

Re-imagining Doctoral Assessment

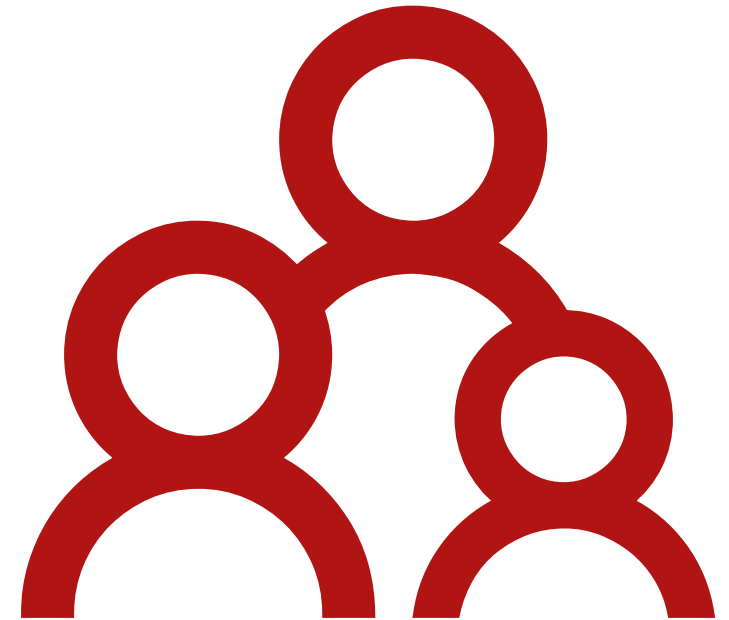
Rachel Spronken-Smith (Deputy Dean) and
Diane Ruwhiu (Dean), University of Otago
Tracy Riley (Dean), Massey University



*Is our universal focus on a thesis (and sometimes an oral) fit for purpose?
Should we be more inclusive?*

Context for change - diversity in doctoral cohorts

- ▶ Gender
- ▶ Ethnicity
- ▶ Disabilities, neurodivergence



Context for change in Aotearoa New Zealand

- ▶ Te Tiriti o Watangi
- ▶ Strengthening partnerships with the Pacific
- ▶ Applied Doctorate Scheme (ADS)



Context for change – career trajectories

- ▶ Only 40-50% of doctoral graduates in the western world work in academia (McCarthy and Wienk 2019; OECD 2014, 2021) – and most are in precarious roles
- ▶ Majority transitioning into other careers
- ▶ Realisation of the need to develop transferable and professional skills to enable transition into a range of jobs
 - ▶ Rise of Doctoral Training Centres and Researcher Development Programmes
- ▶ **So, the expected doctoral outcomes have changed, and so has the education and training, but what about assessment?**

Research aim

How can doctoral assessment be reimagined to move beyond the traditional thesis and an oral examination to embrace more authentic, relevant, and inclusive evaluation methods?

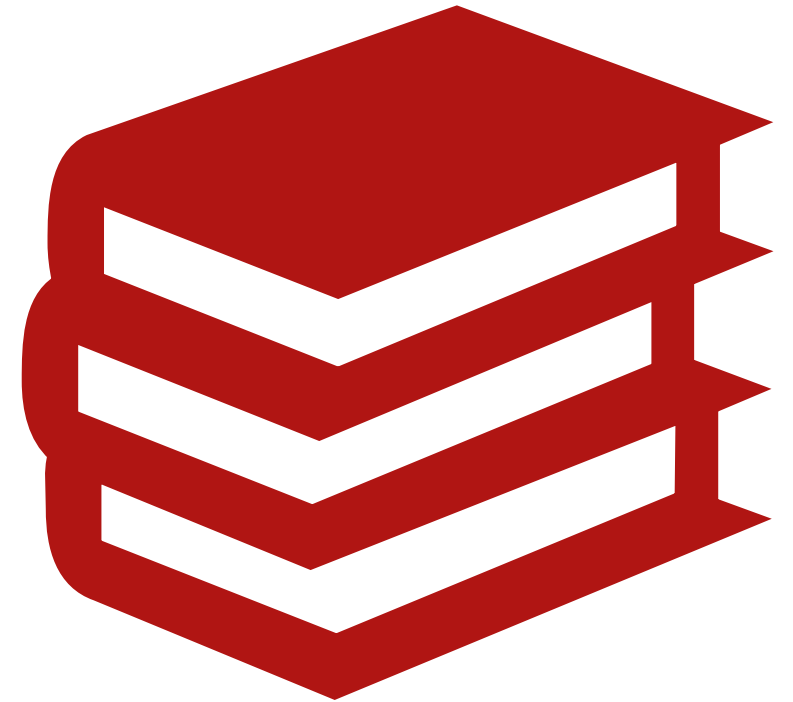
Assessing 'doctorateness'

- ▶ Originality (and significance) of the research
- ▶ Critical engagement with the literature
- ▶ The use of appropriate methods of data collection and analyses
- ▶ Critical analysis of results
- ▶ Effective communication skills - written and verbal (if being examined by an oral examination)
- ▶ The potential (or requirement) to publish

Change assessment from what?

What are we meaning by a traditional thesis?

- ▶ Monograph
- ▶ Hybrid, including publications
- ▶ Creative practice



Change assessment to what?

Let's get creative....

- ▶ Portfolio approach →
- ▶ Postgraduate Cert.
- ▶ Micro-credentials
- ▶

Candidate and career intentions	Skills, attributes desired	Possible portfolio assessment items
Corey – seeking work in government or consultancy	<p>PhD research skills</p> <p>Teamwork, project management</p> <p>Writing policy</p> <p>Engaging with stakeholders</p>	<p>Thesis (or publications)</p> <p>Micro-credentials, testimonials</p> <p>Policy course; white paper from PhD research</p> <p>Testimonial from internship mentor or manager</p>
Jing – seeking an academic career	<p>PhD research skills</p> <p>Teaching</p> <p>Research grant writing</p> <p>Service/committee work</p>	<p>Hybrid thesis</p> <p>Teaching portfolio with philosophy, experience and evaluations</p> <p>Workshops, shadowing, application</p> <p>PhD rep or volunteer roles, testimonials</p>

Study design

Literature review and policy analysis

Interviews with key stakeholders

- Deans of Graduate Research Studies (DDOGS) in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia (ACGR)
- Senior administrators in government
- Universities New Zealand
- Senior Māori and Pacific Island academics
- Supervisors
- Doctoral candidates
- Directors of Career Development Centres
- Directors of Disability Support Offices

Ethics

Views on...

- ▶ *Is the current system of assessment of the PhD fit for purpose?*
 - ▶ *What works well in the current assessment?*
 - ▶ *What is problematic?*

Views on...

- ▶ *Given our diverse cohorts coupled with diverse career pathways... how could we reimagine doctoral assessment?*
- ▶ *What could it look like?*
- ▶ *Should a written thesis should be required as part of doctoral assessment? How can we assess 'doctorateness'?*

Have a group brainstorm and capture ideas about what could be on a poster sheet. Don't worry about pros and cons just yet; just generate some possibilities, teasing out some details on what these could look like!

Views on...

- ▶ *If we were to move to an alternative approach, what would be the benefits and challenges?*

Identify the alternative approach and capture possible pros and cons on a poster sheet.

Next steps



Stakeholder interviews/focus groups



Data analyses



Outputs

Project report
White Paper

THANKS TO YOU ALL FOR YOUR THOUGHTS!

& THANKS TO THE

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University
of Otago

ŌTĀKOU WHAKAIHU WAKA