

Preparing for your Oral Defence

ZOOM
2 July 2024

Prof Alistair McCulloch
UniSA Research Office

Rachel Bageas
(SAS)

Recent developments in the UniSA doctorate

Panels; end user advisors

Focus on skills and development

Oral Defence

Broadens the doctoral examination to both your thesis
and also you as the candidate researcher

Some cheery news!!

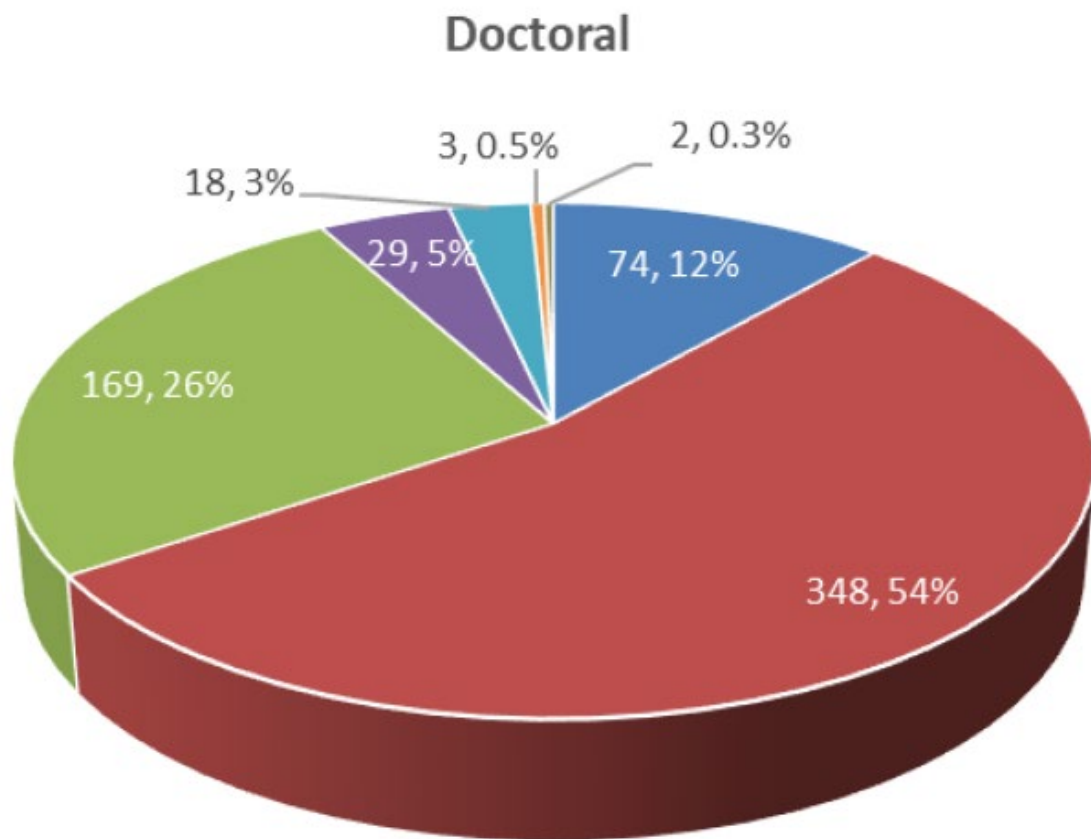


Possible Examination outcomes

In the following pie chart, the examination results are recorded as:

- a) the lowest of the preliminary recommendations for those who completed a traditional examination; or,
- b) the single examination result for those who completed an oral

- 1: Pass forthwith
- 2: Pass, following minor corrections
- 3A: Pass, following major corrections
- 3B: Pass, following major corrections
- 4: Revise and Resubmit
- 5: PhD downgrade to Masters by Research
- 6: Fail



Total – 646 PhD theses

- 1: Pass forthwith
- 2: Pass, following minor corrections
- 3A: Pass, following major corrections
- 3B: Pass, following major corrections
- 4: Revise and Resubmit
- 5: PhD downgrade to Masters by Research
- 6: Fail



Oral Defence impact on Final Examination Results, 2019-2023

- 232 doctoral students (65%) received the same result, 120 doctoral students (34%) received a higher result, 5 doctoral students (1%) received a lower result

