



## 6. Examination and Vivas

### 6.1 Examining Team

- 6.1.1 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 shall normally be appointed for the duration of the examining process, including any resubmissions. The First Supervisor is required to be available to provide any information requested by the Examiners and may, if they wish, volunteer information in advance of the viva (oral examination). The Supervisor(s) will not normally be present at the viva. At the discretion of the Examiners and the student, however, the Supervisor(s) may be present at the viva but only in a non-participatory role.
- 6.1.2 Alternatively and exceptionally, there shall be two External Examiners. Both these Examiners shall be approved by the procedures below. This situation will occur in the following circumstances: (a) Where, aside from the Supervisor(s), there is no appropriate member of the academic staff to act as Internal Examiner. (The Supervisor(s) 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 viva in a non-participatory role. This member of staff will normally be the Research Officer. (b) Where the candidate is a current or former member of academic staff of the University. This does not apply to administrative staff or research students gaining teaching experience.
- 6.1.3 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. Where an Examiner is based overseas, or where deemed appropriate, any viva may be held online.

### 6.2 Approval of External Examiners

- 6.2.1 Examiners can either be appointed to an individual thesis, or to a programme as a whole. The First Supervisor is responsible for identifying appropriate Examiners.
- 6.2.2 To appoint an Examiner to a programme for a term of up to four years, the Programme Director should complete Appendix 6. External Examiner Approval Form (by Programme) and send to the Research Administrator along with a copy of the proposed Examiner's CV. The form will then be passed for approval to the Research Officer and Senate.
- 6.2.3 If the External Examiner is not appointed to the programme, the First Supervisor should complete Appendix 7. External Examiner Approval Form (by Thesis) and send to the Research Administrator along with a copy of the proposed Examiner's CV. The form will then be passed for approval to the Research Officer and Senate.



- 6.2.4 Once the Examiner is approved; the Research Administrator will email them a contract. Once returned, Human Resources will send the Examiner a link to process a right to work check. After this has cleared the appointment process will be complete and the thesis can be released to the examination team.
- 6.2.5 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 School in any 12-month period and more than four research degree candidates in the same School in any 36-month period.
- 6.2.6 Examiners should hold a doctorate and be highly experienced in the area of the Candidate's thesis. They should additionally have suitable experience of thesis examination at Master's and above level.
- 6.2.7 In examinations for a Doctor of Medicine by Research, the examining team should have previous experience of examining a Doctor of Medicine Candidate and one examiner must be a qualified practitioner.
- 6.2.8 It is preferable of the External Examiner has experience of either supervision or examining a PhD within a UK institution.

### 6.3 The Examination Process

- 6.3.1 The Research Administrator will send the Examiners Appendix 8. Report on Thesis Submitted for a Research Degree together with the student's thesis. Examination is expected to be completed within eight weeks. If it becomes apparent at any stage during the examination process that this timeframe is not achievable, the examination team should notify the Research Administrator immediately so any delays can be communicated to the student.
- 6.3.2 In examinations not requiring a viva, each Examiner should write an individual report, then confer to agree a joint report and recommendation.
- 6.3.3 In examinations requiring a viva, each Examiner should make an individual report, then confer to discuss an approach to the viva before compiling a joint report and recommendation after the viva has taken place. Exceptionally, Examiners may reject a thesis and recommend resubmission without holding a viva.

### 6.4 Vivas

- 6.4.1 A viva (oral examination) is mandatory for MPhil, PhD, DProf and EdD students. A viva is normally a requirement for the MSc; it is not normally a requirement for the MA and the LLM, though it may be held for these degrees if the Examiners deem necessary. The viva will be organised by the Research Administrator.
- 6.4.2 Vivas will normally be conducted online. In exceptional cases where the viva is to be held in person, this must be discussed in advance with the Research Officer and approved by the Head of Academic Services. The agreed format of the viva (online or in person) should be confirmed by the First Supervisor and Research Officer prior to submission and recorded on the Intention to Submit Form



- 6.4.3 A Viva meeting for PhD, DProf and EdD is typically 2 hours in length. In rare circumstances it may be more. A viva meeting for MPhil, MSc, MA and LLM is typically 1 hour in length.
- 6.4.4 The Research Administrator will appoint neutral Chair familiar with Vivas to oversee the viva process. The Chair is not expected to take an active role in the viva, merely act as an independent adjudicator of the proceedings.
- 6.4.5 Examiners have the full confidence of the University and are granted substantial discretion regarding the conduct of the viva. The Chair will communicate with the Examiners beforehand to facilitate a discussion on how the viva will be conducted. Examiners are asked to observe the following guidelines:
- (a) The student is liable to be nervous and Examiners should do everything possible to put them at ease to give them the best chance of performing well
  - (b) Examiners should not give any indication of likely recommendations at the beginning of the viva. They may take the opportunity to explain that the viva is part of the examination process and hence no final recommendation can be determined until after it has been completed
- 6.4.6 The viva must take place within three months of the examiners receiving the thesis. Candidates are required to attend on the agreed date.



