UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

CODE OF PRACTICE ON ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH DEGREE THESES

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Code of Practice on Assessment of Research Degree Theses

1. Introduction

1.1 This Code of Practice sets out the processes and procedures for the assessment of research degree theses to be followed by all principal academic units.

1.2 It is recognised that the unit responsible for certain aspects of the assessment of research students varies for good reason across the University and may be either the College or the principal academic unit. For the sake of brevity the following Code of Practice refers only to the principal academic unit (except when referring to those aspects of the procedures which are clearly a University-level responsibility). All references to the principal academic unit should therefore be interpreted as referring to the College or principal academic unit in accordance with practice in the particular part of the University concerned. The term "Head of principal academic unit" should be interpreted as referring to "The Head of principal academic unit or nominee".

1.3 The term "student(s)" in this Code of Practice should be interpreted as referring to students registered for qualifications that are designated as research degrees under the University's Regulations.

1.4 The terms "viva voce" and "oral examination" are interchangeable. Throughout this Code of Practice, the phrase oral examination will be used.

1.5 This Code of Practice applies to all students who submit a standard thesis for examination under the University's Regulations for Research Degrees. It also applies to students who make submissions comprising written work and other formats such as videos, CS, internet sites, portfolios of musical composition etc. that may be submitted as part of the final submission under the University's Regulations.

1.6 This document is published for information only and does not form part of any contract; the University reserves the right to make alterations without notice.

2. Nomination of Examiners

2.1 Students are required to submit to Academic Services a "Notice of Intention to Submit a Thesis" form at least three months before they intend to submit their theses, in order that the nomination of examiners can be sought.

2.2 The receipt by Academic Services of a student's "Notice of Intention to Submit a Thesis" form will trigger the nomination process. However, it is expected that supervisor(s) and principal academic units will have begun the process on an informal basis during the final stages of the completion of the thesis by the student. (see also paragraph 5.1(h) Code of Practice: Supervision and Monitoring of Progress of Research Students).

2.3 On receipt of this form Academic Services will send a "Nomination of Examiners for Research Degrees" form to the student's Head of principal academic unit for their completion and approval. Where the latter is also the student's supervisor, the nomination should be approved by the member of

academic staff within the principal academic unit with responsibility for research students. The completed form should be returned with any supporting documentation, where appropriate, to Academic Services. If any section of the form is incomplete, it will be returned to the relevant Head of principal academic unit or member of academic staff with responsibility for research students. If any exceptional cases have been made (see paragraph 4.1 of this Code of Practice) Academic Services will be responsible for transmission to the University's Postgraduate Committee for consideration.

2.4 Supervisor(s) should normally be consulted before the examiners are nominated. Students should be able to comment on the choice of examiners.

2.5 Those approving the nominations must ensure that the proposed examiners meet the criteria (see Section 4 of this Code of Practice).

2.6 Principal academic units should ensure that the nominees have been asked informally to act as examiners, that they are aware of the University's timescale for the examination of theses (normally eight weeks where an oral examination is to be held; six weeks in other cases) and also of the proposed date of submission of the thesis by the student. Principal academic units should also ensure that nominees know what is expected of them as examiners, should their nominations be confirmed (see Appendix A of this Code of Practice). Nominees should be asked about their availability should there be unforeseen delays in the submission of the thesis.

2.7 The Senate formally appoints external examiners.

2.8 No formal letter of appointment will be sent to the examiners. The confirmation of appointment is included in a letter providing further details concerning the examination of the thesis. This letter accompanies the thesis when it is despatched to examiners, together with Guidance Notes on the Examination of Research Degree Theses.

2.9 Students are advised of the names of their examiners when theses are despatched to the examiners.

2.10 The "Nomination of Examiners for Research Degrees" form also contains a section for the nomination of a chairperson of the oral examination (see Section 5 and Appendix A of this Code of Practice). The nomination of a chairperson can be made at the same time as the nomination of the examiners. If not, then the nomination must be made in advance of the oral examination and Academic Services so notified.

