Instructions to examiners for research degree examinations

2016-17
1. Before the oral examination ................................................................................................. 3
   Submission of the thesis ........................................................................................................... 3
   Arrangements and timescales for the oral examination ......................................................... 3
   Difficulties/delays to the examination (information of relevance to the internal examiner) ........ 4
   Preliminary Report Form ...................................................................................................... 5
   Policy on plagiarism .............................................................................................................. 5

2. The oral examination ........................................................................................................... 6
   The Oral Examination ........................................................................................................... 6
   Additional tests ....................................................................................................................... 7
   The role of the supervisor ..................................................................................................... 7
   The role of the independent chair (if appointed) ................................................................... 7
   Problems on the day .............................................................................................................. 8

3. Regulations for award and possible recommendations ....................................................... 9
   Regulations for award ......................................................................................................... 9
   Learning Outcomes ........................................................................................................... 9
   Types of Recommendation ................................................................................................. 9
      Award (without corrections) ................................................................................................. 10
      Award subject to editorial and presentational corrections ............................................... 10
      Award subject to the correction of minor deficiencies ..................................................... 10
      Referral ............................................................................................................................ 11
      PhD submission referred for resubmission for MPhil ..................................................... 12
      Award of MPhil on a PhD submission ............................................................................. 13
      Failure .............................................................................................................................. 13

4. Immediately after the oral examination ............................................................................. 14
   Notifying the PGR of the examiners’ recommendation ....................................................... 14
   Post-examination support for PGRs ..................................................................................... 14
   Completing the required paperwork ................................................................................... 14
   Failure to reach an agreement - separate reports after the oral examination ....................... 14

5. Completing the final, joint Examiners’ Report .................................................................. 15
   Signatures on the front sheet ............................................................................................... 15
   Completing the joint report template .................................................................................. 15
   Recognising Research Excellence in Doctoral Research Submissions .................................. 15
   General feedback on the examination process ................................................................... 16
   Graduate Board’s Examinations Group ............................................................................... 16
   Release of the Examiners’ Report to the PGR .................................................................. 16

6. Notes for Guidance (in the event of a referral) ................................................................. 17
   Reasons for referral .......................................................................................................... 17
   Timescale for the notes for guidance .................................................................................. 17
   Format and content of the Notes for Guidance ................................................................... 17
   Release of the Notes for Guidance to the PGR .................................................................. 18
   Role of the examiners during the referral period ............................................................... 18

7. After successful examination (4/12 week corrections) ......................................................... 19
   Role of the internal examiner during the correction period ................................................ 19
   Checking editorial and presentational corrections or minor deficiencies ........................... 19
   Extensions to the normal 4/12 week correction period ..................................................... 20
   Final thesis .......................................................................................................................... 20

8. Examination of a resubmission following referral ............................................................. 21
   Resubmission following Referral ...................................................................................... 21
   PhD resubmission for MPhil .............................................................................................. 21
   Examiners’ individual report for a resubmission ............................................................... 21
   Timescale for the examination of a resubmitted thesis ....................................................... 21
   Recommendations following resubmission ....................................................................... 22
   Second oral examination following resubmission ............................................................. 22
   Completing the final, joint examiners’ report for a resubmission ...................................... 24

9. Good practice guidelines for the conduct of the oral examination ..................................... 25
10. Thesis Length ...................................................................................................................... 27
11. Guidance on publications ................................................................................................ 28
12. Supporting disabled PGRs ............................................................................................... 29
13. Mitigating circumstances ................................................................................................ 30
14. Ethical review of the research .......................................................................................... 30
15. Policy documents relating to research degrees ................................................................. 31
1. Before the oral examination

Submission of the thesis

1.1 The thesis must be written in English\(^1\). The presentation requirements for theses are published in the separate Guide to the thesis examination process (see section 15).

1.2 Submission of the thesis for examination must be made to Postgraduate Research & Operations (PGR&O). Theses must not be sent directly to the examiners.

1.3 Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) are solely responsible for the decision to submit their work for examination and for the thesis which is submitted. Substitute versions of theses, additional pages or supplementary material cannot be accepted after submission of the thesis and must not be sent directly to the examiners. This applies irrespective of whether the thesis was submitted on or before the maximum time limit.

1.4 The thesis is submitted to the examiners on the basis that they will treat the contents, and any issues relating to the candidature, as strictly confidential in the periods before, during and following the examination, until such stage as the work may be published in accordance with normal academic custom. The School concerned must advise the examiners of any specific confidentiality undertakings that are required as a result of commercial agreements. If for this or any other reason you should find your appointment would create some conflict of interest please contact PGR&O immediately.

1.5 Examiners are specifically asked to bear in mind that the thesis submitted for examination represents research that may reasonably be expected of a capable and diligent PGR after completion of the standard period of study. The standard period of study is given on the front of the examiners’ report form.

Arrangements and timescales for the oral examination

1.6 The internal examiner is responsible for making the arrangements for the oral examination and must contact the external examiner and PGR to arrange a date, time and venue for the examination. The examination is normally held in the parent school within office hours. Please ensure that the venue is suitable for an examination.

1.7 Every effort should be made for the viva to take place within 6 weeks of receiving the thesis but examiners are asked to accept a maximum time scale of 3 months in which to examine the thesis (6 months in the case of MD PGRs). Delays in arranging the oral examination can cause significant problems for PGRs. The internal examiner is therefore asked to begin making arrangements for the examination immediately upon receiving the thesis to ensure these timescales can be met.

1.8 Delays to the examination can be particularly problematic for overseas PGRs in the UK under the Tier 4 visa arrangements. The University has to adhere to strict rules regarding how long it can issue a Confirmation of Acceptance for Study (CAS) for to PGRs who have submitted for examination. If the examination is scheduled outside of

---

\(^1\) With the exception of research degrees in the modern languages where, in certain circumstances approved by the Graduate Board, a thesis may be submitted in a [language other than English](#).
3 months from submission of the thesis, the University may not be able to continue to sponsor the PGR to remain in the UK whilst they are awaiting their viva.

1.9 Once a date has been agreed the internal examiner must advise PGR&O:

rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk. The supervisor, Postgraduate Research Tutor and administrator in the School/Faculty should also be informed of the arrangements.

Difficulties/delays to the examination (information of relevance to the internal examiner)

1.10 If it is not possible to meet the timescale outlined above, for example where there are other commitments of the examiners, the internal examiner must inform PGR&O and must also keep the PGR, supervisor and the School/Faculty administrative contact informed on the progress being made to arrange the examination. Where all parties are in agreement (including the PGR), a short delay can be considered by the University.

1.11 The examiners are expected to take account of known religious observances when arranging the oral examination. Examiners are also asked, as far as is possible and reasonable, to accommodate the PGR’s prior commitments (e.g. work) and to give sufficient notice of the date to allow the PGR to make appropriate leave arrangements. However, should the examiners experience unreasonable difficulties with the PGR committing to a date the internal examiner is asked to contact PGR&O who will make further enquiries with the Postgraduate Research Tutor (PGRT).

1.12 The University requires the PGR to be in attendance in person for the oral examination. It is expected that the PGR will present for the oral examination which will normally be scheduled within 3 months of dispatch of the thesis to the examiners (6 months in the case of MD PGRs). PGRs must make all reasonable efforts to attend for examination in this period, for example making appropriate leave arrangements if in employment and visa/travel arrangements if travelling from elsewhere. Should exceptional circumstances arise which might prevent them from attending for the oral examination in this period they are asked to contact their PGRT at the earliest opportunity.

