

## 3M.1 EXTERNAL EXAMINING AND VIVAS

### POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR RESEARCH DEGREES

#### EXAMINING TEAM

- i) Normally there should be one External Examiner, who shall be an established authority within the field, and one Internal Examiner, who shall be a member of the academic staff who has **not** supervised the candidate. The examining team (internal and external/s) shall normally be appointed for the duration of the examining process, including any resubmissions. The supervisor is required to be available in the Department/School to provide any information requested by the examiners, and may, if s/he wishes, volunteer information in advance of the oral examination. The supervisor will not normally be present at the oral examination. At the discretion of the Examiners and the candidate jointly, however, the supervisor may be present at the oral examination but only in a non-participatory role.
- ii) Alternatively, and exceptionally, there shall be two External Examiners. Both these Examiners shall be approved by the procedures above. This situation will occur in the following circumstances:
  - a) Where, aside from the supervisor, there is no appropriate member of the academic staff to act as Internal Examiner. (The supervisor **cannot** act as an Internal Examiner.) In these circumstances, two external examiners may be appointed, and a senior member of the University's academic staff will also attend the oral examination in a non-participatory role. This member of staff will normally be the Research Officer.
  - b) A less experienced External Examiner is approved (e.g. when they are subject specialists with a good publication record). In this case, two external examiners should be appointed and the internal examiner must be experienced in the assessment process.
  - c) Two external examiners must be appointed in those cases where the candidate is a current or former member of staff of the University.
- iv) Where no appropriate UK based external examiner is available, external examiners may be nominated who are based overseas. Research Officers will need to consider the experience the overseas external examiners have with examining UK research degrees, in accordance with the criteria for nomination clauses A1 and A3.

#### EXPENSES

- v) Nomination requests to the QA Office for overseas external examiners should include information about the expected costs (including airfares, accommodation, other travel/transfers, and visas) before the nomination is progressed.
- vii) External Examiners are provided with the University's expenses policy with their contract on appointment.

## VIDEO CONFERENCING

- vi) In person vivas are the preferred norm as they offer a candidate the best opportunity to present their work and present fewer problems than remote vivas.
- vii) Applications to hold vivas by video conferencing are considered exceptional; and should be made using the form in the Appendix to this section. The form will be completed and returned to Registry by the Head of Department as soon as possible and in all cases prior to the thesis being released for assessment by Registry to the examining team.
- viii) Examples of circumstances indicating that the use of video conferencing might be appropriate includes:
- The availability of the examiner ) particularly if based overseas
  - The level of expenses incurred for the examiner to travel to the University
  - The availability of the student
- vix) Requests for candidates to partake in vivas remotely are not normally agreed. Remotely held vivas for candidates can present issues concerned with the integrity of the examination process (for example, the involvement of third parties). Where candidates are based outside of the UK when the examination is due to be held, permission may only be granted for the candidate to partake in the viva remotely where sufficient evidence is provided to the Chair of the University Research Committee as follows:
- Why travel to the University is not possible
  - Confirmation of location and time of viva for all parties involved (taking into account time differences so as not to disadvantage the candidate).
  - Detailed arrangements for the security of examination practices. These will normally includes: the attendance by a third party chair (approved by the University) at the remote location and at the University location with the examining team; recording of the viva; report of the process to Registry by the University based independent chair following the viva.

## APPROVAL AND APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

<b>EXTERNAL EXAMINER FOR PhD STUDENTS</b>	<b>MA, MPHIL OR MSc STUDENT</b> (appointed for an individual thesis)	<b>MA, MPHIL OR MSc STUDENT</b> (appointed to a programme of study)
<p>The Supervisor will discuss possible examiners with the candidate;</p> <p>The Supervisor will submit a Nomination and Approval Form, and a CV for the proposed examiner to the Quality Assurance (QA) Office;</p>	<p>The Supervisor will submit a Nomination and Approval Form, and a CV for the proposed examiner to the Quality Assurance (QA) Office;</p>	<p>The Research Officer will submit a Nomination and Approval Form, and a CV for the proposed examiner to the Quality Assurance (QA) Office;</p>
<p>The QA Office then sends the nomination to the Research Officer, and the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor or a Pro Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Senate, for approval.</p>		

Once the nomination has received approval from the Research Officer and on behalf of Senate, the QA Office notify the Research Officer, Supervisor and Registry Office.

