1. **INTRODUCTION**

These guidelines are intended to assist examiners in their consideration of projects submitted for Professional Doctoral degrees. In particular, they are intended to guide the examiner not familiar with the standards required for that particular degree to reach a just decision which does not disadvantage the candidate.

Examiners are expected to be active in research, scholarship and practice (thus ensuring that their knowledge of the field is current) and should be familiar with the supervision and examination process for research projects.

Two examiners are initially invited to examine a professional doctoral project by the Research Committee (RC). Examiners are asked to individually and independently assess the project, prepare assessment reports for the guidance of the candidate and recommend to the RC one classification from those described under Section 4 of this document. The majority view of the examiners shall normally be accepted by the RC and if examiners disagree significantly RC may invite a third person to examine the work.

If an examiner is unable to complete the examination within a time satisfactory to the RC (normally one month) another examiner may be appointed in his/her place.

The supporting documentation for a professional doctorate by project (refer to section 3 of this document) must include an appropriate durable record of the project and a written document (exegesis) of between 10,000 and 15,000 words describing the purpose, theoretical base and development of the project. Supporting documentation submitted for assessment is temporarily bound. After the project is classified as 'Passed' by the RC, it will normally be submitted in electronic format for lodgement with the Library for uploading onto the Australian Digital Thesis (ADT) archive and available subject to specified conditions.

2. **CRITERIA FOR PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE PROJECT**

Professional doctoral programs at RMIT consist of two components: coursework and research, both of which must be successfully completed. The coursework component of the Doctor of (insert title) accounts for two thirds/one third (delete as appropriate) of the total hours needed to meet program requirements and must be completed prior to the submission of the research component for examination. The research component of the Doctor of (insert title) accounts for one-third/two thirds (delete as appropriate) of the overall program and culminates in a thesis that makes a significant contribution to knowledge and/or professional practice. Professional doctoral programs are normally completed in the equivalent of three years full-time (or part time equivalent). These guidelines refer to the research project and present criteria for the examination of the project.

- reviewing the literature relevant to the project

The candidate should demonstrate that he/she has become sufficiently familiar with the relevant body of literature to be able to make a critical assessment of the present state of knowledge in the subject. While not all references in the field need be included, the list should be reasonably complete and should include most key references in the relevant area.
- designing an investigation, and gathering and analysing information
  The candidate should present evidence to show that he/she has satisfactorily
designed, undertaken and concluded an investigation in the nominated field of
research in a way appropriate to that field. The aim of the research should be
described clearly and the study design should be appropriate for the aim and for
the field of study. The project should demonstrate that the techniques adopted
were appropriate to the subject matter and were applied properly. Data should be
collected and analysed with care.

- presenting information in a manner consistent with publication, exhibition or public
  presentation in the relevant discipline
  The project should communicate the purpose and results of the research in a
concise, logical and effective manner, by presenting them in a manner and at a
level appropriate for publication, exhibition or public presentation in the field of
research.

  A project, such as a work of art, design, photographic work or architectural models
resulting from creative investigations, whether presented to individual examiners
or simultaneously to a panel of examiners, shall be presented in a gallery or other
appropriate venue at time and dates approved by the RC on the recommendation
of the Head of Department and Faculty Board. The project and supporting
documentation must be presented clearly and should be of a scholarly standard
and free of typographical and grammatical errors.

- critical appraisal of his/her own work relative to that of others
  The candidate should show that he/she recognises the limitations of the study and
should justify fully any conclusions. The thesis should demonstrate the candidate's
ability to assess the contribution of his/her own work to the state of knowledge
about professional practice in the discipline. The thesis should identify key
references from the professional and academic literature for comparison with the
results of the research.

- A significant and original contribution to knowledge of fact and/or theory.
  'Originality' may be shown in several ways. For example, the candidate may have
posed an important new problem with current practice, have formulated an existing
problem in a novel and useful way, investigated previously ignored material,
offered new and significant insights about issues which have been examined by
other researchers, developed new techniques for investigating issues, applied
appropriate techniques to a new set of problems or developed new ways of
applying existing knowledge to practice. Replications of previous investigations
would be acceptable only if they incorporated new elements in the design or
execution of the investigation and/or if they aimed to develop new knowledge
about professional practice.