Oral defence examination result

Preliminary recommendation	<i>1: Pass forthwith</i>	<i>2: Pass, minor corrections</i>	<i>3A: Pass, major corrections</i>	<i>3B: Pass, major corrections</i>	<i>4: Revise and resubmit</i>
1: Pass forthwith	21	1	0	0	0
2: Pass, minor corrections	32	148	1	1	0
3A: Pass, major corrections	4	64	57	2	0
3B: Pass, major corrections	0	5	4	5	0
4: Revise and resubmit	0	0	3	6	1
5: Downgrade to Masters	1	0	1	0	0
TOTAL	58	218	66	14	1

same result
 higher result
 lower result

Preparing for your Oral Defence

Actors in the Oral Defence

- You
- presenting your thesis for examination
 - may make an opening statement at the start of the Oral Defence
- The examiners
- in most cases both will be brought in by video conference
 - will explore aspects of your thesis and other areas related to your research and your research and your development and plans
- The Chair
- there to manage the Oral Defence and help the examiners:
 - Set the agenda
 - Keep to time
 - Ensure fairness to everyone involved
 - Help the examiners agree a single report and result
- Your supervisor
- may be there if you want them there (should be there for the result/feedback)
 - cannot speak during the Oral Defence

The Oral Defence

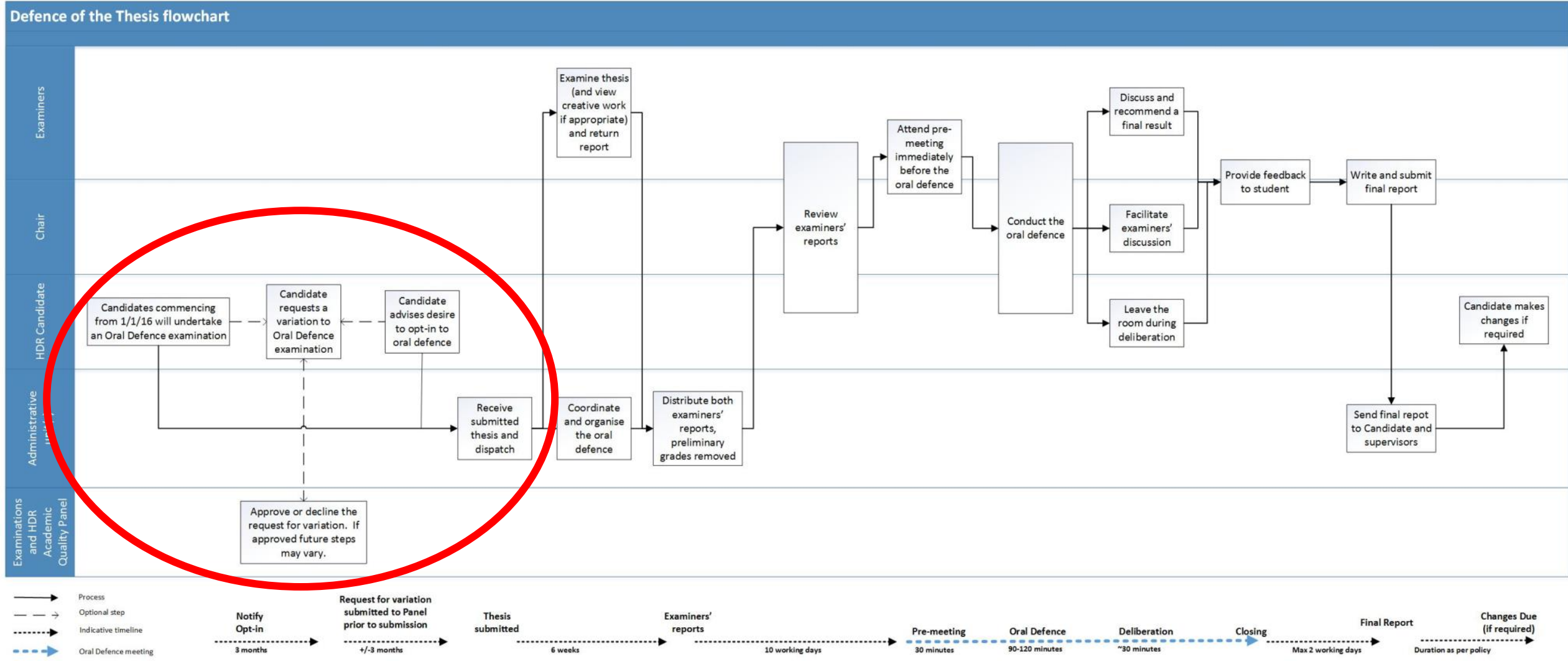
- Free consultancy with international experts in the field of research who have read their work in detail.
- Enhances the visibility of your work with eminent researchers in the field and can facilitate ongoing communication and networking between you and your examiners.
- Examiners get to talk through any differences of opinion about your work and to come to agreement about the examination outcome and any recommended revisions to the thesis or exegesis.

