



EXAMINATION OF RESEARCH DEGREES

GUIDANCE NOTES for MPhil and doctoral degrees

Internal Examiners

The internal examiner should normally be a member of staff from either the same department or an area cognate to the student's field of research. It is possible that the internal examiner will not be an expert in the precise field of research but will be acquainted with the broad area within which it falls. In addition, the internal examiner should normally hold a degree at least equivalent to that for which the student is being examined, and should be experienced in research, including having published. The student's supervisor should not normally act as the internal examiner. If the supervisor *is* nominated, then an additional examiner (internal or external) would need to be appointed as well.

External Examiners

The external examiner will normally be an experienced member of another university qualified (i) to assess the thesis within its own field and (ii) to compare its quality with work of higher degree standard at other British universities.

The external examiner(s) should normally:

- be competent in the area of work being examined
- be experienced in research, including having published

all participants, this should be organised as soon as possible after examiners have been appointed. Vivas should normally be held at Lancaster. Exceptions to this, including the use of video conferencing, will need the approval of the body or officer with delegated authority from Senate.

The Student

The student should thoroughly review the thesis plus background research, experiments, analyses, etc. If possible and available, the student should first take part in a 'mock examination' organised by the supervisor in order to familiarise themselves with the process and likely content. Any queries the student has regarding the viva should be directed to their supervisor; there should be no contact between the student and the examiners.

The Supervisor

The supervisor should assist the student in preparing for the viva, including, if possible, holding a mock viva. The supervisor is also responsible for acting as a liaison between the examiners and the student.

The Examiners

Examiners need to read the thesis and complete an initial independent report on it. Report forms are provided by the Student Registry. The initial report should be sent to the Student Registry at least one week before the viva. After the viva, the viva voce report form should be completed with details of the viva and the recommended outcome and sent to the Student Registry as soon as possible afterwards (normally within five working days of the viva).

The Student Registry

The Student Registry is responsible for sending out copies of the thesis to the examiners, along with the report forms, guidelines, and fees and expenses claim forms. When completed, report and expenses claim forms should be sent back directly to the Registry.

6. THE ORAL EXAMINATION (VIVA VOCE)

Attending the viva will be the student, the internal and external examiners and possibly, with the approval of the examiners, the supervisor (who may be present but may not take an active part in the examination). In addition, all vivas will either have an independent chair or will be recorded.

Information on the conduct of the viva is given in the *Framework for the Research Degree Viva*, which is provided as Appendix 4 to the [Postgraduate Research Regulations](#). Appendix 5 of the regulations provides guidance on the conduct of the viva by video-conferencing.

The guidance set out in the *Framework* is designed to protect the interests of all participants in the process, for any research degree examination leading to a Lancaster award (even when a viva voce is

- (b) When an independent Chair has not been nominated, the internal examiner acts as the convenor of the examination, introducing the external examiner to the student and explaining the procedures of the examination.
- (c) Students should be told at the beginning of their viva that no information about outcomes will be provided until the end of the examination (viva), and that no conclusions should be drawn from this.

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The examination outcomes for the awards are stipulated in the [Postgraduate Research Regulations](#) (see section PR 2.9 for doctoral degrees and section PR 3.8 for the MPhil degree).

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have been carried out satisfactorily.

Once the examiner(s) receives the corrected thesis, the changes should be checked carefully and, if satisfactory, the examiner(s) should confirm to the Student Registry that the amendments have been made as required. Informally the examiner(s) should let the supervisor know when the changes have been confirmed. When checking minor amendments, the examiner(s) should respond within one month of receiving the revised thesis; when checking major amendments, the examiner(s) should respond w

Education). If this decision confirms the recommendation that no degree should be awarded, the student may appeal under the Academic Appeals procedures (see below).

Academic malpractice in research degree submissions

In the event that the examiners find evidence during the preliminary assessment of the thesis submitted for examination of a breach of the University regulations on academic malpractice, the *viva voce* examination should be postponed and the examiners should report their findings to the Deputy Head of Student Registry. In the event that the examiners find evidence during the *viva voce* examination of a breach of the University regulations on academic malpractice, the examiners should not make an award but should instead report on their findings to the Deputy Head of the Student Registry. Such a report should set out the evidence that academic malpractice has taken place and should normally include a recommendation for outright failure with no opportunity for

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