

First Project Review form (and collaborating establishment, if any) then the electronic thesis shall, immediately on the completion of the programme of work, be held confidentially within the institution. After this period the thesis will be kept in the Institutional Repository in the University Library.

16. Selection and Appointment of Examiners and Examiners' Duties

- 16.1** A student for a research degree shall be examined by the external and internal examiners appointed for that purpose by the Faculty Head of Research Students or equivalent role and the Director of the Graduate School on the nomination of the Supervision team. There shall be at least one external examiner and one internal examiner. An external examiner shall be external to and independent of the University and of a Collaborating Establishment. An internal examiner shall be a member of the staff of the University, which can in exceptional cases include members with emeritus status.

Any one external examiner should not be appointed with such frequency that familiarity with the University's research environment could influence, or appear to influence, their objectivity in the examination process. As a guide, an external examiner should not be appointed more than three times within any five year period.

- 16.2** The University prohibits direct teaching, examining or supervising of one family member by another. Whilst there is an expectation that the member of staff will ensure the University is aware of any such cases, students also have a responsibility to inform their Faculty Head of Research Students or equivalent role or Faculty Associate Dean if this situation arises.

If a student is aware that any member of their family is, or becomes, a member of Professional Services (i.e. non-academic) staff they must inform the Director of Student and Academic Services who will ensure appropriate measures are in place to protect confidentiality and integrity of data.

- 16.3** The examination arrangements form on myResearch should be submitted for consideration by the Faculty Head of Research Students or equivalent role and the Director of the Graduate School at least three months prior to submission of the thesis.

Examinations which do not take place within eighteen months of the date approved by the Faculty Head of Research Students or equivalent role and the Director of the Graduate School will require, either,

- a) confirmation by the First Supervisor (or nominee) that the examination team remain valid, or
- b) the submission of a revised examination arrangements form.

16.4 A person who is appointed as a student's supervisor cannot be appointed as an examiner of that student.

16.5 If the student is a member of academic staff of the University at the time of examination, it is a requirement that two External Examiners are nominated as well as an Internal Examiner. This shall apply to all staff on permanent academic or professional services contracts, whether full time or part time. Staff on fixed term or hourly paid contracts may be exempt from this requirement but, in such cases, where the staff member is working in a close collegial relationship with permanent staff (for example as a research and/or teaching fellow) the requirement for two examiners will normally be applied, subject to consideration by the Faculty Head of Research Students or equivalent role and the Director of Graduate School. If, under exceptional circumstances such as illness or emergencies, the second external examiner cannot attend the oral examination, an Independent Chair appointed by the Director of the Graduate School (or nominee) shall be permitted to attend. The academic judgement of the absent second external examiner will be sought before the examiners' recommendation is submitted.

Where the student is registered for a PhD by Published Works two external examiners and at least one internal examiner shall be appointed. This regulation shall apply to all students regardless of his/her status at the time of examination.

Research Students who engage in not more than 6 hours per week of teaching during their research studies do not fall within the scope of this regulation.

a) If the student is funded through the Midlands 3 Cities Doctoral Training Partnership, an Independent Chair shall be appointed from the Doctoral Training Partnership list of Independent Chairs.

16.6 In appointing examiners the Faculty Head of Research Students or equivalent role and the Director of the Graduate School must ensure that the following criteria are met:

- a) the examining team as a whole must have:
 - i) substantial experience in examining research degree students at the level of the degree in question; and
 - ii) substantial knowledge of current research relating to the subject area of the submission.
- b) for PhD examinations, at least one examiner shall normally possess a PhD or equivalent qualification

In order to meet these criteria, additional examiners may be appointed as necessary.

- c) No person who is registered as a student for a research degree at this University or elsewhere may act as an examiner.
- d) All examiners shall be independent of the student and the student's work. No examiner shall have provided any formal guidance in respect of the context or structure of the thesis, thesis project or other submitted work, see also Regulation 16.6 below. External examiners must evidence their eligibility to work in the United Kingdom to the Graduate School.
- e) Former members of the staff of the University are not normally eligible for appointment as external examiners until three years after the termination of his/her employment.

