

Research Examiners' Handbook

Effective from 1 January 2014

Research Degree Examiners' Handbook

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Glossary of Terms

Throughout, the following abbreviations have been used:

HESA = Higher Education Statistical Agency

QAA = Quality Assurance Agency

RI= Research Institute

RC = Research Centre

FRC = Faculty Research Committee

DOS = Director of Studies

URC = University Research Committee

APR = Annual Progress Review

PGRT = Post-graduate Research Tutor

RASC = Research Awards Sub-committee (a sub-committee of URC)

STaR Office = Student Transnational and Research Office (part of Registry)

NOMEX = Nomination of Examiners' Form

Introduction

The Research Examination Handbook is one in a series of 4 handbooks that serve to amplify the regulations. The handbook is set out to lead Examiners through the stages from appointment of Examination team to the signing off of the final thesis. Where appropriate, the Handbook is supplemented by subject-specific guidance provided by approved research degree units. The University's regulations for postgraduate research degree programmes are available to Examiners, students and staff as hard copy and on the University of Wolverhampton web-pages.

This Handbook is closely aligned to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education's second edition of the Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education Section 1: Postgraduate research. The University of Wolverhampton's Research Handbook series came into effect in January 2014. It covers MPhil, PhD, MD, PhD by Publication, as well as Professional / Practitioner doctorate programmes. All research degree Examiners, the students, and supervisors are expected to be conversant with the relevant Research Handbook and to apply its principles in full.

This handbook is printed for your convenience but may be updated periodically. To view the most up to date version please see the University's [Academic Regulations webpage](#).

Academic Standards and Enhancement of the Quality of Research Programmes

The University Research Committee (URC) is empowered by Academic Board to oversee the management of the University's research students. As part of this remit URC aims to ensure that all University of Wolverhampton research students are located in high quality environments with a community of active researchers providing robust research training. To achieve this all research students are managed by a Faculty Research Committee (FRC). This ensures provision of appropriate support and guidance to enable research students to complete their programmes on time, and provides an environment in which students, supervisors, examiners and other staff involved in research degree programmes are aware of and are committed to fulfil their responsibilities.

Each approved unit demonstrates:

- the pursuit of high quality research in cognate areas by a community of academic staff and postgraduates;
- supervisors with the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure the successful completion of students' research programmes;
- access to the facilities and equipment necessary to enable students to complete their research programmes successfully.

Monitoring the Success of Postgraduate Research Programmes

The University Research Committee evaluates performance in each of its Faculty Research Committees and reviews ongoing student performance as part of the annual monitoring process, including:

- submission and completion times and rates;
- pass, referral and fail rates;
- withdrawal rates;
- appeals and complaints, the reasons for them, and how many are upheld;
- comments from examiners;
- recruitment profiles;
- feedback from research students, and where possible from employers, sponsors and external funders;

- where it is available, data on employment and career destinations of former students.

FRCs and the URC each compile annual reports in which statistical and other information relating to postgraduate research programmes is considered and acted upon. The URC annual report is considered by Academic Board. There is student representation on URC and all FRCs.

The Research Environment

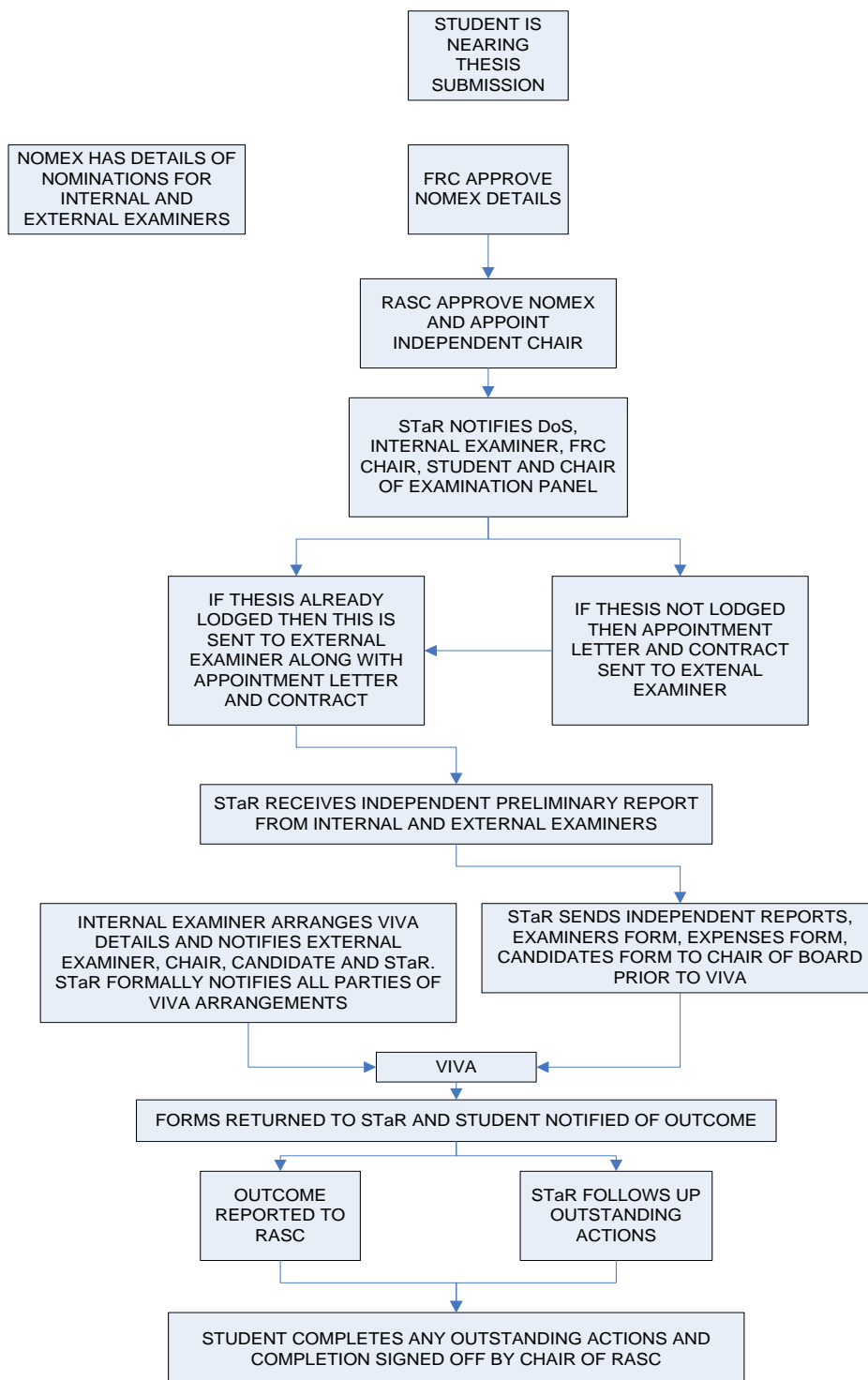
Each research unit provides students with a stimulating environment that includes:

- opportunities and encouragement to exchange and develop ideas with people at appropriate levels who are also engaged in research and/or pursuing established research programmes;
- ready access to academic colleagues and others able to give advice and support;
- adequate learning and research tools, including access to IT equipment, library and electronic publications;
- opportunities for students to develop peer support networks where issues or problems can be discussed informally;
- supervision that encourages the development and successful pursuance of a programme of research;
- guidance on ethical pursuit of research and the avoidance of research misconduct, including IPR breaches
- support to develop research-related skills that contribute to the student's ability to complete the programme successfully, including an understanding of research funding and the commercial exploitation of research
- opportunities to develop personal and employment-related skills to complement the advice on career development available through the University's Careers and Guidance Service
- access to welfare and support facilities that recognise the particular nature of research degree study;
- the opportunity for effective student representation, and for addressing students' feedback including complaints;
- sufficient monitoring to ensure that where a project is undertaken in collaboration with another organisation, the standards of both organisations are maintained;
- the opportunity for students to develop intellectual maturity and encouragement to reflect on their own learning about research and on research outcomes

Section 1: Research Degree Assessment Procedures

The University Research Committee (URC) ensures that all examinations are conducted and recommendations of the examiners are presented wholly in accordance with the University's regulations. In any instance where the University Research Committee is made aware of a failure to comply with all the procedures of the examination process, it may declare the examination null and void and appoint new examiners.

