

# **Examination of Doctoral Degrees Policy**

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**Research Degrees and Researcher Development  
Directorate of Research and Business Engagement**

## **CONTENTS**

### **PART ONE: GENERAL INFORMATION**

1.	Introduction	5
2.	The examination process	6
3.	The oral examination requirement	8
4.	Purposes of the oral examination	8
5.	Criteria for awarding doctoral degrees	9
6.	Examining a Journal Format thesis	10

### **PART TWO: SETTING UP THE ORAL EXAMINATION**

7.	Disability support	10
8.	The examining committee	10
9.	External examiners' fees and expenses	11
10.	Timeframe for organising and holding the oral examination	11
11.	Practical arrangements for the oral examination	12
12.	Attendance of the supervisor, other academic staff and other students at the oral examination	12

### **PART THREE: PROCEDURES PRIOR TO THE ORAL EXAMINATION**

13.	Thesis submission	13
14.	The <i>Pre-Oral Examination Report Form</i>	15
15.	The pre-oral examination meeting	16
16.	Academic malpractice	17

### **PART FOUR: THE ORAL EXAMINATION**

17.	Conduct of the oral examination	17
18.	Communicating the recommendation to the candidate	20
19.	The joint <i>Examiners' Report Form</i>	21
20.	Candidate access to examiner report forms	22
21.	Examiner disagreement over a recommendation	22

### **PART FIVE: EXAMINER RECOMMENDATIONS**

22.	Recommendations for doctoral degrees – <u>first</u> examination	24
22.1	CATEGORY A: AWARD (recommendation A(i) and A(ii))	24
23.1.1	Award with no corrections (recommendation A(i))	24
23.1.2	Award subject to minor corrections (recommendation A(ii))	25
22.2	CATEGORY B: REFER FOR RE-EXAMINATION (recommendations B(i), B(ii) and B(iii))	27
22.3	CATEGORY C: REJECT (recommendations C(i), C(ii), C(iii) and C(iv))	29
23.	Separate examiners' statement: only applicable for category B recommendations and recommendations C(ii) and C (iii)	30

## **PART SIX: RESULTS AND GRADUATION**

24.	Approval of recommendations	31
25.	The submission of the final thesis and release of the result	32
26.	Graduation	33
27.	Appeals	33

## **PART SEVEN: APPENDICES**

28.	Appendix one: Faculty and central graduate office contact details	34
29.	Appendix two: Documents relating to postgraduate research degree examination	35

## **PART ONE: GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 The following policy relates to the examination of doctoral degrees at The University of Manchester and applies to full-time and part-time postgraduate research students of the following degrees:

- Doctoral degrees: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD); Doctor of Medicine (MD) Doctor of Business Administration (DBA);.

A separate version of this policy document exists for the examination of the master's level postgraduate research degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil), entitled; *Examination of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) Degrees Policy*.

1.2 This policy does not apply to PhD by Published Work or Higher Doctorates for which specific guidance exists at;

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/ordinancesandregulations/>

1.3 Examination procedure for the master's-level postgraduate research degrees of Master of Science (MSc) by Research and Master of Enterprise (MEnt) are detailed in the relevant individual Ordinances and Regulations for the degree

<http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/researchoffice/graduate/ordinancesandregulations/#regs>

Examiners for the Master of Science (MSc) by Research and Master of Enterprise (MEnt) should be appointed in accordance with the University's *Nomination of Examiners & Independent Chairs for Postgraduate Research Degree Examination Policy*.

1.4 This policy is intended for use by examiners, academic and administrative staff, and the postgraduate research students of the degrees specified in section 1.1.

- 1.5 Any deviation from this policy will only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances and must be agreed in writing with the candidate before the examination takes place. Enquiries should initially be directed to the appropriate Graduate Office in the School, and then to the Faculty Graduate Office and Faculty Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research where appropriate. If necessary, cases may be referred to the Associate Vice-President for Postgraduate Research and/or the Graduate Administrators Group (GAG).

Enquiries to the Associate Vice-President for Postgraduate Research and/or the Graduate Administrators Group (GAG) should be directed to the Graduate Education Team based in the University's Research Office. Contact details for the Graduate Education Team and Faculty Graduate Offices can be found at:

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/contacts/>

- 1.6 This document should be referred to along with the relevant degree Ordinances and Regulations and other policies that comprise the Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees, of which this policy forms one section. See appendix two for a full list of University policy and guidance documents relating to the examination of postgraduate research degrees. The University's Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees is available at

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/>

## **2. The examination process**

- 2.1 It is a requirement of the University that candidates for all doctoral degrees produce a thesis or other appropriate form of submitted material which embodies their research for examination at the end of the degree. In what follows the term 'thesis' includes other forms of submitted material except where stated.

- 2.2 The examination of a doctoral degree thesis normally involves two parts: firstly, the submission and preliminary assessment of the thesis, normally by one internal and one external examiner; and secondly, the defence of the thesis by the candidate at an oral examination with the same examiners.
- 2.3 The terms *oral examination* and *viva voce* both refer to the method of examining doctoral degrees and are interchangeable. For the purposes of this policy, the term *oral examination* is used.
- 2.4 Where a doctoral programme includes a taught component, candidates must satisfactorily complete all requirements for all elements of the programme to the required standard to receive the final award.
- 2.5 **Notice of submission**

Candidates must complete a *Notice of Submission Form*, available electronically in the University's progression monitoring system, giving at least six weeks up to a maximum of six months notice of their intention to submit their thesis to enable preparations for the oral examination to be made by the appropriate examiners. On submission of the completed *Notice of Submission Form*, the candidate's supervisor will ensure that examiners are nominated in accordance with the criteria stipulated in the University's *Nomination of Examiners & Independent Chairs for Postgraduate Research Degree Examinations Policy*.