16.7 Nomination of Internal Examiners

- a) Subject expertise is the paramount consideration in the appointment of examiners for research degrees, and proposals for examination arrangements will normally identify only one internal examiner. Where an appropriate internal examiner is identified, the following requirements apply. Either:
 - i) The internal examiner must have previously examined or observed a minimum of two research degrees, at least at the level to be examined, and 'self- certified' their experience with the Graduate School, or
 - ii) If the internal examiner does not yet meet the above experience requirement an independent chair will be appointed to convene the examination.

In all cases, internal examiners must have obtained the Certificate in Research Supervision. Where a second internal examiner is required under 16.7(c) below they each must also have obtained the Certificate in Research Supervision.

- b) An 'experienced internal examiner' is a person whose experience is sufficient to give themselves, his/her peer group and the University confidence that they can play a full and balanced role as the sole or lead internal examiner for a research degree. Administrative aspects of this role are as laid out in the 'Guidance Notes for Examiners'. Further, the experienced internal examiner is expected to exercise judgement about the conduct of the examination process such that the outcome is commensurate with the performance. S/he is also responsible for ensuring that standards are appropriately maintained. In other words it is a responsibility of the experienced internal examiner to ensure that the expectations of fellow examiners are neither excessive nor inadequate.

A 'new internal examiner' is one who is gaining experience in the processes but has not yet reached the standing of experienced internal examiner. Normally, after observing or participating in two examinations satisfactorily it is likely that a new internal examiner shall be eligible to become an experienced

internal examiner. The transfer test shall be by self-certification against a checklist, the Director of the Graduate School (or nominee) shall review and countersign, except in rare cases where further experience is deemed to be desirable to protect the students' interest.

- c) When **two** Internal Examiners are proposed, the experience of one must be certified (See Regulation 16.6(a) above) and additionally must, for PhD examinations, have examined at least two at the level of the award. A case must be made giving the reasons for the nomination of a second Internal Examiner, which normally would be relevant where two internal examiners are required to interrogate different aspects of a multidisciplinary thesis.
- d) If a student is in agreement, a member of staff inexperienced in examining may attend their viva as an observer in order to meet a staff development need. The student's agreement to this will be confirmed by supervisors prior to the submission of the examination arrangements form and recorded by the Graduate School.

The internal observer is present solely to gain experience and will not submit any post-viva report. A glue-bound thesis is not required for the observer, only the examiners. The Graduate School will email a copy of the thesis (at the request of the first supervisor) to the observer prior to the date of viva. The observer will not communicate a view on the thesis to the student or to the examiners at any point prior to the final corrected or revised submission and the observer will not communicate any of the deliberations of the examiners to the student at any time. Where two internal examiners are already appointed, an observer may not be included in the examination process.

The 'observing' member of staff will not act as a full member of the examining team but will meet with the internal examiner at the point of completing the pre-viva report in order to understand the purpose the report and the types of issues that would normally be recorded on it. The observer will attend the examiners' pre-viva meeting in order to witness the process by which examination questions are formed, and will then be present for the whole of the viva examination as well as the examiners' discussion of the outcome.

Since the role is that of an observer not formally part of the examination team, during the viva the observer should sit outside of the student's line of vision so that the student is not distracted in any way, and the observer must not take any active part in the questioning. The observer may take procedural notes but should not take notes relating to the content of the student's work or to the outcome of the examination. At the conclusion of the viva the observer will remain to witness the discussion between examiners as to their recommended outcome but must not play any part in this discussion. At the conclusion of the examination process the observer may then discuss the whole process with the examiners.

- e) A Chair appointed at a research degree examination should be an experienced academic, who:
- Has met the University's requirements for an experienced internal examiner,
 - In the opinion of the Faculty Head of Research Students or equivalent role and the Director of the Graduate School, has sufficient background and experience in the administration and examination of research to deal confidently with any queries or issues arising during the examination process,
 - Has not had a role in the candidate's supervision or acted as their formal review assessor.

The Chair must ensure they have familiarity with:

- The University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees,
- The University's regulations concerning research integrity, and
- The University's regulations and processes in respect of plagiarism.