1.13 No award of a research degree can be considered unless the oral examination is completed. If circumstances arise which prevent a PGR from attending for their oral examination they must provide a valid reason supported by documentary evidence (for example a medical note in the case of illness). Cases will be considered by the Graduate Board’s Examinations Group. If a PGR is able to provide a substantiated valid reason for their unavailability/absence permission may be given to delay, postpone or reschedule an oral examination. However, if a PGR is unable to provide a substantiated valid reason, this may result in them being withdrawn from the University with no further opportunity to complete the oral examination.

1.14 No PGR will normally be granted a period of postponement to the oral examination of more than 12 months from the date the thesis is sent out to the examiners (15 months for MD). Bearing in mind that examiners may become unavailable for various reasons, and a topic, once original may not remain so indefinitely, it is extremely unlikely that a request for a postponement to the examination exceeding these periods will be granted.
Preliminary Report Form

1.15 Each examiner should read the thesis carefully and independently of the other examiner(s), bearing in mind the criteria for the award of the degree. Before the oral examination, each examiner must prepare a preliminary report and bring this to the examination. This report must contain brief, preliminary thoughts but must not contain any recommendation relating to the award (or not) of the degree. Each examiner must also complete an independent preliminary report form in the case of a resubmission following referral (please see Section 8).

1.16 Having read the thesis the examiners are obliged to complete a preliminary report form and examine the thesis even if their view is that it does not meet the requirements for the degree as the PGR must be given the opportunity to defend their work at an oral examination.

1.17 On the day of the oral examination the examiners should arrange to meet together before seeing the PGR in order to exchange and discuss the preliminary reports and then decide upon areas for discussion and any issues on which clarification should be sought. These reports should be discussed by the examiners and will assist them in deciding upon the structure of the examination and in identifying specific topics for discussion. This discussion will enable the Examiners to plan the structure of the oral examination and ensure that all relevant issues are addressed appropriately.

1.18 The examiners must not discuss their provisional findings with the PGR at any point before the oral examination or give an indication of the likely recommendation until the oral examination has been completed.

Link to the Preliminary Report Form:
http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22172/research_degrees/1029/postgraduate_research_forms

Policy on plagiarism

1.19 The University has procedures for the investigation of allegations of plagiarism in a thesis submission (see section 15). If the examiners suspect plagiarism within a thesis submission the matter must be immediately reported to the Senior Administrative Officer in PGR&O (rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk). The procedure is set out in the full policy document.
2. The oral examination

The Oral Examination

2.1 In addition to presenting a thesis, PGRs in all subjects are required to present themselves for an oral examination on matters relevant to their thesis. On the first occasion that a thesis is submitted the examiners must, in all cases, conduct an oral examination at which PGRs are required to present themselves and answer questions posed by the examiners (for arrangements on resubmission please see Section 8).

2.2 The role of the oral examination is to ensure that the work reaches the University standards for the degree; that the work has been written by the PGR; and that the work is understood by the PGR.

2.3 The University does not have specific regulations regarding the length of the oral examination or what should be discussed except that the thesis should be discussed with the PGR. The oral examination also gives the PGR the opportunity to answer questions in areas where the examiners are not satisfied. Where the evidence in the thesis is not compelling, the examiners should use the oral examination to encourage the PGR to provide convincing evidence that the stated criteria can be met and reflect on this in their report. Some examiners will also wish to satisfy themselves of the PGR's general level of understanding in the subject area.

2.4 The examiners must not discuss their provisional findings with the PGR at any point before the oral examination or give an indication of the likely recommendation until the oral examination has been completed.

2.5 The oral examination must be conducted in English.

2.6 All appointed examiners must be present at the oral examination. Those present at the oral examination will be the PGR, the external examiner(s), the internal examiner(s), the independent chair (if appointed, see below) and the supervisor as an observer if it is decided that they should be present (see below).

2.7 The oral examination should run continuously and be completed within a day (but please refer to the good practice guidance on the conduct of the oral examination in section 9 regarding short, comfort breaks).

---

2 Good practice guidance on the conduct of the oral examination is given in Section 9
3 With the exception of research degrees in the modern languages, where, in certain circumstances approved by the Graduate Board, the viva might, with the agreement of the external examiner, be conducted in a language other than English (See section 15)
4 See section 15 for the policy on video streaming for a viva in unforeseen and exceptional circumstances only
2.8 The process of notifying the PGR and supervisor of the outcome of the examination should normally take place after the viva but, in any event, must take place within 24 hours of the viva. Please see Section 4 for further advice.

Good practice guidance on the conduct of the oral examination is given in Section 9 of this document.

Additional tests

2.9 The examiners may require the PGR to pass any tests which they prescribe. This could include a short presentation to the examiners at the start of the viva. Please give the PGR at least 2 weeks’ notice if this is required. One purpose of these tests might be to establish that the thesis is the work of the PGR.

The role of the supervisor

2.10 PGRs may invite one of their supervisors to be in attendance at their viva as an observer. A supervisor may only attend with the prior permission of the PGR. If attending as an observer, the supervisor must remain silent during the examination. The Supervisor may not participate in the viva and takes no part in the academic judgement and the decision making process. The Supervisor must leave the room after the oral examination (with the PGR) so the examiners can discuss their recommendation.

2.11 Before the oral examination the internal examiner is asked to establish whether a supervisor will be present and that this is in accordance with the wishes of the PGR. In cases where a PGR has more than one supervisor, only one supervisor is permitted to attend the oral examination. The internal examiner is responsible for ensuring that the supervisor remains silent and that their presence at the oral examination is unobtrusive. The examiners may ask the supervisor to leave if they feel that their presence may jeopardise the smooth running of the oral examination.

2.12 If not present as an observer the supervisor is required to be available for consultation if necessary (ideally in the School but contactable by telephone is acceptable).

The role of the independent chair (if appointed)

2.13 In some circumstances an independent chair may be appointed for an examination. The role of the independent chair is to ensure that the examination is conducted fairly and professionally, and in accordance with University regulations. The independent chair is not expected to be an expert in the subject area, although they should be from a cognate discipline. As such the independent chair is not expected to read the thesis or play a role in academic examination of the PGR or question the PGR on the work being examined at the oral examination.

2.14 The independent chair is required to attend the meeting with the examiners prior to the oral examination and be present for the duration of the oral examination and the
post-viva discussions. After the oral examination the Independent Chair is required to
sign the examiners’ report front sheet and complete a brief report. A pro forma for this
purpose is provided and should be submitted alongside the examiners’ final report
form. Further details are given in the eligibility criteria for the appointment of
examiners (see section 15).

Problems on the day

2.15 Where unforeseen circumstances arise on the day of the oral examination, for
example an examiner is unable to travel to attend/travel for any reason (e.g. adverse
weather conditions, illness etc) immediate consideration should be given to
postponing and rescheduling the oral examination. The internal examiner is
responsible for ensuring all parties are informed of any postponement (including the
PGR, Supervisor(s), School/Faculty Office and PGR& Operations). Cases for the use
of video streaming should only be made if exceptional reasons against postponing
can be demonstrated. If the examiners wish to explore the possibility of continuing
with the oral examination by means of video streaming please contact the the Thesis
Examination Section of PGR & Operations (34003) for further advice. Please consult
the video streaming policy for further advice (See Section 15).

2.16 If circumstances arise which prevent a PGR from attending for their oral examination
the internal examiner is asked to notify PGR & Operations immediately. Further advice
is given in section 1.13.
3. Regulations for award and possible recommendations

Regulations for award

3.1 The Ordinances, Regulations and Programmes of Study for Research Degrees\(^5\) detail the formal regulations and requirements for all of the University’s research degrees. A separate information booklet is provided to examiners detailing the criteria for award of the particular research degree under examination.