When the candidate feels that the thesis is nearing a standard suitable for submission they should contact their supervisor to seek advice on when to give notice. The supervisor's opinion is only advisory and the candidate may decide when to submit and if to follow the advice of the supervisor. Equally, the agreement of the supervisor to the submission of a thesis does not guarantee the award of the degree.

Where the supervisor advises a candidate against submitting their thesis, it is recommended that the supervisor notes their concerns with the Faculty/School Graduate Office with the reasons for advising against submission.

### **3. The oral examination requirement**

- 3.1 Oral examinations are mandatory for doctoral candidates presenting for the first time, even when the examiners have either identified serious flaws in the thesis or are entirely satisfied with the thesis content and its quality.
- 3.2 Examiners are not permitted to fail or refer a thesis on grounds that are not raised with the candidate in the oral examination. In cases where examiners have identified serious flaws in the thesis, the candidate must be given an opportunity to defend their work at an oral examination.
- 3.3 In the case of resubmitted theses for a doctoral degree, examiners may waive the requirement to hold an oral examination if the recommendation is to award the degree and both/all examiners are in agreement.
- 3.4 Only one opportunity to resubmit for re-examination is permitted for doctoral degrees.
- 3.5 In addition to an oral examination, candidates may be required by the examiners to undertake a written examination or presentation which may, for example, test or examine the candidate's competence in the subject. The candidate may only be examined upon material that is formally required for the degree for which he/she is being examined. Examiners may not take into account anything that is not a formal requirement of the degree. Candidates must satisfy the oral requirement of the doctoral degree before they can receive the award.

### **4. Purposes of the oral examination**

- 4.1 The purposes of the oral examination are:
  - i. To enable the examiners to assure themselves that the thesis and the research it reports are the candidate's own work. Where the thesis is Journal format there may be sections that are co-authored. The copyright statement at the beginning of the thesis must make it clear which sections are collaborative or not the student's own work to enable the examiners to assure themselves that the thesis



- and the research it reports are the candidate's own work.
- ii. To give the candidate an opportunity to defend the thesis, clarify any obscurities that the examiners have identified and discuss the subject of the thesis in its disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary context.
  - iii. To enable the candidate to demonstrate a firm understanding of the field of research and thus give the examiners an opportunity to assess the candidate's broader knowledge of the field or discipline within which the thesis falls.

## **5. Criteria for awarding doctoral degrees**

- 5.1 Examiners are required to refer to the criteria for the individual degree detailed in the degree Ordinances before beginning the examination process. Examiners must be satisfied that the degree criteria have been met before recommending an award. Doctoral degree Ordinances and Regulations can be found at <http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/ordinancesandregulations/>. The criteria for awarding a doctoral degree are also listed in section 22.1.1 of this policy.
- 5.2 In accordance with the Regulations, theses submitted for the degrees of PhD, EngD, EntD, MD degrees must not normally exceed 80,000 words of main text, including footnotes and endnotes and excluding preliminary pages and bibliography. Similarly, Professional Doctorate theses (excluding EngD and EntD) must not normally exceed 50,000 words of main text, including footnotes and endnotes. If a student wishes to submit a thesis which exceeds the standard word count a request must be submitted to the Faculty Office. Further information can be found in the Presentation of Theses Policy:  
<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/submissionandexamination/>

## **6. Examining a Journal Format thesis**

- 6.1 A Journal Format thesis allows a doctoral candidate to incorporate sections that are in a format suitable for submission for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Apart from the inclusion of such materials, the thesis must conform to the same standards expected for a standard thesis and examiners must be satisfied that the degree criteria has been met before recommending an award (see section 5). Further details on Journal Format can be found in the University's *Presentation of Theses Policy* and the *Journal Format Theses - Guiding Principles*

## **PART TWO: SETTING UP THE ORAL EXAMINATION**

### **7. Disability support**

- 7.1 The University has responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act to make reasonable adjustments to its examination arrangements to ensure that candidates with additional support needs are not disadvantaged for reasons relating to a long-term medical condition, sensory impairment, specific learning difficulty and/or disability.
- 7.2 Candidates are required to inform the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office if there are any particular arrangements or adjustments that need to be made to enable their full participation in the oral examination. This should be normally done no later than the notice of submission stage of the examination process (see section 2.5). Further advice and support is available from the University's Disability Support Office at <http://www.dso.manchester.ac.uk/>

### **8. The examining committee**

- 8.1 The examining committee for a doctoral degree must comprise at least an internal examiner and an external examiner, except in the circumstances outlined in the University's *Nomination of Examiners & Independent Chairs for Postgraduate Research Degree Examinations Policy*:

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/submissionandexamination/>

- 8.2 An independent chair may also be present under the circumstances detailed in *Nomination of Examiners & Independent Chairs for Postgraduate Research Degree Examinations* Policy  
<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/submissionandexamination/>

## **9. External examiners' fees and expenses**

- 9.1 Fee levels for external examiners are determined by the University from year to year and are specified in the examiner's offer letter. Fees are normally paid on receipt of examiners reports at the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office. Details on the fees payable can be found at:  
<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=7451>
- 9.2 Expenses may be claimed using the official University fees and expenses form provided to the examiner from the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office, which should be completed and returned as soon as possible after the oral examination. Expenses must be normally claimed within two months of the expenditure being incurred.
- 9.3 Enquiries about examiner fees and expenses should be directed to the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office in the first instance.