The Chair's primary roles are to:

- Ensure that the conduct of the examination is academically rigorous, fair and consistent with the University's procedures and guidance,
- Ensure that adequate opportunity is given to the candidate to defend their thesis and to respond to examiners' questions,
- Provide examiners and/or the candidate with advice on the research degree regulations should queries arise in the examination process,
- Confirm with examiners that Turnitin reports have been fully evaluated, and
- Support a new internal examiner in carrying out their duties as described in regulation 16.9 (including review of the Turnitin report).

The Chair is not expected to read the thesis, and will not take an active role in examining the student on their submission nor will they have a role in determining the outcome of the examination. The Chair should be present for the pre-examination discussion between examiners, introduce all those present at the start of the examination and remain for the entire viva voce, the examiners' post-viva deliberations and the subsequent unofficial relay of the outcome to the student. Where the outcome of the examination requires the candidate to undergo a second oral examination, the independent Chair should be in attendance on the same terms as above. Should the Chair no longer be employed by the University, another suitably qualified member of the academic staff will be appointed in their place.

Additional responsibilities of the Chair:

- To clarify for the student the meanings and implications of the examiners' decision on the outcome of the examination.
- Where there is disagreement between examiners about the outcome of the examination or the nature of any revisions or corrections required, the Chair will assist examiners in reaching an agreed position. In such cases

the Chair's role is restricted to providing examiners with advice on their options, and has no casting vote. Where an agreed position cannot be reached with the Chair's assistance, regulation 19 shall apply.

- To be available to comment or provide relevant evidence in relation to a student's appeal against an examination outcome.

16.8 The duties of examiners shall be as follows:

- a) all examiners are required to complete an independent pre-viva form and submit to the Graduate School **at least five days prior to the date of examination**;
- b) the examiners are required to hold an oral examination known as the viva voce, except in the most exceptional of circumstances, see Regulation 17.1;
- c) the examiners are required to submit an Examiners Report form and recommendation on the appropriate form, unless they are in disagreement in which case separate report forms must be submitted (see Regulation 19 below). Also to assess material subsequent to the viva voce where appropriate;
- d) examiners are expected to complete the examining process within ten weeks of receiving the thesis. This applies to re-submissions also. If this cannot be achieved, a report outlining reasons for delay must be submitted to the Graduate School.

16.9 The internal examiner has particular responsibilities to ensure that:

- i) Those present at the viva understand the university's examination procedures, and the conduct expected during the viva examination itself.
- ii) An agreed recommended outcome of the examination process is stipulated (as in regulation 18.2), paying particular attention to noting the examiners' agreement as to whether a second viva examination is required.
- iii) A coherent joint summative report on the thesis is completed following the examination. **This should include an overall evaluation of the thesis with the examiners' view of its strengths and weaknesses.** Where major revisions are required the report should relate clearly to the separate statement of thesis deficiencies which should be completed via myResearch. The statement of thesis deficiencies should be as unambiguous as possible with sufficient detail to allow the student to respond to the examiners' requirements. These requirements may be verbally summarised for the candidate following the viva, but should not be regarded as official notification of the result of the examination (see regulation 17.9).

Where experienced and inexperienced internal examiners are working together it is responsibility of the experienced internal examiner to ensure the coherence of the report. Note that specific processes apply in situations where there is

disagreement amongst examiners as to the outcome of examination (See section 8 of the Guidance Notes for Examiners, and regulation 19).

- iv) The Turnitin similarity report on the thesis is evaluated in consultation with the external examiner(s) and any additional internal examiner. This should be completed as soon as practicable after receipt of the thesis. Instructions for accessing the Turnitin report and its interpretation are provided by the Graduate School. A short report giving the rationale for approval or non-approval of the thesis should then be recorded in myResearch. If, in the view of the internal examiner, the Turnitin report is indicative of bad academic practice it should be referred to the Faculty Head of Research Students or equivalent role and the Director of the Graduate School before the external examiner is contacted. The Faculty Head of Research Students or equivalent role will then follow the relevant steps in the University's General Regulations affecting Students as they apply to research degree candidates (see also section 21).

17. Oral Examination (Viva Voce)

17.1 All students are examined orally in English, (except when submitting under Regulation 11.2), 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. Such cases require the approval of the Director of the Graduate School on the recommendation of the examiners and/or supervision team.

17.2 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 could 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 student, 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.

17.3 If one or more of the examiners contact the Graduate School to say that, in their opinion, the standard of the thesis is such that the oral examination should be