3. Number of Examiners to be Appointed

3.1 At least one internal examiner and at least one external examiner should be appointed for each student, except where the student is a member of staff of this University.

3.2 Where the student is a member of the staff of this University, at least one internal examiner and at least two external examiners will be appointed.

3.3 Where no internal examiner can be appointed, for example in extremely specialised subject areas, two external examiners will be appointed. (see paragraph 2.25 of the Code of Practice on Supervision and Monitoring

Progress of Research Students)
Note: In these cases, the chairperson, who should have some knowledge of the subject area of the thesis in general terms, should undertake the administrative duties of the internal examiner, in addition to chairing the oral examination. (See also Section 5 and Appendix A of this Code of Practice)

3.4 Neither the lead nor the co-supervisor should be appointed as an internal examiner. (see paragraph 2.22 of the Code of Practice on Supervision and Monitoring Progress of Research Students)

3.5 Joint PhDs with partner institutions should be examined in accordance with the agreement signed with the partner institutions. However, this University's minimum requirements for the examination process must be met.

4. Criteria for the Nomination of Examiners

4.1 In the instance where a principal academic unit might wish to nominate an examiner who does not meet the criteria below, an exceptional case, setting out the proposed examiner's particular suitability to examine the thesis concerned, curriculum vitae and research record, should be made in the appropriate section of the nomination of examiners' form. The case will be considered by the Progress & Awards Board of Senate.

The examiners should:

4.1 .1 Be specialists in the general subject area of the thesis.

4.1 .2 Hold qualifications at least equal to the degree which they are examining, unless there is compensating academic or professional status or experience *(e.g. specialist in subject area of thesis and has published widely, but only has master's degree).*

4.1 .3 Have good research experience, be research active and have published in peer reviewed publications.

4.1 .4 Hold a current academic appointment within higher education, although appropriate persons from outside higher education (e.g. a senior scientist at a research institute or professional practitioner) or who holds a similar position which gives familiarity with research (and research degrees) may be appointed.

4.1 .5 Have recent experience (within the last five years) of examining research degree theses and/or a clear understanding of the task to be undertaken.

4.1 .6 Be from a minimum 3aRAE rated department (at least one examiner).

4.2 *The examiners should not:*

4.2 .1 Have had a substantial direct involvement with the student's work (unless it is a resubmitted thesis).

4.2 .2 Be the student's lead or co-supervisor (see paragraph 2.22 of the Code of Practice on Supervision and Monitoring Progress of Research Students).

4.2 .3 Be former members of staff of this University or former research degree

students of this University, before a lapse of at least four years.

4.2 .4 Be a probationer.

4.2 .5 Currently be a student for a research degree.

4.3 External examiners should not be appointed on a regular basis such that their familiarity with the principal academic unit might prejudice objective judgement.

4.4 The academic adviser could be appointed as the internal examiner. This should only be the case where the academic adviser has had no detailed and/or specialist academic investment in the content of the student's work, and has only been involved in providing general academic advice. The Head of principal academic unit should ensure that, in circumstances where the academic adviser is appointed as the internal examiner, they are sufficiently independent (see paragraph 2.23 of the Code of Practice on Supervision and Monitoring Progress of Research Students).

4.5 The mentor could be appointed as the internal examiner. This should only be the case where the mentor has not engaged in any significant pastoral support for the student concerned. The Head of principal academic unit should ensure that, in circumstances where the mentor is appointed as the internal examiner, they are sufficiently independent (see paragraph 2.24 of the Code of Practice on Supervision and Monitoring Progress of Research Students).

