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 applies to Postgraduate Registered Students undertaking programmes defined in the University's Regulations as research degree programmes. In this Code of Practice "Postgraduate Researcher" means a Postgraduate Registered Student undertaking a research degree programme.

1.2 This Code of Practice sets out the processes and procedures for the assessment of all research degree theses.

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

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

2. Nomination of Examiners

2.1 Postgraduate researchers are required to submit a "Notice of Intention to Submit a Thesis" form at least three months before they intend to submit their theses to the supervisor in order for the supervisor to acknowledge the impending submission and so that the nomination of examiners can be sought. The supervisor should forward the signed Intention to Submit Form to the Research Student Administration Team. In signing the form the supervisor is not confirming that the thesis is fit for submission or that the submission will be successful.

2.2 The receipt by Research Student Administration of the "Notice of Intention to Submit a Thesis" form will trigger the nomination process. However, it is expected that supervisor(s) and Schools will have begun the process on an informal basis during the final stages of the completion of the thesis (see paragraph 6.2.11 Responsibilities of Postgraduate Researchers in the Code of Practice: Supervision and Monitoring of Progress of Postgraduate Researchers).

2.3 On receipt of this form Research Student Administration will send a "Nomination of Examiners for Research Degrees" form to the postgraduate researcher's Head of School for their completion and approval. Where the latter is also the postgraduate researcher's supervisor, the nomination should be approved by the member of academic staff within the School with responsibility for postgraduate researchers. The completed form should be returned with any supporting documentation, where appropriate, to the Research Student Administration team. If any section of the form is incomplete, it will be returned to the relevant Head of School (or nominee). If any exceptional cases have been made (see paragraph 4.1 of this Code of Practice) Research Student Administration will be responsible

for transmission to the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel for consideration.

2.4 Supervisor(s) should normally be consulted before the examiners are nominated. Postgraduate researchers must be offered the opportunity to comment on the choice of examiners. Where the Postgraduate Researcher raises concerns, the School should determine whether the concerns are valid; discuss the concerns with the Postgraduate Researcher and confirm the reasons for the nominations proceeding or advise the Postgraduate Researcher of the alternative examiners to be nominated.

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 Schools 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 postgraduate researchers. Schools 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 The confirmation of appointment as an examiner is included in a letter providing 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 Postgraduate Researchers are advised of the names of their examiners and chairperson 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 should be made at the same time as the nomination of the examiners. Research Student Administration should be notified by the School if a substitute chairperson is used.

2.11 In the case of MRes degrees, Schools may appoint examiners for each cohort in accordance with the procedures set out above with the exception of paragraphs 2.1, 2.3 and 2.4 which will then not apply. All other sections of this Code of Practice shall apply.

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 postgraduate researcher, except where the postgraduate researcher is a member of staff of this University.

3.2 Where the postgraduate researcher is a member of staff, with a contract of employment with this University for more than 15 hours per week, two external examiners shall be appointed. This requirement shall also apply to former members of staff who were employed by the University for two thirds or more of their period of study and to current honorary members of staff and individuals who held an honorary contract for two thirds or more of their period of study.

3.3 Where no internal examiner can be appointed, for example in extremely specialised subject areas and for some jointly awarded degrees, two external examiners will be appointed.

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 Appendix A of this Code of Practice)

3.4 Members of the Supervisory team should not be appointed as the internal examiner.

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 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.

4.2 When nominating examiners the Head of School should be aware of the requirement for those who are not UK or EEA nationals to provide evidence of their right to work in the UK. Before making the nomination, the nominee's eligibility to work in the UK must be checked.

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.

4.3 .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.

4.4 *The examiners should not:*

4.4 .1 Have had a substantial direct involvement with the postgraduate researcher's work (unless it is a resubmitted thesis). Where staff involved in progress reviews and members of the School Progress Panel (sometimes known as "internal assessors") are nominated to act as internal examiners, the Head of School (or nominee) should confirm on the Nomination of Examiners form that the nominee has not had

a direct involvement with the postgraduate researcher's work to ensure that there is no conflict of interest. (For example, consideration should be given to the amount of feedback given to the postgraduate researcher by the proposed internal examiner and whether they are sufficiently independent of the postgraduate researcher's work to enable them to carry out the role of internal examiner.)

4.4 .2 Be members of the postgraduate researcher's Supervisory Team.

4.4 .3 Be former members of staff of this University (external examiner) or former postgraduate researchers of this University, before a lapse of at least four years.

4.4 .4 Be a probationer.

4.4 .5 Currently be a postgraduate researcher.