## **10. Timeframe for organising and holding the oral examination**

- 10.1 The oral examination must take place without undue delay, normally within twelve working weeks from the date the thesis is sent to the examiners.
- 10.2 Candidates must be available to attend the oral examination from the time that the thesis is submitted. Candidates may only delay their oral examination in very exceptional

circumstances and must apply to the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office for permission.

- 10.3 The appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office is responsible for informing the candidate of the time and location of the oral examination **not less than ten working days** before the examination.

## **11. Practical arrangements for the oral examination**

- 11.1 The internal examiner is normally responsible for making the practical arrangements for the oral examination and for completing the appropriate documentation in the University's progression monitoring system to confirm the date, time and location of the oral examination. The candidate and the external examiner must be informed of the arrangements no less than 10 working days in advance (see section 10.3).
- 11.2 If necessary, the internal examiner may be required to make practical arrangements for the external examiner's visit to Manchester. The internal examiner should normally be required to act as host during the external examiner's visit to the University.
- 11.3 In the absence of an internal examiner, an appropriate person (e.g. independent chair) must be nominated to make the arrangements for the oral examination and to act as host to the external examiner.

## **12. Attendance of the supervisor, other academic staff and other students at the oral examination**

- 12.1 Postgraduate oral examinations are open to members of University staff, including the candidate's supervisor(s), and other postgraduate research students of the University. The candidate, however, has the right to exclude particular individuals if they feel their presence will be detrimental to their performance in the examination.
- 12.2 Any individuals attending the examination other than the candidate, examiners and, where applicable, independent

chair, should under no circumstances participate in the examination. If required by the examiners, the supervisor(s) may answer any questions put to him/her by the examiners, but at all other times the supervisor(s) must act as a silent observer.

- 12.3 The internal examiner is normally responsible for ensuring that all attendees, other than the candidate, examiners and independent chair, give an undertaking in writing to maintain confidentiality in respect of the subject matter of the oral examination before the oral examination begins. Where the thesis is subject to a confidentiality clause as of the Terms and Conditions of a funder then the external examiner must sign a non-disclosure agreement prior to the examination. This form is available from the appropriate Faculty/School Graduate Office.
- 12.4 Former supervisors of the candidate who are no longer employed at the University may only attend the oral examination with approval from the appropriate School or Faculty PGR Director.
- 12.5 The examiners and/or the independent chair have the right to exclude from the examination anyone they believe may jeopardise the smooth running or integrity of the oral examination.
- 12.6 The candidate and/ or examining committee should give sufficient notice to the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office if it is expected that other individuals will attend the examination. This is to allow any objections to be raised in sufficient time and to enable the Internal Examiner to make arrangements such as the booking of a suitable venue.

### **PART THREE: PROCEDURES PRIOR TO THE ORAL EXAMINATION**

#### **13. Thesis submission**

- 13.1 Theses must be presented in accordance with the instructions set out in the University's *Presentation of Theses Policy*:

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/submissionandexamination/>

The thesis must be submitted electronically in Portable Document Format (PDF) to the institutional repository via eThesis submission in MyManchester." Where a programme is exempt from this requirement it will be stated in the Faculty/School Programme guidelines.

In addition, candidates are required to submit two identical paper copies (or three copies if submitting for the EngD) of the thesis printed from the submitted electronic version. Both of these copies must be bound in accordance with the instructions set out in the University's *Presentation of Theses Policy*. The two bound copies of the thesis must then be submitted to the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office by the candidate's final submission deadline.

- 13.1 The appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office will arrange for the thesis to be forwarded to each examiner for assessment and copies of the following documents:
- i. *Pre-Oral Examination Report Form*. To be completed by each examiner before the oral examination. See section 14.
  - ii. *Examiners' Report Form*. To be completed jointly by both examiners after the oral examination. See section 19.
  - iii. *Examination of Doctoral Degrees Policy*
  - iv. Fees and Expenses claim form (external examiners only)

These documents will be accompanied by a covering letter containing instructions for completing and returning forms.

Under no circumstances should the student or supervisor supply the examiners with the copies of the thesis

- 13.2 If an examiner is unable to carry out their duties an alternative examiner should be considered. The student should be informed of any change to the examiner or any

delay in appointing a suitable examiner at the earliest possible time.

- 13.4 If the thesis submitted for examination has been poorly written or presented, examiners are not permitted to return the thesis to the candidate for amendment prior to the oral examination.
- 13.5 If the thesis is submitted at the end of the candidate's registration period and registration subsequently expires, candidates will be able to get normal access to library and computer facilities. Students should continue to have access to these facilities until withdrawal or at the end of their graduation month following completion. If a student has any issues with access to facilities, they must contact the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office who will arrange short-term temporary access to facilities.