4.6 A person not on the University of Birmingham's payroll but holding an honorary University of Birmingham title may be appointed as an internal but not as an external examiner. *Note: In such cases, it may be appropriate for the chairperson of the oral examination to undertake the administrative duties of the internal examiner (See also 3.3 of this Code of Practice).*

4.7 The original examiners should normally re-examine a thesis that has been resubmitted after revision. Principal academic units will be asked by Academic Services to re-confirm the original examiners. Where examiners are no longer able to act, for example, following retirement, principal academic units should nominate replacement examiners, using the appropriate form, and setting out reasons for the replacement(s). Examiners, in their letter of appointment, will be advised that if the thesis is subject to revision and resubmission and that, if for any reason, they are not re-appointed to re-examine the thesis, their reports will be made available to the examiners.

5. The Oral Examination

5.1 The Chairperson of the Oral Examination

5.1 .1 The appointment of a member of academic staff to chair an oral examination is not only good practice, but is a protection mechanism for the student and the examiners, in instances, for example, of allegations of impropriety or bias on the part of the examiners. The presence of an independent chairperson is to reassure and make the student feel more at ease and during the course of the oral examination ensure that there is fair play, that intense and robust discussion is at an appropriate level and that there is sufficient sensitivity to equal opportunities issues (see also Appendix A of this Code of Practice).

5.1 .2 The chairperson should be independent in that he or she should not have had a substantial direct involvement in the candidate's work or have been involved in the appointment of the examiners. The formal nomination of the examiners on behalf of a principal academic unit should not preclude the Head of principal academic unit from chairing an oral examination. The chairperson must be impartial.

5.1 .3 The chairperson cannot be the student's lead or co-supervisor or internal examiner (see paragraph 2.26 of the Code of Practice on Supervision and Monitoring Progress of Research Students).

5.1 .4 The academic adviser could be appointed to chair the oral examination, but only if they have not had any detailed and/or specialist academic investment in the content of the student's work and has only been providing general academic advice. The Head of principal academic unit should ensure that, in circumstances where the academic adviser is appointed to chair the oral examination, they are sufficiently independent (see paragraph 2.27 of the Code of Practice on Supervision and Monitoring Progress of Research Students).

5.1 .5 The mentor could be appointed to chair the oral examination, but only if they have not engaged in any significant pastoral support for the student concerned. The Head of principal academic unit should ensure that, in circumstances where the mentor is appointed to chair the oral examination, they are sufficiently independent (see paragraph 2.28 of the Code of Practice on Supervision and Monitoring Progress of Research Students).

5.2 The Oral Examination

The following is a set of guidance pointers for the arrangements for and conduct of the oral examination.

The Requirement to hold an Oral Examination is:

5.2 .1 Obligatory for doctoral degrees (exemption only in exceptional circumstances and then, only with the approval of Senate or delegated authority).

5.2 .2 At the discretion of examiners for masters degrees by research.

5.2 .3 Obligatory after a doctoral thesis has been resubmitted.

5.3 *Arrangements for the Oral Examination*

5.3 .1 It is the responsibility of the internal examiner (or the chairperson if two external examiners are appointed) to make the arrangements for the oral examination.

5.3 .2 The internal examiner should notify the chairperson, external examiner(s) and the student, in writing, giving at least two weeks' notice, of the date, time, place and names of those attending.

5.3 .3 The oral examination should normally be held in Birmingham. If not,

approval must be sought from the Progress and Awards Board of Senate.

5.4 *Purpose/Aim of the Oral Examination*

The oral examination

5.4 .1 Provides the student with an opportunity to defend their thesis.

5.4 .2 Assists the examiners in their decision as to whether or not the student has met the requirements for the degree.

5.4 .3 Examines the general field within which the subject of the thesis lies.

5.4 .4 Allows detailed discussion of the thesis.

5.4 .5 Explores the ideas and theories proposed in the thesis.

5.4 .6 Clarifies points of ambiguity.

5.4 .7 Satisfies the examiners that the thesis is the student's own work.

5.5 *Conduct of the Oral Examination*

5.5 .1 The oral examination should be held in a suitable room without interruptions from others.