Learning Outcomes

3.2 The University has approved learning outcomes which came into effect in 2003/04. These are listed in the separate booklet detailing the criteria for award of the particular research degree under examination. They are applicable for the first time for those PGRs commencing study from September 2003 (the PGR’s start date is provided on the front of the report form). Any comments from the examiners are invited in the report form. Examiners will not be expected to monitor/assess all the Learning Outcomes at the time of the viva. The main emphasis of the viva will be upon the research achievement and it may be difficult at that stage to assess expertise in transferable and subject/professional skills. An ongoing process of monitoring and evaluation should therefore be recorded within the Faculty/School (in the University’s system for maintaining a record of the research degree candidature). Examiners may ask that the School make available these records at the viva to enable them to audit the arrangements that have been made. Please refer to the separate booklet for further advice.

Types of Recommendation

3.3 Examiners are asked to submit one of the following recommendations:

- a) that the degree be awarded (without corrections)
- b) that the degree be awarded subject to editorial and presentational corrections
- c) that the degree be awarded subject to the correction of minor deficiencies
- d) that the thesis be referred for resubmission
- e) that no research degree be awarded

3.4 In the case of PhD submissions the following recommendations are also available:

- a) that the degree of MPhil be awarded (without corrections)
- b) that the degree of MPhil be awarded subject to editorial & presentational corrections
- c) that the degree of MPhil be awarded subject to the correction of minor deficiencies
- d) that the thesis be referred for resubmission for the degree of MPhil

\(^5\) Ordinance X (Research Degrees) [http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22168/student_support-related_policies/646/ordinances](http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22168/student_support-related_policies/646/ordinances)
3.5 In all other cases, no PGR may be recommended for the award of a degree other than for which they have applied. For Masters by Research or MPhil submissions, where the work is of exceptional merit, the examiners may recommend the award of the degree with distinction. Please see the separate information booklet for the research degree under examination.

**Award (without corrections)**

3.6 If the PGR has met the required learning outcomes for the programme, and the thesis satisfies the requirements for the award of the degree and does not require any minor alterations the Examiners may recommend the award of the degree without corrections.

**Award subject to editorial and presentational corrections**

3.7 If the PGR has met the required learning outcomes for the programme, and the thesis satisfies the requirements for the award of the degree but is found to contain minor editorial errors, the examiners may recommend the award of the degree subject to editorial and presentational corrections. Editorial and presentational corrections must be specifically confined to the correction of trivial errors, typographical errors, simple mistakes of fact or the insertion of headings or other 'signpost' material for the sake of clarity.

3.8 A PGR is normally required to correct editorial and presentational corrections within 4 weeks of the date of the oral examination. Please ensure the PGR receives the details of any editorial/presentational corrections and is clear about how long they have to complete them. The PGR does not receive this information formally from PGR & Operations and it is the responsibility of the internal examiner to ensure that the PGR and supervisor are fully informed. Bearing in mind the timescale runs from the date of the oral examination please ensure this information is sent promptly.

3.9 The internal examiner must confirm that the corrections have been completed in writing to PGR & Operations (email rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk) (see also section 7). The name of the PGR can not appear on a pass list until such confirmation has been received.

**Award subject to the correction of minor deficiencies**

3.10 If the PGR has met the required learning outcomes for the programme, and the thesis satisfies the requirements for the award of the degree but is found to contain deficiencies which are genuinely minor in nature, the examiners may recommend the award of the degree subject to correction of minor deficiencies. The examiners’ report should explain clearly the nature of the deficiencies, which should be confined to changes which are genuinely minor in nature (e.g. rewriting of sections, correcting calculations or clarifying arguments and the correction of minor typographical errors). A PGR is normally required to correct minor deficiencies within 12 weeks of the date of the oral examination.
3.11 It is expected that minor deficiencies will be confined to changes which are genuinely minor in nature and should not be used when substantial additional work or research is required, when whole chapters have to be substantially rewritten or if the methodology requires substantial revision. “Referral” for resubmission should be considered in those circumstances\(^6\) (see below).

3.12 The recommendation must be reached solely on academic grounds and whether or not the thesis satisfies the criteria for award, the required learning outcomes have been met and the changes required to the thesis are genuinely minor in nature. It should not be determined by the candidate’s personal circumstances and/or whether the examiners feel the PGR will be able to complete the required corrections within a 12-week period.

3.13 Even if the examiners are aware that a PGR’s personal circumstances are such that correction of the thesis within the normal 12 week period is unlikely, a decision to award should still be forwarded if the view of the examiners is that the thesis satisfies the requirements for the award of the degree, subject to the correction of minor deficiencies. If circumstances exist/arise which may prevent the PGR from completing the corrections within the normal 12-week period a case for an extension to the correction period can be made by the Postgraduate Research Tutor (see Section 7).

3.14 **The internal examiner is responsible** for ensuring that the PGR is provided with clear guidance on the deficiencies which must be corrected, in writing within one working day of the oral examination. The internal examiner must confirm that the corrections have been completed, after consultation with the external examiner if requested, in writing to PGR & Operations (email rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk). See section 7 for further advice). The name of the PGR can not appear on a pass list until such confirmation has been received.

Referral

3.15 The decision to “refer” a thesis is normally interpreted as signifying that, although the thesis is potentially of a standard to merit the award of the degree concerned it does not, at this stage, satisfy the requirements for award and certain sections and/or aspects of the thesis are in need of alteration and improvement and a re-examination of the work will be required. It is expected that the PGR will be able to complete the alterations within a reasonable time. If the examiners recommend referral for resubmission, the PGR will be required to revise the thesis, which may entail further research or any other activity required by the examiners, and then resubmit this to the University for re-examination.

3.16 An unsatisfactory thesis should be referred when, despite certain defects in the thesis itself and/or the PGR’s performance in the oral examination (and such other tests as may have been prescribed) there is, in the case of doctoral degrees, evidence of the potential of a successful submission from the originality, independence, scope and significance of the PGR’s research. For MPhil and Mastership by Research PGRs careful consideration should similarly be given to the PGR’s potential and to the

\(^6\) On a first submission only. A second referral is not possible. Recommendations available on a resubmitted thesis are outlined in section 8
criteria for the award of that degree. If the thesis does not possess this potential, the examiners should send forward a recommendation that the degree be not awarded (see below).

3.17 A thesis may also be referred in cases where the PGR does not completely satisfy the examiners through their performance at the oral examination (and in such other tests the examiners may have prescribed) that the award of the degree is justified at this stage.

3.18 Even if the examiners are aware that the PGR’s personal circumstances are such that revision of the thesis is unlikely, a decision to refer the thesis should be forwarded if it is believed that the thesis and the PGR are potentially of the necessary standard.

3.19 The examiners’ report must give a clear summary of the reasons for referral. It should be clear that a thesis has been referred on the basis that the submitted thesis fell short of that required for the award of the degree and that the nature and seriousness of the changes required fall outside of what could be reasonably described under the heading of minor deficiencies. The early section of the report (questions 2-6) should be consistent with the recommendation not to award the degree at this stage, and should provide a clear indication of which of the criteria for award have not yet been fully met. The time the examiners feel the PGR will need for corrections should have no bearing on the academic decision reached on the submitted work and should not be quantified as part of the reasons for referral.

3.20 In the event of a referral, the examiners must prepare notes for guidance, which must be submitted at the same time as the report of the examination for consideration by the Graduate Board’s Examinations Group. Please see section 6 of this document for further advice on preparing the notes for guidance.

3.21 If the examiners’ recommendation is that the thesis be referred, it is the practice for the original examining team to act again, except in exceptional circumstances. Please see Section 8.

**PhD submission referred for resubmission for MPhil**

3.22 In the event of a PhD thesis referred for resubmission for MPhil, in addition to the guidance in the section above, the examiners’ report must also explain:

- The reasons for referral for MPhil with specific reference to the learning outcomes/criteria for MPhil award. This must explain why the submitted thesis does not, at this stage, satisfy the requirements for award and why the examiners believe the thesis is potentially of a standard to merit MPhil award (following resubmission).