#### **14. The *Pre-Oral Examination Report Form***

- 14.1 Examiners must each complete a separate *Pre-Oral Examination Report Form* after reading the thesis and before discussing the thesis with each other.

The *Pre-Oral Examination Report Form* allows examiners to:

- i. clarify their preliminary judgement on the thesis for discussion with the co-examiner at the pre-oral examination meeting;
  - ii. identify priorities and points for discussion at the oral examination;
  - iii. identify revisions required, thereby saving time after the oral examination (even if revisions change as a result of the candidate's performance or the views of the other examiner);
  - iv. identify issues which may need to be discussed with the supervisor or may need to be reported to the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office.
- 14.2 The examiners must exchange copies of their pre-oral examination reports either shortly prior to or at the pre oral examination meeting. Each completed *Pre-Oral Examination Report Form* must be submitted via the internal examiner in

the University's progression monitoring system along with the joint *Examiners' Report Form* (see section 19) after the oral examination.

14.3 Candidates can view the completed *Pre-Oral Examination Report Form* and the joint *Examiners' Report Form* (see section 19) in the University's progression monitoring system once the recommendation has been approved by the appropriate School or Faculty postgraduate research degrees committee (see section 24).

14.4 Examiners must not annotate the thesis with substantive comments. Only minor comments may be noted on the thesis

## **15. The pre oral examination meeting**

15.1 Prior to the oral examination, the examiners must arrange to confer with one another, in order to:

- i. exchange copies of their *Pre-Oral Examination Report Form* (if this has not already been done);
- ii. identify issues to be raised in the oral examination;
- iii. agree the broad strategy for the oral examination – who will ask which questions and in what order;
- iv. confer with the supervisor, if required.

15.2 The internal examiner (or other nominated person in the absence of an internal examiner) is responsible for making the practical arrangements for the pre-oral examination meeting.

15.3 Sufficient time should be allocated for the meeting and the internal examiner or nominated person must arrange the attendance of the supervisor, if required.

15.4 If the examiners and, if applicable, the independent chair and supervisor/s are unable to meet in person for the pre oral examination meeting, the meeting may be conducted by telephone or by other appropriate means (eg; video link).



## **16. Academic malpractice**

- 16.1 Examiners who suspect the candidate has committed academic malpractice should contact the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office in the first instance to seek advice (see appendix one for contact details). Guidance on dealing with academic malpractice can be found in the University guidelines: *Academic Malpractice: Guidelines on the Handling of Cases*:  
<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/policies/display/?id=117138&off=RegSec->SSS>

## **PART FOUR: THE ORAL EXAMINATION**

### **17. Conduct of the oral examination**

- 17.1 The following rules governing the conduct of the oral examination must be adhered to:
- i. Those present at the oral examination shall be the candidate and the examiners, and if required, an independent chair. If supervisors, academic staff or other postgraduate students attend, they must not participate in the examination (see section 12).
  - ii. An oral examination may not proceed without all the appointed examiners being present. In the event of an examiner's or the candidate's unexpected illness or other unforeseen event, the examination must be postponed to another date and the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office informed.
  - iii. The student should inform the supervisor of any exceptional circumstance, which in his/her view might affect their performance adversely prior to the oral examination starting. The Supervisor should ensure that the examiners are aware of any circumstances raised.
  - iv. The oral examination must take place in a room occupied by The University of Manchester and must start at a time when buildings are officially open. In

very exceptional circumstances, the oral examination may be held outside The University of Manchester with the permission of the Faculty Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research. In such cases, the examiners must ensure that the supervisor can be contacted, if required, on the day of the oral examination. Any additional costs associated with holding the oral examination outside of the University must be met by the appropriate School or Faculty.

- v. The oral examination must take place in a quiet, suitable room and without interruption.
- vi. The candidate will be asked to withdraw before the examiners begin their final deliberations. The independent chair should be present at the deliberations.
- vii. In exceptional circumstances, where an external examiner is from outside the UK and unable to attend the oral examination in Manchester within the required time-frame, a request can be made by the internal examiner to hold the examination by video link. The request must be submitted to the Faculty Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research (or his/her nominee). If an oral examination is to be conducted by video conference then an independent Chair must be appointed and the candidate must be present in Manchester with the Internal Examiner and the Independent Chair.
- viii. Candidates may take a copy of their thesis into the oral examination. If required, the candidate may also take a reasonable number of supplementary notes, pen and paper, into the oral examination. The student may request to take a laptop, or tablet computer, into the oral examination but permission must be sought before the examination from the appropriate Faculty/School Graduate Office and the student must have reasonable academic justification for the request.
- ix. The candidate should be made to feel at ease and the format of the examination , as already agreed by

the examiners, must be explained to him/her at the beginning of the examination.