5.5 .2 If any of those who should be attending are unable to be present, then the oral examination must be re-arranged. The chairperson, internal, external examiners and student must be present. No other person may attend except with the unanimous approval of the chairperson and examiners. Supervisor(s) should not be present at the oral examination, unless, exceptionally, they have been appointed as an internal examiner, but should be available on the day. No other person may attend except with the unanimous approval of the chairperson, the examiners and the student.

5.5 .3 Time should be made available on the day of, and before the oral examination, for examiners to meet and discuss their preliminary reports (Examiners, who should keep a copy for themselves, should have already sent another copy to Academic Services) and to discuss the approach to the examination.

5.5 .4 The chairperson should introduce those present, putting them at their ease, explaining the form the oral examination will take and what happens afterwards. The chairperson will only intervene if there is a danger of misunderstanding, unfairness, bias or unprofessional behaviour.

5.5 .5 Each examiner should contribute, but with the external taking the lead.

5.5 .6 There are no rules governing length. It is at the examiners' discretion to make the oral examination as long or short as they think necessary. Short breaks are permitted if necessary/ requested.

5.5 .7 There may be intense questioning, but it should be non-aggressive.

5.5 .8 No-one, at any time, should indicate the likely outcome.

5.6 *After the Oral Examination*

5.6 .1 The chairperson should ask student to withdraw.

5.6 .2 The examiners should deliberate.

5.6 .3 The examiners, through the chairperson, may invite the student and supervisor(s) to hear the recommendation (provisional only).

5.6 .4 The report should be completed and submitted, together with the thesis and the list of corrections or revisions (where appropriate), to Academic Services, ideally immediately after the conclusion of the oral examination but, in any case, by the required date.

5.6 .5 There must be formal approval of recommendations by Senate or delegated authority, where appropriate.

5.6 .6 The student, supervisor(s) and Head of principal academic unit will be formally notified by Academic Services and sent copies of examiners' reports.

5.6 .7 The supervisor(s), in conjunction with the examiners, where appropriate, should provide advice to candidate concerning the corrections and/or revisions required to the thesis.

5.7 Notes:

It is expected that the oral examination will be held at the University of Birmingham. If, in exceptional circumstances, it is held elsewhere or held by video conferencing or by telephone link, the following points must be taken into consideration when seeking approval from the University's Progress & Awards Board of Senate:

5.7 .1 All parties must agree to the venue or video conferencing or telephone link, especially the student.

5.7 .2 Facilities and conditions must be similar to those at the University of Birmingham.

5.7 .3 If video conferencing or telephone links are used, to ensure the quality of the sound links between locations have been tested; that time differences between the two locations do not disadvantage the student by the examination taking place at an inappropriate time of day or night.

5.7 .4 Ensure that there are no interruptions, except in extreme emergency.

5.7 .5 No reason for the student to claim procedural irregularity on the grounds of a change of location or video conferencing or telephone line after the oral examination.

5.7 .6 The student's principal academic unit would be liable for any expenses incurred in travelling to the oral examination by all concerned, including the student, if the examiners requested a location outside the University of Birmingham.

6. Report Form and Recommendations available to Examiners

6.1 Examiners are required to complete the following sections of the report form:

6.1 .1 An independent report before any oral examination is held. Examiners should note any matters that they may wish to raise at the oral examination. The reports are not made available to the student at this stage in the examination process; they act as an aide mémoire to the examiners for the oral examination. The report should address the following areas. However, the report should reflect the subject of the thesis with regard to the areas covered.

(a) Was the nature and purpose of the research made clear and was this substantially achieved?

(b) To what extent does the thesis demonstrate that the student has an adequate understanding of the subject and knowledge of the literature?

(c) Has the student chosen the appropriate methodology for the study? Is the methodology then used effectively? Are the findings interpreted in a valid way?

(d) Is there coverage of recent and relevant literature in the field of study which shows critical appraisal and an original synthesis?

(e) What evidence is there of independent critical and analytical skills, and the ability to evaluate evidence?