## 6.5 Recommendations and Resubmissions

6.5.1 At first submission, there are a number of recommendations open to the Examiners.

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 viva 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. Fail

## 6.5.2 Resubmissions

6.5.2.1 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.

6.5.2.2 MPhil and PhD candidates who are given leave to resubmit their thesis may present themselves for re-examination on one subsequent occasion within two years of the original decision being communicated to them. It is usual for the thesis to be re-examined by way of a new viva.

6.5.2.3 Students on Master's programmes (MA, 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. For the MSc, it is usual for the thesis to be re-examined by way of a new viva.

6.5.2.4 At resubmission, there are a number of recommendations open to the Examiners.



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

### 6.5.3 Minor Modifications

6.5.3.1 Where Examiners make a recommendation of 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 Modifications.

Minor modifications are of two types:

- simple corrections (typographical errors, references, etc.)
- changes of statement or arrangement that do not alter or affect the conclusions of the thesis in any significant manner.

6.5.3.2 The Examiners should either note the modifications within their report or provide an annotated copy of the thesis.

6.5.3.3 Minor modifications should be made within three months. Submission beyond this point requires approval from the Chair of the University Research Committee

The Examiners should complete their review of the minor modifications and deliver their recommendation on the outcome within 4 weeks after receiving the modifications.

### 6.5.4 Major Modifications

6.5.4.1 Where Examiners make a recommendation of major 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 Modifications.



6.5.4.2 Where major modifications are required, the Examiners are required to provide clear and detailed feedback to the student, 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 student and to the student's Supervisor(s).

6.5.4.3 Major modifications should normally take a minimum of six months and maximum of one year. Submission before six months has elapsed, or after twelve months has elapsed, requires approval from the Chair of the University Research Committee.

6.5.4.4 Examiners should complete their review of the Major Modification and deliver their recommendation on the outcome within 6 weeks of receiving the modifications.

### 6.5.5 Failure to Reach Consensus

In cases where the original Examiners are unable to reach agreement on the recommendation on the outcome of the examination the following shall apply:

#### 6.5.5.1 First Submission

The student shall be re-examined by new Examiners. The new Examiners shall be appointed in accordance with Section 6.1 Examining Team.

The new Examiners shall conduct a fresh examination of the original thesis. They shall not see the reports of the original Examiners and no student shall have the right to amend a thesis in any way before re-examination by the new Examiners.

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 Chair of the University Research Committee.

If the new Examiners of the original thesis reach agreement that the thesis undergo 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 Chair of the University Research Committee.

The adjudicator should make a recommendation based on the thesis and the reports of the original and new Examiners. The adjudicator should not have been the Chair of the viva and should not normally conduct a viva.



#### 6.5.5.2 Resubmission/ Major Modifications

If the original Examiners are unable to reach agreement following resubmission of, or major modifications to the thesis, an appropriately qualified adjudicator, who may or may not be a member of staff of the University, should be appointed by the Chair of the University Research Committee.

The adjudicator should make a recommendation based on the thesis and the reports of the Examiners. The adjudicator should not have been the Chair of the viva and should not normally conduct a viva.

#### 6.6 Confirmation of Award

The Examiners' recommendation shall be communicated to the Research Administrator.

The following internal process will apply:

- 6.6.1 When the Examiners' Report recommends the award of the degree without conditions, the Research Administrator is to send the Examiners' Report for signing off to the Vice- Chancellor, or the Vice-Chancellor's representative, for Chair's action to be reported to Senate.
- 6.6.2 When the Examiners' Report recommends the award of the degree subject to minor or major modifications to the thesis, the Research Administrator will inform the student and their Supervisor(s) of the recommendation and provide the Examiners' Report for reference in making the modifications. When the modifications have been completed, the revised thesis should be emailed to the Research Administrator to return to the examining team. This same process will be followed in the instance of resubmission being recommended.
- 6.6.3 When the Examiners' Report recommends rejection or the award of a lower degree, the Research Administrator is to send the Examiners' Report for signing off to the Vice- Chancellor, or the Vice-Chancellor's representative, for Chair's action to be reported to Senate. The student has leave to appeal this decision before the lower award is confirmed.
- 6.6.4 After due internal process and as soon as possible thereafter, the Research Administrator will inform the student of the final result. In the instance of rejection or the award of a lower degree, the student has leave to appeal this decision.
- 6.6.5 Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards

In some cases, a Candidate may be considered for award by aegrotat at where they are prevented by illness or other evidenced circumstance from completing the final elements of their award. A Candidate may also be considered for posthumous award upon evidence of the thesis being likely to have been successful upon viva examination. In both cases, the First Supervisor must liaise with the supervisory team to consider whether there is a sufficient body of work to represent the thesis.



The supervisory team must be satisfied that there be suitable content to warrant an academic judgement and produce a statement of written support. If the Candidate is not able to make the application themselves, the First Supervisor will prepare the work without addition or enhancement.