



NOTES FOR THE EXAMINATION TEAM OF A RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENT

All queries on the examination process or University's regulatory requirements before, during, or after the oral examination, should be addressed to The Graduate School, on 0191 227 4060.

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UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS

1 Regulations and the conduct of the research degree examination

The key aspects of all research degree examinations are governed by University regulations. See <http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/researchandconsultancy/graduateschool/documents/> for the *Academic Regulations for the Degrees of Master of Philosophy & Doctor of Philosophy* and/or the *Academic Regulations for Professional Doctorate Programmes*. For candidates for the degree of PhD by Published Work, see *Academic Regulations for the award of PhD by Published Work*. The relevant features of these regulations are summarised or referenced in these Notes for the Examination Team.

2 Characteristics of different degrees

The research degree academic regulations state that:

MPhil is awarded where the student (sometimes called a candidate) has:

- a) *undertaken a piece of supervised research;*
- b) *critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic;*
- c) *successfully completed training in, and demonstrated an understanding of, research methods appropriate to the field;*
- d) *submitted the work for examination presented to a professional standard;*

- e) *defended the submission by viva voce (oral) examination to the satisfaction of the examiners.*¹

PhD is awarded where the student (candidate) has:

- a) *undertaken a piece of supervised research;*
- b) *critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic resulting in an independent and original contribution to knowledge and understanding (i.e. worthy of publication and peer review by the academic community);*
- c) *successfully completed training in, and demonstrated an understanding of, research methods appropriate to the field;*
- d) *submitted the work for examination presented to a professional standard;*
- e) *defended the submission by viva voce (oral) examination to the satisfaction of the examiners.*²

Professional Doctorate is awarded where the student (candidate) has:

- a) *undertaken a piece of supervised research;*
- b) *critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic producing a submission which successfully articulates the findings resulting in an original contribution to knowledge and professional practice;*
- c) *demonstrated ability to integrate rigorous academic/critical analysis with practical relevance and application;*
- d) *translated ideas into a form understandable by and meaningful to the profession;*
- e) *communicated and disseminated ideas to fellow professionals to stimulate developments of good practice, and to further research into and enhance the profession generally.*³

The Professional Doctorate regulations permit a programme to entail submission of either a thesis or a portfolio; the validation details of the individual Professional Doctorate programme specifies the requirements.

PhD by Published Work is awarded where the candidate has:

- a) Provided evidence of:
 - i. an independent and original contribution to knowledge and understanding, and
 - ii defended their submission by oral examination to the satisfaction of the examiners;

and

- b) Produced evidence of published work which constitutes a coherent whole;
- c) Incorporates an abstract and a substantial introduction and conclusion which both puts the total work submitted into the context of knowledge as it then existed; and indicates the candidate's contribution; and
- d) Is presented to a professional standard.

3 Two Stages of the Examination

All research degree examinations have two stages: i) the submission and ii) the oral examination. The Examiners, therefore, are required both to consider a thesis (or a portfolio in the case of some Professional Doctorate programmes) and to examine the candidate

¹ MPhil/PhD Regulations – regulation 1.3

² MPhil/PhD Regulations – regulation 1.2

³ Professional Doctorate Regulations – regulation 1.1

orally on their understanding of the research. In the case of PhD by Published Work, the 'submission' will include a written commentary on the cited published outputs.⁴

4 Composition of the Examination Team

The Examination Team comprises:

- a) In all cases, a senior member of University academic staff, appointed in accordance with the research degree regulations, to act as Independent 'non-examining' Chair for the conduct of the oral examination.
- b) In the case of MPhil or PhD, at least two independent Examiners, appointed in accordance with the criteria outlined in the regulations; one of the Examiners must be external to the University.
- c) For Professional Doctorate, at least two independent Examiners who are academics or professionals, appointed in accordance with the criteria outlined in the Professional Doctorate regulations; one of the Examiners must be external to the University.
- d) For PhD by Published Work, two independent Examiners both of whom are external to the University.

5 Other Regulatory Requirements

The research degree academic regulations specify the required format of the Student's submission, that the oral examination will normally take place within two months of submission, and the possible outcomes of the examination. These points from those regulations are referenced below.

