

OPERATING PROCEDURES

FACULTY OF MEDICINE

HIGHER DEGREE COMMITTEE

14 June, 2007

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1. ADMISSIONS

1.1. Admission to PhD, or Masters by research

- (a) Candidates with an Honours degree (at least class 2 division 1) in a relevant discipline, or with an MBBS from an Australian or New Zealand university, are in general considered eligible for admission to a PhD program.
- (b) Candidates with Honours below class 2 division 1, or who have not been awarded an Honours degree, need to demonstrate appropriate research experience and are in general considered eligible for admission to a PhD program if able to provide evidence of first authorship on at least one refereed paper in a journal of sufficient standing. However, first authorship on a publication is not an absolute prerequisite and the eligibility of all such candidates is determined on a case-by-case basis.
- (c) Candidates with an MBBS or other medical degree from another country are in the first instance considered to be eligible to enrol for a research Masters program, with later upgrade to a PhD if appropriate. Direct enrolment for a PhD may be approved on the basis of strong support from the proposed supervisor and the relevant Head of School.
- (d) Candidates with a Bachelor's degree (not an Honours degree) and relevant experience, but no first author publications in refereed journals of sufficient standing, may be eligible to enrol in a research Masters program on the basis of support from the proposed supervisor and the relevant Head of School, with later upgrade to a PhD if appropriate. Uncommonly, direct enrolment for a PhD may be approved on the basis of strong support from the proposed supervisor and the relevant Head of School.
- (e) Authority to admit to a research program is delegated to the Dean of Graduate Research on the recommendation of the Head of School (or the Postgraduate Co-ordinator of the School as nominee) and the Faculty Co-ordinator of Postgraduate Studies, for:
 - (i) admission to a Masters by research or to a PhD, for candidates with an Honours degree (at least class 2 division 1) in a relevant discipline, or with an MBBS from an Australian or New Zealand university
 - (ii) admission to a Masters by research, for candidates with a Bachelor's degree and relevant experience, or with an MBBS or other medical degree from another country
 - (iii) admission to a PhD, for candidates who have completed a relevant Masters degree that includes a significant research component.
- (f) In special circumstance existing coursework may be used in lieu of a PhD-qualifying program. This is only applicable for applicants who need to be enrolled directly into a PhD for scholarship/funding purposes. The course must involve one Session's non-award enrolment and the assessment will be that of a research oriented literature review at the end of the Session.

When it is impractical to wait for the next scheduled meeting of the Higher Degree Committee, authority to admit any candidate to a research program is delegated to the Dean of Graduate Research on the recommendation of the Faculty Co-ordinator of Postgraduate Studies.

A list of such admissions is made available at the next meeting of the Higher Degree Committee.

NB: To facilitate compliance with these Standard Operating Procedures, recommendations for admission should in general be submitted via the Postgraduate Co-ordinator of the School to the Faculty Co-ordinator of Postgraduate Studies. The Postgraduate Co-ordinator of the School will ensure that the Head of School is advised about proposed enrolments.

1.2. Admission to MD by thesis

For candidates with an MBBS from an Australian or New Zealand university, authority to admit to an MD by thesis is delegated to the Dean of Graduate Research on the recommendation of the Head of School (or the Postgraduate Co-ordinator of the School as nominee) and the Faculty Co-ordinator of Postgraduate Studies.

1.3. Admission to Masters by coursework, graduate diploma, graduate certificate

- (a) For Masters by coursework and graduate diplomas requiring a medical degree (MMed, MSportsMed, MPsycholMed, graduate diplomas in Sports Medicine, Geriatric Medicine, Paediatrics), a candidate for the degree shall have been awarded a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery from the University of New South Wales or a qualification considered equivalent from another university or tertiary institution at a level acceptable to the Higher Degree Committee of the Faculty of Medicine **AND** shall have had at least one year's full-time experience in the practice of medicine. Additional prerequisites may be specified by the program authority.
- (b) For other Masters by coursework and graduate diploma programs, a candidate for the degree shall have been awarded an appropriate degree of Bachelor of four full-time years duration (or the part-time equivalent) from the University of New South Wales or a qualification considered equivalent from another university or tertiary institution at a level acceptable to the Higher Degree Committee of the Faculty of Medicine **OR** shall have been awarded an appropriate degree of Bachelor of three full-time years duration (or the part-time equivalent) and have had at least three years' relevant experience. Additional prerequisites may be specified by the program authority.
- (c) For graduate certificates requiring a medical degree (Sports Medicine and Geriatric Medicine), a candidate for the degree shall have been awarded a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery from the University of New South Wales or a qualification considered equivalent from another university or tertiary institution at a level acceptable to the Higher Degree Committee of the Faculty of Medicine. Additional prerequisites may be specified by the program authority.
- (d) For other graduate certificate programs, a candidate for the degree shall have been awarded an appropriate degree of Bachelor of three full-time years duration (or the part-time equivalent) from the University of New South Wales or a qualification considered equivalent from another university or tertiary institution at a level acceptable to the Higher Degree Committee of the Faculty of Medicine. Additional prerequisites may be specified by the program authority.
- (e) For newly established programs, admissions are dealt with by the Higher Degree Committee, so that members are informed about the number of candidates seeking to enrol and their background in terms of prior education and experience.
- (f) For all coursework Masters, graduate diploma and graduate certificate programs that have been in operation for over 12 months, authority for admission of candidates who satisfy the above requirements is delegated to the Director, UNSW Student Services on the recommendation of the Head of School (or the Program Co-ordinator as nominee), while authority for admission of other candidates is delegated to the Director, UNSW Student Services on the recommendation of the Head of School (or the Program Co-ordinator as nominee) and the Faculty Co-ordinator of Postgraduate Studies.

