Examiners for Research Degrees

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1 Preamble

1.1 This document covers the arrangement for the appointment and conduct of examiners for research degrees. It covers two circumstances, as follows:

(i) courses where the external and internal examiners are appointed to examine the work of an individual student;

(ii) courses where the external and internal examiners are appointed to examine the work of a cohort of students.

1.2 Where an internal examiner examines the work of an individual student:

(i) a separate appointment is made on each occasion;

(ii) the appointment is made by the Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel;

(iii) there are specific requirements attached to the role of internal examiner.

1.3 Where an internal examiner examines the work of a cohort of students :

(i) all academic staff with full-examiner status may act as internal examiners;

(ii) there are no specific requirements attached to the role of internal examiner.

1.4 Where an external examiner examines the work of an individual student:

(i) a separate appointment is made on each occasion;

(ii) the appointment is made for the duration of the examination process for that student;

(iii) the appointment is made by the Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel.

1.5 Where an external examiner examines the work of a cohort of students :

(i) appointments are made at course level;

(ii) the appointment is made for four years, with the possibility of a one-year extension for the purpose of continuity;

(iii) the appointment is made by the Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel.

1.6 Where a research degree has a taught stage that must be passed before a student can progress, the external and internal examination arrangements are those as for taught postgraduate awards; the arrangements in this document cover only the thesis stage of such courses.

1.7 Specific arrangements for courses are set out in Table 1.

Table 1: External Examiner arrangements for Research Degree Courses

Degree	Taught stage	Who nominates	For what	For how long
PhD	N/A	Supervisor	Each thesis	For the duration of the examination of the thesis
PhD by Portfolio	N/A	Supervisor	Each portfolio	For the duration of the examination of the thesis

PhD by Publication	N/A	Supervisor	Each submission	For the duration of the examination of the thesis
EdD	In line with PG taught provision	Supervisor	Each thesis	For the duration of the examination of the thesis
DClinPsychol	N/A	Course Director	[A subset of] the course	4 Years
DBA	In line with PG taught provision	Supervisor	Each thesis	For the duration of the examination of the thesis
Masters by Research	In line with PG taught provision	Supervisor	Each thesis Note never a viva	For the duration of the examination of the thesis

2 The Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel

2.1 Responsibility for the appointment of External Examiners for Research Degree and for internal examiners where they are appointed to examine the work of an individual student is delegated by the Research. Enterprise and Knowledge Mobilisation Committee to the Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel.

2.2 The membership of the Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel will comprise:

(i) the Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor and Chair of the Research, Enterprise and Knowledge Mobilisation Committee; and

(ii) the Dean of the Graduate College and Chair of the Research Degrees Sub Committee

2.3 The appointments made by the Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel will be reported to the Research Degrees Sub-Committee and up to the Research, Enterprise and Knowledge Mobilisation Committee

3 Appointment and role of internal examiners where an internal examiner is appointed to examine the work of an individual student

Section 3 applies to all courses other than the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

Introduction

3.1 One or more external examiners must be appointed for each Research Degree submission.

3.2 An internal examiner for a Research Degree is required to report on whether the academic standard of the work they are appointed to examine is appropriate for the award offered by

the University, by reference to such sources as published national benchmarks, the national qualifications frameworks, University course specifications and other relevant information.

Criteria for appointment for Internal Examiners

3.3 The criteria for the appointment of an internal examiner for a Research Degree are that the internal examiner must have:

(i) an academic career in a relevant field of study of the subject under examination; and

(ii) a sufficient research record of national standing; and

(iii) one year's experience of supervision in a relevant academic area.

3.4 No person who has been involved in the supervision of the research of the candidate under examination may be appointed as an internal examiner for the candidate.

3.5 An internal examiner may be appointed for the purpose of the assessment of no more than two candidates at any one time.

Appointment process for Internal Examiners

3.6 One internal examiner will be appointed for each Research Degree submission, except where the candidate is a member of staff, in which instance there will be an additional external examiner appointed.

3.7 The Supervisor of the student is responsible for the nomination of an internal examiner, following consultation with the student and the rest of the supervisory panel.

3.8 The nomination is presented to the Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel, which will report all decisions on such appointments to the next meeting of the Research, Enterprise and Knowledge Mobilisation Committee.