- Why the examiners do not believe there is the potential to satisfy the requirements for PhD award by a referral for PhD resubmission. A thorough and detailed account must be provided explaining why the examiners believe the criteria for PhD award could not be met by referral for resubmission for PhD, with specific reference to the learning outcomes/criteria for the award for the degree of PhD.
Award of MPhil on a PhD submission

3.23 Examiners are permitted to recommend the award of the degree of MPhil to PGRs who fail to achieve the standard for the award of a PhD but who nevertheless satisfy the criteria for the award of the degree of MPhil. In these circumstances the degree of MPhil may not be awarded with distinction. An oral examination must take place in all cases.

3.24 It should be noted, however, that in the case of a first submission the examiners should always recommend referral for the degree of PhD if they believe that the submission and the PGR are potentially of PhD standard.

3.25 The examiners’ report must clearly outline the reasons for recommending the award of MPhil, giving positive examples of how the thesis meets the criteria for the award of MPhil and how the learning outcomes for MPhil award have been met. The report must also clearly outline why the criteria for PhD award had not been met and, in the case of a first submission, why these could not be met by referral for resubmission for PhD.

3.26 The joint examiners’ report will be sent to the PGR after approval by the Examinations Group and they will be advised that the preliminary reports are available on request.

Failure

3.27 The decision to ‘fail’ a submission should be reached solely on academic grounds as it implies that the thesis is itself irredeemable or that the PGR does not possess the necessary academic abilities. It should accordingly not take any account of personal circumstances which may have a bearing on the PGR’s opportunity to revise the submission. An oral examination must take place in all cases.

3.28 In the event of a recommendation that a degree be not awarded examiners are asked to ensure that a thorough and detailed account of the reasons for failure is provided. In the case of a recommendation for failure on a first submission the examiners’ report must also include an explicit statement explaining why referral for resubmission was not an option.

3.29 The joint examiners’ report will be sent to the PGR after approval by the Examinations Group and they will be advised that the preliminary reports are available on request.
4. Immediately after the oral examination

**Notifying the PGR of the examiners’ recommendation**

4.1 Examiners are advised to inform the PGR and the supervisor(s) of the recommendation that they are making without waiting for official confirmation of the result by the Graduate Board’s Examinations Group, provided that it is made clear that it is subject to the approval of the Group. The process of notifying the PGR and supervisor of the outcome should normally take place after the examination but, in any event, must take place within 24 hours of the oral examination.

4.2 **It is the responsibility of the internal examiner to ensure that the PGR is informed of any editorial & presentational corrections or minor deficiencies.** The PGR will not receive this information from PGR & Operations. Bearing in mind the timescale runs from the date of the oral examination, please ensure this information is provided promptly.

**Post-examination support for PGRs.**

4.3 In the event that a PGR becomes extremely distressed on receiving an adverse academic decision the examiners are advised to contact the supervisor to provide support. If for any reason the supervisor is not available (or appropriate) the Postgraduate Research Tutor should be contacted. In some circumstances PGRs may appeal against an adverse academic decision. PGRs seeking advice and support in the preparation of an appeal may contact the Student Advice Centre of the Leeds University Union where experienced staff are available to provide guidance.

**Completing the required paperwork**

4.4 After the oral examination, the internal examiner is responsible for ensuring that the final, joint examiners’ report is fully and correctly completed and signed. **This should be done before the external leaves.** In the event of a referral, notes for guidance must also be prepared. More detailed advice is given in Section 5.

**Failure to reach an agreement - separate reports after the oral examination**

4.5 Examiners are reminded that although the process of notifying the PGR and supervisor of the outcome of the examination will normally take place after the oral examination it must take place within 24 hours of the examination. This period can be used by the examiners to discuss the recommendation and to endeavour to reach an agreement.

4.6 In the exceptional circumstances of a failure to reach agreement on the recommendation (within the 24 hour period available) the internal examiner is asked to contact Postgraduate Research and Operations immediately. The **procedure to be followed** is published separately (see section 15). The internal examiner will be asked to advise the PGR in writing, that the examiners are unable to reach an agreement on the recommendation and that they will be submitting separate final report forms to the University. The examiners must then submit separate, independent final reports along with their preliminary report, to PGR&O within 5 working days of the viva.
5. Completing the final, joint Examiners’ Report

**Signatures on the front sheet**

5.1 The internal examiner is responsible for ensuring that the joint examiners’ report is fully completed and signed. This should be done before the external leaves. The examiners must sign and attach the front page which was included with the thesis. **Original, ink signatures are needed.** Electronic signatures cannot be accepted.

5.2 The joint, examiners’ report must be countersigned by the Postgraduate Research Tutor (or Head of School). The report can be passed to the School/Faculty PGR contact to arrange for the PGRT countersignature. The report should be returned to PGR&O within 10 working days of the oral examination, together with the copies of the completed preliminary reports, and the report from the Independent Chair (if appointed). Where the examiners recommend referral, notes for guidance must also be prepared and submitted with the report (see section 6).

**Completing the joint report template**

5.3 All sections of the report must be typed using the template provided. Please ensure that you answer all questions clearly and fully and include in your responses specific examples from the thesis. The report must stand alone from the thesis, and any publications which may have arisen from it, and it must be clearly evident from reading the report itself that the thesis contained, for example in the case of a doctoral award, evidence of originality, independent critical ability and matter suitable for publication.

---

**Link to the Examiners’ Report Form Template:**
http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22172/research_degrees/1029/postgraduate_research_forms

5.4 The examiners’ report must be consistent with the recommendation reached on the thesis. In the case of an adverse decision, it must be clear in the early sections of the report (questions 2-6) why the submitted thesis fell short of that required for the award of the degree and which of the criteria for award had not been fully met. The report should be consistent with the preliminary reports. If there were issues identified in the preliminary reports that were successfully addressed in the examination this should be reflected in the joint report. As this is a joint report, the answers must indicate it is the view of all the examiners (the use of “I” must be avoided).

**Recognising Research Excellence in Doctoral Research Submissions**

5.5 The University has considered arrangements by which research excellence in doctoral research degree submissions can be recognised. Research excellence would be expected to principally reflect outstanding achievement in the thesis and oral examination at a level significantly above what would be expected for the award of a doctoral degree where the PGR has fulfilled all requirements for award either without corrections or with editorial & presentational corrections. Evidence might also be identified from associated research outputs which might include: major theoretical
contribution; acceptance for publication of sections in major journals; patents; prizes for completed work; marketable software; original equipment; new therapies; major exhibitions or performances arising from the practical part of a practice-based degree. Examiners are invited to comment in the Examiners’ Report Form on any research excellence which is identified in the submission and provide further information in support of this recommendation. If the recommendation is approved by the Examinations Group the text provided by the examiners in this section will be included in a letter of congratulations sent to the PGR from the Dean of PGR Studies. Further detail is provided in the policy (see Section 15).

General feedback on the examination process

5.6 If examiners wish to submit separate comments or provide any general comment or feedback regarding the examination process which they wish to bring to the attention of the Graduate Board they are invited to do so by writing to Postgraduate Research & Operations, University of Leeds, LS2 9JT or email: rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk

Graduate Board’s Examinations Group

5.7 The Graduate Board has delegated authority to its Examinations Group to award research degrees subject to it being satisfied that the criteria for the award of the degree have been met. The examiners’ report and recommendation must be approved by the Examinations Group. The Group meets 8-9 times each session. Members consider the content of each examiners’ report form to establish that the criteria for the award has been met and that the recommendation sent forward covers the basic points required by the University, as well as being clear and unambiguous. Each Faculty is represented on this Group.