The Oral Defence

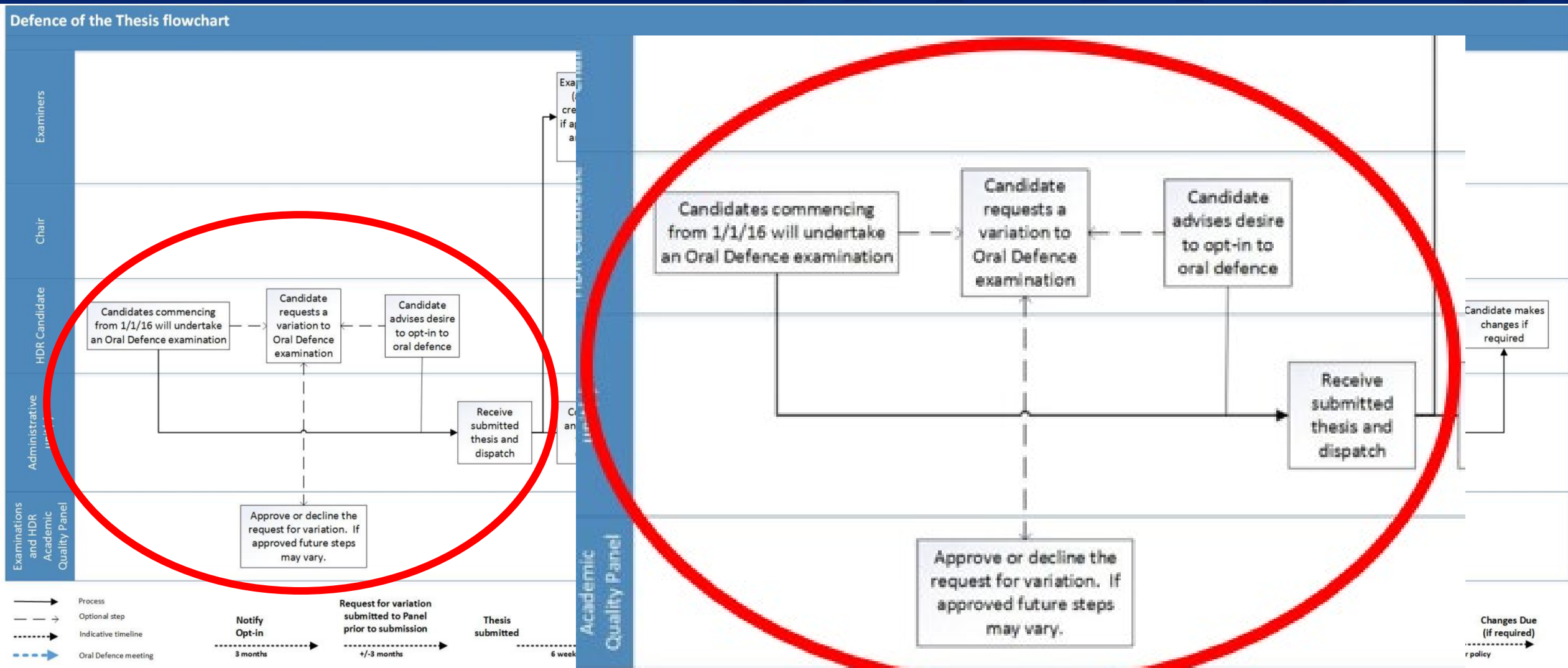
- Chance to engage with examiners' questions directly
- Chance to clear up misunderstandings about your work
- Get the chance to make issue raised by the examiners go away
- Feedback about how the work might be strengthened and improved into the future
- Get a single result and a single set of requirements for the award of the degree

