



**CODE OF PRACTICE FOR EXAMINERS AND CHAIRS  
OF RESEARCH DEGREES  
Academic Year 2010-2011**

**Effective from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2010**

© 2010 Bournemouth University

Document date: August 2010

Circulation: General

Bournemouth University undertakes to encourage the recognition, protection and exploitation of intellectual property rights generated by participants in this programme, to the benefit, as appropriate, of students, staff, industrial/other third parties/partners and the university.

The Graduate School  
Bournemouth University  
Talbot Campus  
Poole  
BH12 5BB

## **Contents**

1	INTRODUCTION	5
2	THE RESEARCH DEGREE AWARDS	5
3	THE EXAMINING TEAM	8
3.1	Appointment of examiners	8
3.2	Roles and responsibilities of examiners	9
4	THE INDEPENDENT CHAIR	10
4.1	Appointment of the independent chair	10
4.2	Roles and responsibilities of the independent chair	10
5	TRANSFER VIVA VOCE PROCESS	11
5.1	Transfer Policy	11
5.2	Transfer report	12
5.3	Transfer <i>viva voce</i>	13
5.4	Resubmission of transfer report	14
6	THE EXAMINATION PROCESS	14
6.1	Approval of examiners and thesis title	14
6.2	Pre- <i>viva voce</i> arrangements	15
6.3	Issues arising on reading the thesis	16
6.4	Arrangements for <i>viva voce</i>	17
6.5	The outcome of the examination	18
6.6	Re-examination for a research award	21
6.7	Disagreement between the examiners	22
6.8	Issues arising regarding the <i>viva voce</i>	22
6.9	Release of examiners' reports to the candidate	23
7	AFTER THE VIVA VOCE	23

7.1	Post-viva voce arrangements	23
7.2	Appeals against examination decisions	24
8	CONTACT	25
	APPENDIX 1 – MASTERS LEVEL DESCRIPTORS	26
	APPENDIX 3 – PRELIMINARY REPORT FORM	28
	APPENDIX 5 – CHAIRS REPORT FORM	32

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

---

This Code of Practice provides guidance and regulations on the examination of research degrees, in particular for independent chairs and internal and external examiners

For further information consult the Code of Practice for Research Degrees and Bournemouth University Rules, which includes all policies, procedures and regulations and associated documentation.

## **2 THE RESEARCH DEGREE AWARDS**

---

The criteria for assessing research degrees are defined by the academic standards of each research programme. These are outlined in Appendices 1 & 2 and follow the qualification descriptors for Doctoral and Master's degrees in the *Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications*.

Examiners should use these criteria when assessing the candidate's thesis to safeguard the academic integrity of the research award, both internally and externally. If a candidate's work fails to meet the required level for the award in question, the examiners should examine the assessment criteria to explore the appropriateness of conferring an alternative award for positive achievement by the candidate.

When assessing the candidate's work, examiners should take into account the subject of the research and also the different types of research programmes, including traditional and practice base doctorates, professional doctorates and doctorates by published work.

The research degrees awarded by Bournemouth University are set out below:

---

### **Master of Philosophy (MPhil) / Practice-based MPhil**

---

The MPhil is awarded to a candidate who, having critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic and demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field, has presented and defended a thesis and/or practical element, by *viva voce*, to the satisfaction of the examiners. Candidates may register to study for an MPhil on a full- or part-time basis.

---

---

### **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) by Thesis / Practice-based PhD**

---

The PhD involves a more complex and advanced project and is awarded to a candidate who, having critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic resulting in an independent and original contribution to knowledge and demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field, has presented and defended a thesis and/or practical element, by *viva voce*, to the satisfaction of the examiners. Because of the extended nature of the research project, most candidates register initially for an MPhil and subsequently transfer to a PhD, once sufficient progress has been made.

Details of the research degree process, the rules and regulations and the support and facilities available to PGRs are set out in this Code.

See also: *Research Degrees at BU: a Guide to Practice-Led Research Degrees*

---

### **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) by Publication**

---

The PhD by Publication is normally only available to members of BU staff.

The PhD by Publication is awarded to a candidate on the basis of publications or other practical elements, together with an accompanying synthesis in which the candidate must demonstrate a critical investigation, providing an original contribution to knowledge, and an understanding of appropriate research methodology for the chosen field. The candidate must also present and defend their thesis, incorporating publications or other practical elements appropriate to the candidate's field of research and synthesis, by *viva voce*, to the satisfaction of the examiners.

See also: *Research Degrees at BU: a Guide to the PhD by Publication*.

---

### **Professional Doctorates**

---

The Professional Doctorate is awarded to a candidate who, having critically investigated and evaluated an approved organisation-centred topic resulting in a fundamental advance in organisation-centred performance, or professional practice topic resulting in a fundamental advance in theory and practice, and demonstrated an understanding of appropriate research methods, has presented and defended a thesis, by *viva voce*, to the satisfaction of the examiners.

The Professional Doctorates are designed to encourage practising professionals to pursue formal qualifications through in-depth research related to activities performed in the workplace. These programmes are an emerging part of the postgraduate and professional portfolio of BU and include:

- **Doctor of Professional Practice (DProf)**

The School of Health and Social Care is offering a Professional Doctorate which is ideal for health and social care professionals from a range of backgrounds including: lecturer practitioners who have completed masters studies; practitioners aspiring to be a nurse or therapy consultants; service leaders and managers from a variety of health and social care organisations including general practitioners, psychotherapists and counsellors, and educationalists. This programme can be completed whilst in part-time or full-time employment.