The University's Research Award Sub Committee (RASC) monitors the Research Degree examination process, approves the nominated examiners and confers the research degree award following due consideration of the Examiners' reports. This process is outlined in the diagram below.



Examination panel

The University Regulations require the candidate be assessed by at least two Examiners. One should be an external examiner and the other internal examiner will be a member of academic staff. Where the candidate is a member of the permanent staff of the University, he/she shall be examined by a minimum of three examiners, of whom at least two must be external to the University. A member of staff is one who holds a substantive appointment as a lecturer, demonstrator or technician with the University or who is regularly engaged as a Visiting Lecturer for more than 50% of his or her time.

The University Regulations stipulate that an Independent Chair will be appointed by the Research Awards Sub-committee to conduct MPhil, PhD, MD or Professional Doctorate examinations. The role and responsibilities of the Independent Chair can be found under Appendix D of this Handbook.

Only the candidate, the approved examining team and the Chair of the examination will be expected to be in attendance at the viva voce. Candidates who wish their Director of Studies (or other member of their supervisory team) to attend the examination must make this request in writing to the STaR Office prior to the examination. Approval for such requests will be granted after liaison with the approved examining team. If permission is given for a member of the supervisory team to attend the examination, s/he may only be present at the same time as the candidate.

The expectation is that a viva voce examination will take place at a University of Wolverhampton Campus with all appointed examiners present in the room with the candidate. However the Research Awards Sub-Committee may give consideration to conducting viva voce examinations remotely (using technology) in the following exceptional circumstances:

- 1) When a member of the examination team has restrictions on travel for instance due to ill health, disability, and weather conditions or other emergency circumstances.
- 2) The option of a remote viva should not be made available to a student who does not wish to return to the University for the viva voce examination. However, in circumstances where there may be difficulties such as immigration, health or financial issues, an exceptional request to hold the viva voce remotely may be considered.

A remote viva should only be considered in exceptional circumstances and should not be viewed as a routine alternative to a face to face viva, or as a justification for nominating examiners from outside the UK. Full details can be found in the URC Policy on remote Viva Voce Examinations (Appendix G).

Appointment of Examiners

At least three to four months before the expected date of submission the nominations for examiners should be forwarded to the University Research Awards Sub-committee. Selection criteria for the appointment of examiners can be found under Appendix A and the Process for Checking Right to Work in the UK can be found under Appendix B of this Handbook. The role and responsibilities of the Internal Examiner can be found under Appendix C of this Handbook.

Upon approval of the examination arrangements the External Examiner is sent a letter of appointment. At this point the candidate must have no involvement with the examiners and no contact made until the viva voce examination; otherwise the arrangements may be considered invalid

Section 2: Criteria for the Assessment of Research Degrees

The University has articulated clear learning outcomes for the awards of MPhil, PhD, MD, Professional and Practitioner Doctorates, PhD by Published Work (See below). In each case the criteria for success (i.e. the 'assessment criteria') are the achievement of the learning outcomes for the relevant award. In setting the criteria for research programmes, the University drew upon the qualification descriptors for doctoral and master's degrees in the QAA *Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications* and the definitions arising from the Bologna Process. The PhD by Published Work is assessed using the same criteria. The criteria used to assess research degrees are available to students, staff and examiners in the Research Degree Handbooks for Students, Examiners and Supervisors. They are also on the University's web pages.

The nature of the candidate's research studies will depend to some extent on the academic discipline concerned. However, regardless of subject, all research degree theses should be examined on the basis of the following learning outcomes:

Learning Outcomes for the Award of MPhil

- Critical investigation and evaluation of a topic through individual research and analysis, which is at, or informed by findings at, the forefront of knowledge in the discipline and which is expressed in a work of publishable quality;
- Evidence of thorough and current knowledge of the specific field to which the topic of the thesis belongs, as well as an understanding of the intellectual context in which that topic is located;
- Demonstration of a comprehensive understanding of appropriate research methodologies;
- Demonstration of originality in the application of knowledge;
- Demonstration of ability to analyse critically one's own findings and those of others;
- Demonstration of ability to formulate a hypothesis or research question(s);
- Demonstration of ability to design, plan and implement a research programme to test, explore and evaluate the hypothesis or question(s).

Learning Outcomes for the Award of PhD, PhD by Publication, and Professional Doctorate

- *For PhD and PhD by Publication* - Substantial critical investigation and evaluation of a topic or set of related topics resulting in an independent and original contribution to knowledge and understanding in the field to which the topic belongs, and which is expressed in a work of publishable quality;
- *For Professional / Practitioner Doctorates* - Substantial critical investigation and evaluation of a topic or set of related topics resulting in an independent and original contribution to practice and understanding in the field to which the topic belongs, and which is expressed in a work of publishable quality;
- Originality is demonstrated through the discovery of new facts or methodologies, through subjecting known facts or methodologies to new insights derived from investigation, and/or through the revision, confirmation or adaptation of existing theories or methodologies to the new circumstances described in the thesis;
- Evidence of systematic, thorough, current and detailed knowledge of the specific subject area of the research as well as the general context in which that subject area is located;

- Evidence of knowledge of an appropriate range of research methodologies and a critical evaluation of their merits;
- Evidence of an ability to develop new hypotheses or research questions that have the capacity to extend the frontier of knowledge of the discipline;
- Evidence of an ability to design, plan and implement a research programme to test, explore and evaluate these hypotheses or questions;
- Evidence of an ability to analyse critically one's own findings and those of others.

Length and format of thesis

Word count

The text of the thesis should normally not exceed the following maximum length which includes endnotes, footnotes and bibliography (except where specified otherwise below) but excludes essential ancillary data.

Subject Area	MPhil	PhD
Science, Engineering and Technology	25,000 words	45,000 words
Arts, Social Sciences, Education and Business	45,000 words	90,000 words
Creative and Performing Arts (where the thesis is accompanied by a portfolio of original, creative work, the following range applies)	20,000 -25,000 words	20,000 - 45,000 words
Professional Doctorate in Biomedical Science (DBMS)	-	25,000
Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD) Professional Doctorate in Health and Wellbeing (DHW) Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology (PsychD)	-	40,000*

**The word limit applies to the body of the thesis but excludes the reference list / bibliography, notes and appendices.*

(Essential ancillary data should not normally exceed 20% of the length of the thesis. Where such data exceeds 20% of the length of the thesis, the consent of the examiners will be sought.)

The thesis may contain work previously published by the candidate, and reference to such publication should be made in the thesis. Where publications are jointly authored by the candidate and others, the candidate's contribution to the publication must be specified.

Published work, supporting narrative, and evidence submitted for the awards of PhD by Publication and Higher Doctorates may vary in number and length according to the subject (see research degree regulations for information).

The format of the research thesis may vary according to the subject and type of research degree. See Appendix E for outline of the format and layout for PhD thesis.