5.8 It is important that the examiners answer each section of the report forms clearly. The Group will ask for further information if it is not satisfied that the recommendation has been clearly and sufficiently justified or if specific examples are lacking. The report and recommendation of the examiners cannot be approved until the Group is satisfied that the additional information supplied addresses the concerns raised with the report.

Release of the Examiners’ Report to the PGR

5.9 The Examinations Group views the joint examiners’ report (completed after the oral examination) as an important source of feedback to PGRs on the assessment of their work. For this reason, the joint examiners’ report will be sent to the PGR and their supervisor(s) by Postgraduate Research and Operations after approval by the Group. Please bear this in mind when completing the report. Please ensure your report only relates to the criteria for the award and that any criticism is fair and measured.

5.10 Examiners should note that the University does not impose any restrictions on PGRs as to who can see the report and they may subsequently share the report with anyone, including sponsors, publishers or other interested parties. The independent, preliminary reports (completed before the examination) are not automatically released to the PGR but will be if requested. In the event of an adverse academic decision (referral, MPhil award on PhD or fail) PGRs will be advised that the preliminary reports are available on request.
6. Notes for Guidance (in the event of a referral)

Reasons for referral

6.1 The examiners’ report must give a clear summary of the reasons for referral. It should be clear that a thesis has been referred on the basis that the submitted thesis fell short of the standard required for the award of the degree and that the nature and seriousness of the changes required fall outside of what could be reasonably described under the heading of minor deficiencies. The early section of the report (questions 2-6) should be consistent with the recommendation not to award the degree at this stage, and should provide a clear indication of which of the criteria for award have not yet been fully met. The time the examiners feel the PGR will need for corrections should have no bearing on the academic decision reached on the submitted work and must not be quantified within the report or notes for guidance (please see Section 3 for advice).

Timescale for the notes for guidance

6.2 In the event of a referral, the examiners must prepare notes for guidance, which must be typed, headed ‘notes for guidance’ and submitted with the report (within 10 working days of the examination) for consideration by the Examinations Group. Please bear in mind that it is often difficult to produce the notes for guidance once both examiners are no longer together and therefore it is useful to negotiate a timetable for the production of the notes for guidance. Where it is not possible to meet this timescale please contact PGR & Operations for further advice (Examination section: 34003).

Format and content of the Notes for Guidance

6.3 The notes for guidance must clearly indicate the necessary and sufficient conditions which, if complied with by the PGR and provided that the thesis as a whole is satisfactory, will lead to a recommendation by the examiners that the degree be awarded. It is essential that the notes are sufficiently detailed to give the PGR suitable guidance to achieve the required standard. However, the detail in the notes should not stifle the initiative of the PGR. The notes may not necessarily include specific editorial comment.

6.4 At this stage, examiners must not include any indication of whether or not a second oral examination will be required. The final decision cannot be made until after considering the resubmitted thesis. If the resubmitted thesis does not meet the requirements for the award of the degree for which the PGR submitted, University regulations require that a second oral examination must be held. Please see section 8 for further advice.

6.5 Examiners are asked to bear in mind the following when preparing the notes for guidance:
- The notes for guidance must be clear and unambiguous – for example, examiners must avoid the use of phrases such as “would benefit from” “might like to consider” etc. and instead use more direct language (“the revised thesis must”).
- The use of emotive language or personal comments is unacceptable.
- That these are joint notes for guidance and must indicate it is the view of all the examiners (“I” must not be used).
- A separate list of corrections from each examiner is unacceptable as it introduces the possibility of inconsistencies, contradictions and duplications. Instead the corrections should comprise one single set of clear corrections and guidance.
- Please ensure that the notes for guidance are free from typographical errors.
- The time the examiners feel a PGR will need for corrections should have no bearing on the academic decision reached on the submitted work and must not be quantified within the report and notes for guidance. The PGR may resubmit at any point in the referral period once the work has been completed and the thesis is ready. The timescales for resubmission will be made clear to the PGR in the information sent by PGR&O.

**Release of the Notes for Guidance to the PGR**

6.6 The notes for guidance must not be issued by the School/Faculty/Examiners to the PGR. The notes for guidance will be issued by PGR & Operations after the Graduate Board’s Examinations Group has scrutinised them together with the examiners’ report. The PGR will be advised that the preliminary reports are available on request. The approved examiners’ report and notes will be issued as quickly as possible by PGR & Operations after approval by the Group.

6.7 Faculties/Schools/Examiners are not permitted to issue informal notes for guidance to the PGR. If any oral advice is given before the Group has approved the official guidance, it must be stressed to the PGR that the advice given is informal.

**Role of the examiners during the referral period**

6.8 If the Examiners’ recommendation is that the thesis be referred, it is the practice for the original examining team to act again for the resubmission, except in exceptional circumstances. The roles of examiner and supervisor must be transparently separated during the period between the first examination and the resubmission and the examiners must maintain independence from the work before it is resubmitted. For this reason, the Examiners must not take a supervisory role during the referral period. The internal examiner may, however, be required to provide clarification of the notes for guidance. PGRs are advised that they should consult with their supervisor in the first instance where clarification is required. Supervisors are asked to contact internal examiners on behalf of PGRs when further clarification is required.

---

7 Supervisors are asked to provide up to six supervision meetings a year for referred PGRs, but the responsibility for initiating these meetings rests with the PGR.
7. After successful examination (4/12 week corrections)

Role of the internal examiner during the correction period

7.1 After successful examination PGRs must carry out any editorial and presentational corrections or minor deficiencies to the satisfaction of the internal examiner within the prescribed time period\(^8\). Individual pages of the thesis must be fully corrected and it is not possible simply to provide an errata page. PGRs are advised to consult with their supervisor(s) throughout this process.

7.2 The internal examiner does not take a supervisory role during the correction period. They may, however, be required to provide clarification of the corrections required. PGRs are advised to consult with their supervisor in the first instance where clarification is required. Supervisors may contact internal examiners on behalf of PGRs when further clarification would be helpful.

Checking editorial and presentational corrections or minor deficiencies

7.3 The PGR normally has 4 or 12 weeks from the oral examination to complete and return the corrections to the internal examiner for checking.

7.4 Please make every effort to check the corrections in a reasonable timescale and provide timely feedback to the PGR. This is particularly important around graduation deadlines. To assist in the process of checking and approving the corrections it is strongly recommended that the PGR provides information outlining what corrections they have made. This could be in the form of tracked changes or supplied as a separate list (to be agreed between the internal examiner and the PGR).

7.5 The internal examiner must confirm to PGR & Operations that the PGR has completed the corrections to their satisfaction. The external examiner should be consulted on the corrections carried out by the PGR if they wish and informed when these are completed. Once the corrections have been checked and approved the internal examiner must:

(i) **Inform PGR & Operations:** that you are satisfied with the corrections carried out, by email to rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk.

(ii) **Inform the PGR:** that you are satisfied with the corrections carried out and that they can now go ahead and submit the final thesis and eThesis (if required).

---

\(^8\) The 4 or 12 week deadline is for the PGR to complete & return the corrections to the Internal Examiner for approval and not the deadline for submission of the final thesis to PGR & Operations. PGRs must then submit 1 copy of their bound thesis to PGR&O, and upload an eThesis if required, within 1 month of the Internal Examiner approving the corrections.
Extensions to the normal 4/12 week correction period

7.6 For PGRs who have been recommended for award, it is important that clear deadlines are in place for the corrections to the thesis in order to act as a motivator for completion. Therefore the PGR normally has 4 weeks (for editorial and presentational corrections) or 12 weeks (for minor deficiencies) from the date of the oral examination to complete and return the corrections to the internal examiner for checking.