---

---

- **Professional Doctorate – Creative Industries (DProf)**

The Media School is offering a Professional Doctorate exclusively for the media industry. The academic standing of this qualification is equivalent to that of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and provides one of the highest qualifications of intrinsic value and status available to practitioners, leading to the title of Doctor. This programme can be completed whilst in part-time or full-time employment. The assessment will focus on the production of a final thesis and where appropriate, maybe accompanied by either supporting material (artefacts in a non-written form) which may be assessed by academics and industry professionals in a *viva voce* and exhibition format

- **Professional or Engineering Doctorate (DProf/DEng)**

The Centre for Digital Entertainment (BU Media School and Bath University) is offering a unique doctoral program that places researchers directly in companies to work on real projects across digital media, animation, games and VFX. These projects will form the basis of an Engineering or Professional Doctorate. The program lasts 4 years with 75% of the programme based in a company. The research is supported by access to a range of options from Bath and Bournemouth's respected Masters programmes. This taught programme will be tailor made for individual needs and arranged in consultation with the researcher, the host company and academic supervisors.

See also relevant programme handbook for each professional doctorate.

---

**Doctoral Track (available to BU Staff only)**

---

The Doctoral Track is only available to members of BU staff.

A separate guide, *Research Degrees at BU: A Guide to the Doctoral Track for BU Staff*, is available from the Graduate School to provide members of staff with information, guidance and advice when embarking on a Doctoral Track. The guide sets out BU's research degree portfolio, additional training programmes offered to BU staff and other research support available to all staff. The guide also sets out the stages of the Doctoral Track which will assist academic staff in identifying the most appropriate doctoral route for them. It should be used in conjunction with this Code of Practice and relevant programme handbooks to provide an insight into academic progression and guidance for completing a research degree.

Members of BU staff undertaking a research degree largely fall under the same rules and regulations as any PGR. Differences apply in areas such as the application process, appointment of examiners and issues such as fees and time allowances.

---

### 3 THE EXAMINING TEAM

---

#### 3.1 Appointment of examiners

The nomination of both the internal and external examiners is considered by the Academic School and their recommendations are referred to the Graduate School and ASC for ratification (see Section 6.1). The supervisory team must discuss the timescale for examination with the candidate as soon as submission of the thesis is imminent.

When appointing an examining team, the following criteria must be satisfied:

- the examination team must comprise at least two examiners, one of whom must be external;
- members of BU staff must have two external examiners, an internal examiner may also be present;
- both examiners should be experienced in the candidate's area of research, and may, where appropriate, have relevant industrial or professional expertise;
- the external examiner must have examined at least once at the appropriate level for the examination;
- both examiners should normally hold a doctorate and at least one must hold a doctorate.
- the candidate must not have been formally advised, supervised, or had any close association with the examiners however, they may have been involved in the Transfer process;
- the candidate shall have no formal contact with any examiner(s) between their appointment and the *viva voce*;
- the external examiner should be independent of the supervisory team and, if relevant, any collaborating establishment;
- no person who is registered for a research degree at Bournemouth University may act as an examiner.
- the same external examiner should not be proposed so frequently that their familiarity with the University might prejudice objective judgement (e.g. not more than three times in a five year period).

Where the examining team (or individual examiner) does not fully satisfy the above criteria, the Academic School should provide a detailed rationale for their appointment when seeking approval (see Section 6.1). The candidate will be notified of the examination team when their nomination has been approved.

### **3.2 Roles and responsibilities of examiners**

The examiners are jointly responsible for ensuring that the thesis meets the criteria for the award of the qualification and that the thesis is the candidate's own work. As such they will:

- read the thesis
- prepare a preliminary report form
- examine by *viva voce* the candidate
- prepare a joint report on the outcome
- make recommendation relating to the award

The full examination process is set out in Section 6.

Both examiners have a duty to acquaint themselves with the Bournemouth University Rules and Regulations and have a responsibility to ensure that the *viva voce* is conducted in accordance with these rules. Clarification of any issues that arise can be sought from the independent chair (see Section 4).

The examiners should make every effort to ensure that the candidate feels at ease during the examination and explore the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the candidate's work.

Both examiners should examine the candidate's work in detail and share any major concerns that arise from their reading of the thesis with the other examiner prior to the *viva voce* examination.

## **4 THE INDEPENDENT CHAIR**

---

### **4.1 Appointment of the independent chair**

The independent chair of the *viva voce* should be appointed by the Deputy Dean (Research & Enterprise) from the candidate's registered school.

The role of the independent chair is purely procedural and non-examining and should ensure that the *viva voce* is conducted in an appropriate manner, in accordance with the Code of Practice, ensuring fairness and consistency throughout. The chair will also provide an additional viewpoint if the conduct of the *viva voce* should become the subject of a candidate's appeal.

To meet the "independent" status, the chair must not have had prior involvement with the candidate, either in a supervisory or advisory capacity, during their research. The independent chair should be selected from across the University and/or different subject area.

The Graduate School holds a central list of independent chairs. Training for independent chairs will ensure consistency between different *viva voce* examinations.