- x. It is essential that no one indicates to the candidate, either before or during the oral examination, what is the likely outcome of the examination. The examiners and the independent chair (if in attendance) must ensure that any conflict of opinion that may arise during the examination will not lead to any indication of the likely outcome of the examination.
- xi. The examiners and the independent chair (if in attendance) are responsible for the conduct of the examination. It is their responsibility to see that the oral examination is fairly and properly conducted.
- xii. The examiners will each contribute to the examination process but the external examiner normally takes the lead role.
- xiii. Whilst some intensive questioning of the candidate may be needed, it must be non-aggressive.
- xiv. Reasonable adjustments must be made for candidates with disabilities (see section 7).
- xv. The examiners may discuss ways of developing the candidate's research and writing beyond the requirements of a doctoral degree, but the candidate must be informed explicitly that these discussions are not part of the assessment.
- xvi. The examiners may request to see evidence of the candidate's attendance at events related to their research, (eg; seminars, conferences and taught course units) where the regulations of the degree under examination require such components to be completed. Such evidence should be requested and presented by the School Office before the oral examination.
- xvii. The oral examination should run for as long as may be necessary for it to serve its proper purpose. The

internal examiner or independent chair must give an opportunity for breaks if the oral examination is anticipated to last more than two hours, provided that this does not disadvantage the candidate.

- xviii. If the supervisor does not attend the oral examination, he/she must be available to provide any clarification requested by the examiners (before, during and after the examination).
- xix. The supervisor and any others present may be asked to withdraw before the candidate, so as to provide the candidate with an opportunity to say anything to the examiners that he/she would prefer to say without the supervisor and others being present.
- xx. The oral examination should normally be conducted in English. In exceptional circumstances, the internal examiner may request permission from the Faculty Graduate Office to conduct the oral examination in a language other than English. Permission must be sought from the relevant faculty office and be supported by a clear academic justification. It is advised that students discuss this with their supervisors as early as possible. The examiners' report must still be written in English.

## **18. Communicating the recommendation to the candidate**

- 18.1 When the examiners have made their decision, they may communicate it to the candidate, making it clear that their recommendation is provisional, until approved by the appropriate School or Faculty postgraduate research degrees committee. If they decide not to tell the candidate the outcome, and to avoid any possible misunderstanding, the candidate must, at the end of the oral examination, be given a clear indication of the procedure by which he/she will be notified of the outcome and the likely timescale. Recommendations must be communicated through a formal process. Examiners should not feel under any obligation to communicate their provisional recommendation to the candidate or supervisor at this stage.

## **19. The joint *Examiners' Report Form***

- 19.1 After the oral examination, the examiners must agree upon a final joint report to be written on the *Examiners' Report Form* giving their recommendation on the outcome of the examination and their comments on the thesis and candidate's performance at the oral examination. It is essential that examiners refer to this policy when completing the report form.
- 19.2 Examiners' responses provided on the form must be typed. The report provides important feedback to the candidate on their thesis and their performance at the oral examination and it is essential that responses are detailed, clear and legible. Where possible the candidate should be informed of the outcome of the examination within 5 working days of the meeting. However, where a recommendation is yet to be agreed an early communication may be to inform the student that the examiners require more time to discuss the final recommendation.
- 19.3 Forms are sent directly to the external examiners by the appropriate Graduate Office. All reports must be completed as fully as possible and signed by both/all examiners and, where applicable, the independent chair before they are uploaded to the University's progression monitoring system via the internal examiner or independent chair. The examiners' copies of the thesis should be returned to the appropriate Faculty/School office.
- 19.4 In exceptional circumstances, examiners may submit separate reports with the permission of the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office. Examiners who are unable to agree on a recommendation must submit separate reports (see section 21).
- 19.5 The University issues two distinct versions of the report form, one for first submission and one for resubmission, and examiners must ensure they are using the correct version. The *Examiners' Report Form* is sent, together with the *Pre-Oral Examination Form* and other documents, from the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office when the thesis is first sent to the examiners.

- 19.6 The completed *Examiners' Report Form* must be uploaded to the University's progression monitoring system via the internal examiner or the independent chair within **five working days** of the oral examination, regardless of which recommendation the examiners have made. This requirement must be made clear to both the internal and external examiners before the examination process begins. If examiners require more than five working days to complete the form, they must inform the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office after the oral examination.
- 19.7 Where an oral examination is not required (I.e. in the case of a resubmitted thesis – see section 3.3), the completed *Examiners Report Form* must be uploaded to the University's progression monitoring system via the internal examiner or the independent chair normally within eight weeks of the thesis first being sent to the examiners.

## **20. Candidate access to examiner report forms**

- 20.1 Candidates can request to see examiner reports (ie the *Pre-Oral Examination Report Form* and the joint *Examiners' Report Form*) in the University's progression monitoring system once the recommendation has been approved by the appropriate School or Faculty postgraduate research degrees committee.
- 20.2 Candidates must carry out all recommendations stated within the report.

## **21. Examiner disagreement over a recommendation**

- 21.1 If, after their deliberations, examiners remain unable to reach an agreement on a recommendation following the oral examination, the procedure detailed below must be followed. An oral examination must take place before the process of reaching an agreed recommendation can be deemed to have failed.
- i. At the end of the oral examination, the candidate should be informed that the examiners have been

unable to reach a decision and that separate reports will be completed and considered by the appropriate School or Faculty postgraduate research degrees committee.