ROLES WITHIN THE EXAMINATION TEAM

6 The role of the Internal and External Examiners is:

- a) to apply their knowledge, expertise and experience to assess the submission and the Student, in the context of the University's research degree regulations;
- b) to understand the requirements of the University's *Regulations for the Degrees of Master of Philosophy & Doctor of Philosophy* or *Professional Doctorate Award Regulations* (in the case of Professional Doctorate) or *Regulations for the Award of PhD by Published Work* in relation to the examination process;
- c) to read the submission in advance of the oral examination;
- d) to form an independent, preliminary assessment of the submission; to record that assessment on the University report form ('A'); and submit it to the University (via the Graduate School) in advance of the oral examination (on the day, before the start of the oral examination, will suffice);
- e) in the rare event where a case of plagiarism is suspected by an Examiner, to notify The Graduate School of any such evidence immediately, and at least ten working days in advance of the scheduled examination date, because University Regulations may require the oral examination to be suspended pending formal investigation of any suggested plagiarism;

⁴ Regulations for PhD by Published Work – Annex A I.

- f) to ensure that the examination results in a clear recommendation and outcome, selected from the options available within the University Regulations; to document that recommendation fully on the day of the examination on the standard report form ('B'), and thereby to recommend that examination outcome to the Research Degrees Committee;
- g) to provide oral feedback of the recommendation to the candidate and Principal Supervisor⁵ at the end of the oral examination;
- h) where the Examiners recommend that the candidate should make corrections to their submission or re-submit it, they are required to assess at a later date whether the corrections/re-submission made by the candidate, are satisfactory; and then to make further recommendation to the Research Degrees Committee on whether the degree should be awarded.

7 Role of the Independent 'Non-Examining' Chair

The Independent Chair is not an academic subject expert, has a neutral role, and takes no part in the actual assessment of the student or submission. Their role is:

- a) to facilitate a professional and authoritative setting for the oral examination;
- b) to ensure that the assessment process is conducted rigorously, equitably, appropriately, fairly and consistently according to the University's research degree regulations and procedures;
- c) to advise the Examiners on the University's research degree regulations, procedures, policy and practice in relation to the oral examination; in particular, to advise on the possible outcomes of the examination under the University's regulations;
- d) at the private preliminary meeting for the Examiners, to enable each Examiner to view and consider the preliminary report ('A') form/s completed by the other Examiner/s;
- e) at the conclusion of the oral examination, to ensure that the Examiners have completed the Examiners' report and recommendation on the examination outcome in full (on the form 'B'), specifying all of the corrections required, and also to sign the report form along with the other members of the examination team;
- f) before the Student (or Candidate) is invited back into the examination room, to telephone the Graduate School on 0191 227 4060 to arrange for the Graduate School to make immediate photocopies of the fully completed and signed 'B' form; and also if the Principal Supervisor is not already in attendance with the Student, to arrange for the Principal Supervisor to be called over to the examination venue to support the Student in receiving feedback.
- g) at the conclusion of the examination, to invite the Student and Principal Supervisor back into the examination room and enable the Examiners to give oral feedback to the Student on the recommended examination outcome; to provide the Student with a photocopy of the completed report form 'B'; and to advise the Student that the recommendations stated on the 'B' form will be submitted for the Research Degrees Committee to consider for approval at their next meeting; and
- h) to provide an additional report (in standard format) to the Research Degrees Committee on the conduct of the examination, from the perspective of the Independent Chair.

⁵ For PhD by Published Work, the candidate has an appointed 'Adviser' rather than a Supervisor

On the day of the examination, the Independent Chair is given a copy of the candidate's submission for reference only during the oral examination. The Independent Chair is not required to read the thesis in advance of the oral examination.

THE SUBMISSION & THE PROCEDURE BEFORE THE ORAL EXAMINATION

8 Submission

The Student (or Candidate) submits the thesis (or portfolio, where appropriate) to the Graduate School and not directly to the Examiners. In the case of PhD by Published Work, the 'submission' will include a written commentary on the cited published outputs. The University requires the submission to be presented to an excellent standard of presentation, and the format is specified in the relevant regulations and published guidance.⁶ The Student is required to submit both sufficient hard copies (as previously advised by The Graduate School) together with an identical electronic copy in pdf format.

On receipt of the submission from the candidate, The Graduate School despatches to the Internal and External Examiners:

- the thesis (or portfolio, where appropriate), and
- a preliminary report form ('A') to be used by the Examiner to record his/her independent preliminary assessment of the thesis/portfolio (or, for PhD by Published Work, an independent preliminary assessment of the candidate's submission - comprising a written commentary together with the candidate's relevant published outputs).