The QA Office will then prepare and send a contract to the examiner.

The Supervisor and the Research Officer submit the 'Notice of Intention to Submit a Thesis for a Higher Degree' form to the Registry Office, including the name of the approved external examiner, and the examination procedure will commence.

## **MAXIMUM LIMITS FOR EXAMINATION OF THESES**

- iv) Examiners appointed to a programme for a four year term are permitted to examine no more than eight theses per year. Examiners appointed to a thesis should not normally be appointed to examine more than two research degree candidates in the same department in any 12 month period, and more than four research degree candidates in the same department in any 36 month period.

## **VIVA VOCE EXAMINATION**

- v) On receipt of the returned contract, the Registry Officer shall forward the thesis and abstract, instructions for Examiners and the External Examiners Report Form to the Examiners. S/he shall request them to fix within a reasonable time afterwards a date on which they may require the candidate to present him/herself for oral examination. An oral examination is mandatory for MPhil and PhD. An oral examination is normally a requirement for the MSc by research; it is not normally a requirement for the MA by research and the LLM by research, though it may be held for these degrees if the examiners require it.
- vi) Internal and external examiners should communicate before the viva to determine between themselves how the viva should be conducted. Examiners have the full confidence of the University and are given a substantial degree of discretion as to how the viva should be conducted. Consideration should be given to using video conferencing for conducting the viva in certain circumstances (see appendix). They are asked, however, to observe the following guidelines:
- a. Candidates are liable to be nervous and examiners should do everything that is possible to put candidates at their ease to give them the best chance of performing well;
  - b. Examiners should not, however, give any indication of likely recommendations at the beginning of the viva. They may take the opportunity to explain that the viva itself is part of the examination process and hence no final recommendation can be determined until after it has been completed;

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESUBMISSIONS**

- vii) At first submission, there are a number of recommendations open to the examiners, which may be summarised as follows:
1. approval for the degree and approval, where applicable, of mark and/or classification
  2. approval for the degree subject to minor modifications to the thesis being carried out to the satisfaction of the Internal Examiner
  3. approval for the degree subject to major modifications to the thesis being carried out to the satisfaction of the Internal Examiner/Both Internal and External Examiner
  4. leave to revise the thesis more broadly and subsequently to resubmit it for the degree. A further oral examination for PhD would normally be held in this case