- ii. Each examiner must complete a separate *Examiners' Report Form* giving justification for their recommendation. The forms should be uploaded to the University's progression monitoring system via the internal examiner or the independent chair within five working days of the oral examination.
- iii. Students can request to have copies of the the approved pre-oral and final examination reports via their Graduate Office once the recommendation has been approved by the appropriate School or Faculty postgraduate research degrees committees
- iv. The internal examiner or independent chair where appropriate, will be invited to the next, or specially convened, meeting of the appropriate School or Faculty postgraduate research degrees committee to discuss the reports and to see if a recommendation can be agreed. Before the meeting, the external examiner should be contacted in order to obtain his/her views on the case. If necessary, the chair of the appropriate School or Faculty postgraduate research degrees committee may seek advice on the case from the Faculty Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research or the Associate Vice-President for Postgraduate Research
- v. If agreement is not reached, the appropriate School or Faculty postgraduate research degrees committee may, at its discretion, appoint one or more new external examiners or may determine other action where appropriate. Additional examiners must not be told the identity of the original examiners nor their specific recommendations.

21.2 Examiners may consult with staff in the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office in the first instance on the day of the oral examination for further advice if necessary (see appendix one for contact details). Graduate Office staff may

refer any problems or concerns to the Faculty Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research.

## **PART FIVE: EXAMINER RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **22. Recommendations for doctoral degrees – first examination**

NB: regardless of which recommendation is selected, examiners are required to complete a joint *Examiners' Report Form* and upload it to the University's progression monitoring system via the internal examiner or independent chair within **five working days** of the oral examination having taken place (see section 19 for further information on the *Examiners' Report Form*).

There are three categories of recommendations for doctoral degrees: 'A' (award), 'B' (refer) and 'C' (reject). Within each category, examiners must select a sub-recommendation, as follows.

#### **22.1 CATEGORY A: AWARD (recommendation A(i) and A(ii))**

##### **22.1.1 Award with no corrections (recommendation A(i))**

The examiners should select recommendation A(i) if the thesis is satisfactory in every way and there are no revisions to be made to it.

The examiners may recommend the award if they are satisfied that the thesis is satisfactory in every way and that:

- the candidate possesses an appropriate knowledge of the particular field of learning within which the subject of the thesis falls;
- the research which is reported in the thesis contributes a substantial addition to knowledge;



- the results of the research show evidence of originality and independent critical judgement;
- the thesis is presented in a lucid and scholarly manner;
- the thesis has been submitted in the form prescribed by University regulations and policy;
- Any contribution of others has been clearly detailed;
- no part of the thesis has previously been submitted for the award of a degree at this or any other University (students should refer to the [Journal Format PhD Theses - Guiding Principles for Students and Staff](#) for further information);
- the thesis and the work reported in it are the candidate's own.

Following receipt of an A(i) award recommendation the final version of the thesis should be submitted by the student via My Manchester,, normally within 10 working days.

### **22.1.2 Award subject to minor corrections (recommendation A(ii))**

Recommendation A(ii) should be selected if the examiners are satisfied that the thesis meets the criteria for the degree (see section 22.1.1 above) but some minor corrections are necessary to the thesis. The corrections, in the view of the examiners, and taking into account the guidance given below, should not be sufficiently serious to merit a recommendation for resubmission and re-examination under Category B.

Minor corrections permissible under box A(ii) include:

- typographical errors; however, if the errors, although trivial individually, are so numerous as to suggest carelessness on the part of the candidate or so intrusive as to distract the reader's attention from the argument of the thesis, the examiners would be fully justified in making a recommendation under Category B rather than box A(ii);
- minor amendments and/or replacement of, or additions to, the text or to references or diagrams;
- other more extensive corrections may be made as long as they do not require significant (as defined by

the examiners) re-working or re-interpretation of the intellectual content of the thesis.

If more substantial revisions are required, the examiners should select one of the recommendations under Category B.

A list of corrections must be provided by the examiners in section four of the *Examiners' Report Form* for the benefit of the candidate. Once carried out by the candidate, the corrections must be approved by the internal examiner without the need for a further oral examination.

The time permitted for minor corrections to be completed by the candidate is **normally no more than four weeks** from the date the candidate receives the list of corrections in the University's progression monitoring system. In exceptional circumstances, where there are more than four weeks of work required of the student the candidate may be given 12 weeks to complete the revisions. The examiners' decision to allow 12 weeks for minor corrections to be completed, must be based on the quantity of the work required and length of time of which it is feasible to complete the corrections.

The Graduate Office must receive notification that the minor corrections have been approved by the internal examiner via the University's progression monitoring system within 2 weeks of the candidate submitting the revisions.

In examinations where there is no internal examiner, the independent chair must ensure that minor revisions are approved and confirmed in the University's progression monitoring system by an external examiner or other person nominated by the School.

The examiners' decision to recommend an A(ii) should be made on the grounds that the thesis will NOT require a further examination. The decision whether to recommend an A(ii) as opposed to a B(i) **must not be determined by the candidate's personal circumstances.**

The candidate is expected to be available in the period after the oral examination to complete minor revisions as part of

their responsibilities in the examination of their degree. In very exceptional circumstances, the candidate may apply to the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office for permission to submit the corrected thesis later than the four-week or 12 week deadline given.

Candidates and examiners should refer to the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office if further guidance on minor corrections is required (see appendix one for contact details).

## **22.2 CATEGORY B: REFER FOR RE-EXAMINATION (recommendations B(i), B(ii) and B(iii))**

Referral under recommendation B requires the candidate to resubmit the thesis for re-examination. A candidate will be permitted to resubmit on only one occasion. See the University's *Resubmission and Re-examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees Policy* for details of resubmission and re-examination.