  While it is difficult to assess what constitutes ‘a significant contribution’, one
important way of gauging if a candidate’s work meets this expectation is to
consider the extent to which the work is publishable or a project is publicly
presentable at the highest level. It would be helpful for the examiner to offer an
opinion on the publishable content of the project.

- Independent and critical thought
  The candidate should show that she/he has the ability to conceive original ideas for
further investigation from independent, critical examination of the literature, to
state clearly the central theme or argument, to develop this theme systematically
and to assess the results of those investigations in a critical manner, relative to the
work of others and to current thinking about practice.

- The capacity to work independently of supervision
The originality and significance of the contribution to the field and the rigor of the independent, critical thought should be high enough to suggest that the candidate can initiate and conduct independent research leading to publication in a scholarly journal or professional equivalent, and exhibition in a recognised venue.

3. **PROJECT PRESENTATION**

Projects such as works of art, designs, photographic works or architectural models resulting from creative investigations, shall be presented in a gallery or other appropriate venue.

3.1 The presentation shall include:

A. The project to be assessed. This includes essential data and documentation;

B. The supporting documentation. This includes an appropriate durable record of the submission and complementary data and documentation, where appropriate. In addition to this, the presentation of a professional doctoral by project shall include an assessable written document (exegesis) of 10,000 - 15,000 words in the format used for a thesis, defining the purpose and theoretical base of the work and the factors taken into account in its conception, development and resolution. The project should manifest its theoretical context in practice, ie recoverable in the actual work presented in the project. The assessable written document is therefore a true exegesis and not a thesis separate to the project.

C. A catalogue of the presented assessable work including the approved project description (not for assessment);

The examiners shall attend the presentation and receive for examination the supporting documentation. The examiners should receive the assessable exegesis prior to the presentation.

3.2 Projects may be presented to **individual examiners** or to a **project presentation panel** which includes the examiners. All project examinations must be conducted with an appointed Chair of the project presentation. This is to ensure that examiners are appropriately briefed and that dialogue between examiners and candidate is at the appropriate professional level. The Chair should make clear to examiners the relative weighting between the project and the exegesis. The procedures for these presentations are as follows:

a) Projects **presented to individual examiners**: each examiner will attend the presentation at the appropriate venue and will be briefed by the appointed Chair of the project presentation. Each examiner will then, within one month, forward an individual examiner’s report of the evaluation directly to the RC.

b) Projects **presented to a project presentation panel** which includes the examiners:
   - the first part of the process shall take the form of a visual public presentation of the project by the candidate to a panel in a suitable gallery space or other appropriate venue;
   - the panel shall be chaired by a person appointed by the RC;
   - the Chair shall present the candidate to the panel and describe the procedure for the presentation. A candidate shall normally be allocated approximately one hour for an oral presentation; additional time may be allocated at the discretion of the Chair. Following the oral presentation, a further period up to ninety minutes will be allocated for discussion. This will take the form of discussion between members of the panel followed by discussion opened to the floor. Input from the public and the candidate shall be directed through the Chair;
• immediately following the presentation, the examiners may confer privately on any aspect of the submission and have the right to recall candidates for further clarification;
• the examiners shall, within one month of the presentation, prepare individual reports of their evaluation of the project and submit those reports directly to the RC.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS BY EXAMINERS

In assessing the project, the examiners should prepare a report of a minimum of 2 pages, indicating if the criteria stated in Section 2 of this document have been satisfied and, if not, what modifications are necessary. Examiners are reminded that candidates value as much feedback as can be provided.

After examination of the project, the examiner must make one of the following recommendations:

1. the project be classified as PASSED with no requirement for correction or amendments and the candidate be awarded the degree for which they are enrolled;

   The examiner may recommend this category for a project which is accepted as satisfactory for the degree.

2. the project be classified as PASSED SUBJECT TO MINOR AMENDMENTS being made to the satisfaction of the RC, without further examination. The candidate must make minor amendments as recommended by the examiner/s;

   The examiner may specify this category for a project which requires correction of deficiencies in the exhibitable works, or minor errors or omissions in the supporting documentation, but which are not of sufficient importance to warrant submission for re-examination. Such amendments would be minor editing of the script, (eg. spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc), the insertion of additional information, or the clarification of points in the text or exhibitable work. The changes should not entail further experimental work or substantial re-writing or re-working. Such changes would be carried out to the satisfaction of the Head of Department, who would recommend to the RC that the amendments have been made in accordance with the examiners' requirements.

