

For the Academic Policy &
Regulations Committee
3rd February 2009

University of Birmingham

**Changes to the Code of Practice on Assessment of Research Degree Theses
and Regulations**

Purpose of Paper

1. To propose changes for effect in 2009/10 to the Regulations and Code of Practice on Assessment of Research Degree Theses.

Proposals

2. APRC is requested to approve the following changes:

- To Regulation 7.4.6 (a) (additions underlined):

7.4.6 (a) The examiner shall prepare reports and make progress and award decisions in accordance with the Assessment of Research Degree Theses.

- Delete Regulation 7.4.7. (i) and move to Code of Practice as 6.13

~~7.4.7 (i) Following the examination of a thesis resubmitted for a research degree, the examiners shall make one of the following recommendations to the Senate or delegated authority, as appropriate, either:~~

- ~~(i) — That the Registered Student be awarded the degree for which the thesis or other work was submitted, where appropriate, after completion of minor corrections to the satisfaction of the internal examiner;~~
- ~~(ii) — That the Registered Student, having resubmitted 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 the related taught masters degree, as appropriate after completion of minor corrections to the satisfaction of the internal examiner; or~~
- ~~(iii) — That the thesis be rejected without opportunity for resubmission and the Registered Student be awarded the degree for which the thesis was submitted.~~

3. APRC is requested to approve the following changes to the Code of Practice on Assessment of Research Degree Theses (additions underlined, deletions struck through).

- 6.5 Examiners' recommendations: MMus, MRes and one-year MPhil (Mode B)

Following the initial submission and examination of the Registered Student's work for the degree of MMus, MRes and one-year MPhil (Mode B) and where the student has satisfied the requirements of the

degree as set out in Regulations Assessment, Progression and Award Chapter 4.47.4, and passed the taught modules as set out in the programme requirements, the examiners of the thesis or required reports shall decide on behalf of Senate either:

- 6.5.1 That the Registered 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 Where the thesis is a qualifying thesis, that the Registered 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. 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, 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 Registered Student has made minor corrections to the thesis or one or more reports to the satisfaction of the internal examiner.
- 6.5.4 Where thesis is a qualifying thesis, that the Registered Student be awarded the degree of MMus, MRes or one-year MPhil (Mode B) as appropriate after minor corrections to the thesis with or without the option of proceeding to further work for the degree of PhD.
- 6.5.5 That the Registered Student be awarded the degree of MMus, MRes or MPhil (Mode B) as appropriate after the student has made major corrections to the thesis or one or more reports to the satisfaction of the ~~internal~~ examiners.
- 6.5.6 Where thesis is a qualifying thesis, that the Registered Student be awarded the degree of MMus, MRes or one-year MPhil (Mode B) as appropriate after major corrections to the thesis with or without the option of proceeding to further work for the degree of PhD.
- 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 Registered Student has failed to satisfy the requirements for the report(s) or thesis degree as set out in Regulations Assessment, Progression and Award Chapter 4.47.4, 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 reports 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 year of study.~~
- ~~6.6.7 That the student be not awarded the degree and be debarred from further examination.~~
- 6.6.1 That one or more reports or the thesis be referred to the student for major revision and resubmission.
- 6.6.2 That the thesis or one or more reports be rejected without opportunity for resubmission and the student not be awarded the degree for which the thesis was submitted.

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

Following the initial submission and examination of the students' 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 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 the Registered Student be awarded the degree of MPhil (Mode A) or two-year MPhil.~~
- 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. Where the thesis is a qualifying thesis, that the student be awarded the degree of MPhil (Mode A) or two-year MPhil with or without the option of proceeding to further work for the degree of PhD. If the student chooses the former and is subsequently awarded the degree of PhD, then the degree of MPhil will not be awarded.~~
- 6.7.3 That the Registered Student be awarded the degree of MPhil (Mode A) or two-year MPhil as appropriate after the student has made minor corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal examiner.

- 6.7.4 Where the thesis is a qualifying thesis, that the Registered Student be awarded the degree of MPhil (Mode A) or two-year MPhil as appropriate after minor corrections to the thesis with or without the option of proceeding to further work for the degree of PhD.
- 6.7.5 That the Registered Student be awarded the degree of MPhil (Mode A) or two-year MPhil as appropriate after the student has made major corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the ~~internal~~ examiners.
- 6.7.6 Where thesis is a qualifying thesis, that the Registered Student be awarded the degree of MPhil (Mode A) or two-year MPhil as appropriate after major corrections to the thesis with or without the option of proceeding to further work for the degree of PhD.
- 6.13 Following the examination of a thesis resubmitted for a research degree, the examiners shall make one of the following recommendations to the Senate or delegated authority, as appropriate, either:
- (i) That the Registered Student be awarded the degree for which the thesis or other work was submitted; or
 - (ii) That the Registered Student be awarded the degree for which the thesis or other work was submitted, where appropriate, after completion of minor corrections to the satisfaction of the internal examiner;
 - (iii) That the Registered Student, having resubmitted a thesis for the award of a doctoral degree, be awarded the lower alternative research masters or taught masters degree, as appropriate after completion of minor corrections to the satisfaction of the internal examiner; or
 - (iv) That the thesis or other reports be rejected without opportunity for resubmission and the Registered Student not be awarded the degree for which the thesis was submitted.

