Summary of changes – September 2026 - Version 1.1

Oral Examination Procedure for Postgraduate Research Degrees

Purpose. This document summarises the principal changes made to the oral examination procedure and explains their effect and rationale. The revisions introduce formal guidance for managing unexpected disruptions before or during a viva, including circumstances that may affect a PGR's ability to participate fully, and reflect lessons learned from recent casework and discussion at PROG.

Change type	Previous position	Revised provision	Effect of change	Rationale
Addition	The Oral Examination Procedure for Postgraduate Research Degrees did not contain specific guidance on how to manage unexpected disruptions arising during a viva examination.	A new section has been added to the procedure setting out how unexpected disruptions during a viva should be managed.	Introduces formal guidance for handling disruptions that may affect the conduct of a viva examination.	Provides a clear and consistent framework for responding to unforeseen events during vivas, reducing uncertainty for PGRs, examiners and Professional Services staff.
Addition	Issues affecting a PGR's ability to participate fully in a viva, such as illness arising during the examination, were not explicitly addressed in the procedure.	The procedure now includes guidance covering a range of potential disruptions that may occur before or during a viva.	Provides greater clarity for PGRs, examiners and staff on how unforeseen circumstances should be handled.	Ensures that circumstances which may affect the fairness or validity of the examination are recognised and managed appropriately when they arise, rather than being addressed retrospectively through appeals or complaints.
Addition	There was no documented process informed by recent case experience in which a viva outcome was challenged on the basis of illness that had not been raised at the time of the examination.	The updated guidance reflects lessons learned from a recent appeal case and was developed following discussion and support from PROG.	Strengthens the procedure by addressing a gap identified through casework and reducing uncertainty in similar situations in future.	Incorporates lessons learned from operational experience, strengthens procedural robustness and supports consistent decision-making where a viva is affected by an unexpected disruption.