Section 3: Examining the Thesis

When the thesis is submitted it is requested that the examiners undertake initial examination of the thesis within a few weeks of receipt and that independent Pre-Viva Reports are submitted to the STaR Office. In completing the Pre-Viva Report Form, each examiner shall consider whether the thesis provisionally satisfies

the learning outcomes of the degree (as set out above in section 2) and where possible make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of the oral examination (viva voce)

The Oral Examination (Viva Voce)

Viva voce arrangements

It is the responsibility of the Internal Examiner to liaise with the examining team, which comprises of the examiners and Chair of the viva voce, and candidate to arrange a date and time for the viva to take place (see role of Internal Examiner and Guidelines for Independent Chairs in Appendices C and D respectively). The viva examination should be arranged within 2-3 months of submission of the thesis to examiners. If the External Examiner anticipates a significant delay we request they contact us. If the Examiners are unable to agree if an oral examination should take place, the recommendation of the External Examiner or majority is accepted. The formal paperwork is sent out to the candidate and examining team from Registry's STaR Office. Pre-Viva Report Forms should be submitted to the STaR Office at least 1 week prior to the viva date. A week prior to the viva the paperwork, including the Pre-Viva Report, is sent out to the Independent Chair who presides over the viva voce.

The day of the viva voce

On the day of the viva voce examination, the examining team have a pre-viva meeting where they exchange their Pre-Viva Reports. They will discuss the questions they will ask the candidate and agree on how the viva should proceed (see also Guidelines for Independent Chairs Appendix D).

Following the viva voce examination the examiners will make their recommendation on a Post-Viva Recommendation form. This recommendation, together with the Pre-Viva reports on the thesis, should provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of work to enable the Research Awards Sub-committee to satisfy itself that the recommendation chosen is correct. All examiners' recommendations are subject to ratification by the Research Awards Sub-Committee and, as appropriate, the Professional Doctorate Progression and Award Board.

The viva should be conducted in such a way that the student has adequate opportunity, encouragement and time to explain his or her research and to defend the thesis. There is no prescribed time limit for this purpose. It is also recommended that examiners should allow short breaks at appropriate points.

In attending the viva, the student is declaring him/herself fit to do so. If a student is unwell immediately prior to the viva such that they are unable to attend it, they should immediately notify the STaR Office and provide the relevant medical evidence in connection to the illness.

If a student attends the viva, but becomes so unwell during it that it affects his or her performance, the examiners should, after consultation with the independent Chair and the student, decide whether or not to continue. If they do continue, they should note in their final report that the student was unwell, and the time at which this occurred. If they decide not to continue they should determine whether they have enough evidence to make a decision or whether it will be necessary to resume the viva examination on another occasion.

As a guide, under such circumstances, the Examiners will decide what proportion of the viva examination has been completed and what issues will be covered in any rescheduled viva.

Percentage of viva completed	Action to be taken following adjournment
<40% completed	Reschedule and restart

40-70% completed	Reschedule and resume
>70% completed	Decision on outcome

Care should be taken to ensure illness is genuine and is not simply used as an excuse for a second attempt at the viva.

Examiners' Recommendations

Following the examination, the Examiners may make one of a number of recommendations, which are transmitted to the RASC for approval.

Examined for the Award of PhD

Pass	No corrections required
Pass, subject to minor corrections (in accordance with Regulation 5.7 - Not relevant to Higher Doctorate degrees)	Corrections to be submitted within 12 weeks
Re-submit and or be re-examined orally for the degree originally submitted (in accordance with Regulation 5.8 - Not relevant to Higher Doctorate degrees. Not relevant for PhD by Publication as there is no provision for resubmission. However, the candidate may apply to re-register for this award, but only after a minimum of three years from the date of the original examination has elapsed)	Resubmit within 12 calendar months of the date of the viva
Re-submit and/or be re-examined orally for the degree of MPhil (in accordance with Regulation 5.9 - Not relevant to Higher Doctorate degrees, PhD By Published work or Professional Doctorates)	Resubmit within 6 calendar months of the date of the viva
Fail	No further opportunity for submission

Examined for the Award of MPhil

Pass	No corrections required
Pass, subject to minor corrections (in accordance with Regulation 5.7)	Corrections to be submitted within 12 weeks
Re-submit and or be re-examined orally for the degree originally submitted (in accordance with Regulation 5.8)	Resubmit within 12 calendar months of the date of the viva
Fail	No further opportunity for submission

At the end of the viva, the examiners recommendations are communicated to the candidate in writing using the Viva Outcome Form. It is the responsibility of the Chair to complete the form and hand it to the candidate as the viva voce concludes.

With the exception of a) Pass and e) Fail recommendations, a list of revisions/amendments should be communicated to the candidate. These should be sufficiently detailed to allow the candidate to understand clearly what they are required to do. The internal examiner (see Appendix C: Role of the Internal Examiner) ensures that the amendments are clearly stated on the Post-Viva Feedback Report, which should be returned to the STaR Office within 10 working days of the viva for onward transmission to the candidate and the supervisory team. On re-examination, examiners will *only* consider the issues that were previously referred.

Minor corrections:

Examiners may recommend a Pass subject to minor correction of editorial or other stated deficiencies. Minor corrections are defined as those that can reasonably be completed within 12 weeks of the viva voce. Typically, minor amendments entail improvements to the satisfaction of the examiners on:

- a) the presentation of the thesis (spelling, punctuation, syntax)

- b) correction of minor errors of fact or interpretation
- c) minor re-writing to make the context, focus or originality of the thesis clearer to the reader (this may include suggested revision of the thesis title by the Examiners)
- d) integration of graphic/statistical material into relevant parts of the text bibliography and references
- e) minor re-organisation of material within or between sections/chapters for easier comprehension by the reader (including more effective cross-referencing)
- f) clarification of particular points or of terminology employed.

Students must resubmit the corrected work to the STaR Office within 12 weeks of the viva voce. At least one of the examiners (often the internal examiner) will review the corrected thesis in line with the original list of recommended corrections/amendments. Following review of the corrected thesis, examiners can recommend a Pass or Fail. Examiners are asked to communicate their final recommendation to the STaR Office on the Examiners Final Declaration Form within 4 weeks of receipt of the revised thesis.

If the minor amendments are not submitted within 12 weeks, and in the absence of approved and recorded Leave of Absence, the University reserves the right not to confer the award.

Resubmission:

If the thesis is not considered to be of sufficiently high standard to recommend the award submitted, but there is evidence of the potential of a successful submission, then the examiners may recommend that the student re-submit the thesis. The examiners have the discretion to request a further oral examination following re-submission of the thesis.

Resubmission amendments require major work. They typically involve any of the following:

- a) a major re-think of the methodology employed in the project, or
- b) a major recasting of whole sections/chapters of the thesis (or original composition)
- c) re-running of experiments, fieldwork or other methods of data collection
- d) conducting new experiments or additional fieldwork.

The timescale for resubmission (originally submitted for PhD) is one calendar year from date of viva voce.

All of the examiners will re-examine the revised thesis in line with the original list of recommended corrections/amendments. They will be asked to make one of the following recommendations:

Pass	No corrections required
Pass, subject to minor corrections	Corrections to be submitted within 4 weeks
Fail	No further opportunity for submission

Examiners are asked to communicate their recommendation to the STaR Office on the Independent Resubmission Report and Recommendation Form within 12 weeks of the resubmitted thesis.

Minor corrections following resubmission must be submitted within 4 weeks from the receipt of the list of corrections. Following the submission of minor corrections, the examiners are asked to make their final recommendation of either Pass or Fail to the STaR Office on the Examiners Final Declaration Form within 4 weeks of receipt of the revised thesis. If the minor amendments are not submitted within the timescale, and in the absence of approved and recorded Leave of Absence, the University reserves the right not to confer the award.

Resubmission of PhD for MPhil

If the thesis is not considered to be of sufficiently high standard to recommend the award of PhD and the examiners do not believe there is evidence of potential to reach the appropriate standard within 12 months, they may recommend that the candidate re-submit the thesis for an interim award (i.e. MPhil). This requires the re-working of the original PhD thesis to meet the word length and learning outcomes for the award of MPhil.