In order to safeguard the integrity of the examination process, the Examiners should not accept the submission directly from the candidate; nor should there be any direct communication (on the candidate's submission) between the Examiners and the candidate or supervisors in advance of the oral examination being held.

The Independent Chair is not provided with a copy of the submission until the day of the Oral Examination, and then for reference only.

9 Preliminary Assessment of the Submission

The examination schedule typically allows the internal and external examiners four weeks to read and assess the submission, and to document their preliminary assessment in an independent report, which must be returned to the University in advance of the oral examination. The form of this report is prescribed by the University (the 'A' form), and is available in both hard copy and electronic versions.⁷ The purpose of the independent, preliminary report is to facilitate the rigor and independence of the examination process (in accordance with QAA *Post Graduate Research Code of Practice*). The Internal and External

⁶ MPhil/PhD Regulations – Appendix 1; Professional Doctorate Regulations – Appendix 1; Regulations for PhD by Published Work – Annex A; and *Submitting for Examination: Guidance for Research Degree Students and Supervisors*

⁷ MPhil candidates, the report form is MPhil (A); for PhD candidates, the report form is PhD (A); for Professional Doctorate candidates, the report form is Prof Doct (A); for PhD by Published Work candidates, the report form is PhD PUB (A)

Examiners may bring the completed report form 'A' on the day of the Examination, or email it to The Graduate School in advance.

In the rare event where a case of plagiarism is suspected, however, an Examiner should notify The Graduate School immediately, at least ten working days in advance of the scheduled examination date, because University Regulations may require the oral examination to be suspended pending formal investigation.

Each Examiner's preliminary report is **only** shared with the other members of the Examination Team **on the day of the Oral Examination**, at the private meeting before the examination commences; in this context, the preliminary reports provide the starting point for the Examination Team's plan for the actual conduct of the examination.

10 Fixing the date for the oral examination

The University's expectation is that the oral examination normally takes place within two months of the candidate presenting their submission to The Graduate School. Therefore, on receipt of the submission, The Graduate School promptly despatches a copy to the internal/external examiner(s) and contacts all members of the Examination Team to request possible dates on which it might be convenient to hold the oral examination. The Graduate School then liaises with all parties (Candidate, Supervisor and Examination Team, including the Independent 'non-examining' Chair) to finalise a date for the oral examination. Once the date and time is fixed, The Graduate School arranges the venue, organises any travel and accommodation arrangements as required by the External Examiner(s), and confirms detailed examination arrangements to all parties by email in advance of the examination date. **The email will also direct the Examination Team and the Candidate/Principal Supervisor to relevant information on the University's research degree examination procedures, located on The Graduate School's website at:** www.northumbria.ac.uk/pgrexams.

11 Travel arrangements and accommodation

The Graduate School will also liaise with the External Examiner before the Oral Examination, to ensure appropriate travel and accommodation arrangements are in place.

THE DAY OF THE ORAL EXAMINATION

12 Notification of the examination date, time and venue

Before the examination date, The Graduate School will have notified all parties by email of the detailed arrangements for the examination, including the date, schedule, venue and location.

13 Initial Private Meeting for the Examination Team

The Graduate School will invite the Examination Team to attend the examination venue at least 45 minutes before the scheduled formal start time for the oral exam. The first fifteen minutes is normally spent dealing with the relevant examination paperwork required by the Graduate School Administrator (see section 14 following). A private meeting for the Examination Team then follows (normally scheduled for 30 minutes); this enables the Examiners and Independent non-examining Chair to confer and the Examiners to share the contents of their individual preliminary reports ('A' forms) before the Candidate (possibly accompanied by his/her Supervisor) attends the examination venue and before the oral

examination begins. Examples of the issues which may be decided at that private meeting are:

- a) Issues which Examiners have already identified (on the preliminary report 'A' forms) to be addressed in the oral examination;
- b) Agree the rough order of questions, and who will take the lead in the academic questioning (often this is the External Examiner);
- c) Perhaps agree that the Independent Chair will invite the Candidate (and Principal Supervisor, if in attendance) into the examination room, make introductions, and then hand over to (perhaps) the External Examiner.