4.5 External examiners should not be appointed on a regular basis such that their familiarity with the School might prejudice objective judgement

4.6 With the approval of the Senate or delegated authority, 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 postgraduate researchers work, and has only been involved in providing general academic advice. The Head of School should ensure that, in circumstances where the academic adviser is appointed as the internal examiner, they are sufficiently independent. An exceptional case should be made in the appropriate section of the nomination of the examiners' form. The case will be considered by the Senate or delegated authority.

4.7 With the approval of Senate or delegated authority, 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 postgraduate researcher concerned. The Head of School should ensure that, in circumstances where the mentor is appointed as the internal examiner, they are sufficiently independent. An exceptional case should be made in the appropriate section of the nomination of the examiners' form. The case will be considered by the Senate or delegated authority.

4.8 A person not on the University of Birmingham's payroll but holding an honorary University of Birmingham title or having been awarded the title of Recognised Supervisor of the University of Birmingham 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).*

4.9 The original examiners should normally re-examine a thesis that has been resubmitted after revision. Schools will be asked by Research Student Administration to re-confirm the original examiners. Where examiners are no longer able to act, for example, following retirement, Schools 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. (See also 7.8 regarding recommendations open to new examiners of a resubmitted thesis.)

5. Format and submission of the theses for examination

5.1 The format of theses submitted for examination is set out in Regulation 7.4.2 and outlined in the Library Services "Guide to Presenting your Thesis" available at https://intranet.bham.ac.uk/as/studentservices/graduateschool/rsa/presentingyourtesis.aspx.

5.2 When submitting the thesis for examination, the Postgraduate Researcher must also submit an electronic exact copy of the thesis for a plagiarism check via Turnitin in accordance with guidance issued by the School. A thesis will not be sent for examination until the School has confirmed that the plagiarism check has been completed and the thesis cleared for examination.

5.3 Where the thesis contains confidential material and restricted access to the thesis is required, this must be applied for at the time the intention to submit a research degree thesis form is submitted. The examiners will be informed of the confidential nature of the material.

6. The Oral Examination

6.1 The Chairperson of the Oral Examination

6.1 .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 postgraduate researcher 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 postgraduate researcher 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).

6.1 .2 The chairperson should be independent in that he or she should not have had a substantial direct involvement in the postgraduate researcher's work or have been involved in the appointment of the examiners. The formal nomination of the examiners on behalf of a School should not preclude the Head of School from chairing an oral examination. The chairperson must be impartial.

6.1 .3 The chairperson cannot be a member of the postgraduate researcher's Supervisory team.

6.1 .4 With the approval of the Senate or delegated authority 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 postgraduate researcher's work and has only been providing general academic advice. The Head of School should ensure that, in circumstances where the academic adviser is appointed to chair the oral examination, they are sufficiently independent. An exceptional case should be made in the appropriate section of the nomination of the examiners' form. The case will be considered by the Senate or delegated authority.

6.1 .5 With the approval of the Senate or delegated authority, the mentor could be appointed to chair the oral examination, but only if they have not engaged in any significant pastoral support for the postgraduate researcher concerned. The Head of School should ensure that, in circumstances where the mentor is appointed to chair the oral examination, they are sufficiently independent. An exceptional case should be made in the appropriate section of the nomination of the examiners'

form. The case will be considered by the Senate or delegated authority.

6.2 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:

6.2 .1 Obligatory for doctoral degrees

6.2 .2 For masters degrees, the decision on whether to hold an oral examination shall be taken with the agreement of both the internal and external examiners. An oral examination must be held in all cases where examiners are proposing that the masters thesis be revised and resubmitted or rejected.

6.2 .3 Obligatory after a doctoral thesis has been resubmitted.

6.2 .4 A postgraduate researcher may apply to the Senate or delegated authority for an exemption to the requirement to attend an oral examination. Exemptions shall be granted only in exceptional circumstances. Where an exemption is granted, the examiners should make appropriate alternative arrangements to clarify any points of ambiguity and satisfy themselves that the thesis is the Postgraduate Researcher's own work.

6.3 Arrangements for the Oral Examination

6.3 .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.

6.3 .2 The internal examiner should notify the chairperson, external examiner(s) and the postgraduate researcher, in writing, giving at least two weeks' notice, of the date, time, place and names of those attending.

6.3 .3 The oral examination should normally be held in Birmingham. If not, approval must be sought from the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel.

6.3 .4 (i) The viva may not be recorded or broadcast in any format.
(ii) With the prior approval of the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel the viva may be held by video / tele conferencing (see 6.7 below).