Such re-submission will take place within 6 calendar months of the date of the oral examination. The examiners have the discretion to request a further oral examination following re-submission of the thesis. All of the Examiners will re-examine the revised thesis in line with the learning outcomes for MPhil and will be asked to recommend Pass, Pass subject to minor corrections or Fail on the Independent Resubmission Report and Recommendation Form.

Minor corrections following resubmission must be submitted within 4 weeks from the receipt of the list of corrections. If minor amendments are required, the examiners will be asked to make their final recommendation of either Pass or Fail to the STaR Office on the Examiners Final Declaration Form within 4 weeks of receipt of the reworked thesis. If the reworked thesis is not submitted within the timescale, and in the absence of approved and recorded Leave of Absence, the University reserves the right not to confer the award.

Failure to agree a recommendation

Where examiners are unable to reach an agreed recommendation, the Dean of Research may take the following course of action:

- a) accept a majority recommendation;
- b) accept the recommendation of the External Examiner; or
- c) require the appointment of an additional examiner.

In the case of c) above, the additional examiner shall prepare a Pre-Viva Report on the thesis and may request an additional oral examination. The only outcomes available to the additional examiner are either Pass or Fail. S/he shall neither seek nor be informed of the individual recommendations of the other examiners.

Section 4: Academic Misconduct

If at any stage of the process the examiners find evidence of cheating, plagiarism or other irregularity in the preparation of the thesis or in the candidate's conduct at the oral examination, they must report the matter to the STaR Office. The matter will then be referred to the University's Conduct and Appeals Unit for investigation and where appropriate instigate the penalties for academic misconduct according to the procedures outlined in Appendix F.

Appendices

Appendix A: Criteria for the Appointment of Research Degree Examiners

1. GENERAL

- 1.1 At least two examiners must be appointed for each thesis presented for examination, at least one of whom must be an external examiner. It is normal practice to appoint one internal and one external examiner. However, if the student is or has been, within the 12 months prior to the submission of the thesis, a member of University staff, two external examiners and an internal examiner must be appointed.
- 1.2 To ensure the good standing of University of Wolverhampton Research Degrees, the examiners appointed for each student must be able, and be seen to be able, to make an independent assessment of the student and their thesis.
- 1.3 The supervisors may wish to consult the student for their views on individuals who might act as examiners, but the student's supervisors are responsible for nominating suitable examiners and should do so well in advance of the student submitting their thesis, so as to avoid subsequent delays in the examination process. Nominations should not be made unless the proposed examiners have informally agreed to act.
- 1.4 In support of the University's commitment to equality and diversity, supervisory teams are asked to consider, where possible, the gender and ethnicity balance of the examiners when making nominations.
- 1.5 All examiners must be formally appointed by the Research Awards Sub-Committee (RASC) following review by Research Student Boards (RSBs) within the Faculties/Research Institutes. The RSB advises on the academic expertise and suitability of the nominees; whilst RASC checks for any potential conflicts of interest the student or supervisor may have with the nominees.
- 1.6 Once examiners have been approved, the STaR Office will write to the examiners confirming their appointment. Under no circumstances should an examination proceed until the examiners have been formally appointed by the University.
- 1.7 Examiners should respect the confidentiality of the examination process and should under no circumstances discuss their views regarding the quality of the thesis or the content of their independent Pre-Viva Report and recommendations therein with the student, the other examiner(s), the supervisory team or the course leader (in the case of Professional Doctorates). These discussions are only appropriate to be had between examiners at the pre-viva meeting where Pre-Viva reports are exchanged.
- 1.8 Examiners should respect the confidentiality of the material they are examining. In some circumstances where students are sponsored by a company or industrial body, the examiners may need to sign a specific confidentiality agreement, as required by the sponsor.
- 1.9 Where a student is required to resubmit their thesis, the same examiners will normally undertake the re-examination, other than in exceptional circumstances (e.g. if an examiner has since retired and no longer wishes to participate).

2. CRITERIA FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF BOTH THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EXAMINER:

- 2.1 Examiners should normally hold a degree in a cognate or relevant discipline that is at least equivalent to the degree that they are examining.

- 2.2 Probationary staff shall normally not be appointed to examine research degrees. However, the University does not wish to exclude recently appointed lecturers, individuals early in their career or individuals with appropriate professional backgrounds from industry from examining and where such individuals are appointed, the other examiner must be an experienced examiner.
- 2.3 It is accepted that examiners may be acquainted with the supervisors, and sometimes the student, and this in itself is not a bar to acting as an examiner. However, there must not be a personal link between the examiners and the candidate (see 2.5).
- 2.4 The examiners appointed should not have had any significant research or other contact with the candidate or supervisors which might inhibit a completely objective examination.
- 2.5 Supervisory teams should disclose details of any situations which have the potential to impair the ability of the examiner(s) to make a fair and impartial assessment of the student's thesis. A non-exhaustive list of potential sources of conflict is provided below:
- Nominated examiners' substantial involvement in the student's research, for example direct and sustained input/advice into the work being examined. Acting as an independent assessor during the Annual Progress Review should not compromise the ability of an individual to act as internal examiner, unless they undertake a more active role in the student's research.
 - Close personal relationships between the nominated examiner and the student, supervisors or other nominated examiner(s), for example this would include partners, spouses and close family relationships.
 - Close professional relationships between the nominated examiner and the student, supervisor or other nominated examiner, for example line management relationships, joint holding of grants, co-authorship of papers, or working in the same Institution in the case of two external examiners. This may be mitigated by the size and relative independence of the research team.
 - Nominated examiner(s) having acted as personal tutor to the student;
 - The work of the nominated examiner(s) is the focus of the student's research;
 - In cases where the student's research has involved collaboration with or funding of research by an external party, the nominated examiner(s) must be independent of that relationship;
 - Nominated examiner(s) having direct commercial interest in the outcomes of the research;
- 2.6 The existence of a potential conflict of interest should not necessarily be a bar to the appointment of a nominated examiner. However, Faculties, examiners, supervisors and students are required to declare any potential conflicts which may affect the integrity of the examination process at the point of nomination, or in the case of situations that only become apparent after examiners have been appointed, as soon as reasonably possible.

3. CRITERIA FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF THE INTERNAL EXAMINER

- 3.1 The internal examiner is a member of academic staff of the University of Wolverhampton and must hold a substantive appointment of at least 0.2 FTE or be regularly engaged as a Visiting Lecturer for more than 50% of their time.
- 3.2 The internal examiner is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the oral examination, should be able to assess the thesis and contribute to the oral examination, and must have a sound knowledge and understanding of University regulations and procedures governing the viva voce.
- 3.3 The internal examiner must have completed the formal 'Examining a Research Degree' course within the last three years before being recommended for appointment as an internal examiner for the first time.
- 3.4 The internal examiner is normally a member of academic staff of the students' department, although it may be appropriate for the internal examiner to be drawn from another academic

department/Faculty.

- 3.5 The internal examiner should not have had an active role in considering a candidate's progression stage. Staff members who may have attended seminars/presentations given by the candidate may be nominated as internal examiners provided they have taken no part in the progression decision.