### **4.2 Roles and responsibilities of the independent chair**

The roles and responsibilities of the independent chair are primarily:

- to safeguard the candidate's interests, to ensure they are treated fairly and that their interests are safeguarded
- to ensure that regulations and procedures are adhered to and that a permanent record of the proceedings is produced;
- to have ultimate responsibility for the way in which the *viva voce* is conducted, and for the completion of the associated paperwork.

In addition, the independent chair should:

- have knowledge of and provide accurate information and guidance on regulations and procedures of the University governing a *viva voce*;

- outline the nature of the viva, introduce those present, clarify arrangements and ensure the candidate understands the nature and purpose of the viva;
- explain that their role is neutral within the examination process and that their presence is to ensure that the examination is conducted in accordance with the Codes of Practice and equal opportunities policy of BU;
- ensure that the candidate is provided with oral and written comments, and understands the outcome of their viva and what is required of them in terms of any corrections;
- forward all documentation to the research administrator promptly which includes:
  - the written Chair's report of the *viva voce* (see Appendix 5);
  - the completed final joint examiners report with signatures;
  - a report of any relevant recommendations;
  - the completed checklist.

The chair must **not** participate in the examining of the candidate.

## **5 TRANSFER *VIVA VOCE* PROCESS**

---

### **5.1 Transfer Policy**

The transfer *viva voce* is a formal process that should mirror the candidate's final *viva voce* experience. PGRs should transfer to a higher award (usually MPhil to PhD) after 18 months registration full-time study (36 months part-time study). The transfer process is an important milestone to ensure that the PGR and their research meet the required academic standards to continue at doctoral level. Whilst acknowledging that some degree of flexibility across BU is essential, the best practice for this process is recommended below.

The transfer process (report and *viva voce*) is an examination of progress and, as such, is conducted under the normal

University rules applied to examinations. Progress is monitored by the Academic School and the Graduate School.

If PGRs fail to meet this milestone on time, a formal process will be triggered. Under exceptional circumstances, formal requests for extensions should be made and passed to the Academic School for approval. An extension of 6 months for full-time PGRs (12 months part-time) may be granted.

## 5.2 Transfer report

The supervisory team will give guidance and clarify the purpose of the report, what is required and the consequences of outcomes. PGRs will also be made aware that this is part of a continuing process and not a stand alone document - the content of this report should be written for eventual incorporation within the final thesis.

The transfer report will normally have an upper word limit of 10,000 words (including any appendices, draft chapters, literature review etc), although this may vary across different disciplines, and be accompanied by a separate 500 word abstract. A typical report should include:

<b>an introduction</b>	including the research project question, aims and objectives
<b>a literature review</b>	a review of the academic literature, its relation and context to the research
<b>a research plan</b>	a description of the methodology and approach used in the research
<b>progress to date</b>	a summary of findings, results and discussions to date and any problems encountered
<b>conclusion</b>	a summary of progress to date plus a revised plan for completing the research project
<b>a reference list</b>	and bibliography

The above is for guidance only and the transfer report should be tailored to reflect the requirements of the school or subject area. It is important that PGRs should discuss this with their

supervisory team and reflect the progress of the research at the point of transfer (i.e. it may be possible to include draft chapters of the final thesis in the report).

### **5.3 Transfer *viva voce***

The transfer *viva voce* will normally be scheduled to take place within 4-6 weeks of submission of the transfer report. The transfer *viva voce* will be carried out by a transfer panel, which will include:

- an independent Chair;
- two independent academics;
- a supervisor may also attend, if the PGR agrees, but may only contribute to the discussion for clarification purposes, if invited to do so.

Where appropriate, an external reviewer may also be asked to read and comment on the transfer report.

The transfer *viva voce* and its outcome is a formal process that mirrors that of the final *viva voce* experience. The subsequent recommendations of the panel may be that the PGR either:

- transfers and becomes registered onto the programme of PhD;
- transfers and become registered onto the programme of PhD subject to consideration of specific recommendations of the transfer panel (within 1 month full time / 2 months part time);
- does not transfer but remains registered at MPhil to carry out further work to resubmit the transfer report;
- does not transfer but continues to work to the submission of an MPhil;
- does not transfer and is withdrawn.

All PGRs should receive clear, written feedback on the transfer report and *viva voce*.

The outcome of the transfer process will be presented to the Academic School for final confirmation and reported to the Graduate School.

## 5.4 Resubmission of transfer report

Where transfer has been deferred, the PGR should also be advised on what further work should be carried out prior to resubmission or the reasons why transfer has not been approved.

The timeframe for resubmission of the transfer report will normally be within 2 months for full-time PGRs and 4 months for part-time PGRs.

If the PGR fails to satisfy the transfer panel following resubmission, a further opportunity is provided to re-submit within 6 months full time (12 months part time). If the PGR then fails to meet the necessary level on the second resubmission, they may:

- continue to work to the submission of an MPhil;
- be withdrawn.