6.4 Purpose/Aim of the Oral Examination

The oral examination

6.4 .1 Provides the postgraduate researcher with an opportunity to defend their thesis.

6.4 .2 Assists the examiners in their decision as to whether or not the postgraduate researcher has met the requirements for the degree.

6.4 .3 Examines the general field within which the subject of the thesis lies.

6.4 .4 Allows detailed discussion of the thesis.

6.4 .5 Explores the ideas and theories proposed in the thesis.

6.4 .6 Clarifies points of ambiguity.

6.4 .7 Satisfies the examiners that the thesis is the postgraduate researcher's own work.

6.5 Conduct of the Oral Examination

6.5 .1 The oral examination should be held in a suitable room without interruptions from others.

6.5 .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 postgraduate researcher 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, but should be available on the day.

6.5 .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 Research Student Administration) and to discuss the approach to the examination.

6.5 .4 The chairperson should introduce those present, putting them at their ease, explaining the format that the oral examination will take and what happens afterwards. The chairperson must be present throughout the oral examination proceedings and will only intervene if there is a danger of misunderstanding, unfairness, bias or unprofessional behaviour.

6.5 .5 Each examiner should contribute, but with the external taking the lead.

6.5 .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.

6.5 .7 There may be intense questioning, but it should be non-aggressive.

6.5 .8 No-one, at any time, should indicate the likely outcome.

6.6 After the Oral Examination

6.6 .1 The chairperson should ask the postgraduate researcher to withdraw.

6.6 .2 The examiners should deliberate.

6.6 .3 The examiners, through the chairperson, may invite the postgraduate researcher and supervisor(s) to hear the recommendation (provisional only).

6.6 .4 The report should be completed and submitted, together with the thesis and the list of corrections or revisions (where appropriate), to Research Student Administration, ideally immediately after the conclusion of the oral examination but, in any case, by the required date.

6.6 .5 There must be formal approval of recommendations by Senate or delegated authority, where appropriate.

6.6 .6 The postgraduate researcher, supervisor(s) and Head of School will be formally

notified by Research Student Administration and sent copies of examiners' reports.

6.6 .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.

6.7 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 Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel:

6.7 .1 All parties must agree to the venue or video conferencing or telephone link, especially the postgraduate researcher.

6.7 .2 Facilities and conditions must be similar to those at the University of Birmingham.

6.7 .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 postgraduate researcher by the examination taking place at an inappropriate time of day or night.

6.7 .4 Ensure that there are no interruptions, except in extreme emergency.

6.7 .5 No reason for the postgraduate researcher to claim procedural irregularity on the grounds of a change of location or video conferencing or telephone line after the oral examination.

6.7 .6 The postgraduate researcher's School would be liable for any expenses incurred in travelling to the oral examination by all concerned, including the postgraduate researcher, if the examiners requested a location outside the University of Birmingham.

7. Report Form and Recommendations available to Examiners

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

7.1 .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 postgraduate researcher 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. The report should address the following areas:

(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 postgraduate researcher has an adequate understanding of the subject and knowledge of the literature?

(c) Has the appropriate methodology for the study been chosen? 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?

7.1 .2 A separate or joint report following the oral examination. This should take into consideration the independent reports and the postgraduate researcher's performance in the oral examination.

7.1 .3 A final, where possible, agreed recommendation

7.1 .4 Guidance to postgraduate researchers on corrections/revisions: detailed advice to the postgraduate researcher in order that any corrections and/or revisions may be carried out satisfactorily.

7.2 The date by which the examination process should be completed and the reports submitted to Research Student Administration 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.

7.3 Copies of the reports will be made available to Heads of Schools, supervisor(s) and postgraduate researchers 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 Research Student Administration.

7.4 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.

7.5 <u>Examiners' recommendations: MRes, MA/MSc by research and MPhil</u>

Following the initial submission and examination of the postgraduate researcher's work for

the degree of MRes, MA/MSc by research or MPhil, the examiners shall make one of the following recommendations to the Senate or delegated authority:

7.5 .1 That the degree for which the thesis was submitted be awarded.

7.5 .2 Where the thesis is a qualifying thesis, that the degree of MRes, MA/MSc by research or MPhil be awarded with or without the option of proceeding to further work for a doctoral degree. If the postgraduate researcher chooses the former and is subsequently awarded the doctoral degree, then the degree of MRes, MA/MSc or MPhil will not be awarded.

7.5 .3 That the degree of MRes, MA/MSc by research or MPhil be awarded after the postgraduate researcher has made minor corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal examiner.