5. the award of an appropriate lower degree which shall be awarded if the candidate accepts (and provided that the candidate shall have been given the right to appeal)
  6. the award of an appropriate lower degree subject to minor modifications being carried out to the satisfaction of the Internal Examiner, which shall be awarded if the candidate accepts (and provided that the candidate shall have been given the right to appeal)
  7. the award of an appropriate lower degree subject to major modifications being carried out to the satisfaction of the Internal Examiner/Both Internal and External Examiner, which shall be awarded if the candidate accepts (and provided that the candidate shall have been given the right to appeal)
  8. leave to revise the thesis more broadly and subsequently to resubmit it for an appropriate lower degree.
- vii) The revisions required by a resubmission are more substantial than those for 'major modifications', and it is usual for the thesis to then be re-examined by way of a new viva voce.
- viii) Where examiners make a recommendation of a resubmission, candidates are permitted **one resubmission only**, exclusive of any minor or major modifications that the panel may later recommend.
- a) MPhil and PhD candidates who are given leave to resubmit their thesis may present themselves for re-examination (resubmission) on one subsequent occasion **within two years** of the original decision being made known.
  - b) Students on all other programmes, including Masters programmes (MA, and MSc and the LLM by research) may present themselves for re-examination (resubmission) on one subsequent occasion **within one year** of the original decision being made known.
- ix) At resubmission, there are a number of recommendations open to the examiners, which may be summarised as follows:
1. approval for the degree and approval, where applicable, of mark and/or classification
  2. approval for the degree subject to minor modifications to the thesis being carried out to the satisfaction of the Internal Examiner
  3. approval for the degree subject to major modifications to the thesis being carried out to the satisfaction of the Internal Examiner/Both Internal and External Examiner
  4. the award of an appropriate lower degree which shall be awarded if the candidate accepts (and provided that the candidate shall have been given the right to appeal)
  5. the award of an appropriate lower degree subject to minor modifications being carried out to the satisfaction of the Internal Examiner, which shall be awarded if the candidate accepts (and provided that the candidate shall have been given the right to appeal)
  6. the award of an appropriate lower degree subject to major modifications being carried out to the satisfaction of the Internal Examiner/Both Internal and External Examiner, which shall be awarded if the candidate accepts (and provided that the candidate shall have been given the right to appeal)
  7. fail
- x) Recommendations leading to the award of an appropriate lower degree are subject to the candidate's acceptance: see Appeals procedure.
- xi) At the conclusion of the viva, the examiners may inform the candidate of their recommendation (provided that this recommendation is for a pass, revision, or referral). **Examiners should not give any indication of their recommendation if this is likely to be a fail.** Examiners should inform the candidate that further discussion is needed before any recommendation can be made. If examiners decide to give the candidate some indication of their likely recommendation, they should make it clear

that their report is a recommendation only and that the final decision remains with Senate or with the Vice-Chancellor acting on behalf of Senate.