## 6 THE EXAMINATION PROCESS

---

### 6.1 Approval of examiners and thesis title

The approval of the examiners is a formal process which follows

The Examiner Approval Process	
Supervisors propose examining team which meets the criteria set out in Section 3.1	Supervisors
Academic School considers nominations and rationale	Academic School (usually School Research Committee or equivalent)
Nominations forwarded to the Graduate School and Academic Development & Quality	Graduate School / ADQ
Nominations reviewed by independent experienced researchers and comments fed back to ADQ	Reviewers / ADQ
Reviewers comments may be fed back to Supervisors for comment or, in exceptional circumstances, may be considered by a panel chaired by Graduate School.	Supervisors / ADQ / GS
Final examiner nominations sent to ASC for	ASC / ADQ

ratification by Chairs action and School notified of outcome	
Once ratified by ASC , letters must be sent to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the external and internal examiners confirming their appointment</li> <li>to the candidate advising them of the examining team.</li> </ul>	Academic School

Examination arrangements will not normally be considered outside ASC meetings and proposals should be sent to EDQ via the Graduate School at least six weeks in advance of the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) meetings held during the academic year.

If there is any change to the title of the thesis following the submission of examination arrangements for ASC approval, the candidate must make a formal application to amend the title.

The candidate should submit one soft bound copy of the thesis for each examiner together with an abstract. The candidate must complete and sign a **Declaration Form** and hand it in with the thesis. Copies of the bound thesis must be submitted to their research administrator, who sends the thesis and Preliminary Report Form to the examiners.

## 6.2 Pre- *viva voce* arrangements

Prior to the *viva voce*, each examiner should read the thesis and complete the **Preliminary Report Form** (see Appendix 3) to ensure that there is documented evidence that the thesis has been independently examined.

The Preliminary Report should be treated as confidential and not be available to anyone other than the examiners and chair. The reports should normally be submitted to the research administrator prior to the *viva voce*.

Supervisory teams may be allowed to see the reports on the day of the *viva voce*, although this would be at the discretion of the examiners and on the understanding that the information would not be divulged to the candidate.

Section 3 of the examiner's Preliminary Report form should include specific comments on:

- the literature review;
- application of research methods;
- literary, or other, form and presentation;
- the candidate's contribution to research;
- the extent of any collaboration.

In completing the Preliminary Report, each examiner must:

- consider whether the thesis provisionally satisfies the requirements of the degree;
- if possible, make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of any subsequent examination.

On the day of the examination, the examiners will be provided with an opportunity to discuss their reports prior to the *viva voce*.

### **6.3 Issues arising on reading the thesis**

Where the examiners are of the opinion that the thesis submitted by an MPhil, PhD, DBA or DProf candidate is so unsatisfactory that no useful purpose would be served by conducting a *viva voce* examination, they may recommend that the *viva voce* examination be postponed and the thesis referred for further work.

If either examiner has any significant issues or concerns, they should ensure that these are brought to the attention of the independent chair in advance of the date set for the *viva voce*.

The independent chair may recommend one of the following actions is taken:

- in the unlikely event that the examiner(s) deem that thesis is not presented in a form appropriate for examination (e.g. the English language needs further improvement), the candidate should be informed that the *viva voce* will be postponed until the thesis meets the required standard;

- in the unlikely event that the examiner(s) suspect academic misconduct (e.g. plagiarism) has occurred, the viva voce should continue as planned and the candidate questioned on the alleged misconduct as part of his/her defence. In this instance, neither the candidate nor the supervisory team should be made aware of the concerns of the examiner(s).

In either instance, the recommendations open to the examiners when the *viva voce* takes place, are set out in Section 6.5.

#### **6.4 Arrangements for *viva voce***

The *viva voce* is normally held in the UK. However, in exceptional cases the Graduate School may give approval for the examination to take place abroad, or via video conferencing.

Where for reasons of sickness, disability or comparable valid cause and the University is satisfied that a candidate would be under serious disadvantage if required to undergo a *viva voce* examination, an alternative form of examination may be approved. Such approval shall not be given on the grounds that the candidate's knowledge of the language in which the thesis is presented is inadequate.

The research administrator is the main point of contact throughout and is responsible for the *viva voce* arrangements, including:

- arranging the date and time of the viva voce in conjunction with the examiners and the candidate and notify the examining team, supervisory team and the candidate of the final arrangements for the viva voce.
- arranging a room for the viva voce, making sure that it is appropriate and in a quiet location;
- organising meals and refreshments;
- arranging travel and hotel accommodation for the examiners, if applicable;
- in conjunction with the Deputy Dean (Research & Enterprise), appointing an independent chair;

- providing the independent chair with a pack containing copies of the following:
  - University Rules for the Awards of Degrees by Research;
  - Preliminary Report and Examiners' Report Forms;
  - Code of Practice for Examiners & Chairs of Research Degrees;
  - Checklist.
- ensuring that all the arrangements are in place to meet and greet the external examiners and the candidate on the day of the *viva voce*.

Members of the supervisory team may, with the consent of the candidate, attend the *viva voce* examination. However, they:

- may only offer comments when invited to do so by the examiners;
- may also request permission from the examiners to clarify a particular point for the candidate during the *viva voce*;
- must withdraw from the examination prior to the deliberations of the examiners on the outcome.

If the supervisory team is not in attendance at the *viva voce*, they should, be contactable during the examination so that the examiners may seek clarification on any specific issue.

## **6.5 The outcome of the examination**

### ***6.5.1 Report on the viva voce***

After the *viva voce*, the examiners are jointly responsible for completing the **Examiners' Joint Recommendation Form** (see Appendix 4). Both examiners should sign the completed report, however, in the case of a disagreement between the examiners, independent reports are required (see Section 6.7).