1.4. English language requirements

All applicants for admission to UNSW postgraduate programs whose first language is not English must provide evidence that their English language ability meets the University's requirements for admission. A potential supervisor who has confidence in the ability of a candidate to communicate at an appropriate level in English, both orally and for the purposes of scientific writing, may write to the Higher Degree Committee and seek to have the language requirements waived, but **ONLY** for students from countries designated Assessment Level 1 or 2, other than for government-sponsored students. The supervisor then takes full responsibility for the candidate in this regard.

1.5. Supervision

- (a) Any suitably qualified member of academic or research staff may be appointed as either principal supervisor, joint supervisor or co-supervisor of a research higher degree candidate.
- (b) Any supervisor seeking to supervise more than 5 full-time research students, or equivalent, at any one time must provide substantiating evidence of adequate time and experience to the Associate Dean (Research Students).
- (c) A co-supervisor should be appointed for all research higher degree students (other than jointly supervised students) except where the supervisor has obtained the approval of the Higher Degree Committee to not make such an appointment.

2. CANDIDATURE

2.1. Advanced standing

For research higher degrees, admission with advanced standing is usually granted when a candidate is transferring from another Australian university because the principal supervisor has accepted an appointment at UNSW and will continue to supervise the candidate. Except in such cases, however, advanced standing is usually not approved e.g. on the basis of research completed prior to enrolment. Instead, candidates are advised to seek remission of one or more sessions at the time of submission of the thesis, if this should prove to be earlier than the minimum duration of enrolment for the degree.

For coursework Masters programs, standard University-wide rules apply.

2.2. Program leave

Program leave for up to 12 months (total during the period of enrolment) is routinely granted on the recommendation of the Head of School (or the Postgraduate Co-ordinator of the School as nominee). If leave exceeding this period (either on one occasion or in total) is sought, supporting documentation from the supervisor and the Postgraduate Co-ordinator of the School (or Head of School where the supervisor is the Postgraduate Co-ordinator) must be presented.

Authority to approve requests for program leave is delegated to the Faculty Co-ordinator of Postgraduate Studies.

2.3. Transfers

All proposed transfers between Schools must provide supporting documentation indicating the agreement of both the proposed supervisor and the Head of the School to which the candidate is transferring.

2.4. Degree program

Following appropriate review within the School, requests to upgrade enrolment from Masters by research to PhD or *vice versa* require documentation indicating support of the supervisor and the Head of School (or the Postgraduate Co-ordinator of the School as nominee), as well as the reasons for such support.

2.5. Enrolment pattern

- (a) Requests for change from full-time to part-time enrolment or *vice versa* need not be sent to the Higher Degree Committee as these can be approved by the Head of School (or the Postgraduate Co-ordinator of the School as nominee) or the program authority.

- (b) A request for change of status by an international full fee-paying student who commences a program and then becomes a permanent resident is subject to the rules set out in the UNSW Fee Policy for international students. If a student has an offer as an international student, but becomes a permanent resident before commencing the program, the application may be reassessed by the Head of School in view of the competition for places for local students.

2.6. Change of supervisor or research area

- (a) Authority to approve change of supervisor or co-supervisor within a School, and to approve change of research area, is delegated to the Dean of Graduate Research on the recommendation of the Head of School (or the Postgraduate Co-ordinator of the School as nominee), except where BOTH the research and supervision arrangements are to be changed and the candidate has been enrolled for more than 12 months.
- (b) All requests for change of research area require documentation indicating support of the supervisor and the Head of School.