7.7 The University does not prescribe whether a PGR is expected to work full-time on their corrections, or a number of hours per day, as it is acknowledged that at this point in their candidature many PGRs will already have taken up other responsibilities and commitments. It is therefore accepted that one PGR could take a few days/weeks to undertake the same amount of corrections that another PGR may take several months. In keeping with this, the Graduate Board’s Examinations Group may consider an extension to the normal correction period if PGRs experience difficulties during the correction period and need extra time because of, for example, work/family reasons. A case for an extension to the correction period must be made by the Postgraduate Research Tutor by email to rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk. Further advice can be found in the Policy on suspensions and extensions (see Section 15).

Final thesis

7.8 Once the internal examiner has confirmed they are happy with the corrections the PGR can have the final version of their thesis hard bound and deliver this to PGR & Operations within a period of 1 month. One copy of the hard bound thesis is required for the award of the degree. Doctoral PGRs who commenced doctoral study from September 2009 onwards are also required to upload an exact pdf copy of their final thesis (the “eThesis”) in addition to the hard bound copy. Further information covering the submission of an eThesis can be found at: http://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/10125/assessment/913/submitting_your_final_ethesis.

9 Where the learning outcomes have been met and thesis satisfies the requirements for award but is found to contain either editorial and presentational corrections or minor deficiencies
8. Examination of a resubmission following referral

Resubmission following Referral

8.1 PGRs are normally required to resubmit within the following period from the date the notes for guidance are issued and to pay the re-examination fee.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Type</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral submissions</td>
<td>within 18 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPhil submission</td>
<td>within 15 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD submission referred for resubmission for MPhil</td>
<td>within 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastership by Research submission</td>
<td>within 9 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2 Examiners may wish to bear in mind that the referral periods give the maximum time limit for a referred thesis to be resubmitted and that a PGR may resubmit at any point in this period once the work has been completed and the thesis is ready. PGRs are solely responsible for the decision to submit their work for examination. If circumstances arise which prevent the PGR from resubmitting their thesis within the normal period, a case for an extension to the referral period can be submitted by the Postgraduate Research Tutor. Further advice can be found in the Policy on suspensions and extensions (see Section 15).

PhD resubmission for MPhil

8.3 A PGR whose submission has been referred for resubmission for PhD may, with the approval of the Head of School and the Graduate Board and on payment of the entry fee, elect to resubmit the thesis (in a suitably revised form) for examination for the degree of MPhil, under the normal examination requirements for that degree. Resubmission must take place within 12 months from the date the notes for guidance are issued.

Examiners’ individual report for a resubmission

8.4 Each examiner must read the resubmitted thesis independently of the other examiner(s) and complete an examiner’s individual report before discussing the resubmission with the other examiners.

Link to the examiners’ individual report form:
http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22172/research_degrees/1029/postgraduate_research_forms

Timescale for the examination of a resubmitted thesis

8.5 Every effort should be made to complete the re-examination within 6 weeks of receiving the resubmitted thesis but examiners are asked to accept a maximum time scale of 3
months in which to complete the examination (including a second oral examination if required).

**Examination of a resubmitted thesis**

8.6 The original examiners’ report and notes for guidance (following the first viva) will be provided to the examiners with the resubmitted thesis. PGRs are also required to supply a summary of how the revised thesis has responded to changes detailed by the examiners in the notes for guidance. This will also assist the examiners when considering the resubmitted thesis. There is no set format for this and the PGR is asked to present this in a format which best reflects the changes they have made.

8.7 Examiners are reminded that the notes for guidance must "clearly indicate the necessary and sufficient conditions which, if complied with by the candidate, and provided that the thesis as a whole is satisfactory, will lead to a recommendation for the award of the degree" (see section 6).

8.8 The University takes this as meaning that if the PGR follows the advice and guidance given by the examiners in its entirety in revising the thesis, and provided that the thesis as a whole is satisfactory, the degree must be awarded (albeit possibly with corrections). If, on re-submission, the alterations and improvements required in the notes for guidance have been carried out to the satisfaction of the examiners and the thesis as a whole remains satisfactory, a recommendation should then be forwarded for the award of the degree.

8.9 It is possible that some PGRs may not (for various reasons and sometimes for defendable academic reasons) follow all the advice and guidance given in the notes for guidance. In these cases the examiners should consider the thesis as a whole and reach a decision whether or not the thesis now meets the appropriate minimum standard for the award of the degree, or whether one of the other options set out is appropriate.

**Recommendations following resubmission**

8.10 PGRs are not permitted to present a thesis for re-examination on more than one occasion. A second referral is not possible and on resubmission a PGR will either:

(i) Be recommended for the award of the degree (subject in some cases to editorial and presentational corrections or the correction of minor deficiencies);

(ii) Fail.

8.11 In the case of a resubmission for the degree of PhD only, the PGR may also be recommended for the award of the degree of MPhil (subject in some cases to editorial and presentational corrections or the correction of minor deficiencies).

**Second oral examination following resubmission**

8.12 All examiners consider the re-submission and a second oral examination may be held if the examiners deem it appropriate. If both the Examiners are in agreement that the thesis now meets the requirement for the award of the degree for which the PGR
submitted it may not be necessary for a second oral examination to be held. This is a decision that examiners are asked to take after reading the resubmitted thesis and completing their preliminary report.

8.13 However, the examiners may not recommend that a thesis be failed, or the award of a lower degree, without a second oral examination. Therefore if, after reading the resubmitted thesis, the examiners reach a preliminary view that the PGR has not fulfilled the requirements for the award of the degree for which they submitted it is essential that a second oral examination be held to ensure that the PGR is given every opportunity to defend the work. This applies in the event of the examiners considering either a recommendation not to award a research degree (fail) or a recommendation to award the degree of MPhil on a PhD resubmission.

8.14 After completing the individual report, the internal examiner should contact the external examiner to discuss the examination and agree whether or not a second oral examination is necessary.

If a second oral examination is required

8.15 An independent chair must be appointed in cases where a second oral examination is required on a resubmitted thesis. If a second oral examination is required the internal examiner is asked to contact PGR & Operations immediately (rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk). PGR & Operations will arrange with the School for the appointment of an independent chair.

8.16 The internal examiner is then asked to make the arrangements for the oral examination with the external examiner, the independent chair (once appointed) and the PGR. PGR & Operations (rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk), the supervisor(s) and the PGR administrator in the Faculty/School should also be informed of the examination date once agreed.

8.17 The University requires the PGR to be in attendance in person for the oral examination. In the case of PGRs who must return from overseas for a second oral examination, examiners are asked, as far as is possible and reasonable, to allow sufficient notice, and flexibility, in the date of the examination to allow the PGR to make appropriate travel and visa arrangements.

8.18 The examiners must not discuss their provisional findings with the PGR or their Supervisor at any point before the second oral examination. Examiners must not give an indication of the likely recommendation until the oral examination has been completed.

8.19 If a second oral examination is required the process for informing the PGR follows that for the first examination. This should normally take place after the viva but, in any event, must take place within 24 hours of the oral examination. Please see section 4. After the oral examination, the examiners must then complete a final, joint examiners’ report (see below).
If a second oral examination is not required

8.20 If a second oral examination is not required, the internal examiner is asked to take steps to inform the PGR, supervisor(s) and PGR administrator in the School/Faculty of the recommendation the examiners are sending forward. Please ensure the PGR receives notification of the outcome and details of any minor corrections as soon as possible.

8.21 The examiners must then complete a final, joint examiners’ report (see below). Please record the date the PGR was informed of the recommendation (and any corrections) in the box provided on the front of the examiners’ report form. PGR & Operations will use this date to calculate the 4/12 week deadline for any corrections.