7.5 .4 Where the thesis is a qualifying thesis, that the degree of MRes, MA/MSc by research or MPhil be awarded as appropriate after minor corrections to the thesis with or without the option of proceeding to further work for a doctoral degree.

7.5 .5 That the degree of MRes, MA/MSc by research or MPhil be awarded after the postgraduate researcher has made major corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners.

7.5 .6 Where the thesis is a qualifying thesis, that the degree of MRes, MA/MSc by research or MPhil be awarded as appropriate after major corrections to the thesis with or without the option of proceeding to further work for a doctoral degree.

7.5 .7 That the thesis be referred for major revision and re-submission.

7.5 .8 That the postgraduate researcher, having submitted a thesis for the award of an MPhil degree be awarded an MA/MSc by Research, as appropriate, if necessary after the postgraduate researcher has made minor or major corrections or revisions to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners. The postgraduate researcher shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9.

7.5 .9 That the thesis be rejected without opportunity for resubmission and the postgraduate researcher not be awarded the degree for which the thesis was submitted. The postgraduate researcher shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9. A Postgraduate Certificate may be awarded for the successful completion of taught modules.

7.6 Examiners' recommendations - Doctoral degrees

Following the initial submission and examination of the thesis for a doctoral degree (e.g PhD, PhD with integrated study, a Professional Doctorate, EngD, MD or DDS), the examiners shall make one of the following recommendations to the Senate or delegated authority:

7.6 .1 That the degree for which the thesis was submitted be awarded.

7.6 .2 That the degree for which the thesis was submitted be awarded after the postgraduate researcher has made minor corrections or revisions to the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal examiner.

7.6 .3 That the degree for which the thesis was submitted be awarded after the

postgraduate researcher has made major corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners.

7.6 .4 That the thesis be referred for revision and re-submission for the degree for which the thesis was previously submitted.

7.6 .5 That the postgraduate researcher, having submitted a thesis for the award of a doctoral degree be awarded a research Master's or the related taught Master's degree, as appropriate, if necessary after the postgraduate researcher has made minor or major corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners. The postgraduate researcher shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9.

7.6 .6 That the postgraduate researcher, having submitted a thesis for the award of a doctoral degree, the thesis be referred for revision and resubmission for an appropriate research masters degree.

7.6 .7 That the thesis 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. A postgraduate certificate may be awarded for successful completion of taught modules.

7.7 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:

7.7 .1 That the degree for which the thesis or other work was submitted be awarded; or

7.7 .2 That the degree for which the thesis was submitted be awarded, where appropriate, after completion of minor corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal examiner;

7.7 .3 That the degree for which the thesis was submitted be awarded, where appropriate, after completion of major corrections to the satisfaction of all examiners;

7.7 .4 That the postgraduate researcher, having resubmitted a thesis for the award of a doctoral degree, be awarded an alternative research masters or taught masters degree, as appropriate after completion of minor or major corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners. (The postgraduate researcher shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9.); or

7.7 .5 That the postgraduate researcher, having submitted a thesis for the degree of MPhil, be awarded an MA/MSc by Research, as appropriate, if necessary after the postgraduate researcher has made minor or major corrections or revisions to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners. The postgraduate researcher shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9.

7.7 .6 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. A postgraduate certificate may be awarded for successful completion of taught modules.

7.8 Where one or more examiners of a revised and resubmitted thesis have been replaced, the examiners will have the full range of options available that were available at the first examination of the thesis.

7.9 In cases where the examiners agree and an adequate report has been submitted and the recommendation is to award the degree subject to minor or major corrections, action to advise the postgraduate researcher will be taken by Research Student Administration without reference to any academic authority.

7.10 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.

8. Corrections

8.1 In accordance with Regulation 7.4.7(d), where corrections are required to be made to a thesis, to remove any ambiguity examiners need to be explicit in the guidance given with regard to corrections, and this should be in the form of a detailed list of the required corrections included with the examiner's report form. Where examiners have indicated corrections on the body of theses, reference must be made to this on the examiner's report form.

8.2 A copy of the examiners' reports, together with the list of corrections is sent to the postgraduate researcher by the Research Student Administration Team. The accompanying letter confirms the date by which the corrected thesis should be submitted to the Research Student Administration Team who will forward the corrected thesis to the examiners for checking.

8.3 The Registered Student may raise any queries on the required corrections with the examiners through their supervisor.

8.4 The postgraduate researcher is permitted one opportunity to complete the minor or major corrections to the satisfaction of the examiners (Regulation 7.4.7(e). Examiners are not permitted to provide feedback to the Registered Student on corrections prior to the formal submission of the corrected thesis.