(f) Is there an understanding of the theoretical field associated with the study? Is the linkage and balance between practical investigation and theory satisfactory?

(g) Is the thesis clearly written and presented? Is the style and structure of the thesis satisfactory?

(h) To what extent does the thesis show evidence of originality and make a contribution to knowledge? Does it contain matter suitable for publication?

(i) What is your view of the overall quality of the research described in the thesis?

(j) Is the synopsis an adequate summary of the work presented?

6.1 .2 A separate or joint report following the oral examination. This should take into consideration the independent reports and the student's performance in the oral examination.

6.1 .3 A final, where possible, agreed recommendation

6.1 .4 Guidance to candidates on corrections/revisions: detailed advice to the student in order that any corrections and/or revisions may be carried out satisfactorily.

6.2 The date by which the examination process should be completed and the reports submitted to Academic Services will be clearly stated in examiners' letters of appointment and on the first page of the report form. The reports should ideally be completed immediately after the end of the oral examination.

6.3 Copies of the reports will be made available to Heads of principal academic units, supervisor(s) and students in order that they may benefit from examiners' comments and advice. The acceptance of an invitation to act as an examiner is on the understanding that examiners are willing to have their reports made available in this way. Where examiners have comments that they might wish to draw to the attention of the University, these should be raised separately from the report and sent directly to Academic Services.

6.4 Examiners will be advised of the definition of the standard required of the thesis for the degree for which it is submitted and of the range and definitions of recommendations available to them as defined in the regulations for the degree concerned. This is provided in the information sent to examiners with the letter accompanying the thesis for examination.

6.5 <u>Examiners' recommendations: MMus, MRes and one-year MPhil (Mode B).</u>

Following the initial submission and examination of the student's work for the degree of MMus, MRes or one-year MPhil (Mode B) and where the student has satisfied the requirements for the degree as set out in Regulations Assessment, Progression and Award Chapter 4.1 the examiners shall decide on behalf of the Senate either:

6.5 .1 That the student be awarded the degree of MMus, MRes or one-year MPhil (Mode B) with or without the option of proceeding to further work for the degree of PhD.

6.5 .2 That, where the student's performance shows clear potential for further research, the student should have the option either of proceeding to further work for the degree of PhD or of being awarded the degree of MMus, MRes or MPhil as appropriate. If the student chooses the former and is subsequently awarded the degree of PhD, then the degree of MMus, MRes or MPhil will not be awarded.

6.5 .3 That the student be awarded the degree of MMus, MRes or MPhil as appropriate after the student has made minor corrections to one or more report(s) to the satisfaction of the internal examiner.

6.5 .4 That the student be awarded the degree of MMus, MRes or MPhil as appropriate after the student has made major corrections to one or more report(s) to the satisfaction of the examiners.

6.6 Following the initial submission and examination of the student's work for the degree of MMus, MRes or one-year MPhil (mode B), where the student has

failed to satisfy the requirements for the degree as set out in Regulations Assessment, Progression and Award Chapter 4.1, the examiners shall make one of the following recommendations to the Senate or delegated authority, either:

6.6 .1 That the student undertake such further tests as may be prescribed.

6.6 .2 That one or more of the student's report(s) be referred to the student for major revision and re-assessment.

6.6 .3 That the student complete a new research project and report upon it.

6.6 .4 That, provided that the student has previously presented at least one satisfactory report on the research project, the student be permitted to re-sit part or the whole of the set of written examinations.

6.6 .5 That the student undertake a combination of requirements (a) to (d) as appropriate.

6.6 .6 That the student repeat the entire programme of study.

6.6 .7 That the student be not awarded the degree and be debarred from further examination.

6.7 Examiners' recommendations: One-year MPhil (mode A) and two-year MPhil

Following the initial submission and examination of the student's work for the degree of MPhil (one-year (mode A) or two-year) and where the student has satisfied the requirements for the relevant degree as set out in Regulations Assessment, Progression and Award Chapter 4.1, the examiners shall decide on behalf of the Senate either:

6.7 .1 That, where the student's performance shows clear potential for further research, the student should have the option of either proceeding to further work for the degree of PhD or of being awarded the degree of MPhil. If the student chooses the former and is subsequently awarded the degree of PhD, then the degree of MPhil will not be awarded.