Completing the final, joint examiners’ report for a resubmission

8.22 The internal examiner is responsible for ensuring that the final, joint examiners’ report is fully and correctly completed and signed. Original, ink signatures are needed – electronic signatures cannot be accepted – and if no second oral examination was held the report front cover should be signed by the external and posted.

8.23 All sections of the report must be typed using the template provided. Please ensure that you use the template specifically for a resubmitted thesis and that you answer all questions clearly and fully and include in your responses specific examples from the thesis.

Link to the Examiners’ Report Form Template: http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22172/research_degrees/1029/postgraduate_research_forms

8.24 The joint examiners’ report form for a resubmission must “stand alone” from that completed after the first examination and examiners are asked to complete all sections in full, with reference to the resubmitted thesis. The use of the phrase “as first report” is unacceptable.

8.25 If a second oral examination is not required, the internal examiner is asked to take steps to inform the PGR of the recommendation the examiners are sending forward and any minor corrections required to the thesis. Please note this date in the box provided on the front of the examiners’ report form template. PGR & Operations will use this date to calculate the 4/12 week deadline for any corrections.

8.26 The joint, examiners’ report should be countersigned by the Postgraduate Research Tutor (or Head of School) and returned to PGR & Operations, together with the copies of the completed preliminary reports. The report is then considered by the Graduate Board’s Examinations Group (as for the first examination).
9. Good practice guidelines for the conduct of the oral examination

Examiners may find the following good practice helpful in conducting the examination.

BEFORE the viva

- Before the examination the internal examiner should ensure logistical arrangements are in place to make all parties comfortable and to minimise distractions.

- Consider the suitability of the room for the purpose of an oral examination to ensure as few distractions as possible. This should include the environmental conditions (such as lighting and temperature) and noise (e.g. away from building work).

- Consider the layout of the room (table, chairs, availability of whiteboard/pens, refreshments etc) and practicalities such as ensuring all mobile phones are switched off and placing a “do not disturb” sign on the door.

- There should be a room where the PGR and supervisor (if attending) can wait during the examiners’ discussions.

- Unless required for the purposes of a presentation/demonstration by the PGR, the use of electronic equipment/devices during the oral examination by PGRs or examiners (or the supervisor or independent chair if in attendance) is not permitted.

DURING the viva

- Invite the PGR into the room and introduce those present and clarify their roles. If either the supervisor or an independent chair is in attendance, clearly explain their roles:
  
  - The supervisor is in attendance as an observer only and must remain silent during the examination. The supervisor may not participate in the examination and takes no part in the academic judgement or the decision making process. The Supervisor must leave the room after the oral examination (with the PGR) whilst the examiners discuss their recommendation.
  
  - The role of the independent chair is to ensure that the examination is conducted fairly and professionally, and in accordance with University regulations. The independent chair does not play a role in academic examination or question the PGR on the thesis. The Chair will, however, remain in the room after the oral examination whilst the examiners discuss their recommendation.

- Aim to put the PGR at ease as far as possible. Explain the purpose of the oral examination and go through the format for the examination and how things will work. The examiners share responsibility for questioning the PGR during the oral examination.

- Explain the possible recommendations the examiners can make.

- Explain to the PGR that after the oral examination they will be asked to withdraw from the room (along with the supervisor, if present as an observer) whilst the examiners confer on their decision before asking them to return.
• Ask the PGR if they have any questions and advise him/her to seek clarification should any part of the process or the questioning be unclear.

• The PGR should also be told that they may request a break(s) during the examination and that they may consult their copy of the thesis during the examination if it helps them.

• Allow the PGR time to collect their thoughts and develop responses to the questions posed by the examiners. Allow the PGR to consult their copy of the thesis (which may be annotated with notes/post-it notes) during the oral examination if it helps them.

• Wherever possible, examiners should pose succinct and focussed questions and avoid asking multi-part questions which are more difficult for the PGR to remember. Instead, where possible, ask one question at a time and use follow-up questions as necessary. Examiners should actively listen to the PGR’s answers. If the PGR gives a poor answer, try to rephrase the question in a different way and give them another opportunity to produce a better response.

• Although the oral examination will normally run continuously, respect any request a PGR may make for a short break. The Examiners or the independent chair (if present) may also wish to suggest a break at appropriate points in the examination.

• In the event of a PGR becoming distressed, examiners are advised to offer the PGR a break in order to compose him/herself before continuing. If a PGR is unable to continue, examiners must contact PGR&O (Examinations section: 34003).

• At the close of the examination ask the PGR if they feel the examination has covered all points they were expecting and give them the opportunity to raise any points in relation to the thesis which they feel were not covered.

• On completing the oral examination, instruct the PGR (and supervisor if attending) to leave the room in order for the examiners to discuss the final recommendation on the basis of the thesis and the viva. Only the examiners (and independent chair if appointed) must be present for this part of the process.

**AFTER the viva**

• Invite the PGR (and supervisor if attending) back into the room and inform them of the recommendation. A single recommendation must be made. Inform the PGR & supervisor that the outcome is subject to confirmation by the Graduate Board. If you are unable to reach a decision at the viva you must do this within 24 hours of the examination and inform the PGR and supervisor.

• Outline the next stages in the process to the PGR, depending on the outcome of the oral examination, including communication of any corrections to the thesis.

• In the event that a PGR becomes extremely distressed on receiving an adverse academic decision, the examiners are advised to contact the supervisor to provide support to the PGR. If for any reason the supervisor is not available (or appropriate), the Postgraduate Research Tutor should be contacted.
10. Thesis Length

10.1 During their assessment of a submission, examiners are asked to bear in mind that all PGRs have been given the following advice by the Graduate Board:

“During the examination of your thesis your examiners will be considering both the quality and value of your work and the way in which you have chosen to present your review, results, arguments and conclusions. Your ability to express your findings in a clear and concise manner will be under examination and excessive length or too discursive a style will be judged a weakness. Your supervisor is, of course, best placed to advise you on the desirable length and form of your submission. The University expects that theses will normally not exceed the following maximum lengths:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Maximum Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MA, MSc, MSc(Eng) and MEd</td>
<td>30,000 words (100 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPhil</td>
<td>60,000 words (200 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD (including Integrated PhD &amp; Master)</td>
<td>100,000 words (300 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EdD</td>
<td>55,000 words (185 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DClinDent</td>
<td>50,000 words (170 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHSC</td>
<td>50,000 words (170 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>80,000 words (250 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DClinPsychol</td>
<td>40,000 words (135 pages)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note that the above limits include all appendices & footnotes but not bibliographies/reference lists. Many Schools will expect theses to be substantially shorter than these limits and your own School may well have its own stipulated maximum.

It is accepted that in some disciplines it may be necessary to exceed the stipulated limit in individual cases. If you believe you cannot avoid exceeding the above maximum length, or the maximum length specified by your School, you should talk to your Supervisor and then, if necessary, the Postgraduate Research Tutor will seek approval from the Graduate Board. It is therefore in your own interests to consider the question of overall length during the initial stages of thesis preparation.”

10.1 In the event that Graduate Board approved the submission of an over length thesis, a copy of the case will be included in the paperwork provided to the examiners. In all cases it remains open to the examiners to reach an academic judgement on whether the additional length is justified or should be reduced as part of any corrections to the thesis.