Examiners are required to make one of the following recommendations under category B:

- **B (i)** that the thesis is satisfactory in substance, but defective in presentation and/or content and does not require a further oral examination;
- **B (ii)** that the thesis is satisfactory in substance, but defective in presentation and/or content and requires a further oral examination;
- **B (iii)** that the thesis is unsatisfactory in substance, defective in presentation and/or content and requires further research and a further oral examination.

If examiners recommend that the candidate will require a further oral examination upon resubmission of the thesis (recommendations B(ii) and B(iii)), the examiners may later, if in joint agreement and if their recommendation is to award the degree, dispense with the oral examination after assessment of the resubmitted thesis. Examiners must inform the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office

staff as soon as possible if they wish to dispense with the oral examination so that the candidate can be informed and any refund given.

For category B recommendations, examiners must submit a statement as part of the joint Examiners' Report form (see section 23) detailing the required revisions. Examiners should offer guidance to the student when their recommended changes will impact on the word limit of the thesis; this may include suggestions on which parts of the thesis can be reduced to allow for any additions.

For recommendations **B(i) and B(ii)**, the candidate is normally required to revise and resubmit the thesis for the doctoral degree **within six months** of receiving the examiners' statement detailing the required revisions (see section 23). Examiners may make a recommendation to extend that period so that the candidate is required to revise and resubmit the thesis for the doctoral degree within 12 months of receiving the examiners' statement detailing the required revisions from the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office. The decision to exceptionally allow additional time for the student to revise and resubmit is made by the appropriate committee and must be based on the quantity of the work required and length of time it is feasible to complete the work.

Any student who wishes to request an extension to their resubmission deadline, due to mitigating circumstances, should make the request via the normal extension application process within the School.

For recommendation **B(iii)**, the candidate is required to revise and resubmit the thesis for the doctoral degree **within 12 months** of receiving the examiners' statement detailing the required revisions (see section 23) from the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office.

### **22.3 CATEGORY C: REJECT (recommendations C(i), C(ii), C(iii) and C(iv))**

Where examiners are not satisfied that the thesis and oral examination have met the standards required, and have not found evidence that the thesis could be corrected under category A or B, they may recommend:

- **C(i): Reject but award the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil).**

For recommendation C(i), examiners must refer to the degree criteria in the MPhil Ordinances and Regulations and justify their decision to recommend the award of MPhil. The candidate must resubmit the thesis via MyManchester, with a new title page, indicating that it is a master's (and not a doctoral) thesis.

- **C(ii): reject but award the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) subject to minor corrections being made to the thesis.**

For recommendation C(ii), as part of the Examiners' Report Form examiners must include a statement detailing the required corrections (see section 23) Examiners must refer to the degree criteria in the MPhil Ordinances and Regulations and justify their decision to recommend the award of MPhil, subject to minor corrections.

The time permitted for minor corrections to be completed by the candidate is **normally no more than four weeks** from the date the candidate receives the list of corrections in the University's progression monitoring system. In exceptional circumstances, where there are more than four weeks of work required of the student the candidate may be given 12 weeks to complete the revisions. The examiners' decision to allow 12 weeks for minor corrections to be completed, must be based on the quantity of the work required and length of time of which it is feasible to complete the corrections.

On completion and approval of minor corrections, the candidate must upload the thesis via MyManchester, with a new title page, indicating that it is a master's (and not a doctoral) thesis.

- **C(iii): reject but invite the candidate to revise and resubmit the thesis for examination for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil).** For recommendation C(iii), examiners must submit a statement detailing the required revisions (see section 23) as part of the *Examiners' Report Form*. The candidate is required to revise and resubmit the thesis for examination for the MPhil degree **within six months** of receiving the examiners' statement via the University's progression monitoring system detailing the required revisions, and, where appropriate, attend one further oral examination. The candidate will be permitted to resubmit on only one occasion.
- **C(iv): reject and no resubmission be permitted.** For recommendation C(iv), examiners must justify their decision not to recommend the doctorate in the *Examiners' Report Form*. When the recommendation of the examiners is not to award a doctoral degree, the internal examiner or independent chair where appropriate will normally be invited to the next meeting of the appropriate School or Faculty postgraduate research degrees committee to assist in its consideration of the case and to answer any questions.

**23. Examiners' statement: only applicable for category B recommendations and recommendations C(ii) and C(iii)**

Where examiners recommend any of the category B or the category C recommendations C(ii) or C(iii), examiners must produce a written statement of required revisions. This will then be provided to the candidate via the University's progression monitoring system. Examiners should give sufficient detail of the defects of the original submission and

recommend ways in which the thesis should be corrected in order to make a satisfactory revision of the thesis. The statement must be suitable to form the basis of the subsequent re-examination.

The statement should specify to the candidate changes that need to be made to the thesis before resubmission, although the statement does not need to descend to the level of specifying every revision to spelling, grammar, etc, where these are numerous, and can state requirements in general terms, where appropriate. The statement should be in a form suitable for communication to the candidate.