The Preliminary Reports and Examiners Joint Recommendation Form must together provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of the work to enable the University to satisfy itself that the criteria for the award of the degree have been met.

## 6.5.2 Examiners' recommendations

The recommendations open to the examiners following the *viva voce* are set out in the University Rules, which state:

<b>Recommendations for outcome of the viva voce</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that the appropriate award be made;</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that the appropriate award be made subject to <b>CORRECTIONS</b> being made to the thesis</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Timescale:</b> 1 months FT 2 months PT</p> <p><b>Minor Corrections</b> are those NOT requiring academic re-assessment, for example, typographical errors or minor re-organisation of material</p>	<p>If examiners are satisfied that the candidate has in general reached the standard required for the degree, but consider that the candidate's thesis requires some minor corrections <b>not requiring academic re-assessment</b> (for example, typographical errors or re-organisation of material) they may recommend that the degree be awarded subject to the candidate correcting the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal examiner.</p> <p>In such circumstances, the examiners must indicate in writing to the candidate what minor corrections are required and the time scale for submission.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the internal examiner to verify that the corrections have been made, to his/her satisfaction and a certificate of corrections (RD18) should be submitted to initiate conferment of the award.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that the appropriate award be made subject to <b>AMENDMENTS</b> being made to the thesis</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Timescale:</b> up to 6 months FT up to 12 months PT</p> <p><b>Amendments</b> refers to substantive changes including academic clarification of points, additional references in addition to typographical, grammatical, reformatting, and restructuring.</p>	<p>If the examiners are satisfied that the candidate has in general reached the standard required for the degree, but consider that the candidate's thesis requires substantive amendments, but not so much as to call for the re-submission of the thesis, they may recommend that the degree be awarded subject to the candidate amending the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal and/or the external examiner(s).</p> <p>In such circumstances, the examiners must indicate to the candidate in writing what amendments and corrections are required. The time scale is to be agreed with the candidate following the examination and communicated to the candidate in writing.</p> <p>In such cases, a certificate of corrections (RD18) certifying that the amendments made are satisfactory</p>

	<p>must be submitted with the recommendation of the examiners. The statement must be signed and dated by the internal and/or external examiner(s) as decided by the examiners at the examination.</p>
<p><b>• that the candidate be permitted to RE-SUBMIT for the degree and be re-examined;</b></p>	
<p><b>Timescale:</b> up to 12 months FT up to 24 months PT</p> <p><b>Resubmission</b> would normally require a review of methodological approaches, re-examine data and/or analyses etc.</p>	<p>If the examiners recommend a resubmission of the thesis, the candidate may be required to review methodological approaches, re-examine data and/or analyses etc.</p> <p>In such circumstances, the examiners must indicate to the candidate in writing what amendments and corrections are required. The time scale (normally within a maximum of 12 months full time or 24 months part time) is to be agreed with the candidate following the examination and communicated to the candidate in writing.</p> <p>The examiners must also indicate to the candidate whether they will be required to undergo a further <i>viva voce</i> following examination of the re-submitted thesis, which should be carried out by both Examiners.</p> <p>Where the thesis has previously been examined, a second re-submission is not permitted – i.e. a candidate may only resubmit once.</p>
<p><b>• that the candidate be awarded the lower research degree of MPhil</b></p>	
<p><b>Timescale:</b> up to 12 months FT up to 24 months PT</p>	<p>If the examiners are satisfied that the candidate has not reached the standard required for a doctoral degree, but consider that the research has achieved the standard required for an MPhil then the examiners may recommend the award of the lower research degree. The award must be subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners.</p> <p>The time scale (normally within a maximum of 12 months full time or 24 months part time) is to be agreed with the candidate following the examination and communicated to the candidate in writing.</p>
<p><b>• that the candidate NOT be awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined</b></p>	
	<p>In such cases the examiners must provide written guidance concerning the deficiencies of the thesis for the candidate. The examiners may not recommend that a candidate fail outright without holding a viva voce or other alternative examination.</p>

---

	Where Senate decides, on the recommendation of the examiners, that no award is made and no re-examination be permitted, the examiners must prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their decision, to be given to the candidate.
--	---

---

### **6.5.3 Assessment Offences**

Where evidence of an assessment offence in the preparation of the thesis, or other irregularities in the conduct of the examination comes to light subsequent to the recommendation of the examiners, the Graduate School shall consider the matter, if necessary in consultation with the examiners, and take the necessary action, in accordance with the University policy on assessment offences.

## **6.6 Re-examination for a research award**

The University Rules permit **one re-examination**, subject to the following requirements:

- a candidate who fails to satisfy the examiners at the first examination of the thesis, including where appropriate the *viva voce*, may on the recommendation of the examiners, and with the approval of the University, be allowed to revise and re-submit the thesis for re-examination;
- the examiners must provide the candidate, via the independent chair, with written guidance on the deficiencies of the first submission;
- the candidate must re-submit the revised thesis within 12 months full time (24 months part time) from the date of the last part of the examination. The Graduate School may, where there are good reasons, approve an extension of this period;
- Senate, at the recommendation of the Graduate School, may require that an additional external examiner be appointed for the re-examination.