14 Graduate School representation at the exam

A Graduate School administrator will attend the examination venue immediately before the examiners' private meeting begins, to ensure that the room is satisfactory, that all parties have arrived, to collect each examiner's completed preliminary report (on the standard 'A' form) and to make photocopies of each report immediately so that copies can be shared with all members of the Examination Team. The Administrator also provides the following documentation:

- a) A copy of the submission for the Independent non-examining Chair (for reference only)
- b) Hard copy of the University standard report form 'B' to be used to record the Examiners' recommendation on the examination outcome at the conclusion of the oral examination;
- c) Hard copy of the University standard report form for completion by the Independent Chair;
- d) Hard copies of these *Notes* and of the relevant *research degree regulations*, for reference;
- e) Documentation to arrange payment of the fee and any expenses incurred by the external examiner(s).

Once the oral examination has concluded, the Administrator will collect the Examiners' report detailing the Examiners' recommendation on the examination outcome (on the report form 'B'), and the Independent Chair's own report on the conduct of the examination. The Administrator will then make photocopies of the Examiners' report, retain the original, and give the copies to the Independent Chair. Once the Examiners are ready to give their oral feedback to the candidate on the examination outcome, a copy is given to the candidate and to their Supervisor.

Where the Candidate's Supervisor is not going to attend the full oral examination with the Candidate, it is expected that a member of the supervision team (usually the Principal Supervisor) is available to attend the exam venue, with the candidate, to hear the oral feedback. In this case, once the Examiners are ready to 'feedback', the Graduate School Administrator is available to contact the Supervisor to attend the exam venue with the Candidate to hear that feedback (see section 15, second paragraph below).

15 Supervisor's attendance at the oral exam

A member of the supervision team (normally the Principal Supervisor)⁸ may, at the request of the candidate, be present at the oral examination but as an observer only, to support the candidate. The Supervisor is not an examiner; s/he does not attend the Examiners' private

⁸ For PhD by Published Work, the candidate has an appointed 'Adviser' rather than a Supervisor

meeting, but waits outside the examination venue with the candidate, until invited into the room by a member of the Examination Team. At the end of the oral examination, the Supervisor must withdraw from the examination room, along with the candidate, while the Examiners consider and decide which examination outcome they will recommend to the University.

Even when the Principal Supervisor has not attended the whole examination, s/he is required to attend the examination venue to hear the Examiners' feedback with the candidate. To facilitate this (if the supervisor has not already been in attendance during the course of the oral examination), the Independent Chair should first contact the Graduate School to advise that the Examination Team has concluded their deliberations and is ready to feedback their recommendation to the candidate. The Graduate School will then telephone the candidate's Principal Supervisor to request that s/he immediately attend the examination venue.

16 Conduct of the Oral Examination (viva voce)

The academic conduct of the oral examination depends upon the expertise, experience and independence of the external and internal Examiners. In addition, the presence of the Independent 'non-examining' Chair facilitates a professional and authoritative setting for the examination, and ensures that it is conducted in a fair and equitable way. The Independent Chair will seek to ensure that the Candidate has the opportunity to respond to all questions posed by the Examiners, and may invite an Examiner to re-phrase a question, if it appears that the Candidate has not understood it fully. Should the oral examination extend beyond two hours, the Independent Chair ensures that the Candidate is offered a comfort break.

17 Outcome of the Examination

When the Examiners have finished asking all their questions, and the Candidate has no further queries, the Independent Chair will draw the examination to a conclusion; and ask the Candidate and Principal Supervisor to leave the examination venue and to return after 45 minutes or longer, to receive oral feedback. In the absence of the Candidate (and Supervisor if s/he has attended the oral exam), the Examination Team draws together their conclusions and determines which examination outcome they will recommend to the Research Degrees Committee.

It is the Independent Chair's responsibility to facilitate the External and Internal Examiners reaching a consensus recommendation; and also to advise on the University's Research degree regulations (if required).

The research degree regulations provide the following options from which the Examiners select their recommendation:⁹

- A. Award the degree.¹⁰
- B. Award the degree, subject to modifications being carried out to the satisfaction of the nominated examiner/s;¹¹

⁹ The options are the same for MPhil, PhD and Professional Doctorates (but see footnote 12 below). For PhD by Published Work there is no option C) and D) as listed above. The options for all research degree awards are detailed clearly on the report pro-forma (the 'B' form) which is used by the Examiners.

