

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. 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
 - demonstrate critical investigation and evaluation of the topic of research
- 3.3** One of the student's supervisors who is not an examiner shall normally attend the oral examination, unless the student has expressed a wish to the contrary. The purpose of this is to assist the student and examiners with matters of clarification only and not to participate in the viva. Attendance by a supervisor is not compulsory but if the student feels that this would be helpful, the University then expects the supervisor to be at the oral examination.

- 3.4** Oral examinations must normally take place with the student and the examination team present at the same location.
- 3.5** The recording of the proceedings of the oral examination, by any method, is normally prohibited.
- 3.6** There will normally be at least two examiners present - one external examiner who is independent of De Montfort University and one internal examiner.
- 3.7** The oral examination should normally last between two and three hours. The pattern for each particular oral is for the examiners to determine; but in most cases the examiners will wish to focus on a detailed consideration of the research, its methodology and its findings. In some cases, however, the examiners may wish to focus on a discussion of broader aspects of the research process or findings, or the implications for policy/research, or publication possibilities. For this, the student could be invited to highlight aspects or issues that appear most important or interesting.
- 3.8** The intention is that oral examinations should be constructive and stimulating for all participants. The students should expect to be challenged on their ideas, but should be assured that the experience is intended to be helpful and positive. In preparation, students are advised to re-familiarise themselves with their thesis, make their own assessment of its strengths and weaknesses, and try to anticipate issues that are likely to be raised. The student must bring a copy of the his/her thesis with them to the oral examination.

No communication shall be made with a student for the award of a distinction of the University which purports to be, or might reasonably be taken to be, official notification of the results of the candidature, except by the Graduate School Office on behalf of the Director of Student and Academic Services.