The outcome of a re-examination should be reported on the **Examiner's Joint Recommendation Form** and the examiners may recommend:

- that the appropriate award be made:
- that the appropriate award be made subject to minor or major amendments being made to the thesis, to the satisfaction of the Examiners;
- that the candidate be not awarded the degree;
- that, in the case of a PhD, DBA or DProf examination, the candidate be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the Examiners.

Where the thesis has previously been examined, a second resubmission is **NOT** permitted.

### **6.7 Disagreement between the examiners**

The examiners should submit a joint recommendation report on the outcome of the *viva voce* however, where the examiners are not in agreement, separate reports and recommendations may be submitted to the University.

In such cases, where the examiners recommendations are not unanimous, Senate may:

- accept the (unanimous) recommendation of the external examiner(s); or
- require the appointment of an additional external examiner.

Where an additional external examiner is appointed, he/she shall assess the thesis and prepare an independent preliminary report on the basis of the thesis and, if considered necessary, conduct a further *viva voce*.

This additional external examiner should not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional examiner, the University shall complete the examination as set out in the University Rules.

### **6.8 Issues arising regarding the *viva voce***

In the unlikely circumstances that the original examination has to be postponed or terminated, a further examination may be required and in such cases the approval of the Graduate School must be sought without delay.

Where such an examination is arranged, it must normally be held within two calendar months of the original examination date unless the Graduate School has given permission otherwise. Any such examination is deemed to be part of the candidate's first examination.

### **6.9 Release of examiners' reports to the candidate**

Under normal circumstances, the examiners' reports are confidential and will not be shown to the candidate prior to examination. However, examiners should note that all information held on the student file may be released to the candidate if requested under the Data Protection Act, this includes the Preliminary, Joint Examiners and Chairs Reports. If there is an appeal following the outcome of the *viva voce*, all paperwork relating to the examination will need to be submitted to the Registrar together with statements from those present. Examiners therefore may wish to prepare separate independent reports/notes prior to, and during, the *viva voce*.

## **7 AFTER THE VIVA VOCE**

---

### **7.1 Post-viva voce arrangements**

After the *viva voce* has been held, the research administrator should ensure that:

- the independent chair copies and provides them with all the forms pertaining to the outcome of the *viva voce*;
- if the thesis is subject to amendment, the independent chair informs the candidate of the examiners' recommendations and provides a date for re-submission of the revised thesis;
- a copy of the recommendations letter be sent to the supervisory team;
- once the revised thesis has been received it should be forwarded to the examining team for comment;

- if the examiners are satisfied with the re-submission they should inform the research administrator who provides all the necessary information to the Graduate School;
- the candidate must submit hard bound copies of their final thesis and an abstract as outlined in the Code of Practice for Research Degrees.

After conferral has been recommended, the Graduate School will write to the candidate congratulating them and informing them that Registry will be in touch regarding the Awards Ceremony.

The research administrator will check that the examiners have returned their expense forms and process them accordingly.

## 7.2 Appeals against examination decisions

A request for a review may only be made in relation to the decision of Senate on the recommendation of the examiners. Given the existence of procedures for complaint and grievance during the study period (as set out in the University Academic Rules), alleged inadequacy of supervisory or other arrangements during the period of study do not constitute grounds for requesting a review of the examination decision.

Requests for a review are permitted only on the following grounds:

- that there is evidence of **procedural irregularity** in the conduct of the examination (including administrative error) of such a nature as to cause doubt as to whether the result might have been different had there not been such irregularity;
- that there is evidence of **unfair or improper assessment** on the part of one or more of the examiners. candidates may not otherwise challenge the academic judgement of the examiners;
- that there are **circumstances affecting the candidate's performance** of which the examiners were not aware at the viva voce.

Requests for a review should be made in writing to the Registrar and, if granted, will be considered in accordance with the procedures set out in the Student Academic Appeals Policy of the University Rules.

## **8 CONTACT**

---

If you have any queries or wish to seek advice about any of the procedures relating to the examination process, do not hesitate to contact the Graduate School or Academic School Research Administrator.

## **APPENDIX 1 – MASTERS LEVEL DESCRIPTORS**

---

### **Descriptor for qualifications at Masters (M) level: Masters degree**

#### **Masters degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:**

- i a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice;
- ii a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;
- iii originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
- iv conceptual understanding that enables the student:
  - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline; and
  - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

#### **Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:**

- a deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- b demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;
- c continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level;

#### **and will have:**

- d the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
  - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;
  - decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations; and
  - the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

## APPENDIX 2 – DOCTORAL LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

### Descriptor for qualifications at Doctoral (D) level: Doctoral degree

#### Doctorates are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- i the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;
- ii a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
- iii the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;
- iv a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.


#### Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- a make informed judgments on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- b continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches;

#### and will have:

- c the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

## APPENDIX 3 – PRELIMINARY REPORT FORM

	<b>RESEARCH DEGREE RD14: EXAMINER'S PRELIMINARY REPORT FORM</b>
<p><b>Notes:</b> Each Examiner is required to make an <b>independent</b> preliminary report and provisional recommendation on the thesis and to submit it either i) prior to the Viva Voce examination to the Research Administrator or ii) on the day of the Viva Voce examination to the Independent Chair. Text fields will expand as required. Use the TAB key to move to the next field.</p>	

<b>Preliminary Report of the Examiner on a Candidate for the Award of:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Master of Philosophy (MPhil)	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
<input type="checkbox"/> Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctor of Professional Practice (DProf)
<input type="checkbox"/> Doctor of Philosophy by Publication (PhD by Pub)	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctor of Engineering (DEng)

<b>1 Examination Arrangements</b>							
Candidate's name							
Title of thesis							
Date of viva voce							
External Examiner (1)							
External Examiner (2)							
Internal Examiner (1)							
School / Institute	<input type="checkbox"/> AS	<input type="checkbox"/> BS	<input type="checkbox"/> DEC	<input type="checkbox"/> HSC	<input type="checkbox"/> MS	<input type="checkbox"/> ST	

<b>2a Report of the Examiner on the Research Thesis (All Candidates)</b>	
The Examiner is requested to give a reasoned assessment of the candidate's thesis.	
Does the thesis demonstrate: i) competence in the investigation of the chosen topic(s) and/or ii) competence in undertaking a critical study of the chosen topic(s)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If NO, please explain why:
Is the thesis satisfactory as regards literary presentation and succinctness?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If NO, please explain why:
Is the abstract of the thesis submitted acceptable?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If NO, please explain why:
In the case of a candidate whose research programme is part of a collaborative group project, does the thesis indicate clearly the individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If NO, please explain why:

<b>2b Additional Comments for a PhD Thesis only</b>	
Does the thesis represent a significant contribution of knowledge of the subject by: i) the discovery of new facts,	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If NO, please explain why:

and/or ii) the exercise of independent critical powers?	
Does the thesis show evidence of a sound understanding of methodology?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If NO, please explain why:
Does the thesis provide evidence of originality?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If NO, please explain why:

### 2d Additional Comments for a DProf Thesis only

Does the thesis represent: i) substantive theoretical and informed contribution to the candidate's area of professional practice? and ii) a narrative and critical reflections on practice with evidence of practice development?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If NO, please explain why:
Does the thesis contain a comprehensive review of literature and evidence related to the area of investigation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If NO, please explain why:
Does the thesis show: i) sound understanding of the selected methodology to the research approach? and ii) appropriate and effective skills in the development and undertaking of the research enquiry?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If NO, please explain why:
Does the thesis provide: i) evidence of originality? and ii) an integrated approach to synthesising the contributions to knowledge and practice that their work makes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If NO, please explain why:

### 3 Examiner's Report

A report of about 300 words should suffice


### 4 Provisional Recommendations

*Note: If the Examiner wishes to suspend judgement until after the oral examination this should be stated below. If the candidate's performance in the oral is such as to necessitate an amendment to the recommendation made on this form, the final recommendation should be stated on the Examiners' Report Form.*

### Signature

<b>Name of Examiner</b>		<b>Date</b>	
<b>Signature</b>			

## APPENDIX 4 – EXAMINERS JOINT RECOMMENDATION FORM

	<b>RESEARCH DEGREE RD15:</b> <b>EXAMINERS' JOINT RECOMMENDATION FORM</b>
	<p><b>Notes:</b> The Examiners are required, where possible, to complete a joint recommendation on this form on the Viva Voce examination, the result of the examination as a whole and the recommendations to the University's Senate.</p> <p>If the provisional recommendations of the Examiners in their independent preliminary reports were not in agreement, an explanatory statement of the final joint recommendation must be made below.</p> <p>If an agreed joint recommendation cannot be submitted, each Examiner should therefore complete separate copies of this form, and details of the disagreement should be stated below and, where appropriate, related to the preliminary report.</p> <p>Text fields will expand as required. Use the TAB key to move to the next field.</p>

<b>Joint Examiners Recommendation for a Candidate for the Award of:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Master of Philosophy (MPhil)	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
<input type="checkbox"/> Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctor of Professional Practice (DProf)
<input type="checkbox"/> Doctor of Philosophy by Publication (PhD by Pub)	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctor of Engineering (DEng)

<b>1 Examination Arrangements</b>						
Candidate's name						
Title of thesis						
Date of submission						
Date of viva voce						
External Examiner (1)						
External Examiner (2)						
Internal Examiner (1)						
School / Institute	<input type="checkbox"/> AS	<input type="checkbox"/> BS	<input type="checkbox"/> DEC	<input type="checkbox"/> HSC	<input type="checkbox"/> MS	<input type="checkbox"/> ST

<b>2 Report of the Examiners on the Viva Voce Examination</b>	
The Examiners are requested to give a report on the viva voce examination of the candidate, giving a reasoned assessment of the candidate's performance.	
Are you satisfied that the thesis presented is the candidate's own work?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If NO, please explain why:
Did the candidate show a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of matters relating to the thesis?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If NO, please explain why:
Did the candidate show a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of background studies to the subject of the thesis?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If NO, please explain why:

<p>In the case of a candidate whose research programme is part of a collaborative group project, did the viva voce examination indicate clearly the individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If NO, please explain why:
--	--

<p><b>3 Additional Comments on the Viva Voce Examination</b>          A report of about 300 words should suffice</p>

