



Examiners for Research Degrees

March 2023

Contents

1	Preamble	3
2	The Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel.....	4
3	Appointment and role of Internal Examiners where an Internal Examiner is appointed to examine the work of an individual student	5
	Introduction	5
	Criteria for appointment for Internal Examiners	5
	Appointment process for Internal Examiners.....	5
	The role of the Internal Examiner	6
4	Appointment and Role of External Examiners.....	6
	Introduction	6
	Nomination of External Examiners	6
	Criteria for appointment for External Examiners	7
	Declaration of Interest	8
	Role of External Examiners where the External Examiner is appointed to examine the work of an individual student	8
	Role of External Examiners where the External Examiner is appointed to examine the work of a cohort of students.....	9
	Restrictions on the reappointment of External Examiners and cohorts examined.....	9
	Briefing and induction of External Examiners.....	10
	Early termination of External Examiner contracts	10

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 (only applicable to the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology):
 - (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 (only applicable to the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology):
 - (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 to Level 8 modules, 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 thesis	For the duration of the examination of the thesis
PhD by Publication	N/A	Supervisor	Each thesis	For the duration of the examination of the thesis
EdD	In line with PGTaught 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 PGTaught provision	Supervisor	Each thesis	For the duration of the examination of the thesis
Masters by Research	N/A	Supervisor	Each thesis	For the duration of the examination of the thesis Note there is no viva for the Masters by Research examination.

2 The Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel

- 2.1 Responsibility for the appointment of External Examiners for Research Degrees and for Internal Examiners where they are appointed to examine the work of an individual student is delegated by the Education and Student Experience Committee to the Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel.
- 2.2 The membership of the Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel will comprise:
 - (i) the Chair of the Education and Student Experience Committee; and
 - (ii) the Chair of the Research Degrees Sub Committee; and
 - (iii) the Dean of the Graduate College.
- 2.3 The appointments made by the Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel will be reported to the Education and Student Experience Committee, specifying those nominations that have been approved.

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.

Criteria for appointment for Internal Examiners

- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 No person who is a sessional member of staff 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 via Research Space to the Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel, which will report all decisions on such appointments to the next meeting of the Education and Student Experience 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, Office for Students requirements, University course specifications and other relevant information.
- 3.11 Where there is no Internal Examiner, the Graduate College will appoint one of the External Examiners to undertake the specific responsibilities of the Internal Examiner during the appointment stage.

4 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, Office for Students requirements, University course specifications and other relevant information;
 - (ii) the standards of student performance in those courses or parts of courses which they have been appointed to examine, and on the comparability of the standards with those of similar courses or parts of courses 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.

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 Appointment of Examiners Form and submit it, together with the curriculum vitae and the right to work documentation of the nominee in Research Space.

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 criterion 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. This requirement may be waived in exceptional circumstances by the Research Degrees Examiner Appointments Panel where the internal examiner has such experience and where the proposed External Examiner has 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 not been sufficient 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 has collaborated in the research of the Supervisor(s) or Chair of Panel 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 in Research Space, 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 Examiner, 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 the conflict of interest 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.

Role of External Examiners where the External Examiner is appointed to examine the work of an individual student

The information set out in 4.15 applies to all research degrees other than to the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

- 4.15 External Examiners, in line with the UKSCQA External Examining Principles, are, in their expert judgment, required to report on:
- (i) whether the academic standard of the thesis 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, Office for Students requirements, University course specifications and other relevant information;

- (ii) the standards of student performance in those courses or parts of courses which they have been appointed to examine, and on the comparability of the standards with those of similar courses or parts of courses 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.

Role of External Examiners where the External Examiner is appointed to examine the work of a cohort of students

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

- 4.16 External Examiners for the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, are, in their expert judgement, required to report whether or not:
- (i) the University is maintaining threshold academic standards for its award in accordance with the Framework for Higher Education Qualification and applicable Subject Benchmark Statements;
 - (ii) the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the course and is conducted in line with the institution's policies and regulations;
 - (iii) the academic standards and the achievement of students are comparable with those in other Higher Education Institutions of which the External Examiners have experience.

Restrictions on the reappointment of External Examiners and cohorts examined

- 4.17 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 years or more has elapsed.
 - (ii) External Examiners from the same institution cannot examine the work of the same cohort of students.

Briefing and induction of External Examiners

- 4.18 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.
- 4.19 The Graduate College will ensure that on appointment the External Examiner is sent:
- (i) information about the place (in person or online) of the relevant examinations within the context of the course;
 - (ii) information about the organisation and phasing of reporting;
 - (iii) information about the roles, powers, and responsibilities assigned to External Examiners and the policies and procedures of the University;
 - (iv) guidelines on writing the independent and joint reports;
 - (v) a copy of the Handbook for Examiners.
- 4.20 External Examiners for Research Degrees will be provided with appropriate support from the Graduate College. Liaison with External Examiner(s) for Research Degrees once appointed shall be through the Graduate College. The department 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

- 4.21 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, including its Dignity at Work Policy.
- 4.22 The early termination of a contract shall be effected by the Chair of the Education and Student Experience Committee on behalf of the Academic Board, who shall present a report on any such termination to the Education and Student Experience Committee.
- 4.23 Any External Examiner whose contract is subject to early termination shall have the right of appeal to the Vice-Chancellor within 28 days of the issue of the notice of termination, who shall establish a panel of independent senior members of the University to hear and determine the matter, and make recommendations.

Version Control Statement

Version:	2
Document title:	Examiners for Research Degrees
Author name:	Quality and Standards Office / Graduate College
Approved date:	8 March 2023
Date for review:	March 2026
Amendments record:	Version 2, minor amendments approved by Education and Student Experience Committee, March 2023 Version 1, approved by Academic Board, March 2020