

## Guidance Notes for Examiners

### 1. Introduction

These Guidance Notes are issued by the Graduate School Office and are intended to assist examiners and supervisors in their preparation for and conduct of examinations of candidates for the degrees of Master of Research, Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy. They are based on the Research Degree Regulations and Procedures of De Montfort University.

### 2. Responsibilities in Relation to the Examination Process

The respective responsibilities of the Supervisor, the Examiners and the Graduate School Office are as follows:

#### 2.1 The First Supervisor (or Second where necessary)

- a) to complete the 'Approval of Examiners' form at least three months prior to the submission of thesis and submit the form together with a copy of the External Examiner's CV (if not already on file) to the Graduate School Office for approval by the Faculty Head of Research Students and the Director of the Graduate School. Ensure evidence is provided that confirms the External Examiner is eligible to work in the United Kingdom to the Graduate School Office. To inform the examination team of their nomination and of the subsequent approval;
- b) to make the administrative arrangements for the oral examination, this involves consulting the student and the external and internal examiners as appropriate, notifying all concerned of the date, time and place of the oral examination and attending the examination to answer questions, unless the student has expressed a wish to the contrary;
- c) to complete Section B of the 'master copy' of the Examiners' Report Form and to pass this to the internal examiner immediately before the examination. The report must provide contextual information on the student's work, e.g. mentioning any technical problems experienced during the research or any personal difficulties faced by the student;
- d) following an examination where examiners require minor corrections or major revisions to be made to the thesis, to obtain details of these from the examiners and to pass them onto the student. The typed 'Statement of Thesis Deficiencies' or the 'Statement of Reasons for Failure' should be done as soon as possible after the examination is concluded and **definitely within 20 days of the examination.**

## 2.2 All Internal and External Examiners

- a) to read the thesis as soon as possible after they receive it and to make themselves available to conduct the oral examination as soon as practicable. The University aims to ensure that all candidates are examined as soon as possible and no later than ten weeks after submission of their thesis. This applies to re-submissions also;
- b) to prepare written notes on the thesis and to **complete the independent pre-viva form and submit to the Graduate School Office 5 days prior to the date of the oral examination.** These notes and pre-viva forms should form the basis of discussion with other examiners immediately prior to the oral examination;
- c) jointly with the other examiners, to complete Section C of the Examiners' Report Form and, where applicable, the typed 'Statement of Thesis Deficiencies' or the 'Statement of Reasons for Failure'. This should be done as soon as possible after the examination is concluded and **definitely within 20 days of the examination.**

## 2.3 The Experienced Internal Examiner

- a) to ensure that the completed Examiners' Report Form is passed to the Graduate School Office as soon as possible and within three working days of the oral examination at the latest. Where appropriate the 'Statement of Thesis Deficiencies' or the 'Statement of Reasons for Failure' should be passed to the Graduate School Office within 20 working days of the oral examination;
- b) if the examiners have decided that minor corrections are required, to consider these (in association with any other internal examiners) once submitted and to notify the Graduate School Office without delay whether or not they are satisfactory. The Graduate School Office will provide a form for such notification.

Until such time as the award is conferred upon the student, the internal examiner is required to retain one copy of the thesis collected at the viva voce.

## 2.4 The Graduate School Office

- a) to give formal notification to all examiners of their appointment by the Faculty Head of Research Students and the Director of the Graduate School;
- b) to dispatch copies of the thesis to all examiners as soon as it has been formally submitted by the student and examination arrangements have been approved, together with these guidance notes;

- c) to dispatch a copy of the thesis to the Supervisor, along with these Guidance Notes including the 'master copy' of the Examiners' Report Form, with Section A completed and request that he or she makes the administrative arrangements for the oral examination;
- d) to notify the candidate of the result of his/her candidature upon receipt of the completed Examiners' Report Form.

### **3. The Oral Examination**

**3.1** All students are examined orally in English on the programme of work and on the field of study. However, in cases of sickness, disability or comparable valid cause, an alternative form of examination may be approved (see Regulation 17.5). Such cases require the approval of the Director of the Graduate School on behalf of the Research Degrees Committee on the recommendation of the examiners.

**3.2** The purposes of an oral examination are:

- a) to establish that the submitted work is that of the student;
- b) to give the student the opportunity to defend the direction, structure and conclusions of the work. This involves the examiners making constructive criticisms of both the research and the thesis and giving the student the opportunity to respond;
- c) to explore with the student any particular issues in the thesis or submitted work which require clarification or development. This is particularly important in cases where the examiners feel that their final decision may be other than an unconditional pass;
- d) to test the student's personal eligibility for the award of the degree by exploring his/her understanding of issues arising in and from the research and of the relationship of the research to the wider field of knowledge. In the case of a PhD, the student should be able to demonstrate his/her understanding of the nature and extent of the original contribution to knowledge entailed in the research;
- e) the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and the degree of MA/MSc by Research is awarded to recognise the successful completion under such conditions as are prescribed by Regulations, of a supervised programme of individual research, the results of which have been satisfactorily embodied in a thesis together, under certain circumstances, with another form of presentation as defined in Regulation 1.8 and which:
  - demonstrate an understanding of research methods appropriate to the field of study; and