6.7 .2 That the student be awarded the degree of MPhil without the option of proceeding to further work for the degree of PhD.

6.7 .3 That the student be awarded the degree of MPhil after the student has made minor corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal examiner.

6.7 .4 That the student be awarded the degree of MPhil after the student has made major corrections to one or more report(s) to the satisfaction of the examiners.

6.8 Following the initial submission and examination of the student's work for the degree of MPhil, where the student has failed to satisfy the requirements for the relevant degree as set out in Regulations Assessment, Progression and Award Chapter 4.1 the examiners shall make one of the following recommendations to the Senate or delegated authority, either:

6.8 .1 That the thesis be referred to the student for major revision and re-submission.

6.8 .2 That the thesis be rejected without opportunity for resubmission and the student not be awarded the degree for which the thesis was submitted.

6.9 Examiners' recommendations - Doctoral degrees

Following the initial submission and examination of the thesis for the degree of PhD, PhD with integrated study, a professional doctorate, EngD, MD or DDS, and where the student has satisfied the requirements for the degree as set out in Regulation 7.4.1, the examiners shall decide on behalf of the Senate either:

6.9 .1 That the student be awarded the degree for which the thesis was submitted.

6.9 .2 That the student be awarded the degree for which the thesis was submitted after the student has made minor corrections or revisions to the satisfaction of the internal examiner.

6.9 .3 That the student be awarded the degree for which the thesis was submitted after the student has made major corrections to one or more report(s) to the satisfaction of the examiners.

6.10 Following the initial submission and examination of the thesis for the degree of PhD, PhD with integrated study, a professional doctorate, EngD, MD or DDS, where the student has failed to satisfy the requirements for the degree as set out in Regulation 7.4.1, examiners shall make one of the following recommendations to the Senate or delegated authority, either:

6.10 .1 That the thesis be referred to the student for revision and re-submission for the degree for which the thesis was previously submitted.

6.10 .2 That the student, having submitted a thesis for the award of the degree of PhD, PhD with integrated study, a professional doctorate, EngD or MD be awarded the degree of MPhil or MRes or the related taught Master's degree, as appropriate, if necessary after the student has made minor or major corrections or revisions to the satisfaction of the examiners.

6.10 .3 That the student, having submitted a thesis for the award of the degree of PhD, PhD with integrated study, a professional doctorate, EngD or MD the thesis be returned to the student for revision and resubmission for the degree of MPhil.

6.10 .4 That the thesis be rejected without opportunity for resubmission and the student not be awarded the degree for which the thesis was submitted.

6.11 In cases where the examiners agree and an adequate report has been submitted and the recommendation is to award the degree or to award the degree subject to minor or major corrections, action to advise the student will be taken by Academic Services without reference to any academic authority.

6.12 In cases where the recommendation is for resubmission, or award a lower qualification or rejection, reports will be submitted for consideration and, if appropriate, approval by Senate or delegated authority.

7. Failure of Examiners to Reach Agreement

7.1 In cases where the original examiners (i.e. those appointed as per Regulations Assessment, Progression and Awards Chapter section 1 Examiners and sub-section 4.4 Examiners) are unable to reach agreement on the recommendation on the outcome of the examination the following shall apply.

7.2 The student shall be re-examined by new examiners. The new examiners shall be appointed in accordance with section 1 Examiners and section 4.4 Examiners except that two external examiners may be appointed if no suitable internal examiner is available. None of the new examiners shall have been an original examiner and the Head of principal Academic Unit shall not be appointed as a new examiner.

7.3 The new examiners shall conduct a fresh examination of the student. They shall not see the reports of the original examiners.