Perhaps try to think about it as a serious conversation

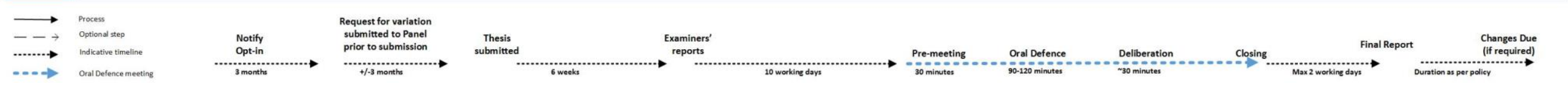
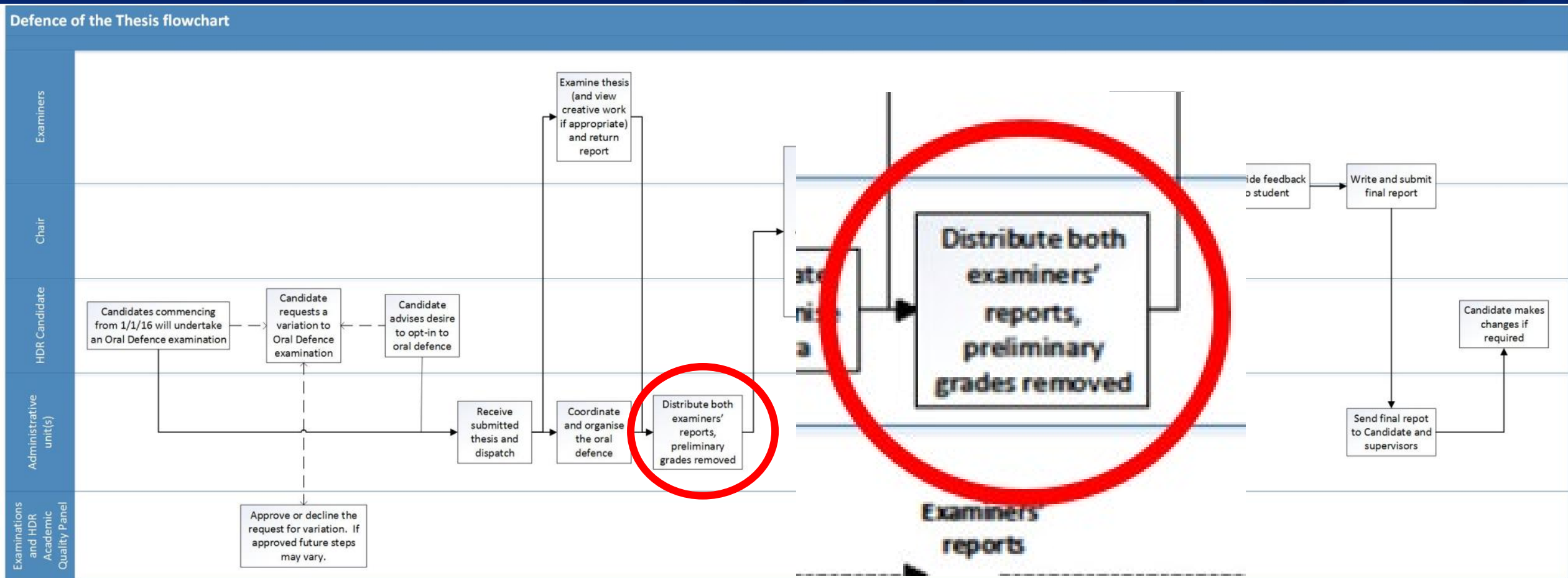
Preparing for your Oral Defence