4. CRITERIA FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER

- 4.1 The external examiner is the subject specialist. External examiners must have recent, significant and demonstrable expertise in the student's field of research in order to provide an in-depth analysis of the thesis and in order to provide a rigorous viva voce examination.
- 4.2 Except where there is a strong practitioner/ industrial focus to the research, the external examiner will normally hold a substantive academic appointment in a university or higher education establishment.
- 4.3 If the topic of research spans a number of different disciplines, the faculty may wish to nominate a second external examiner to ensure that the combined expertise of the examining team covers all aspects of the student's work.
- 4.4 The external examiner shall normally have prior knowledge and experience of research degree examinations and standards through previous examination experience. In exceptional circumstances an external examiner who is recognised as an expert in their subject discipline, but who has little or no formal examining experience, may be appointed as long as the combined proposed examining team has experience of 3 or more previous examinations.
- 4.5 The external examiner must be completely independent of both the University and any collaborating establishment. For this reason, honorary/Emeritus members of the University's staff are not permitted to be appointed as external examiners. Former members of the University's staff are eligible for appointment as an external examiner; however a period of at least 3 years must have elapsed before a former member of the University's staff may be appointed as an external examiner, subject to the other criteria being met.
- 4.6 An external examiner is not normally permitted to act in connection with the examination of a second research degree student at this University within a period of 12 months. The University Research Committee discourages the frequent use of external examiners except in exceptional cases and will ensure that the same external examiner is not approved so frequently that their familiarity with a research group might be considered to prejudice objective judgement.
- 4.7 Where a student is either sponsored by, receiving supervision from, or undertaking work in an industrial establishment, academic institution or company, RASC will not approve an individual employed by that organisation for appointment as an external examiner.
- 4.8 Where the proposed external examiner does not meet the above criteria, the supervisor must make a strong case for appointment. In such cases: either
- (i) the internal examiner must be very experienced in doctoral examinations at this University; **or**
 - (ii) a second external examiner who is experienced in research degree examinations should be appointed
- 4.9 The appointment of a nominated external examiner is subject to verification of their right to work in the UK.

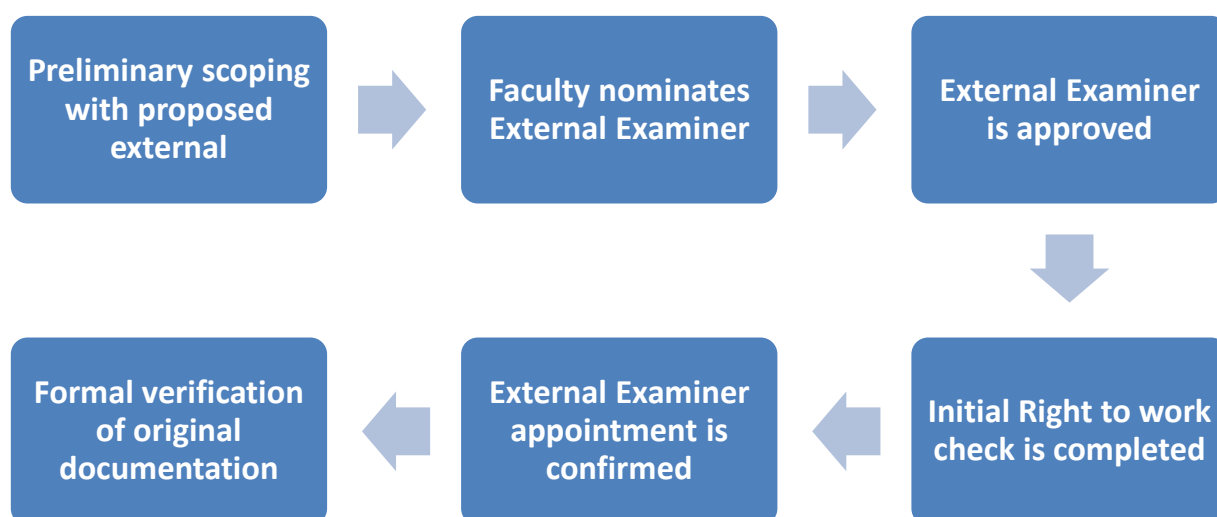
Appendix B: External Examiners (Research Degrees) - Process for Checking Right to Work in the UK

1) Overview

The law on preventing illegal working is set out in sections 15 to 25 of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 which came into force on 29 February 2008. Employing someone who is not allowed to work in the UK is illegal, and the University is required to carry out checks on everyone it employs. This includes checks on External Examiners who are contracted to perform a specific service, even if they are already employed by other UK institutions. These checks apply to ALL External Examiners including UK nationals.

There could potentially be severe consequences for the University if it is found to be employing an illegal worker and checks on that person's right to work in the UK have not been properly carried out. The Home Office's UK Visas and Immigration Service (UKVI) monitor this and failure to follow correct procedures could result in the University's licence (to sponsor international students for Tier 4 visas) being revoked.

This document sets out in detail how to manage such checks. An overview of the process is presented below.



2) Process for Checking Right to Work in the UK

a) Preliminary Scoping

Preliminary scoping of a potential External Examiners right to work in the UK takes place during initial conversations between the Director of Studies (DOS) and the proposed examiner as part of the nomination process. When completing the Nomination of Research Degree Examiners form (NOMEX) the DOS is required indicate to the best of their knowledge as to whether the proposed external examiner has the right to work in the UK. The DoS should also check that the proposed External Examiner is prepared to post to the University their evidence that they have the Right to Work in the UK before the thesis is dispatched to them. This should help identify to the Faculty Research Student Board any potential issues at an early stage in the nomination process before the NOMEX is forwarded to the Research Awards Sub Committee (RASC) for approval.

b) Examiner Approval

RASC approves the nomination of the External Examiner but the appointment is not confirmed until their right to work in the UK has been verified.

c) Verification

The Student Transnational and Research Office (STAR) will contact the External and request that they provide a copy of acceptable documentation for right to work checks. The STaR Office receives the physical RTW evidence (e.g. passport), video calls the External Examiner to verify identification and returns the documentation by special delivery.

d) Confirmation of External Examiner Appointment

STAR Office will only send a thesis that is to be examined to the external examiner once right to work documents have been received and verified and the appointment confirmed.

3) Record Keeping and Review

The STAR Office maintains records of all External Examiner nominations, appointments and right-to-work verifications (including when appointments and right to work expires). These details are held on a database alongside verified copies of original documents which will be retained securely for two years after expiry of the appointment.

Following the Viva Voce the STAR Office will check whether the External's appointment is still current or has expired before sending additional materials for examination i.e. minor amendments or a resubmission.

4) Acceptable Documentation for Right to Work Checks

The following information is drawn from the Home Office document "Right to work checks: an employer's guide" (last updated 2 July 2021), as published at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/right-to-work-checks-employers-guide>

Further guidance is also available via www.gov.uk/check-job-applicant-right-to-work

Appendix C: Role of the Internal Examiner

The primary responsibility of the Internal Examiner is to read and examine the candidate's thesis. However, s/he is also responsible for a number of tasks prior to and following the examination, in order to ensure that the examination process is carried out in optimum circumstances and that the student is able to perform to the best of her / his ability.

Before the examination, the Internal Examiner:

- a) Liaises with the other members of the examining team, the Independent Chair* and the Candidate to establish a mutually convenient date, time and venue (i.e. room) for the examination to take place (and delegates to an appropriate administrator within the Faculty the task of room booking and hospitality, including refreshment for the candidate during the viva).
- b) Notifies the STaR Office of the above details as soon as they are confirmed;
- c) Informs the candidate's Director of Studies of the arrangements once they have been confirmed.
- d) Completes an independent Pre-Viva Report on the candidate's thesis.

*Note: the nominated Independent Chair must be involved in the discussions to establish a suitable date for the viva voce examination. Non-availability of a Chair due to failure to consult on suitable dates may mean that the examination cannot proceed as planned and will need to be rescheduled.

Following the examination, the Internal Examiner:

- e) Ensures, in conjunction with the External Examiner and the Independent Chair, that the Post-Viva Recommendation form is appropriately completed and returned to the STaR Office.
- f) Ensures, where appropriate, and in agreement with the External Examiner and the Independent Chair, that the amendments required and the time-scale in which they are to be completed, together with any other relevant information, are clearly communicated to the candidate at the end of the viva.
- g) Ensures that the amendments are clearly stated on the Post-Viva Feedback Report, which should be returned to the STaR Office within 10 working days of the viva for onward transmission to the candidate and the supervisory team.
- h) Ensures (in liaison with the External Examiner) that the necessary amendments, where required, are subsequently carried out under the specified conditions, and that the Examiners Final Declaration Form is appropriately completed and returned to the STaR Office.