7.4 The student, his or her supervisor and Head of Principal Academic Unit concerned shall have the right to see the reports of the original examiners but shall not discuss the reports with any other person.

7.5 No student shall have the right to amend a thesis in any way before re-examination by the new examiners.

7.6 If they are unable to reach agreement, an adjudicator should be appointed as laid down by the Senate or delegated authority.

7.7 The adjudicator should make a recommendation based on the thesis and the reports of the original and of the new examiners. The adjudicator should not have been the chairperson of the oral examinations. They should not normally conduct an oral examination.

Appendix A: The Examiners and the Chairperson of the Oral Examination

A Internal Examiner

The internal examiner is expected:

A1 To ensure that the whole examination process is completed within the period allowed (normally, eight weeks where an oral examination is to be held; six weeks in other cases) and to submit reports as requested to Academic Services by the required date.

A2 To liaise with the external examiner, supervisor(s), student and chairperson in order to arrange a suitable date for the oral examination, if held.

A3 To notify Academic Services of any delays in arranging the oral examination.

A4 To notify all those concerned in good time, normally at least two weeks in advance, of the date, time and place of the oral examination and the names of those who will be attending.

A5 To refer oral examinations to be held outside the University of Birmingham to Academic Services to seek approval from the University's Research Progress

Board.

A6 To make appropriate arrangements for the oral examination, including time to discuss the preliminary independent reports with the external examiner.

A7 To ensure that report forms are submitted to Academic Services following the oral examination by the required date, including a clear specification of the corrections and/or revisions for onward transmission to the student, student's supervisor(s) and student's Head of principal academic unit.

A8 With the external examiner, through the chairperson of the oral examination, may invite the student and supervisor(s), to hear the recommendation (provisional only) (The official notification of the outcome, following approval by the University's Research Progress Board, where appropriate, will be by letter from Academic Services.)

A9 To complete a 'Certification of Corrections' form in cases where a student has to make minor or major corrections to the thesis. (Note: This will be a joint responsibility with the external examiner where major corrections are required.)

B External Examiner

The external examiner is expected:

B1 To submit reports as requested to Academic Services and to ensure that deadlines for examining theses are met.

B2 To attend an oral examination, if held.

B3 To complete a 'Certification of Corrections' form where the student is required to carry out major corrections. This is a joint responsibility with the internal examiner.

B4 To complete a 'Certification of Corrections' form where the student is required to carry out minor corrections, and two external examiners instead of an internal (normally their responsibility to complete the form) have been appointed.

C Chairperson

The following is a list of characteristics and duties of the chairperson:

C1 A member of academic staff, with sufficient ability and maturity to ensure the proper conduct of the proceedings, who has examined research degrees in any University on previous occasions. They may be from a different principal academic unit to the student. Once appointed, Academic Services should be notified.

C2 Some knowledge of the subject area of the thesis in general terms.

C3 No requirement to read the thesis.

C4 Is not one of the examiners.

C5 Undertakes responsibility for the administrative duties of the internal examiner in cases where no internal examiner is appointed and two external examiners

are appointed.

C6 Introduces those present at the oral examination and puts everyone one at ease.

C7 Ensures that those present understand the procedures to be followed.

C8 Only intervenes if there is a danger of misunderstanding, unfairness, bias or unprofessional behaviour.

C9 At the end of the oral examination, asks the student to withdraw while the examiners deliberate, making it clear to the student that the chairperson is not an examiner and will not participate in the substance of the deliberations.

C10 If the examiners wish to advise the student and the supervisor(s) of their recommendations, to make sure this is undertaken in a professional way and with as little stress as possible for those concerned, that the student knows what is required of them and that this recommendation is provisional only - the student must await a formal letter from Academic Services.

C11 During the oral examination and deliberations to make brief notes concerning the conduct of the oral examination and to ensure that these are retained, for possible use in the future, for example, in the case of an appeal.

C12 To respond, either individually or as part of a principal academic unit response to a student appeal.