¹⁰ Examiners may recommend this outcome, i.e. *Award the degree, despite typographical/spelling or minor textual corrections being needed, provided that the Examiners do not wish to review these corrections after the candidate has made them.*

¹¹ "Modifications" may include revision of material in the thesis that the Examiners specify in detail and which, in their judgement, are necessary for the thesis to reach an acceptable standard. This can include revisions that rectify omissions as well as improvements to the contextualisation/arguments/discussions within the thesis, and removal of sections/other re-structuring of the thesis. The award of the degree is withheld until the Examiners confirm that all requested modifications have been completed to their satisfaction.

- C. Require a re-submission for the degree, including a further oral examination, and with the work re-submitted within a maximum period of twelve months from the date of the first examination.
- D. Recommend the award of a lower degree, with or without further amendment to the thesis, in accordance with the criteria and requirements of that lower degree – see footnote¹².
- E. Fail.

Care is needed in judging the most appropriate outcome from the University's regulations, to carry the examiners' assessment and requirements. The footnote (13), following below, indicates the range of corrections which might be required where a Candidate has, in principle, met the requirements for the award but further work is required. **The Examiners should also decide which of them will subsequently review the corrected submission and approve it on behalf of the Examiners (in some cases, they may decide that all of the Examiners should review it).**

Where corrections are required, the Examiners should not consider how much time might be required to complete the specified corrections, only what corrections should be made to the submission. It is the responsibility of the University's Research Degrees Committee to determine the timescale and deadline by which the Candidate is required to complete the specified corrections, taking in to account the scale of those corrections.

In contrast to examination outcome 'B' (award the degree subject to modifications being made), a re-submission outcome (outcome 'C') is selected where Examiners consider that the Candidate has NOT satisfied the University's requirements for the award; the shortcomings of the submission are so significant that the submission has to be thoroughly revised, so that the Candidate can make a second attempt to satisfy the requirements through a re-examination. In this instance, the regulations permit the Candidate up to twelve months in which to revise the submission in the light of the comments made by the Examiners, and then re-submit it. Thereafter, the Candidate has a second oral examination, to demonstrate that s/he meets the criteria for the award; this is the final opportunity for the Candidate to do so because *normally, only one re-examination is permitted*.¹³

In order to safeguard the integrity of the examination, the Examiners should not accept the corrected submission directly from the candidate; nor should there be any direct communication (on the candidate's submission) between the Examiners and the candidate or supervisors until the examination process has been fully concluded and the award has been made – see section 23 following. Any further communication must be channelled through the Graduate School.

18 Completing the Final Report

When the Candidate (and Principal Supervisor if in attendance at the examination) has left the examination venue, the Examiners then complete their final report on the outcome of the examination. The University pro-forma (the report form 'B') is used, and must be completed in full and photocopied before the Candidate and supervisor are invited into the room to hear the Examiners' recommendation and oral feedback. The report is signed and dated by the whole Examination Team, including the Independent Chair. The report identifies the recommended outcome; it also states in detail the reasons underlying the Examiners' recommendation and so provides the evidence to substantiate the Examiners' conclusion. Where appropriate, the report also lists comprehensively the corrections, alterations and/or

¹² For Professional Doctorate programmes, the outcome is *Fail the degree and recommend the award of credits from the taught component module(s), in accordance with the criteria and requirements of the professional doctorate degree programme – see Professional Doctorate regulation 10.3*

¹³ MPhil/PhD Regulations – regulation 10.8; Professional Doctorate Regulations – regulation 10.8

additions which the Examiners require to be made to the work; these details may be provided on supplementary sheets of paper.

Where corrections are required, the report states which Examiner(s) will subsequently review the corrected submission and approve it on behalf of the Examiners.

The Independent Chair then contacts The Graduate School to arrange for photocopies to be made of the completed 'B' form (and of any supplementary sheets), so that a copy can be given to the Candidate and Principal Supervisor immediately.

19 If No Consensus can be reached

If the Independent Chair is unable to facilitate the Examiners to reach a consensus agreement on the examination outcome, then each Examiner formally records their own recommended outcome on a separate report form 'B'. The Independent Chair is also required to provide his/her own report setting out the reason(s) why the Examiners were unable to reach a consensus. In such a case, and before the report forms are completed, the Independent Chair is advised to first telephone the Graduate School for guidance – (0191) 227 4060.

