For APRC APRC.13.05.**05**
16th May 2013

Assessment of Research Degree Theses – Major corrections following revision and resubmission

1. Purpose of Paper

APRC is invited ***to consider***, and if thought appropriate, ***to approve*** amendments to the Code of Practice for Assessment of Research Degree Theses to permit major corrections following revision and resubmission.

2. Proposals/Recommendations

That the Regulations are amended as follows (additions underlined, deletions struck through):

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:

6.13 .1 That the degree for which the thesis or other work was submitted be awarded; or

6.13 .2 That the degree for which the thesis or other work was submitted be awarded, where appropriate, after completion of minor corrections to the satisfaction of the internal examiner;

6.13 .3 That the degree for which the thesis or other work was submitted be awarded, where appropriate, after completion of major corrections to the satisfaction of all examiners;

6.13 .4~~3~~ That the postgraduate researcher, 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 major corrections to the satisfaction of all examiners, (The postgraduate researcher shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9.);
or

6.13 .5~~4~~ That the thesis or other reports be rejected without opportunity for resubmission and the degree for which the thesis was submitted not be awarded. The postgraduate researcher shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9.

3. Background

On the conclusion of the examination, external examiners for research degree theses are invited to provide comments on the quality, standards and examination processes at the University of Birmingham. Unlike external examiner reports for taught programmes of study, it is optional for external examiners of research degree theses to return these reports.

The majority of the positive comments received confirmed that there are no significant issues with our regulations or procedures and that they are congruent with those of other institutions.
There were no particular trends in the positive comments received on academic matters. Most comments praised individual students, supervisors or programmes and this feedback has been passed on to the Schools in question.

A small number of external examiners made the point that it felt harsh to not allow major corrections to a resubmitted thesis. This has not been policy at the University of Birmingham to date, although this outcome could be referred to the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel for a decision notwithstanding regulations.

The current outcomes for a resubmitted thesis allowed by the regulations are: award, award with minor corrections, award lower degree, award lower degree with minor corrections or reject the thesis. The lower award for a Doctoral thesis would be either an MPhil or MA/MSc by research. For MA/MSc by research there is no lower qualification and for an MRes a lower qualification would be a PG Cert for the 60 taught credits.

4. Consultation

An analysis of External Examiners' Feedback on the quality, standards and examination processes of research degrees for the period January to December 2012 was presented to the March 2013 Graduate School Management Board.

GSMB resolved that a recommendation should be made to APRC to amend the Code of Practice for the Assessment of Research Degree Theses to include the option for examiners to recommend major corrections following the examination of a revised and resubmission thesis.

5. Arguments to Support Proposal Topic and Purpose of the Paper

Currently where examiners wish to make a recommendation of major corrections for a resubmitted thesis, this falls outside regulations and therefore must be referred to the Research Progress & Awards Sub Panel for consideration. A case notwithstanding regulations is first considered by two members of the Sub Panel and then to the Chair for final approval.

Allowing major corrections on resubmission, will remove the need for cases to be referred to the Sub Panel and will bridge the gap between minor corrections and a lower award or rejection of the thesis.

Claire Evans
Research Student Administration Manager
Registry