NB: To facilitate compliance with these Standard Operating Procedures, recommendations regarding candidature should in general be processed by the Postgraduate Co-ordinator of the School.

2.7. Progress

Unsatisfactory progress reports are forwarded to the Faculty of Medicine Higher Degree Committee for appropriate action. For coursework higher degree students who are required to show cause, standard University-wide procedures apply.

2.8. Submission of thesis

Authority to approve requests for extension of enrolment, or for remission of up to two sessions before submission of a research thesis, is delegated to the Faculty Co-ordinator of Postgraduate Studies.

3. NOMINATION OF EXAMINERS

- (a) In general, all examiners for research theses should be external to the University and at least one examiner of a PhD thesis should be from an overseas institution, although neither of these is a mandatory requirement. If an internal examiner is to be appointed, this individual should not be from the same School as the candidate. In such instances, documentation must be provided to assure the Faculty of Medicine Higher Degree Committee that the examiner has no significant research collaboration with the supervisor/co-supervisor and has had no significant interaction with the candidate.
- (b) To ensure the timely availability of a replacement examiner, should the need arise, at least 4 examiners must be nominated for doctoral candidates and at least 3 for Masters candidates. One of these may be designated a reserve examiner. Nomination of examiners will not be approved without brief written reasons for selection of each examiner. The form for nomination of examiners must be signed by the Head of School (or the Postgraduate Co-ordinator of the School as nominee). The Graduate Research School will return nomination forms that do not comply with these requirements.

NB:

To facilitate compliance with these Standard Operating Procedures, recommendations for appointment of examiners should in general be submitted via the Postgraduate Co-ordinator of the School to the Faculty Co-ordinator of Postgraduate Studies.

Authority to approve appointment of examiners for research theses is delegated to the Faculty Co-ordinator of Postgraduate Studies.

This delegation does not apply to appointment of examiners for MD by published work.

4. EXAMINERS' REPORTS

4.1. Masters projects

For all coursework Masters programs, authority to recommend admission to the degree is delegated to Director, UNSW Student Services on the recommendation of the Head of School (or the Postgraduate Co-ordinator of the School as nominee), where the candidate has satisfactorily completed the major project and all other requirements.

4.2. Research theses

- (a) Where all examiners of a doctoral thesis or of a Masters by research thesis recommend award of the degree or award subject to minor corrections (i.e. recommendations 1 or 2 in Part C of the examiners report), authority to recommend that Council admit to the degree is delegated to the Head of School (or the Postgraduate Co-ordinator of the School as nominee), except that if the Head of School is the candidate's supervisor then the delegated authority should be exercised by the Postgraduate Co-ordinator. All such recommendations are noted in the agenda of the Faculty of Medicine Higher Degree Committee.
- (b) If an examiner (or examiners) recommends that the candidate be awarded the degree subject to further work to the satisfaction of the Higher Degree Committee (recommendation 3), the Higher Degree Committee will review the candidate's response to the examiner's comments and may forward the revised thesis to the same examiner (or examiners) for review prior to recommending award of the degree.
- (c) If an examiner (or examiners) recommends that the candidate be not awarded the degree but be permitted to re-submit the thesis (with or without a further period of study and/or research) (recommendation 4), the Higher Degree Committee forwards the re-submitted thesis to the same examiner (or examiners) for re-examination. In addition, any examiner who recommended award of the degree based on the original submission is sent copies of the other examiners' reports and offered an opportunity to re-examine the thesis. If the re-submitted thesis is then approved by all but one examiner, the Faculty of Medicine Higher Degree Committee may appoint an additional examiner.
- (d) For a PhD thesis, if two or more examiners recommend that the candidate be not awarded the degree but be permitted to re-submit the thesis (recommendation 4), the candidate may withdraw from the PhD program, enrol for a Masters by research, and subsequently submit an appropriately revised thesis for the latter degree. Because this will constitute a new submission, appointment of examiners will require approval by the Faculty of Medicine Higher Degree Committee and may or may not include any of the examiners of the PhD thesis.
- (e) The Higher Degree Committee reserves the right to vary these procedures in individual cases e.g. where one examiner submits an adverse recommendation that is markedly at variance with the recommendations of the other examiners and/or an examiner's adverse recommendation is inconsistent with the written comments provided. In addition, complicated cases may be dealt with by the Committee on an individual basis e.g. where examiners' reports on a resubmitted thesis do not yield a clear majority decision. If appropriate, the Committee may appoint a working group to undertake a review of the thesis, the examiners' comments and the candidate's responses prior to making a recommendation.