Appendix D: Guidelines for Independent Chairs of Research Degree Examinations

University regulations stipulate that an Independent Chair will be appointed by the University Research Committee (URC) to conduct MPhil/PhD or Professional Doctorate thesis examinations. The following guidelines are designed to make clear the role of the Chair and the extent of his/her responsibilities.

- 1) The primary role of the Chair is to conduct the examination in order to ensure (i) fairness to the candidate and (ii) full observance of University procedures and regulations. In addition, the Chair is responsible for ensuring that the recommendations of the examiners are communicated to the candidate and the STaR Office.
- 2) The Chair should **not** (i) read the thesis; (ii) make any contributions to the academic examination of the thesis; (iii) make any contributions to the academic evaluation of the thesis by the Examiners. The Chair is not expected to have any academic expertise in the area being examined, nor to bring to the examining process any such expertise s/he may coincidentally possess.

Only the candidate, the approved examining team and the Chair of the examination will be expected to be in attendance. Candidates who wish their Director of Studies (or other member of their supervisory team) to attend the examination must make this request in writing to the STaR Office prior to the examination. Approval for such requests will be granted after liaison with the approved examining team. If permission is given for a member of the supervisory team to attend the examination, s/he may only be present at the same time as the candidate (see too below, 6e).

3) Prior to the examination:

- a) The STaR Office will contact the proposed Chair of an examination following the approval of the examination arrangements. Members of the University Research Awards Sub-Committee will be approached in the first instance on a rota basis, although other members of the University research community may be co-opted, if necessary.
- b) The Internal Examiner will be responsible for liaising with the Independent Chair and with members of the examining team in order to establish a mutually convenient date, time and venue (i.e. site) for the examination and for communicating this information to the STaR Office well in advance of the examination.
- c) The STaR Office will be responsible for (i) sending copies of the thesis, the regulations, and the Pre-Viva reports to members of the examining team and (ii) communicating information on the date, time and venue of the examination to all members of the examining team, the student and the Independent Chair.
- d) Immediately prior to the examination, the STaR Office will provide the Independent Chair with all relevant forms/ information, including:
 - Post-Viva Recommendation form
 - Viva Outcome Form
 - Candidate Details Form
 - Current copy of the regulations
 - Research Degree Examiner's Handbook
 - Copies of the Pre-Viva reports from each Examiner
 - Supplementary travelling expenses form(s) for the External Examiner(s)
 - Independent Chairs Notes Form

The Chair will also be notified if approval has been given for any member(s) of the candidate's supervisory team to attend the examination.

4) At the outset of the examination the Chair

- a) should explain the status and role of the Independent Chair during the examination, and the reason for taking notes (see 5b below);
- b) should ensure that any procedural questions that the Examiners may have are discussed and resolved prior to the start of the examination; this may include a discussion on how exactly the thesis will be examined (e.g. turn-taking by the Examiners, chapter-by-chapter analysis, etc);
- c) should ensure that the candidate is introduced to each member of the examining team before questioning begins;
- d) should endeavour to establish an atmosphere in which the candidate will be able to perform to the best of her/his ability;
- e) should make it clear that any member(s) of the supervisory team attending the examination do so as observers only, and that they may not take part in either the examination nor in the evaluation of the thesis after the examination;
- f) should ensure that the candidate is advised that the recommendations of the examiners will be communicated in writing at the end of the viva voce and that s/he should not infer any decision from the questions and discussion.

5) During the examination the Chair

- a) should intervene in the examining process if s/he judges that fairness to the candidate at risk;
- b) should take brief notes on procedural matters only, e.g. those outlined in 4b above, on the overall conduct of the examination (including areas/questions which the candidate had difficulty with, and the ways in which the Examiners dealt with such difficulties); these notes should be returned to the STaR Office, with the Post-Viva Recommendation Form, within seven days of the Viva;
- c) offer the candidate and members of the examining team the opportunity for a brief 'comfort break', where appropriate.

6) After the examination the Chair

- a) will request that any member(s) of the supervisory team leave the room during the Examiners' discussion (although they may accompany the candidate for any final feedback session the Examiners wish to give);
- b) will ensure that the examiners' recommendations comply with the University regulations;
- c) will ensure that the Viva Outcome Form is completed and handed to the candidate at the end of the viva but they shall make it clear that the final decision rests with the University Research Awards Sub-Committee.
- d) will ensure that any other documentation supplied by the STaR Office (e.g. Candidates Details Form, extra travelling expenses forms) be handed, as appropriate, to the relevant person

(candidate/External Examiner(s)); and that the Post-Viva Recommendation Form is completed and sent to the STaR Office, as soon as possible;

- e) will ensure that any recommended revisions or amendments are clearly stated, and that these are communicated to the candidate. Where these are of a specialist academic nature, it may be more appropriate for a member of the examining team to communicate directly with the candidate, in which case the Chair should ensure that responsibility for so doing is clearly designated.

Please note: When the recommendation of the Examiners is that the candidate should be **granted the award** subject to minor amendments and corrections, these should be completed within 12 weeks of the viva. The degree cannot be awarded until the approved thesis is submitted.

When the recommendation of the Examiners is that the candidate should **permitted to re-submit**, the candidate is entitled to 12 calendar months of the viva in which to modify the thesis and re-submit. If there are sound reasons why this automatic entitlement could cause problems (for example, if one of the Examiners will be on a sabbatical at the time of resubmission), the candidate should be informed. However, any recommendation on the part of the Examiners that the candidate should submit prior to the 12-month deadline will not supplant the candidate's entitlement to the full period*.

- 7) In the event of a request for review of an examination decision, the Chair of the examination may be approached by the review panel for further information.

*** for PhD by Publication, there is no provision for re-submission. However, the candidate may apply to re-register for this award, but only after a minimum of three years from the date of the original examination has elapsed.**

Working Definition of 'minor amendments'

N.B. for Guidance only to Examiners of Research Degrees

Minor amendments are defined both by the nature of the work to be carried out on the thesis and the timescale within which such completion is thought reasonable.

1) Nature of the Work Minor amendments should **not** involve any of the following:

- a) a major re-think of the methodology employed in the project, nor
- b) a major recasting of whole sections/chapters of the thesis (or original composition)
- c) re-running of experiments, fieldwork or other methods of data collection
- d) conducting new experiments or additional fieldwork.

Typically, minor amendments entail improvements to the satisfaction of the Examiners on:

- I) the presentation of the thesis (spelling, punctuation, syntax)
- II) correction of minor errors of fact or interpretation
- III) minor re-writing to make the context, focus or originality of the thesis clearer to the reader (this may include suggested revision of the thesis title by the Examiners)
- IV) integration of graphic/statistical material into relevant parts of the text
- V) bibliography and references
- VI) minor re-organisation of material within or between sections/chapters for easier comprehension by the reader (including more effective cross-referencing)
- VII) clarification of particular points or of terminology employed.