<p><b>4 Recommendation</b>          The Examiners are requested to indicate which recommendations apply and to delete those that do not. Where corrections, amendments or resubmission is required, instructions MUST be given to the Chair</p>	
<p>The examiners may recommend one of the following recommendations for outcome of the viva voce</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	that the appropriate award be made
<input type="checkbox"/>	that the appropriate award be made subject to CORRECTIONS being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of the Internal Examiner by ..... (please specify date)
<input type="checkbox"/>	that the candidate be permitted to RE-SUBMIT for the degree and be re-examined to the satisfaction of the <input type="checkbox"/> External Examiner and/or <input type="checkbox"/> Internal Examiner by ..... (please specify date) and be re-examined as follows:
<input type="checkbox"/>	the thesis must be revised and if deemed satisfactory by the Examiners, the candidate will be exempt from further examination, oral or otherwise
<input type="checkbox"/>	the thesis must be revised and the candidate undergo a further oral or alternative examination
<input type="checkbox"/>	the thesis is satisfactory, but the candidate must undergo a further oral or alternative examination
<input type="checkbox"/>	the thesis is satisfactory, but the candidate must undergo a further examination, to take the form of:..... (as specified by the Examiners)
<p><i>NB Where the thesis has already been examined, a second re-submission is not permitted.</i></p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	that the candidate be awarded the lower research degree of MPhil subject to presentation of the amended thesis to the satisfaction of the <input type="checkbox"/> External Examiner and/or <input type="checkbox"/> Internal Examiner by ..... (please specify date)
<input type="checkbox"/>	that the candidate NOT be awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined

<p><b>5 Additional Comments on the thesis or any other aspect of the examination</b></p>

<p><b>Signature</b></p>			
Signature of External Examiner		Date	
Signature of External Examiner		Date	
Signature of Internal Examiner		Date	

## APPENDIX 5 – CHAIR’S REPORT FORM

	<b>RESEARCH DEGREE RD18: CHAIR’S REPORT FORM</b>
<i>Notes: For further guidance, please see the Code of Practice for Chairs and Examiners of Research Degrees. Please complete and return to the School Research Administrator.</i>	

<b>1 Candidate’s Details</b>						
Candidate’s name						
Title of thesis						
Internal Examiner (1)						
School / Institute	<input type="checkbox"/> MPhil	<input type="checkbox"/> PhD	<input type="checkbox"/> PhD by Pub.	<input type="checkbox"/> DProf	<input type="checkbox"/> DBA	<input type="checkbox"/> DEng

<b>2 Examination Arrangements</b>						
Time of viva voce						
Location						
Chair of Viva Voce						
External Examiner (1)						
External Examiner (2)						
Internal Examiner (1)						
Supervisors (if present)						
School / Institute	<input type="checkbox"/> AS	<input type="checkbox"/> BS	<input type="checkbox"/> DEC	<input type="checkbox"/> HSC	<input type="checkbox"/> MS	<input type="checkbox"/> ST

<b>3 Outcome of the Viva Voce</b>	
The examiners made the following recommendations for outcome of the viva voce	
<input type="checkbox"/>	that the appropriate award be made
<input type="checkbox"/>	that the appropriate award be made subject to CORRECTIONS being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of the Internal Examiner by ..... (please specify date)
<input type="checkbox"/>	that the candidate be permitted to RE-SUBMIT for the degree and be re-examined to the satisfaction of the <input type="checkbox"/> External Examiner and/or <input type="checkbox"/> Internal Examiner by ..... (please specify date) and be re-examined as follows:
<input type="checkbox"/>	the thesis must be revised and if deemed satisfactory by the Examiners, the candidate will be exempt from further examination, oral or otherwise
<input type="checkbox"/>	the thesis must be revised and the candidate undergo a further oral or alternative examination
<input type="checkbox"/>	the thesis is satisfactory, but the candidate must undergo a further oral or alternative examination

<input type="checkbox"/>	the thesis is satisfactory, but the candidate must undergo a further examination, to take the form of:..... (as specified by the Examiners)
<i>NB Where the thesis has already been examined, a second re-submission is not permitted.</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	that the candidate be awarded the lower research degree of MPhil subject to presentation of the amended thesis to the satisfaction of the <input type="checkbox"/> External Examiner and/or <input type="checkbox"/> Internal Examiner by ..... (please specify date)
<input type="checkbox"/>	that the candidate NOT be awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined

<b>4 Report on the Viva Voce</b>	
Please provide a brief report on the pre-Viva Voce discussion	
Please provide a brief report on the Viva Voce examination	
Please provide a brief report on the post Viva Voce discussion	
Please provide any other comments on the Viva Voce	

<b>5 Document Checklist</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chair's Report completed
<input type="checkbox"/>	RD14 Examiner's Preliminary Reports attached
<input type="checkbox"/>	RD15 Examiners' Joint Recommendation Form attached
<input type="checkbox"/>	Where corrections, amendments or resubmission is required, instructions MUST be attached
<input type="checkbox"/>	If thesis title is to be changed, please state new title:

<b>Signature</b>			
Signature of Independent Chair		Date	

## **Acknowledgements**

This code of practice has been written taking account of University rules and regulations and existing handbooks and information for PGRs. The QAA Code of Practice has been referred to for guidance and we have taken into account the many valuable views gained at events organised by UKCGE, SW & W Hub and Vitae where we have had the opportunity to share best practice with other institutions.