---

10 DClinPsychol only: In exceptional cases, with the approval of their supervisor(s), PGRs may include appendices (up to 20,000 words maximum) which will not be counted towards the overall word length of the thesis.
11. Guidance on publications

**Distinction between the publication requirements at Doctoral and Masters level**

11.1 For the benefit of examiners the following guidance is given:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Publication requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Doctoral | Publication requirement: “Matter suitable for publication”  
At doctoral level, the expectation is that the thesis will contain original work which is of publishable quality in appropriate, peer-reviewed journals (or publication in other form as appropriate for the field of research e.g. monograph). When commenting on the extent to which the thesis contains matter suitable for publication, Examiners are invited to comment on work which has already been published and/or may comment on parts of the thesis which may form the basis of an appropriate publication following some reworking. |
| MPhil and Masters by Research | Publication requirement: “Material at a level suitable for publication”  
It is acknowledged that the breadth and depth of critical analysis shown at MPhil & Masters by Research level might be more limited than that at doctoral level on account of the much narrower focus of the research, less extensive range of sources and shorter thesis. However it is expected that the quality of the research demonstrated would still be at a level suitable for publication (in reputable journals/publications as appropriate to the field of research). It is expected that the work could contribute an element towards a broader published work even if there might not be the volume of work needed for publication by itself. When commenting on the extent to which the thesis contains material at a level suitable for publication, Examiners are invited to comment on work which has already been published and/or may comment on parts of the thesis which could be suitable for publication following some reworking, and/or which could contribute an element towards a broader published work even if it is unlikely to be published by itself. |

**Use of jointly or solely authored publications in the thesis**

11.2 Guidance is given to PGRs on the use of their published work within a thesis, including identifying the contribution of others to the work. This is especially important when chapters might have been based on jointly authored publications as the examiners will need to be able to clearly identify the work directly attributable to the PGR to determine whether there is a substantially original contribution by the PGR and whether this contribution is at the appropriate level to merit the award of the degree. PGRs are required to indicate their contribution to the work and that of the other authors at the point of examination entry, and include this information clearly on the title pages of the thesis. To assist the Examiners, the statement at examination entry is included with the thesis, along with copies of any publications. Examiners can view the full guidance given to PGRs (see Section 15).

**Alternative style of doctoral thesis including published material**

11.3 This model of submission is currently only available to PGRs registered in the Faculties of Environment and Engineering where an approved protocol is in place. Under this protocol, published material can be included in the thesis without the need for the work to be rewritten and integrated into individual chapters of the thesis. Advice is provided to examiners in the separate booklet enclosed.
12. Supporting disabled PGRs

Supporting Disabled Postgraduate Researchers – advice to examiners

12.1 Disabled PGRs, and their supervisors and examiners, can access a wide range of support from Disabled Students Assessment and Support (DSAS)\(^1\). The process for identifying and agreeing support and reasonable adjustments for the final oral examination is set out in a separate document (see section 15). This document, which is intended to provide a single point of reference for PGRs and staff in DSAS, Schools/Faculties and PGR&O:

- Summarises the routine adjustments with clear precedents which can be accommodated without prior approval by the Examinations Group.
- Provides examples of adjustments which may be facilitated with prior approval by Examinations Group, with a framework and timescale for consideration of these.
- Summarises the support available to all PGRs in preparation for assessment.

12.2 It is important that the need for reasonable adjustments is identified well in advance of the final examination to allow due consideration to be given prior to examination. Schools are asked to work in partnership with PGRs, and DSAS where required, to identify when reasonable adjustments may be required for oral examination; and what those reasonable adjustments might be. A framework and timetable is included in the separate document.

12.3 The School is responsible for communicating any agreed adjustments and support arrangements to the PGR, the Supervisor and the examiners.

12.4 The Internal Examiner has responsibility for facilitating on the day any reasonable adjustments to the oral examination, which will have been agreed upon in advance.

12.5 These arrangements ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to the oral examination so that disabled PGRs are not disadvantaged by the process for examination. However the same academic standards for the award of the particular research degree must be upheld and the thesis must meet the criteria and standard expected for qualification concerned. Guidance on these arrangements can also be sought from the Thesis Examination Section of PGR & Operations (rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk; 34003).

\(^1\) http://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/10710/disability_mental_health_learning_difficulties/740/disabled_postgraduate_research_students
13. Mitigating circumstances

13.1 As set out in the Policy on suspensions and extensions (see Section 15), for PGRs, the Graduate Board accommodates ‘mitigating circumstances’ by considering a period of suspension or extension of study which will lengthen the overall candidature and delay the deadline for submission of the thesis for examination.

13.2 For research degrees there can be no “mitigating circumstances” with the criteria for award. In order to be eligible for the award of the degree, all PGRs must complete an oral examination and the thesis submitted for examination must meet the stated criteria for award of the degree and the specified learning outcomes must be met.

13.3 Any mitigating circumstances which may have affected the PGR during their period of study should not be taken into account as part of the assessment of the thesis and should never lead the examiners to award a research degree where the work is not felt to be of the appropriate standard. However such factors might be taken into account when determining whether any reasonable adjustments to the examination process should be considered, for example in the case of a disability, or any support needed in order to complete any amendments to the thesis after the examination.

14. Ethical review of the research

13.1 All PGRs are required to confirm that they are aware of, and comply with, the University’s procedures for the review of ethical issues arising from research involving animals; human participants, their data or their tissue; or the potential for significant environmental impact. PGRs’ awareness of the ethical implications of their research, and that ethical approval has been sought and received where necessary, is reviewed at various stages in the candidature including the training needs analysis, the transfer stage and at examination entry. At the point of entry for examination, the Graduate Board requires PGRs (along with their Supervisor & Postgraduate Research Tutor) to confirm that all ethical review requirements have been satisfactorily addressed.

13.2 The University Research Ethics Committee recognises that in some cases it may be beneficial for examiners to have access to the detailed ethics information so they can see how PGRs have dealt with the ethical issues of their research. The documents which make up the ethics application typically include the application form, recruitment material, participant information sheet and consent form. These can be combined into one PDF and made available to examiners on request. Please inform the Thesis Examination Section of PGR & Operations (rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk) in the first instance who will contact the University’s Ethics Administrator.

13.3 Further information about the University’s research ethics policy and requirements for researchers is available at http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/goodpractice.
15. Policy documents relating to research degrees

The following documents relating to the submission and examination of theses for research degrees are published on the website:

**Ordinance & Regulations & Programmes of Study**\(^12\)

The formal regulations and requirements for all the University’s research degrees.

**Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures**\(^13\)

This document sets out a framework of shared responsibilities between the University, supervisors and PGRs. It is supplemented by Faculty Protocols.

**Policies covering the examination of PGRs**\(^14\)

- Instructions to examiners for research degrees
- Guidelines for the use of video streaming for an oral examination
- Use of solely and jointly authored publications in a thesis submission
- Procedure in the event of a disagreement between examiners
- Procedures for investigating plagiarism in research degrees
- Research excellence policy
- Policy on Suspensions and extensions
- Submission of a thesis in a language other than English (modern languages only)
- Eligibility criteria for the appointment of examiners and Independent Chairs
- Procedure covering PGR appeals
- Protocol for an alternative format of thesis including published material (Faculties of Environment and Engineering only)
- Framework for reasonable adjustments and support for PGR examinations
- Guide to the thesis examination process for PGRs

**Forms covering the examination of PGRs**\(^15\)

- Examiners’ Preliminary Report form (complete before the viva)
- Examiners’ final, joint report form (complete after the viva)

---

\(^{12}\) [http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22168/student_support-related_policies/646/ordinances](http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22168/student_support-related_policies/646/ordinances)

\(^{13}\) [http://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/10112/research_degrees/910/research_student_guide](http://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/10112/research_degrees/910/research_student_guide)

\(^{14}\) [http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22172/research_degrees/1030/regulations_codes_policies_and_procedures_for_postgraduate_research](http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22172/research_degrees/1030/regulations_codes_policies_and_procedures_for_postgraduate_research)

\(^{15}\) [http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22172/research_degrees/1029/postgraduate_research_forms](http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22172/research_degrees/1029/postgraduate_research_forms)