For APRC APRC.13.05.**06**
16th May 2013

Criteria for the Appointment of Examiners

1. Purpose of Paper

APRC is invited to ***consider***, and if thought appropriate, ***to confirm*** the wording of the current Code of Practice for Assessment of Research Degree Theses relating to the criteria for the appointment of examiners.

2. Proposals / Recommendations

The Committee is invited ***to review*** and ***confirm***:

(i) that the following sections (4.1 and 4.3) from Code of Practice for Assessment of Research Degree Theses are appropriate;

(ii) that the nomination of an Emeritus Professors as examiners falls with the criteria stated in 4.3.4 and does require approval of the Research Progress & Awards Sub Panel;

(iii) that the nomination of a person who does not hold an academic appointment falls with the criteria stated in 4.3.4 and does not require approval of the Research Progress & Awards Sub Panel leaving the nominating School to approve suitability of the examiner.

4.1 In the instance where a School 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 Senate or delegated authority.

[…]

4.3 The examiners should:

4.3 .1 Be specialists in the general subject area of the thesis.
4.3 .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).
4.3 .3 Have good research experience, be research active and have published in peer reviewed publications.
4.3 .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, a professional practitioner or a person based in a relevant industry) who holds a similar position which gives familiarity with research (and research degrees) may be appointed.

3. Background

Point 4.1 of the Code of Practice for the Assessment of Research Degree Theses indicates that approval is required where proposed examiners do not meet the criteria as set out in the Code of Practice.

Point 4.3.4 states that examiners should hold a current academic appointment but also indicates that in some circumstances those not meeting this criteria could be appointed but does not specifically state that approval of the Senate or delegated authority is required.It is current practice for such cases to be referred to the Research Progress & Awards Sub Panel, who is the delegated authority for postgraduate research programmes.

In the academic year 2010-11, 19 referrals were made where the nominated examiner did not hold an academic appointment and in the academic year 2011-12 16 referrals were made.

In addition, in 2010-11 13 referrals were made for the nomination of examiners who were Emeritus Professors and 15 in 1011-12.

The most frequent requests to appoint non-standard examiners come from Psychology, Education and Philosophy, Theology and Religion. The reasons for this may be acceptable as these Schools both have large numbers of PGRs and may also have subject-specific reasons to use examiners from outside academia, e.g. for professional doctorate programmes. In other instances a person from outside academic may be appointed to examine a practice based research degree such as the PhD in Musical Composition and PhD in Practice Based Research in Dramaturgy and for the EngD programme, an external examiner may be appointed from industry.

In considering referrals the Sub Panel often request further information to support the nomination before confirming their approval.

A breakdown of all referrals to the Research Progress & Awards Sub Panel for non-standard appointment of examiners is attached. (Appendix A).

4. Consultation

An analysis of referrals to the Research Progress & Awards Sub Panel in 2011-12, including a breakdown of referrals for non-standard appointment of examiners was presented to the March 2013 Graduate School Management Board.

GSMB resolved that a recommendation should be made to APRC to permit examiners who do not hold a current academic appointment, including Emeritus Professor to be appointed without referral to the Research Progress & Awards Sub Panel.

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

Indicator 17 of the QAA Chapter B11 Research Degrees states that institutions should ensure that “There is a methodology for establishing that the examiners have relevant qualifications and experience”. The criteria as set out in points 4.3.1 to 4.3.4 set benchmarks for the appointment of examiners but point 4.3.4 provides the option for appointments to be made from outside academia.

If appointments of those not holding an academic appointment (including Emeritus

Professors) are not referred to the Sub Panel, the nominating School would be responsible for ensuring that quality and standards are maintained and only examiners appropriately qualified, experienced and familiar with academic research are appointed.

Postgraduate researchers are permitted to comment on the choice of examiners but do not have the right to veto the choice of examiners. However, where objections are raised, Schools are advised to consider the objections and determine if they are valid.

The person signing the nomination of examiners form on behalf of the School confirms that the Code of Practice has been followed and that the examiners meet the criteria as set out in the Code of Practice, unless a case has been made on the nomination of examiners form to support the non-standard appointment of examiners.

When a nomination of examiners form is returned to the Research Student Administration team they check that those being nominated meet the criteria as set out in the Code of Practice for Assessment of Research Degrees. Where this is not the case, the School's asked to submit a case for referral to the Research Progress & Awards Sub Panel.

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Appendix A - Research Progress and Awards Sub Panel - Non-Standard Appointment of Examiners

Reason	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Does not hold a qual equal to that nominated to examine	10	9	14	8	8	9
Does not hold an academic appointment	27	27	17	25	19	16
Student's supervisor/former supervisor	2				4	
Former member of staff/former student (less than 4 years)	6	6	11	9	9	9
Current research student		1		1		
Probationer	5	7	3	5	10	5
Emeritus Professor	10		5	6	13	15
Other	5	8	1	8	14	8
Total	65	58	51	62	77	62