8.5 The award of the degree is withheld until the internal examiner for minor corrections and all examiners for major corrections have confirmed that the corrections have been completed to their satisfaction.

8.5 With the approval of the Senate or delegated authority, examiners may request further minor corrections to be made following major corrections. Where the examiners require further minor corrections, a comprehensive list of the further corrections should be returned to the Research Student Administration Team, together with an explanation of the reasons for the request for further corrections who will refer the request to the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel for consideration.

Examiners should not request Postgraduate Researchers to carry out any further corrections until the decision of the Research Progress & Awards Sub Panel is known.

8.6 Further corrections following minor corrections are not permitted.

9. Revise and Resubmit

9.1 In accordance with Regulation 7.4.7(d), examiners are required to be explicit in the guidance given with regard to the required revisions, and this should be in the form of a detailed report/list of the required revisions in the examiner's report form. Where examiners have indicated revisions on the body of the thesis, reference must be made to this on the examiner's report form.

9.2 A copy of the examiners' reports, together with the report on the required revisions, is sent to the postgraduate researcher by the Research Student Administration Team. The accompanying letter confirms the date by which the revised thesis should be submitted to the Research Student Administration Team.

9.3 A revised and resubmitted thesis is subject to a full further examination.

10. Failure of Examiners to Reach Agreement

10.1 In cases where the original examiners (i.e. those appointed as set out in Regulations 7.4.4) are unable to reach agreement on the recommendation on the outcome of the examination the following shall apply.

10.2 The postgraduate researcher shall be re-examined by new examiners. The new examiners shall be appointed in accordance with Regulation 7.4.4 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 School shall not be appointed as a new examiner.

10.3 The new examiners shall conduct a fresh examination of the postgraduate researcher. They shall not see the reports of the original examiners.

10.4 The postgraduate researcher, his or her supervisor and Head of School concerned shall have the right to see the reports of the original examiners but shall not discuss the reports with any other person.

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

10.6 If the new examiners are unable to reach agreement, an appropriately-qualified adjudicator, who may or may not be a member of staff of the University, should be appointed by the Head of College and approved by the Senate or delegated authority.

10.7 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 Research Student Administration by the required date.

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

A3 To notify Research Student Administration 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 Research Student Administration to seek approval from the University's Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel.

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 Research Student Administration following the oral examination by the required date, including a clear specification of the corrections and/or revisions for onward transmission to the postgraduate researcher, postgraduate researcher's supervisor(s) and postgraduate researcher's Head of School.

A8 With the external examiner, through the chairperson of the oral examination, may invite the postgraduate researcher 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 Research Student Administration.)

A9 To complete a 'Certification of Corrections' form in cases where a postgraduate researcher 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 Research Student Administration 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 postgraduate researcher is required to carry out major corrections. This is a joint responsibility with the internal examiner.

B4 Where the postgraduate researcher is required to carry out minor corrections, and two external examiners instead of an internal examiner (normally their responsibility to complete the form) have been appointed, the examiners should nominate which examiner will undertake the checking of the minor corrections and complete a “Certification of Corrections”.

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 School to the postgraduate researcher. Once appointed, Research Student Administration 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 Is present throughout the oral examination and only intervenes if there is a danger of misunderstanding, unfairness, bias or unprofessional behaviour.

C9 At the end of the oral examination, asks the postgraduate researcher to withdraw while the examiners deliberate, making it clear to the postgraduate researcher 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 postgraduate researcher 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 postgraduate researcher knows what is required of them and that this recommendation is provisional only - the postgraduate researcher must await a formal letter from Research Student Administration.

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 Where there is an unexpected interruption to the viva, the Chair should take the lead in instigating appropriate action. The Chair should confirm to the postgraduate researcher and examiners that no further discussions will take place until the viva is reconvened. A record of the time and duration of the break should be in the Chair’s notes.

Chairs should familiarise themselves with the fire evacuation plans for the venue. If a fire alarm occurs during the viva examination, the chair should immediately stop the proceedings and ensure that the Postgraduate Researcher and examiners make their way to the relevant assembly point.

If the period of evacuation is not prolonged, and if the Safety or Fire Officer confirms that normal use of the building, the viva may be re-started at the discretion of the Chair in consultation with the examiners and Postgraduate Researcher.

Where it is not possible for the viva to continue, the examiners, in consultation with the Chair, should determine whether sufficient discussion has taken place for a final recommendation to be made or whether a new date needs to be arrange to continue the viva.

C13 To respond, either individually or as part of a School response to a postgraduate researcher appeal.