



Guidelines for Conflict of Interest for Thesis Examination

Higher Degree by Research Students

These Guidelines support the HDR thesis examination process and, in particular, the identification and reporting of perceived or actual conflicts of interest related to the appointment of examiners.

These Guidelines should be considered in conjunction with Higher Degree by Research Policies and Procedures. These documents are available on the [Compliance, Legislation and Policy website](#).

1. Supervisors should report to the Thesis Chair any minor or major conflict of interest that may arise between an examiner and various parties including the student, any member of the supervisor team, the University, the subject matter itself or, another examiner.
2. Supervisors can (if required) contact the Graduate Research School (GRS) for information related to 6(b) and 7(c), prior to completing their nomination of examiners for consideration by the Thesis Chair.
3. If a supervisor wishes to nominate an examiner where there is an identified major conflict of interest between the examiner and a supervisor, the student or the University, the supervisor needs to provide a justification for the use of that examiner.
4. Identified minor conflicts of interest will not normally preclude an examiner from being appointed. That noted, all minor conflicts of interest should be noted on the Nomination of Examiners form.
5. **Major** conflicts of interest between the **examiner and student** include (but are not limited to):
 - a. The examiner has co-authored a paper, book chapter, conference item or creative output with the student within the last five years.
 - b. The examiner has worked with the student on matters regarding the HDR project.
 - c. The student has worked for the examiner, in a paid or unpaid position, within the last five years.
 - d. The examiner is in negotiation to directly employ or be employed by the student.
 - e. The examiner has acted as a referee for the student for employment.
 - f. The examiner is a relative, friend, associate, mentor or has a business relationship with the student.
 - g. The examiner was previously a friend, associate or mentor of the student or previously had a business relationship with the student.
6. **Minor** conflicts of interest between the **examiner and student** include (but are not limited to):
 - a. The examiner has a current professional relationship, such as shared membership of a Board or Committee with the student.
 - b. The examiner has had personal contact with the student that may give rise to the perception that the examiner may be dealing with the student in a less than objective manner.
7. **Major** conflicts of interest between the **examiner and any member of the supervisor team** include (but are not limited to):
 - a. The examiner and supervisors have substantively and directly collaborated to co-author a paper, book chapter, conference item, research grant or creative output within the last five years.
 - b. The examiner was a student of the supervisor within the last five years.
 - c. The examiner has co-supervised with the supervisor within the last two years.
 - d. The examiner has worked for the supervisor (or visa versa), in a paid or unpaid position within the last five years.
 - e. The examiner is a relative, has a previous or existing romantic relationship, or has a business relationship with the supervisor.
8. **Minor** conflicts of interest between the **examiner and any member of the supervisor team** include (but are not limited to):
 - a. The examiner and supervisors have collaborated to co-author a paper, book chapter, conference item, research grant or creative output as part of a large team within the last five years.

- b. The examiner has a current professional relationship, such as shared membership of a Board or Committee with the supervisor.
9. **Major** conflicts between **the examiner and the University** might exist where:
 - a. The examiner has or had a formal grievance with the University.
 - b. The examiner has a current Honorary, Adjunct or Emeritus position with the University.
10. **Minor** conflicts between **the examiner and the University** might exist where:
 - a. The examiner is in negotiation to work for the University.
 - b. The examiner is currently appointed to complete a course, organisational unit or procedure review for the University.
 - c. The examiner has examined for the University more than two times in the past 12 months.
11. **Major** conflicts of interest between the **examiner and the subject** exist where:
 - a. The examiner has a direct commercial interest in the outcomes of the research.

RELATED DOCUMENTS/LINKS/FORMS

Internal

- [Higher Degree by Research \(HDR\) Thesis Examination Policy](#)
- [Higher Degree by Research \(HDR\) Thesis Examination Procedures](#)
- [Conflict of Interest Procedures](#)
- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Curtin Values](#)

External

- [Higher Education Support Act 2003 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2015 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Education Services for Overseas Students \(ESOS\) Act \(Cth\)](#)