Preparing for your Oral Defence

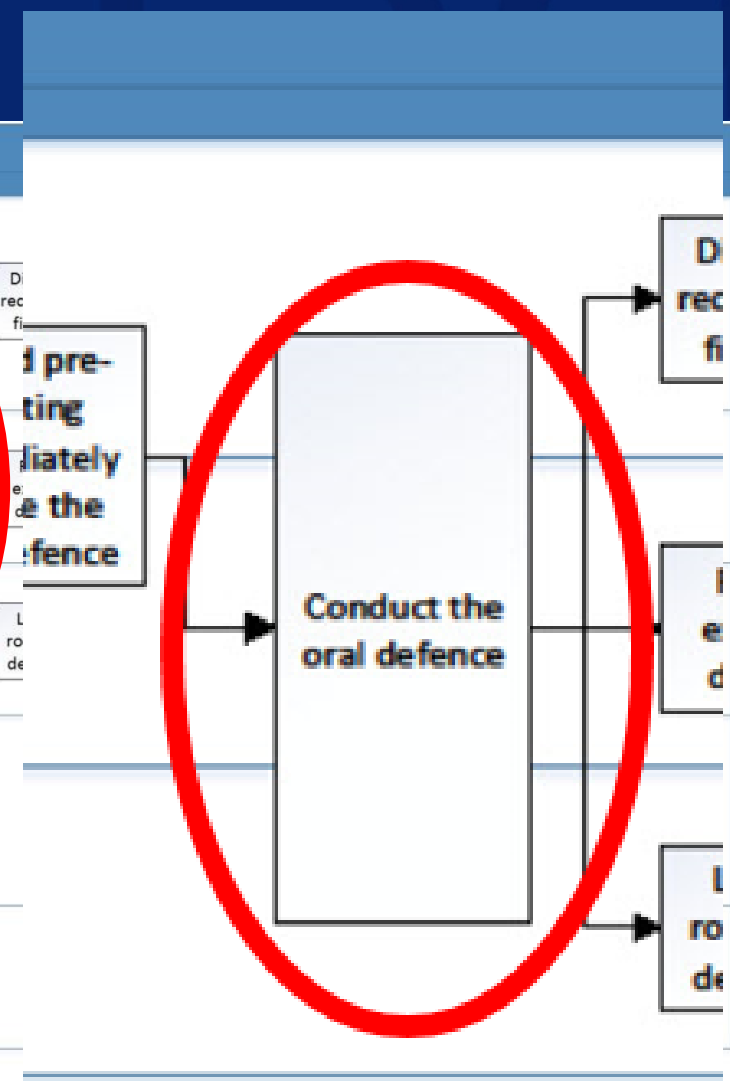
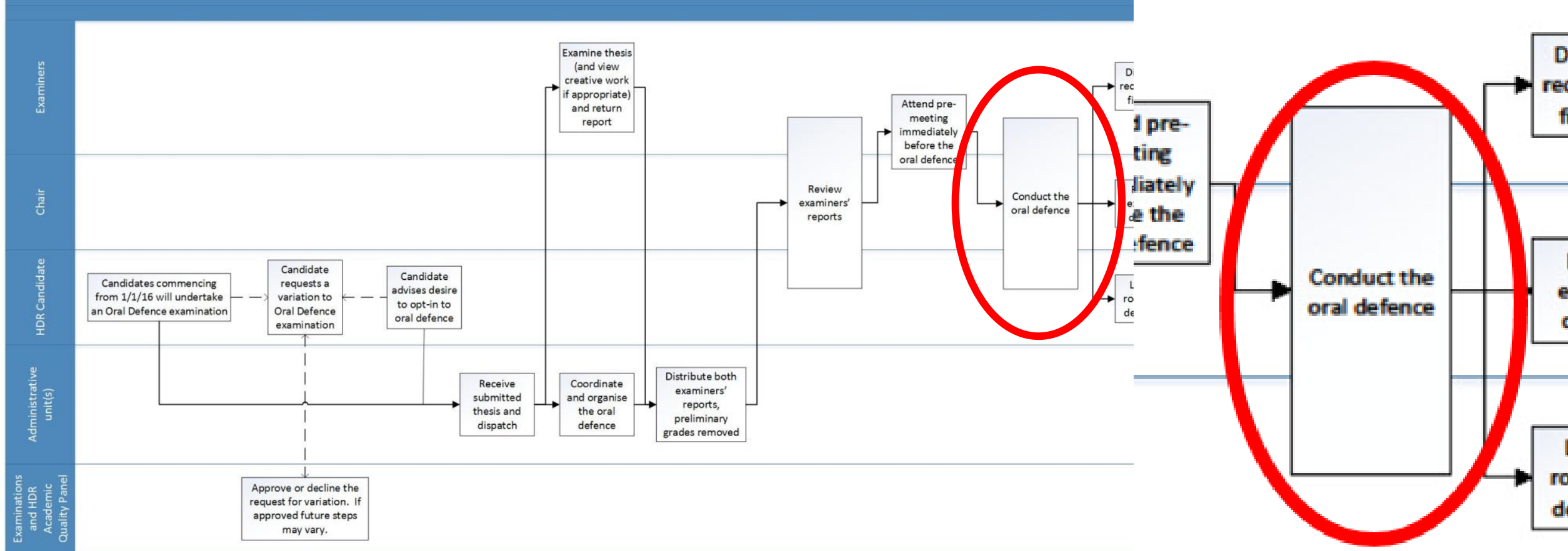