20 Immediate Oral Feedback to the Candidate

Following full completion and photocopying of the final report form ('B'), the Independent Chair invites the Candidate (and Supervisor) to return to the examination room. The Examiners then inform the Candidate orally of the recommendation they are making to the Research Degrees Committee on the result of the examination. The Examiners also inform the Candidate of any required corrections. The Independent Chair gives to the Candidate (and the Supervisor) a photocopy of the Examiners' final report (the completed 'B' form, together with any supplementary sheets), but explains that the Examiners' recommendation requires consideration for approval by the Research Degrees Committee at its next monthly meeting.

Whilst the Candidate can be work on any required corrections immediately following the examination, s/he cannot submit the corrected version until s/he has received the formal notification of the RDC's decision on the examination outcome, issued by The Graduate School.

21 Conclusion of the Oral Examination

This concludes the examination. The Independent Chair immediately liaises with The Graduate School by telephone (0191 227 4060) to ensure that all the required documentation is immediately passed to The Graduate School, i.e.

- a) Completed and signed 'B' form (together with any additional comments continued on supplementary pages);
- b) Completed 'A' form from each Examiner;
- c) The copy of the submission used as a reference by the Independent Chair during the oral examination;
- d) The Independent Chair's own report on the conduct of the examination.

22 Research Degrees Committee (RDC) Decision

The Graduate School arranges for the Examiners' recommendation (on the 'B' form) to be considered at the next meeting of the University's Research Degrees Committee. The RDC

meets monthly. In the vast majority of cases, the Committee endorses the Examiners' recommendation. Where corrections are to be made, it is the Committee's responsibility to specify the deadline that the Student must meet in completing these corrections; normally corrections are to be submitted within a maximum of six months. Very occasionally, the Committee will adjust the Examiners' recommendation, to ensure parity across the University, or where Examiners have strayed outside of University regulations. When Examiners have been unable to reach a consensus recommendation, the Committee may appoint new examiners.

Following the meeting of the Research Degrees Committee, the Secretary of the RDC informs the Candidate formally of the approved outcome of the Examination and (where appropriate) confirms the detailed corrections/requirements specified by the Examiners, and the deadline for submission. This confirmation is copied to the Principal Supervisor.

CORRECTIONS

- 23 **Where the examination outcome entails corrections**, the Examiners will have specified which Examiner/s are required, in due course, to assess the corrected submission. The Candidate is supported by the Principal Supervisor, to make the required corrections within the timescale specified by the Research Degrees Committee. **The Examiners are not involved in supporting the Candidate in this work, because their role is that of assessor. To safeguard the integrity of the Examination, any further communication between the Candidate/Supervisor and the Examiners must be channelled solely through The Graduate School.**

The Student submits their corrected submission to The Graduate School. On receipt, The Graduate School sends to the relevant Examiner/s:

- the corrected submission; and
- a copy of the Examiners' report (on the form 'B') originally completed by the Examiners at the conclusion of the oral examination, for the Examiner's reference.

The relevant Examiner/s is required to review the corrections to assess them against the requirements stated on the 'B' form and within the context of the University's criteria for the award. If the corrections are satisfactory, the Examiner/s recommends (to The Graduate School) that the Award should now be made. If the corrections have not been completed to the satisfaction of the Examiner/s, they will recommend that further work needs to be done by the Candidate to meet the Examiners' original requirements. The Graduate School co-ordinates this assessment, which is completed by post and email, and the Candidate is not directly involved. Once the Candidate has completed the outstanding corrections/revisions, The Graduate School send copies to the Examiner/s for further review. When the Examiners are satisfied and can recommend the award, the Examiners' recommendation is then submitted to the next meeting of the Research Degrees Committee for consideration. When the RDC has approved the recommendations and awarded the degree, the Candidate and Principal Supervisor are notified of the formal outcome.

RE-SUBMISSION

- 24 **Where the examination outcome entails a Re-submission**

In this case, the Candidate is supported by the Principal Supervisor, to re-work the material and re-submit the work for a second oral examination within twelve months. **The Examiners are not involved in supporting the Candidate in this work, because their role is that of**

assessor. To safeguard the integrity of the Examination, any further communication between the Student/Supervisor and the Examiners must be channelled solely through The Graduate School.