2) Timescale

The timescale for amendments is as follows:

Minor amendments (First viva) – 12 weeks from date of viva

Minor amendments (Resubmission) – 4 weeks from date of viva

Resubmission – one calendar year from date of viva (6 months from date of viva for MPhil under 2014 regs)

Appendix E: Format of PhD Thesis

The following requirements shall be adhered to in the format of the thesis submitted for examination:

The text of the thesis should normally not exceed the following maximum length for the subject or type of research degree see table below. This word limit includes endnotes, footnotes and bibliography (except where specified otherwise below) but excludes essential ancillary data. *(Essential ancillary data should not normally exceed 20% of the length of the thesis. Where such data exceeds 20% of the length of the thesis, the consent of the examiners will be sought.)*

Subject Area	MPhil	PhD
Science, Engineering and Technology	25,000 words	45,000 words
Arts, Social Sciences, Education and Business	45,000 words	90,000 words
Creative and Performing Arts (where the thesis is accompanied by a portfolio of original, creative work, the following range applies)	20,000 -25,000 words	20,000 - 45,000 words
Professional Doctorate in Biomedical Science (DBMS)	-	25,000
Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD) Professional Doctorate in Health and Wellbeing (DHW) Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology (PsychD)	-	40,000*

**The word limit applies to the body of the thesis but excludes the reference list/bibliography, notes & appendices.*

Theses shall normally be in A4 format. In exceptional cases the University Research Committee may give permission for a thesis to be submitted in another format where it is satisfied that the contents of the thesis can be better expressed in that format;

Copies of the thesis shall be presented in a permanent and legible printed form. Any copies produced by photocopying must also be permanent and legible. The size of character used in the main text, including displayed matter and notes, shall be font size 12. You may use font style Arial, Tahoma or Verdana.

The thesis may be printed on one or both sides of the paper which shall normally be white, of good quality and sufficiently opaque to avoid show-through;

The margin at the binding edge of the page shall not be less than 40mm; other margins shall not be less than 15mm;

Spacing of typescript should be consistent with clarity; in the main body of the text, this should normally be double-spaced.

Pages shall be numbered consecutively through the main text including photographs and/or diagrams included as whole pages;

The title page shall give the following information (see specimen later):

- the full title of the thesis;
- the full name and qualifications of the author;
- that the degree is awarded by the University;
- the award for which the degree is submitted in partial fulfilment of its requirements;
- the Collaborating Establishment(s), if any;
- the month and year of submission; and
- statement of copyright.

Theses must be submitted for examination in a secure temporarily bound form.

[Specimen title page]

THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE FARMING
CO-OPERATIVES IN WESSEX

JOHN SMITH BSc

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of Wolverhampton
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

This research programme was carried out
in collaboration with the Christminster Agricultural College

July 2009

This work or any part thereof has not previously been presented in any form to the University or to any other body whether for the purposes of assessment, publication or for any other purpose (unless otherwise indicated). Save for any express acknowledgments, references and/or bibliographies cited in the work, I confirm that the intellectual content of the work is the result of my own efforts and of no other person.

The right of John Smith to be identified as author of this work is asserted in accordance with ss.77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. At this date copyright is owned by the author.

Signature.....

Date.....

Appendix F: Procedure for the Investigation of Academic Misconduct by Research Students

The University's procedure for research students is closely modelled on that used for undergraduates and students on taught postgraduate programmes.

1. Definitions

A research student is defined as a student of the University who is enrolled on a research degree programme leading to the degrees of Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or a Masters degree by research. Students studying for a professional doctorate who are in the thesis phase of their study programme are also defined as research students for the purposes of this procedure.

2. Cheating

Cheating is defined as any attempt by a candidate to gain unfair advantage in an assessment by dishonest means, and includes e.g. all breaches of examination rules, falsifying data

3. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as incorporating a significant amount of unattributed direct quotation from, or unattributed substantial paraphrasing of, the work of another.

4. Collusion

Collusion occurs when two or more students (and/or researchers) collaborate to produce a piece of work to be submitted (in whole or part) for assessment and the work is presented as the work of one student alone, without due acknowledgement of the contribution of others.

In the context of all three definitions: where research students are working in closely related fields to one another, or are supported by technical staff, it is important that each student takes care not to claim deliberately or inadvertently that a given piece of work carried out by someone else is their own work. Due acknowledgement must always be made to the contributions of others, whether in work submitted for assessment, presented at a conference or placed in the public domain through publication or any other medium.

Where a case of academic misconduct as defined above is suspected in a piece of work* contributing to a research award of the University, the matter must be referred to the relevant Director/Head of the Research Institute/Centre or Dean of Faculty (or nominee), who will determine whether a *prima facie* case exists to investigate the matter further. The Director/Head/Dean or nominee may seek advice from the Conduct and Appeals Unit in considering the matter. If the Director/Head/Dean or nominee then decides that the matter should be investigated further he or she must inform the Head of the Conduct and Appeals Unit.

** For the purpose of this procedure a "piece of work contributing to a research award of the University" is any written work or oral presentation submitted to the supervisors for assessment or submitted to a Faculty Research Committee in support of the progression stage of a Research Degree Programme or as part of annual monitoring.*

If a *prima facie* case for further investigation is established. A letter inviting the student to a meeting will be sent by the Research Institute/Centre (RI/RC).

The meeting will have in attendance:-

- The Director/Head of the RI or RC, or Dean of Faculty, or nominee

- The Head of the Conduct and Appeals Unit
- Director of Studies or other member of the supervisory team
- Student (and friend)
- Note taker (provided by the Conduct and Appeals Unit)

If, as a result of this meeting, academic misconduct is admitted by the student or the evidence clearly shows that academic misconduct has occurred, the relevant Faculty Research Committee will be informed and will be requested to apply the appropriate penalty (see paragraph 7 below). The student will be informed in writing within five working days of the meeting.

5. Investigation by Panel

5.1 If there is no conclusive result after this stage of investigation, and there are still grounds to suspect academic misconduct the matter will be referred back to the Conduct and Appeals Unit and a panel will be established to review the circumstances, comprising:

- Representative member of staff from another research Degree Unit
- Student representative nominated by the President of the Students' Union.
- Secretary to the panel (provided by the Conduct and Appeals Unit)

None of the members of the panel may come from a Faculty or Unit directly involved in the case.

5.2 The panel may as a result of its deliberations make recommendations and observations to the University Research Committee and to Academic Board concerning general principles relating to the operation of research degree programmes. The panel may carry out its investigation by whatever means it judges to be necessary and may require the attendance of members of staff or students to give evidence.

5.3 The Conduct and Appeals Unit will notify the student whose conduct is in question:

- that a panel has been established;
- the precise nature of any allegations against him/her;
- that he/she has the right to present evidence in person and to be accompanied by a "friend" who should normally be a fellow student or an officer of the Students Union. The student shall be responsible for notifying the Conduct and Appeals Unit of the identity of the friend and of any witnesses to be called not less than 48 hours prior to the interview meeting.
- that s/he has the right to see all the documents put to the panel for the purpose of establishing proof of the allegation(s);
- that s/he may submit a written statement to the panel prior to a personal appearance;
- that s/he may proceed with his/her programme of study while the matter remains unresolved, including any scheduled assessment; and that in these circumstances the payment of fees will be deferred until the matter is resolved. If the student is required to withdraw, the fees for the period of registration during consideration of the case will be waived.

Unless s/he agreed to a shorter period, the student must be given written notice at least one week prior to a request for attendance at a meeting of the panel.

5.4 The Head of the Conduct and Appeals Unit must inform the student of the decision of the panel as soon as is reasonably practicable and must confirm the decision in writing, no later than five working days after the hearing.

5.6 If the panel upholds the allegation of academic misconduct a written report of the panel's findings agreed by the members together with the agreed penalty, must be submitted to the relevant Faculty Research Committee and to the University Research Committee (URC) sub-committee. The agreed penalty will normally be that listed in section 7 below. The URC sub-committee, which meets most months, will receive for ratification the report of the panel at the earliest opportunity following the hearing. In exceptional circumstances, to avoid undue delay, the matter may be dealt with by Chair's action or by correspondence if appropriate to do so.

6. Penalties

Academic Board has agreed that the penalty for academic misconduct by any postgraduate research student is a requirement to withdraw from the University.