3.9 Where a candidate is re-examined following failure, the person originally appointed as an internal examiner will be reappointed, except where the internal examiner is no longer qualified or has left the institution, in which case a new appointment will be made.

The role of the Internal Examiner

3.10 The role of the internal examiner is to assess the candidate and report on whether the academic standard of the work they are appointed to examine is appropriate for the award offered by the University, by reference to such sources as published national benchmarks, the national qualifications frameworks, University course specifications and other relevant information.

4 Where there is no internal examiner, the designated first examiner wil undertake the specific responsibilities of the internal examiner during the appointment stage. Appointment and Role of External Examiners

Introduction

4.1 No student may be awarded a research degree by the University without the involvement of an external examiner.

4.2 External examiners for Research Degree provision are, in their expert judgment, required to report on:

(i) whether the academic standard of the work they are appointed to examine is appropriate for the award offered by the University, by reference to such sources as published national benchmarks, the national qualifications frameworks, University programme specifications and other relevant information;

(ii) the standards of student performance in those programmes or parts of programmes which they have been appointed to examine, and on the comparability of the standards with those of similar programmes or parts of programmes in other UK higher education institutions;

(iii) the extent to which the processes for assessment, examination, and the determination of awards are sound and have been conducted according to the University's requirements.

4.3 All external examiners for Research Degrees must be of an appropriate standing in line with the criteria for appointment of Research Degree examiners, set out below.

Sections 4.4 and 4.5 apply to all courses other than the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

Nomination of External Examiners

4.4 The nomination of an external examiner for a Research Degree is the responsibility of the Supervisor of the research student concerned, in consultation with the student and the rest of supervisory panel.

4.5 The Supervisor will complete an application in Research Space and submit it, together with the curriculum vitae of the nominee.

Criteria for appointment for External Examiners

4.6 The criteria for the appointment of an external examiner for a Research Degree are that the external examiner must:

(i) have a significant academic career in an appropriate field of study, a significant research record of national standing; and

(ii) have five years' experience in the relevant academic area and a research degree;

(iii) show evidence of detailed knowledge of UK higher education;

(iv) be an employee of a UK higher education institution or of a non-UK higher education institutions with similar research degree requirements, except where 4.7 applies.

(v) In the case of the appointment of an external examiner to the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, a significant clinical career and significant relevant clinical expertise may exceptionally replace the requirement for a significant academic career and academic expertise as set out in (i)-(iv) above.

4.7 The appointment of external examiner may be made where the nominee has retired within two years of nomination, provided that there is evidence that they are familiar with current expectations in higher education and there is evidence that they have continued to research and publish during their retirement, and have experience of external examining in the past three years.

The criteria set out in 4.8 does not apply to the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology.

4.8 Where an external examiner is appointed to examine the work of an individual student, the external examiner must have experience of external examining, except where internal examiner has such experience, in which case the Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel may waive that requirement. They should, at least, have experience of research degree supervision.

4.9 An individual may not be appointed as an external examiner where the nominee:

(i) is a member of a cognate subject group where a member of the nominating University cognate subject group is serving as an examiner for an undergraduate or postgraduate award; or

(ii) has an association with the nominating School which could compromise their role as external examiner; or

(iii) is a former member of the University staff and since they ceased employment either (a) at least five years has not yet elapsed or (b) there has been insufficient time for students taught by that member of staff to have completed their studies, whichever is the longer; or

(iv) is a former student of the University and since they ceased to be a student of the University at least five years has not yet elapsed;

(v) has been involved in the research of the candidate, or who has collaborated in the research of the first or second supervisor within the past three years.

4.10 In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to nominate an external examiner where one or more of these conditions needs to be set aside, where:

(i) there is a clear case that there are a very limited number of potential examiners;

(ii) a case has to be made to the Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel, setting out the arguments, and including an account of the measures taken to recruit another suitable external examiner.

Declaration of Interest

4.11 Before accepting a nomination as an external examiners, the nominee must declare any known conflicts of interest to the University.

4.12 An external examiner who becomes aware of any conflict of interest must declare such to the University as soon as possible.

4.13 A potential conflict of interest may not disqualify a nominee for consideration or an appointed external examiner from continuing in that role if arrangements can be put in place to prevent the conflict of interest from occurring. Such arrangements must be put in place:

(i) before the nomination is approved by the Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel, where an external examiner has not yet been appointed;

(ii) before the external examiner is next asked to undertake any element of their duties where the external examiner has been appointed.