3. the project be classified as PASSED SUBJECT TO SPECIFIC AMENDMENTS being made to the satisfaction of the RC, without further examination. The candidate must rework/rewrite specific sections of the project as recommended by the examiner/s;

   The examiner may specify this category for a project which requires more substantial amendment than that outlined in Recommendation 2, above, but which still does not warrant submission for re-examination. In addition to corrections as specified in Recommendation 2, above, such further amendment might include rewriting and/or reworking certain aspects of the script and/or the exhibitable work as specified by the examiner/s. The amendments should not change the substantive conclusions of the project. Such changes would be carried out to the satisfaction of the Head of Department, who would recommend to the RC that the amendments have been made in accordance with the examiners' requirements.

4. the project be classified as DEFERRED FOR MAJOR REVISION and resubmitted for completion of the examination following revision and/or extra work as recommended by the examiner/s;

   The examiner may specify this category for a project which requires major amendments and re-submission for examination. This category is to be used when
the project contains flaws which have the potential to affect its substantive conclusions, but shows some merit which may, by a limited amount of further work (normally twelve months) under approved supervision, be sufficiently improved for re-submission. The project may require further work in any or all areas, eg. further experimental work, further analysis, major rewording of a section of the supporting documentation, expansion of the literature review or revision of the exhibitable work.

In the report, the examiner should give clear, detailed guidelines as to what the candidate has omitted or misinterpreted. Your reasons for making this recommendation should stand scrutiny in an appeal process.

If the project is classified by the RC as 'Deferred for major revision', the revised work will normally be resubmitted within twelve months of the notification of the classification to the candidate. Where possible, the revised work is normally assessed by the examiner/s who recommended 'Deferred for major revision' for completion of the examination. The examiner/s of the revised work shall recommend to the RC a grading of 'Passed' or 'Failed' only. (The examiner/s may advise of changes of an editorial nature.)

5. the project be classified as FAILED; the candidate should not be awarded the degree for which they are enrolled and NOT be permitted to revise and resubmit the project for re-examination.

The examiner may recommend this category for a project when a limited amount of additional work or modification will NOT raise the project to an acceptable standard. This category is to be used when the project contains substantive flaws which are irredeemable and it is clear that the candidate has not presented sufficient evidence to warrant the award of the degree. The examiner is requested to detail as fully as possible the reasons for this recommendation in the report. These reasons should stand scrutiny in an appeal process.

If the project is classified by the RC as 'Failed', the project cannot be re-submitted for the same degree.

5. THE EXAMINER'S REPORT

The examiner is expected to prepare a detailed report (a minimum of 2 pages) on the project; comments and suggestions should be full enough to enable the RC to gauge the quality of the work. Comments on the following would be appreciated:

- the extent to which the candidate has demonstrated:
  - originality;
  - critical insight;
  - capacity to carry out independent research.

- the extent of the contribution to knowledge made by the project, and in particular its contribution to the understanding of the subject with which it deals;

- the suitability of the project for publication or presentation at an internationally recognised public forum, and any suggestions which would be helpful to the candidate in preparation of the material for publication or public presentation.

Detailed guidance for any revision referred to in the examiner's summary recommendation should be included. When the examiner recommends major amendments and re-submission, the revisions required should be sufficiently detailed to act as a specification for the candidate.
Consultation with other Examiners
Consultation with other examiner(s) is not encouraged, to preserve the independence of the examinations.

In the case of examination by a project presentation panel, the examiners may confer with each other during an examiners' meeting held following the presentation by the candidate. The examiners may not through consensus determine a recommendation for the status of the project. Each examiner should submit an independent report.

An examiner may request the Secretariat of the RC to question the candidate on any aspect of the work, in which case a copy of the question and answer is sent to the other examiners.

Confidentiality, and the Anonymity of Examiners
Examiners’ reports will normally be made available to candidates and supervisors. Unless the examiner agrees to have his/her name revealed to the candidate, the normal practice shall be to provide anonymous reports to the candidate. Where the examiner’s name is revealed to the candidate, this shall not occur until after the examination process is complete. The examiner may also indicate if any part of the report is to be restricted. In such instance, that part of the report is to be marked “In Confidence”.