Note: academic misconduct is defined as any case of deliberate, premeditated cheating, (including deliberate plagiarism or collusion) which has either been admitted by a student, or which a panel has judged to be a premeditated attempt to deceive and gain unfair advantage (see paragraph 1 above).

7. Right of Appeal

Students have the right of appeal against a penalty that includes a requirement to withdraw, restricts the final award or affects progression in any other way. In this case the student may resort to the Appeals procedure for Postgraduate Research Students. An Appeal Panel may only consider an appeal against a penalty for academic misconduct on the grounds specified in the Procedure for Academic Appeals. If the Panel upholds the appeal in the student's favour, it may decide either to impose an alternative penalty or to rule that no penalty should be imposed.

Appendix G: Policy on remote Viva Voce Examinations



UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE RESEARCH AWARDS SUB-COMMITTEE

POLICY ON REMOTE VIVA VOCE EXAMINATIONS

The expectation is that a viva voce examination will take place at a University of Wolverhampton Campus with all appointed examiners present in the room with the candidate.

However the Research Awards Sub-Committee may give consideration to conducting viva voce examinations remotely (using technology) in the following exceptional circumstances:

- 1) When a member of the examination team has restrictions on travel for instance due to ill health, disability, and weather conditions or other emergency circumstances.
- 2) The option of a remote viva should not be made available to a student who does not wish to return to the University for the viva voce examination. However, in circumstances where there may be difficulties such as immigration, health or financial issues, an exceptional request to hold the viva voce remotely may be considered.

This should only be considered in exceptional circumstances and should not be viewed as a routine alternative to a face to face viva, or as a justification for nominating examiners from outside the UK.

APPROVAL FOR REMOTE VIVA VOCE EXAMINATION

- 1) Permission must be sought from the Research Awards Sub-Committee (RASC) at an early stage using the request form. Wherever possible, requests should be submitted alongside the NOMEX form (3-6 months before thesis submission) to allow time for alternative arrangements to be considered in the event that the request is not approved.
- 2) The Chair of RASC has the right to request further information or to refuse a request where a strong enough case has not been made.
- 3) Where unforeseen circumstances arise on the day of the viva, for example the External Examiner is unable to travel due to adverse weather conditions, please contact the STaR Office if you wish to discuss the potential for the viva to proceed remotely. This should again be in exceptional circumstances where there is a particular reason as to why the viva cannot be rescheduled for another date.

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING REMOTE VIVA VOCE EXAMINATIONS:

- 1) Viva voce examinations may only be conducted remotely with the written agreement of the research student and all members of the Examination Team (examiners and independent chair). This agreement should be sought and confirmed by the STaR Office prior to the proposal being considered by the Research Awards Sub-Committee.
- 2) The internal examiner is responsible for ensuring that all parties involved in the examination are informed of the details of the examination arrangements
- 3) The internal examiner should ensure familiarity with the relevant technology (software and hardware) prior to the examination and take responsibility for operating equipment at a basic level during the examination. This may involve adjustments to camera settings, volume etc.

- 4) Any time differences between the two locations must be taken into account to ensure that the student is not disadvantaged by an examination taking place at an inappropriate time. The Chair of RASC will have the final decision on appropriateness.
- 5) A 2-way video connection only will be considered. The person/people at each end of the link should be able to see the other person/people present at all times. The viva cannot be conducted by means of telephone conference except in cases of partial completion. (see pt. 11)
- 6) Consideration should be given to:
 - Identifying a room with suitable facilities (advice from rooming /Faculty Technicians)
 - Hardware, e.g. a large TV screen would be more appropriate than a laptop
 - Software that can be accessed and utilised by both users in both locations
 - The speed of network connections available at the 2 sites
 - Access to a working webcam and microphone
 - Audio is tested for both parties (additional speakers may be required)
 - Telephone in case of equipment failure (see point 11)
- 7) Advice may be sought from Digital Services via Ext. 2000 with regards to the proposed software e.g. FaceTime, Skype etc. With sufficient notice, a call can be logged with Digital Services to check university equipment etc. to ensure that it's working properly on the day. More information regarding software available can be found on the 'Applications On Demand webpage' <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/its/self-help/software/applications-on-demand/>
- 8) A test call must be made to the remote location before the examination day to ensure that the facilities are working properly. In no circumstances can a remote viva take place if the test call is unsatisfactory.
- 9) A Viva conducted remotely should otherwise be comparable to a face-to-face viva; there should be no interruptions during the viva.
- 10) All parties must understand that in the event of any failure with the technology before or during the viva it will not be possible for the examination to continue and it may be necessary for the viva to be rescheduled. In the event that the technology fails on the day of the viva the STaR Office must be informed. Alternative arrangements to reschedule the viva must be made as soon as possible.
- 11) Under such circumstances, the Examiners will decide what proportion of the viva examination has been completed and what issues will be covered in any rescheduled viva.

Percentage of viva completed	Action to be taken following technology failure
<40% completed	Reschedule and restart
40-70% completed	Reschedule and resume
>70% completed	Complete by telephone

Care should be taken to ensure that failure of technology is not used as an excuse for a second attempt at the viva, especially when it is the student at a remote location.

- 12) If the internal and external examiners are at separate sites, they must take account of their need to consult privately with each other on the conduct of the examination: how the pre-oral discussion should be conducted; the form and sequence of questions; who should take the lead at various stages of the oral. There must be a room for the candidate to wait during these discussions.
- 13) As part of the remote viva, examiners should discuss and agree privately the content of the joint report so that their recommendations may be conveyed to the candidate. Their final

signed report must then be submitted in the usual way. Examiners will be required to comment on the conduct of the viva voce examination and should refer explicitly to the use of the technology.

14) Examinations shall not be recorded.

15) Students, whose thesis has been examined remotely, are still eligible to submit an appeal against the decision of the Examiners in accordance with the Research Degree Appeals Procedures. Please note that once they have given written consent to undertake a remote viva, students are not able to submit any appeal simply on the grounds that their thesis was examined remotely. They will need to demonstrate that the conduct of the remote viva examination constitutes grounds for appeal as set out in the Appeals Procedure for Research Students (Appendix 7 [5](#) of the Research Student Handbook).

In addition to the above, in cases where the candidate will be attending the viva voce remotely, the following guidance applies:

- 1) The viva should normally take place in a recognised Higher Education institution with appropriate facilities. If it is not possible to use facilities in a recognised Higher Education institution, the student must provide detailed evidence of the reliability of the facilities that are proposed for use. If there are any costs incurred these must be borne by the student.
- 2) The responsibility for identifying a suitable institution/facility lies with the student in consultation with their Director of Studies. Once identified the Director of Studies should make official contact with the proposed institution to request permission to use their facilities.
- 3) When booking a location consideration should be given to the fact that the average time of a viva is 2-4 hours.
- 4) Once permission has been sought by the Director of Studies from the institution, the following details should be forwarded to the STaR Office for the consideration of the Research Awards sub-committee:
 - a) Name of proposed institution
 - b) Written agreement from the proposed Institution to host the viva and provide an invigilator
 - c) Contact details (telephone number and email address) for the institutional contact and the invigilator
- 5) The Research Awards sub-Committee should approve the appointment of the invigilator provided by the Institution. The invigilator must be present at all times during the examination.
- 6) The student must ensure that the equipment is functioning prior to the exam.
- 7) When it is the student who is in the remote location, it is recommended that, during the period in which the examiners deliberate before calling the student back in, the facilities be set to 'mute' rather than switched off. This is to avoid any possible problems in re-establishing the link. It is also recommended that the screen be switched off so that the candidate cannot see the examiners while they are deliberating.

VERSION:	2	AUTHOR/OWNER:	Jill Morgan /Research Policy Unit
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