4.14 Where a conflict of interest cannot be avoided, the University may decide not to approve a nomination, or to discontinue an existing appointment, following the procedure set out in these Regulations.

The information set out in 4.16 applies only to the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

4.15 External examiners for the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology are, in their expert judgment, require to report on whether (i) the University is maintaining threshold academic standards for its award in accordance with the national qualifications frameworks and applicable subject benchmark statements; (ii) the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s) and is conducted in line with the institution's policies and regulations; (iii) the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other higher education institutions of which the external examiners have experience.

Reappointment of External Examiners

4.16 Restrictions shall apply as follows:

(i) A former external examiner for Research Degrees must not be reappointed until: in the case of an external examiner appointed to examine the work of an individual student with the same supervisor, a period of one year has elapsed; and in the case of an external examiner appointed to examine the work of a cohort of students, a period of five or more has elapsed.

Briefing and induction of External Examiners

4.17 Following confirmation of appointment by the Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel, external examiners for Research Degrees will be provided with a letter of appointment, outlining:

(i) contractual arrangements, including rates of payment, expenses, and tenure;

(ii) details of the criteria and procedures for the premature termination of a contract.

4.18 The Assessment Management Team will ensure that on appointment of examination for PhD, EdD and MA/MSc by Research the external examiner is sent:

(i) a written statement about the place of the relevant examinations within the context of the course;

(ii) a written statement about the organisation and phasing of reporting;

(iii) general information about the roles, powers, and responsibilities assigned to External Examiners and the policies and procedures of the University; information concerning the arrangements for examination of work and, where appropriate information concerning the arrangements for examination the viva.

(iv) guidelines on writing the Report;

(v) a copy of the Handbook for Examiners.

4.19 The School within which the student is being supervised should not liaise with the external examiner on any matter concerning the examination, once the appointment has been made.

Early termination of External Examiner contracts

4.20 Termination at the request of the external examiner

(i) Where an external examiner is unable to continue with the role until the end of their appointment, or likely to be unavailable for an extended period of time during their appointment, they should notify Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) in writing as soon as possible.

(ii) Notification should be in sufficient time to enable appropriate alternative arrangements to be made so as not to impact on the assessment process and the student experience.

(iii) Upon receipt of the notice of intent to terminate early, QAE will issue the external examiner with a termination of appointment letter.

4.21 Termination for other reasons

The contract with an external examiner for a Research Degree may be terminated before the end of the external examiner's term of office in one or more of the following circumstances:

(i) the failure to disclose a relationship, contractual or otherwise, which may impair the integrity of the examination process and the independence of the external examiner;

(ii) a failure to fulfil the terms of the contract by failing to attend meetings, and/or presenting the required report(s), and/or return students' work following examination;

(iii) a persistent failure to make arrangements for receiving thesis and attend, where appropriate, the viva, and/or present the required reports;

(iv) dismissal by the main employer of the external examiner for improper conduct in relation to the person's employment, which may impair the integrity of examination process or the independence of the external examiner;

(v) disbarment from being able to practise that may impair the integrity of examination process or the independence of the External Examiner, where there is a clinical or professional element to the research degree;

(vi) breach of University policies .

4.22 The early termination of a contract shall be effected by the Chair of the Research, Enterprise and Knowledge Mobilisation Committee who shall issue a termination of appointment letter and present a report on any such termination to the Research, Enterprise and Knowledge Mobilisation Committee.

4.23 Any external examiner whose contract is subject to early termination shall, upon receipt of the termination of appointment letter, have 14 days to appeal the termination. The request to appeal should be submitted by email to QAE. Upon receipt of the external examiner appeal, QAE shall convene an appeal panel (normally via MS Teams) within 14 days and invite the external examiner to present evidence to the panel comprising the Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor (Chair), the Dean of the Graduate, the Director of QAE and a panel secretary. If the external examiner does not attend the panel meeting and has not given any notice of being unable to attend, the panel will consider the appeal in their absence. The outcome of the appeal panel shall be communicated within seven days of the meeting to all parties, whereby the outcome will be either: a) reinstatement or b) contract terminated.

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