Preparing for your Oral Defence

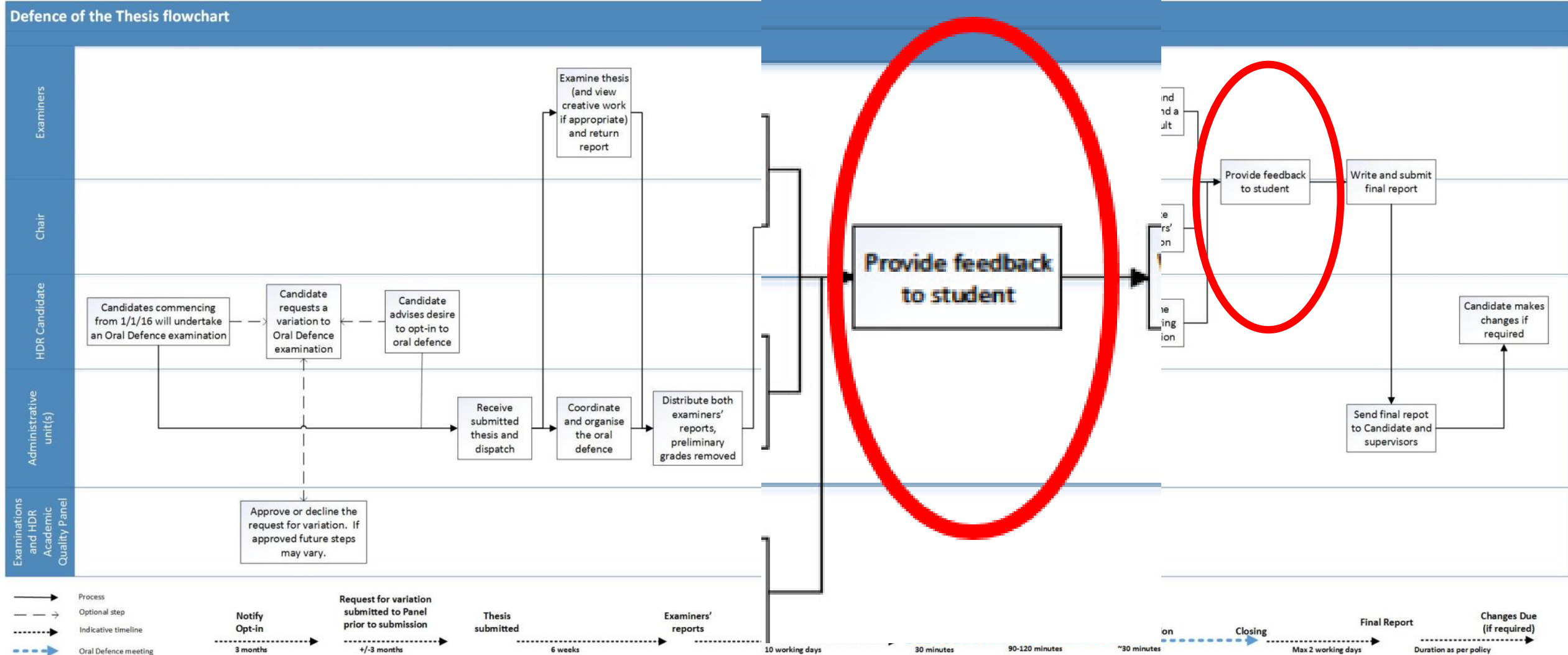


Preparing for your Oral Defence

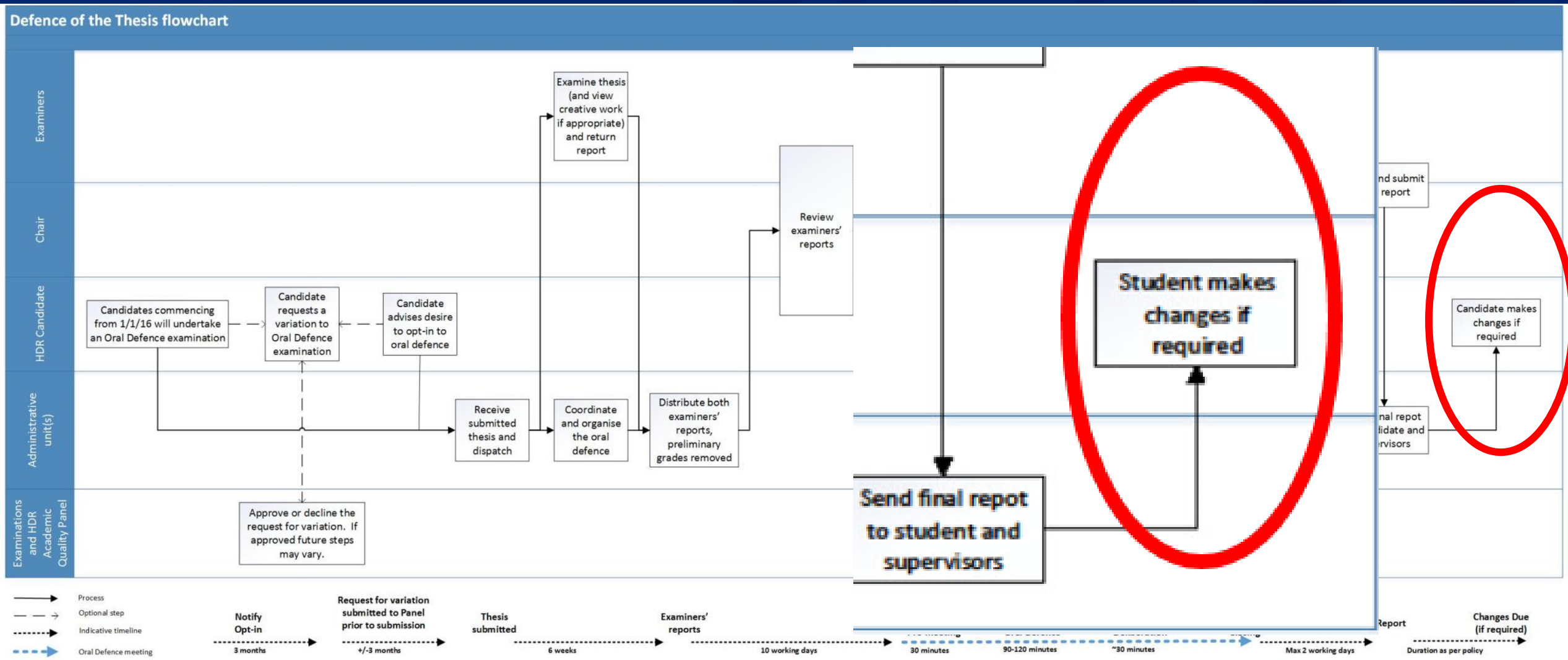
Defence of the Thesis flowchart



Preparing for your Oral Defence



Preparing for your Oral Defence



The Oral Defence Moodle Resource

- Introduction
- For students
- For supervisors
- For chairs
- The case manager
- Other sources of advice
- A must read: It's a PhD, not a Nobel Prize

Introduction

[← Prev](#) [Next →](#)

The oral defence involves a conversation between the PhD student and the thesis examiners, either face to face or by video conference, facilitated by an independent chair. This conversation follows the receipt of preliminary examiner reports, and leads to a final report and examination result. The oral defence is compulsory for all PhD students commencing their studies from 1st January 2016, and is optional for those who started before this date.

The oral defence brings students into contact with international experts in the field of research who have read their work in detail. This enables students to engage with examiners' questions directly, giving them the opportunity to clear up misunderstandings about the work, as well as receive feedback about how the work was received and how it might be strengthened and improved into the future. Meeting examiners in person enhances the visibility of the student's work with eminent researchers in the field and can facilitate ongoing communication and networking between students and examiners. The oral defence also enables examiners to talk through any differences of opinion about the work and to come to agreement about the examination outcome and any recommended revisions to the thesis or exegesis. This enables a single result and a single set of recommendations, rather than the two separate sets produced within prior arrangements.

This resource aims to introduce research degree students, their supervisors, and chairs of oral defence committees to the oral defence at UniSA. You may choose to go direct to the tab that describes your role in the oral defence, or read through each page, and watch the embedded videos and other resources for a fuller sense of how the oral defence can best be prepared for and conducted.

This resource was developed by Dr Wendy Bastalich, with assistance from Andrew Thomson and Simon Smith from the TIU educational design team, Professor Alistair McCulloch from UniSA RO, and staff within Student and Academic Services. Any feedback or requests for updates to information on this site can be forwarded to ResearchEducation@unisa.edu.au or research.examinations@unisa.edu.au.

<https://lo.unisa.edu.au/course/view.php?id=9064>