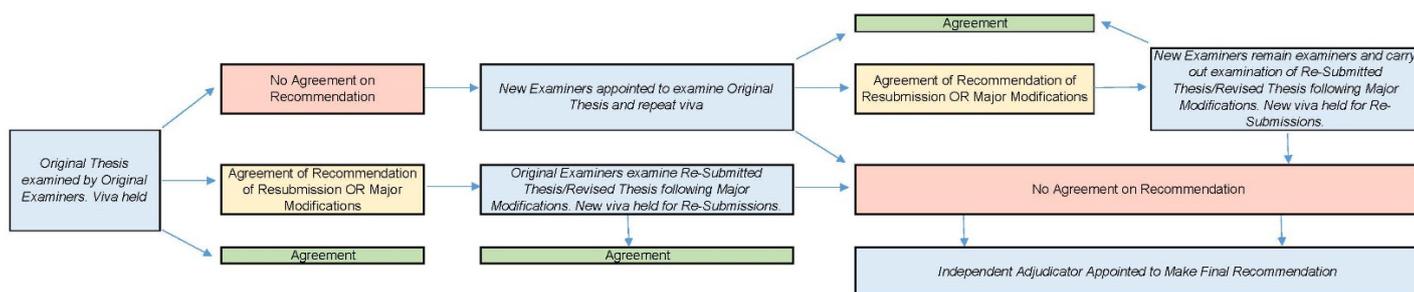
## MINOR AND MAJOR MODIFICATIONS

- xii) Where examiners make a recommendation of major or minor modifications, candidates must satisfy the examiners that the prescribed actions have been taken; the satisfaction of the examiners will be demonstrated by their endorsing of the Certificate of Corrections.
- xiii) Minor modifications are of two types:
  - a) simple corrections (typographical errors, references, etc.), and
  - b) changes of statement or arrangement that do not alter or affect the conclusions of the thesis in any significant manner.
- xiv) If the examiners require such amendments, they will make the candidate aware of them directly on the occasion of the oral examination, usually by handing him/her a list of corrections or indicative corrections, and/or by, in the report, indicating the nature and extent of the corrections, and/or in a statement they should prepare for the candidate's guidance.
  - a) Minor modifications should normally be made **within three months**, unless stipulated by the examining team. Submission beyond this requires approval from the University Research Committee Chair.
- xvi) Where major modifications are required, the examiners are required to provide clear and detailed feedback to the candidate, via their report and any additional material that seems advisable, so that the nature of the re-workings required to bring the thesis up to the standard of the degree are clear both to the candidate and to the candidate's supervisor(s).
  - a) Major modifications should normally take a **minimum of six months**, unless stipulated by the examining team. Submission before six months has elapsed, or after twelve months has elapsed, requires approval from the University Research Committee Chair.
- xvii) The Internal Examiner should indicate to the Registry Officer when they have been satisfactorily completed by checking the edited thesis and signing the recommendations form. This process ensures that the copy of the thesis deposited in the library is professionally presented for the benefit of future researchers who may wish to consult it.

## FAILURE TO REACH CONSENSUS

- xviii) In cases where the original examiners are unable to reach agreement on the recommendation on the outcome of the examination the following shall apply:
  - a) **If the submission is the first submission**, the candidate shall be re-examined by new examiners. The new examiners shall be appointed in accordance with the above regulations, except where two external examiners may be appointed if no suitable internal examiner is available. None of the new examiners shall have been an original examiner.
  - b) The new examiners shall conduct a fresh examination of the original thesis. They shall not see the reports of the original examiners, and no candidate shall have the right to amend a thesis in any way before re-examination by the new examiners.
  - c) If the new examiners are unable to reach agreement on re-examination of the original thesis an appropriately-qualified adjudicator, who may or may not be a member of staff of the University, should be appointed by the Chairman of the Research Committee (see f, below).

- d) If the new examiners of the original thesis reach agreement that the thesis undergo major modifications or be resubmitted, they remain the examiners of the resubmitted/revised thesis. If the new examiners are then unable to reach agreement following examination of the resubmitted/revised thesis an appropriately-qualified adjudicator, who may or may not be a member of staff of the University, should be appointed by the Chairman of the Research Committee (see f, below).
- e) **If the submission is a resubmission:** If the original examiners are unable to reach agreement following resubmission of, or major modifications on the thesis, an appropriately-qualified adjudicator, who may or may not be a member of staff of the University, should be appointed by the Chairman of the Research Committee.
- f) The adjudicator should make a recommendation based on the thesis and the reports of the original and of the new examiners. The adjudicator should not have been the chairperson of the oral examinations. They should not normally conduct an oral examination.



## CONFIRMATION OF AWARD

- xix) Examiners' recommendation shall be communicated to the Registry Officer, and thereafter shall be reported to Senate (Examination Senate). The following internal process will apply:
- When the Examiners' Report recommends the award of the degree without conditions, the Registry Officer is to send the Examiners' Report for checking and signing off to the Chairman of the Research Committee, and then to the Vice-Chancellor, or the Vice-Chancellor's representative, for Chairman's action to be reported to Senate (Examination Senate).
  - When the Examiners' Report recommends the award of the degree subject to minor modifications to the thesis, then the Registry Officer will inform the Internal Examiner. The Internal Examiner will certify to the Registry Officer that the required changes have been made. Then the Registry Officer is to send the examiners' report for checking and signing off to the Chairman of the Research Committee, and then to the Vice-Chancellor, or the Vice-Chancellor's representative, for Chairman's action to be reported to Senate (Examination Senate).
  - When the Examiners' Report recommends resubmission, the Registry Officer is to inform the Chairman of the Research Committee.
  - When the Examiners' Report recommends rejection or the award of a lower degree, the Registry Officer is to inform the Chairman of the Research Committee. Thereafter, if the candidate accepts the lower degree, the Registry Officer is to send the examiners' report for checking and signing off to the Chairman of the Research Committee, and then to the Vice-Chancellor, or the Vice-Chancellor's representative, for Chairman's action to be reported to Senate (Examination Senate).
- xx) After due internal process, and as soon as possible thereafter, the Registry Officer will inform the candidate of the final result.