Background

4. The range of possible examiners' decisions for research degree theses/reports after the first submission are detailed in the Code but not in Regulations. The range of decisions available to examiners after revision and resubmission are detailed in Regulations 7.4 but not in the Code.
5. The University offers a range of research qualifications consisting of a mixture of taught and research elements, such as the MMus, MPhil (B), and the MRes. Colleges differ in the range of awards they offer, and some are used as a progression step towards undertaking a full doctoral qualification (e.g. PhD). These are "qualifying theses" but the distinction between them and stand-alone research masters is not currently made in the legislation.
6. The taught modules on these programmes are assessed according to the Assessment Protocols, and the research elements are assessed under the

Code of Practice on Assessment of Research Degree Theses (hereafter “the Code”).

7. The Code specifies examiners recommendations available in the three main categories of research degrees: doctoral awards; MMus/MRes/one-year MPhil (B); and MPhil(A)/two-year MPhil. These recommendations are also detailed in the Examiners’ Guidance Pack sent to all internal and external examiners.
8. For some MRes, MMus, and MPhil(B) programmes, a specified number of taught credits must be undertaken and passed, and a research element completed. For most programmes this is a thesis, but in some programmes the research element is broken down into smaller “reports”. These reports may be derived from a placement, laboratory setting, or short research reports or commentaries (e.g. students on MPhil(B) Playwriting Studies are required to author an original play and write a 6,000 word accompanying commentary; students on MRes Molecular and Cellular Biology complete two research reports based on involvement in separate lab-based research projects).

Arguments in Support of Proposal

9. The current legislation refers solely to “theses” and do not reflect the variety of alternative research-based assessments. Changing the wording, where applicable, to include “reports” will enable these alternative assessments to be included.
10. The current legislation details the range of examiners’ decisions in two different locations – Regulations, and the Code. Placing all the recommendations into the Code will enable examiners to refer to just one place to know of the available decisions.
11. The existing Code of Practice details a range of recommendations for the MRes, MMus and one-year MPhil (B) that are inconsistent with the set of recommendations for MPhil(A) and two-year MPhil. The proposed deleted options are:

<i>Option</i>	<i>Reason for deletion</i>
That the student undertake further tests as prescribed	Not available to students on MPhil(A) and two-year MPhil. The wording is unclear and ambiguous.
That the student complete a new research project and report upon it.	Not available to students on MPhil(A) and two-year MPhil. This option implies a “re-sit” attempt, but this is not available for research elements – a student may only “revise and re-submit” and existing project.
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	Not available to students on MPhil(A) and two-year MPhil. All “written examinations” are for taught modules, and the assessment of these are covered by the Assessment Protocols. All

examinations.	students would have an automatic right to re-sit any failed assessments and this wording should not be in this Code.
That the student undertake a combination of requirements.	Not available to students on MPhil(A) and two-year MPhil. The wording is unclear and ambiguous.
That the student repeat the entire year of study.	Not available to students on MPhil(A) and two-year MPhil. This option is unclear as to what would be required of a student should they be required to repeat.

12. This leaves the following list of rationalised and consistent examiners' decisions for all students on MPhil, MRes or MMus programmes at initial examination:
- (i) Award degree.
 - (ii) Award degree with option of progressing to PhD (in cases of qualifying thesis).
 - (iii) Award degree subject to satisfactory completion of minor corrections (on thesis/reports), with option of progressing to PhD (in cases of qualifying thesis).
 - (iv) Award degree subject to satisfactory completion of major corrections (on thesis/reports) option of progressing to PhD (in cases of qualifying thesis).
 - (v) Revise and resubmit (thesis/reports).
 - (vi) Thesis/reports rejected and student required to fail and withdraw.
13. The following list of examiners' decisions is for all students on MPhil, MRes or MMus programmes following revision and resubmission:
- (i) Award degree.
 - (ii) Award degree subject to satisfactory completion of minor corrections (on thesis/reports).
 - (iii) Award lower alternative qualification.
 - (iv) Award lower alternative qualification subject to satisfactory completion of minor corrections (on thesis/reports).
 - (v) Thesis/reports rejected and student required to fail and withdraw.

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