The Candidate re-submits their thesis (or portfolio, as appropriate) to The Graduate School. On receipt, The Graduate School sends to the Examiners:

- a) The revised submission;
- b) a copy of the Examiners' report (on the form 'B') originally completed by the Examiners at the conclusion of the oral examination, for the Examiner's reference and
- c) The University pro-forma for each Examiner to make an independent, preliminary assessment of the resubmission (the form ReSubmission 'A').

The Graduate School then liaises with all parties to arrange a second oral examination. Normally, the process is largely the same as for a first submission and first oral examination. However, the research degree regulations only permit a student to have one re-submission; therefore, the options available to the Examiners on the recommended outcome following the second examination are more limited:

- A. Award the degree.¹⁴
- B. Award the degree, subject to modifications being carried out to the satisfaction of the nominated examiner/s;¹⁵
- C. Recommend the award of a lower degree, with or without further amendment to the submission, in accordance with the criteria and requirements of that lower degree.
- D. Fail.

¹⁴ Examiners may recommend this outcome, i.e. *Award the degree*, despite typographical/spelling or minor textual corrections being needed, provided that the Examiners do not wish to review these corrections after the candidate has made them.

¹⁵ "Modifications" may include revision of material in the thesis that the Examiners specify in detail and which, in their judgement, are necessary for the thesis to reach an acceptable standard. This can include revisions that rectify omissions as well as improvements to the contextualisation/arguments/discussions within the thesis, and removal of sections/other re-structuring of the thesis. The award of the degree is withheld until the Examiners confirm that all requested modifications have been completed to their satisfaction.

PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH DEGREES – MPhil AND PHD

25 Practice-led submission

A submission may be based around a candidate's own creative practice if this is used as an instrument of inquiry and reflection. In these cases, the practice and its processes will demonstrate a clear research methodology and the outcomes will be defensible in relation to their impact upon, and significance for, the appropriate academic field as a whole. The practice-led submission comprises:

- a permanent record of the candidate's creative work within the art and design subject domain including fine art, film, performance, creative writing, design practice, etc.; and
- a written thesis of 30,000 - 40,000 words for PhD; or 15,000 - 20,000 words for MPhil.

The formal relationship between the practical and written aspects of the research degree submission is defined as follows:

The line of inquiry or argument of the written thesis will elucidate the reflective elements of a programme of research in which a creative practice, and its products, will have embodied the process of interrogation and review. The submission will also set the permanent record of the candidate's practice within its contemporary artistic or design context - these might include theoretical, historical, critical, literary, technological, economic, political or social frames of reference.

26 [When the University conducts the examination of a submission built around creative practice, the programme on the day of the oral examination is slightly different from standard examinations. The following supplementary notes highlight the difference:](#)

- a) Each Examiner must first view the creative work before he or she is able to complete their independent preliminary report on the candidate's submission (on the standard report form 'A'). Normally the creative work will be available to view on the same day as the oral examination is being held.
- b) The Examination Team views the creative work without the Candidate being present. If necessary, the Examiners can return to view the exhibition of work (with the Candidate) during the course of the subsequent oral examination.
- c) After viewing the exhibition, each Examiner adjourns to a separate room - so that s/he can then complete a written report (using the form 'A') to record their own independent preliminary assessment of the Candidate's submission
- d) After completion of their independent reports, these documents are used as the basis of the Examination Team's private preliminary meeting before the oral examination begins. The Graduate School administrator is available to make photocopies of the completed 'A' forms and to ensure that copies are retained by the University for the record.
- e) After their private meeting has concluded, the Candidate is invited into the examination room (together with the Supervisor if the Candidate has requested that his/her Supervisor should attend the oral examination) and the oral examination begins
- f) At the conclusion of the oral, the Candidate (and Supervisor, if in attendance at the examination) is asked to leave the room and the examiners have a further private meeting to agree their recommendation on the examination outcome. At the conclusion of this second private meeting, the Examiners then complete their (joint) report and recommendation on the examination outcome (using the report form 'B').

- g) After completion of the 'B' form, the Candidate is invited back into the room to hear the Examiners' recommendation/feedback on the outcome of his/her oral examination (with a member of the supervision team always expected to be present).

The remainder of the examination follows standard procedure, as set out in sections 12-22 above.

APPEALS AGAINST THE OUTCOME OF THE EXAMINATION

- 27 The principles and procedures for research degree students to appeal are published in the Handbook of Student Regulations, at <http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/researchandconsultancy/graduateschool/documents/PGRstudentregs/>

The Graduate School
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