The examiners must agree this statement of required revision and ensure it is included as part of the joint examiners report, within **five working days** of the examination. The candidate can view the report in the University's progression monitoring system with the official written notice of the recommendation once it has been confirmed by the appropriate School or Faculty postgraduate research degrees committee

## **PART SIX: RESULTS AND GRADUATION**

### **24 Approval of recommendations**

- 24.1 The result recommended by examiners is provisional until approved by the appropriate School or Faculty postgraduate research degrees committee. The decision to award a doctoral degree is made on the basis of the examiners' reports and recommendation. A School or Faculty postgraduate research degrees committee will normally consist of a chair who is a senior academic member of staff, senior academic staff from each School/discipline within that particular School/Faculty and Graduate Office administrators.
- 24.2 A doctoral degree recommendation will be approved either at a meeting of the appropriate School or Faculty postgraduate research degrees committee or just by the chair of the committee (i.e. 'chair's action'). If a recommendation is straightforward and there are no issues of concern, a recommendation will normally be approved by

chair's action, and reported to members at the next appropriate School or Faculty postgraduate research degrees committee meeting.

- 24.3 The recommendations of category B (iii) (referral with further research and a further oral) and categories C(i)-C(iv) (reject), will normally be considered at the next meeting of the appropriate School or Faculty postgraduate research degrees committee, where members will discuss individual cases and review examiners' reports. The internal examiner, or independent chair where appropriate, will normally be invited to attend this meeting and in some cases the supervisor may be required to attend. It may also be appropriate to seek further comments, for clarity, from the external examiner. As part of the discussions the research degrees committee can request revised examiners reports, review statements on revisions and/or request an amendment to the recommendation with agreement from the examiner.

## **25 Submission of the final thesis and publication of the result**

- 25.1 Once the examiners' reports have been received and the recommendation has been approved either by chair's action or by the appropriate School or Faculty postgraduate research degrees committee, the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office is able to release the approved recommendation to the candidate.
- 25.2 In the case of an A(ii) recommendation (award with minor revisions), the internal examiner must sign off in the University's progression monitoring system that minor revisions have been satisfactorily completed by the candidate before the award can be approved and released to the candidate.
- 25.3 Results will not be formally published until the candidate has submitted an electronic copy of their final thesis via My Manchester with the completed appropriate revisions. .



- 25.4 Any delay in the submission of the electronic copy of the final thesis will delay formal publication of the result (i.e. completion of the candidate's record on the student system), which will in turn delay the release of the degree certificate and graduation.
- 25.5 The School or Faculty should give consideration to parties who need to be notified of the result such as the research student's sponsor.

## **26. Graduation**

- 26.1 Graduation ceremonies are organised by the Student Services Centre and take place twice a year, in July and December. Degree certificates are issued at the graduation ceremony. The Student Services Centre will automatically post certificates to any candidates who do not register or attend the ceremony after the ceremony has taken place. Further details on graduation can be found at the following link:  
<http://www.saa.manchester.ac.uk/graduation/>
- 26.2 Candidates who do not received their certificate, or who have lost their certificate, may request a replacement from the Student Services Centre.
- 26.3 A degree will not be conferred upon any person who has a relevant debt outstanding to the University. Candidates with debt outstanding to the University should contact the Student Services Centre in the first instance to arrange prompt payment.

## **27. Appeals**

Appeals may be made only on specific grounds as detailed in the University's policy on Academic Appeals, available from the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office or at <http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/policies/display/index.htm?id=101916&off=RegSec->AcaReg->SSS>

If the External Examiner has concerns relating to standards within the institution they should approach the internal

examiner in the first instance. Once all internal procedures have been exhausted including a confidential report to the Vice-President (Teaching, Learning and Students), they have the right to contact the QAA ([www.qaa.ac.uk/complaints/concerns/pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/complaints/concerns/pages/default.aspx)).

**28. APPENDIX 1: Faculty and central Graduate Office contact details**

NB: queries should be directed to the appropriate School Office within the relevant Faculty in the first instance. <http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/contacts/>

**29. APPENDIX 2: Documents relating to postgraduate research degree examination**

**FORMS**

Form	Completed by	Location of form
Notice of submission form	Candidate	Online monitoring system
Nomination of Examiners form	Supervisor	Online monitoring system
Oral details form	Internal Examiner	Online monitoring system
Pre-Oral Examination Form <sup>F</sup>	Each Examiner	Online monitoring system
Joint Examiners Report Form	Jointly by both/ all examiners	Online monitoring system

Forms are available in the University's progression monitoring system.

**POLICY & GUIDANCE**

- *Presentation of Theses Policy*
- *Academic Malpractice: Guidelines on the Handling of Cases*
- *Nomination of Examiners & Independent Chairs for Postgraduate Research Degree Examinations Policy*
- *Examination of Doctoral Degrees Policy*
- *Examination of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) Degrees Policy*
- *Resubmission and Re-examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees Policy*
- *Conducting Oral Examinations by Video Link Policy*
- *Posthumous Award of Postgraduate Research Degrees Policy*

Policy/guidance is available from the appropriate School or Faculty graduate office or from the central graduate education web pages at <http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/>

<b>Document control box</b>	
Policy / Procedure title:	Examination of Doctoral Degrees Policy
Date approved:	June 2016
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Supersedes:	November 2011
Previous review dates:	
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Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations:	<a href="http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/">http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/</a>
Related policies: N/A	
Related procedures:	
Related guidance and or codes of practice:	Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees ( <a href="http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/">http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/</a> )
Related information: (list or state N/A)	
Policy owner:	Graduate Education (Helen Baker)
Lead contact:	Graduate Education (Helen Baker)