APPENDIX F
GUIDELINES FOR THE EXAMINATION OF RESEARCH DISSERTATIONS AND THESIS

1. Upon the completion of the evaluation process, examiners must submit their Examiner’s Reports (see guidelines below) and complete the attached Evaluation Form and return it to:

The Post Graduate Examination Officer
PO Box 77000
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
Port Elizabeth
6031

2. According to the University's Policy, Procedures and Rules for Postgraduate Research Degrees a supervisor/promoter must be appointed for master’s dissertations and doctoral theses respectively. It is recommended that co-promoters should be appointed for theses, while co-supervisors may also be appointed for dissertations. The policy stipulates that the supervisor/promoter and co-supervisor/co-promoter may be appointed as internal examiners for research degrees. Similarly, the policy states that at least one external examiner must be appointed for a dissertation, while at least two external examiners must be appointed for doctoral theses.

3. Examiners must work independently of one another in evaluating a candidate’s work, and may not communicate with the candidate or other examiner(s) at any time. The only exception to this rule is that external examiners may consult the candidate’s supervisor/promoter to clarify any uncertainties or problems relating to the formal requirements for the assessment of the research work. Such consultation should be handled with caution so as not to influence the external examiner’s impartial assessment of the work.

4. Acceptance of the role of external examiner does not in any way require the examiner to provide guidance to the candidate.

5. The identity of external examiners is regarded as confidential until the completion of the examination process. External examiners should, however, provide an indication of whether their names may be disclosed to the candidate in the attached Evaluation Form.

6. A dissertation or thesis may be submitted for examination with a hard or soft cover.
7. External examiners may keep the copy of the dissertation or thesis sent to them (i) subject to the *NMMU Intellectual Property Policy* requirements; or (ii) unless the dissertation or thesis is not accepted, in which case it must be returned to the above-mentioned address as soon as possible. If the dissertation or thesis is accepted on condition of minor adjustments, an amended version will be sent to the examiner upon inclusion of the suggested amendments.

8. **Examiners should critically evaluate a candidate’s work taking the following considerations into account:**

a) In the case of a dissertation, the candidate is not required to make an original contribution to the knowledge of the subject or field, but should demonstrate the ability to undertake critical enquiry on the basis of a thorough understanding of existing research in the relevant field, as well as effective report writing skills.

b) In the case of a doctoral thesis, the candidate is required to make an original contribution to the study area and the relevant field of research.

c) A candidate may not be penalised for belonging to any particular school of thought.

d) A candidate may not be penalised if the contents and findings of the dissertation or thesis can only be applied in practice to a limited extent.

9. **Examiners are expected to compile a report which deals clearly with the following issues** with due consideration to the nature of the study:

a) **Research:**
   - The evaluation of the dissertation or thesis against the requirements for academic research on that level.
   - Understanding of current research, explanatory frameworks and problems within the field of enquiry.
   - The delineation of appropriate research aims and objectives, and where appropriate the research hypothesis or hypotheses.
   - The delimitation of the scope of the study as evident from the research aims and objectives.
   - The extent to which the focus of the study remains consistent with the aims and objectives of the research.

b) **The Title:**
   - The formulation of the title must be unambiguous and should convey the focus of the study.

c) **Literature Study/Review:**
• The relevance, contemporary nature and authority of the scientific and other sources consulted by the candidate.
• The comprehensiveness of the literature study.
• The candidate’s ability to critically review and logically present the relevant literature in the field of study.

d) **Research Design and Methodology**:
• The design should be a logical progression from the research aims and objectives, and the research hypothesis or hypotheses.
• The relevance of the research design in serving the research process.
• The candidate’s critical evaluation of the research design and method(s) employed.
• The relevance and scope of the processes that are used to identify and collect the objects of the research (data, documents, artefacts, specimens, compositions etc).
• The use of appropriate techniques for the analysis of the research objects in order to meet the objectives/aims/hypotheses of the study.
• The accurate interpretation and discussion of findings, well substantiated by the results of the analysis.
• The presentation of the results in terms of the research objectives/aims/hypotheses.

e) **Conclusions and Contributions**
• The candidate must be able to draw logical conclusions from the results.
• The candidate must consider the application/implication/contribution of the research findings in practical, scientific and/or research fields.
• Appropriate recommendations/proposals should be made for future research.
• The candidate should have considered the limitations and shortcomings of the study.

f) **Technical Presentation**:
• The overall linguistic and technical presentation of the dissertation or thesis, for example, the use of tables and/or graphic illustrations.
• The schematic division into chapters and the table of contents.
• The abstract.
• The consistent application of a particular referencing style.
• The reference list or bibliography.
• The inclusion of appropriate annexures and/or appendices, such as questionnaires, computer programmes, and other research documents.

g) **Suggestions and Recommendations**:
• The examiner should explicitly state in which respects the study should be expanded, revised and/or amended.
10. Examiners should complete the attached Evaluation Form in informing the University of the outcome of the examination process. The outcome of the examination process consists of one of the following options:

a) That the dissertation or thesis be accepted in fulfilment/partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree, with or without distinction.
   
   - In the cases of a dissertation a mark not exceeding 100 should be awarded. The candidate passes by obtaining a mark of not less than 50 and passes with distinction by being awarded a mark of not less than 75. Where the external examiner has not awarded a distinction, he/she should indicate on the attached Evaluation Form whether he/she would object if a distinction is awarded in terms of the applicable institutional rules.
   - In the case of a thesis, no mark is awarded and the examiner is merely required to indicate whether the degree should be awarded.

b) That the dissertation or thesis be regarded as complying with the requirements for the degree concerned, subject to the incorporation of minor corrections of a technical nature as pointed out in the examiner's report, to the satisfaction of the candidate's supervisor/promoter. In such cases, extracts from the examiner’s report may be provided to the candidate without disclosing the name of the particular examiner.

c) That the dissertation or thesis be awarded subject to revisions or major corrections of a technical nature that should be made to the satisfaction of the supervisor/promoter. In such cases, extracts from the examiner’s report may be provided to the candidate without disclosing the name of the particular examiner.

d) That the dissertation or thesis not be accepted in its present form and the candidate be requested to expand, revise or amend the content with a view to its re-examination, in which case the examiner should indicate his or her availability to conduct the further assessment of the research work.

c) That the dissertation or thesis be rejected, in which case the candidate has the right to appeal the outcome of the examination according to the formal appeals procedure as outlined in the University's Policy, Procedures and Rules for Postgraduate Research Degrees.

11. In the case of differences of opinion regarding the outcome of the examination process, the University reserves the right to appoint an additional external examiner who acts as arbiter as stipulated in Section 6.7 of the NMMU Policy, Procedures and Rules for Postgraduate Research Degrees. The final decision regarding the awarding of master’s and/or doctoral degrees remains with the University.