

**LTC09D059**

**Title: PG Research Programmes Policy Group – External Examiners’ reports for Postgraduate Research Degrees 2008-09**

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### **Background**

In accordance with the Code of Practice on Research Degrees section 11 iii, the examiners’ reports for research degrees have been reviewed by the Director of Research Degree Programmes. This is a summary report of the findings of the reports of external examiners reporting during the session 2008-9. The examiners’ reports concern themselves almost entirely with feedback on the individual thesis, but periodically issues are raised regarding University policies in general. Review of the external examiners’ reports also allows the identification of good practice in learning, teaching and assessment which can be disseminated throughout the University.

The outcomes of this review will be considered by the Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group at its next meeting on 6 November 2009 and by the Learning and Teaching Committee.

### **Process**

Each Examiner submits a separate written report and recommendation to the Board of the School concerned which is forwarded to the Head of School for approval and signature. Where there is agreement on the recommendation the Head of School then forwards the recommendation to the Registry for approval by the University. All examiners’ reports are reviewed on receipt by the Graduate Office by the Assistant Registrar for generic or School-specific issues and any such issues are brought to the attention of the School and/or Director of Research Degree Programmes for discussion and action, where appropriate.

### **General Issues**

The examiners’ reports continue to be very positive about candidates’ work and performance in the viva and are indicative of a clear position of confidence amongst a range of UK and international examiners in the quality and standards of research degrees at this University. Examiners commented that the candidates they examined compared favourably with candidates examined at other universities and some that the work was among the best that they had seen at doctoral level. The reports contain minimal references to issues outside of the assessment of candidates.

### **Specific Issues**

An issue raised last year was that some candidates’ work contained a large number of typographical, presentational and/or grammatical errors. This issue was raised again in a sizable minority of examiners’ reports this year. The Policy Group had discussed how this issue might be addressed but it is clear that there are still training needs here and further discussions required about proof reading.

A number of examiners also commented on problems with the bibliography and in particular with referencing styles. One examiner, who requested referencing guidelines for the MSc by Research, commented that greater clarity was required in the guidelines particularly regarding the referencing of multiple authored works. Another commented that more guidance on this issue was required before thesis submission with an emphasis on acceptable norms at a departmental or institutional level.

Two external examiners commented on the word count for the MPhil and PhD, one felt that the word limit for the MPhil should be reduced from 80,000 to 65,000 words, the other that the PhD should be reduced from 100, 000 words to 80,000.

The issue of copyright was raised in several reports. One external examiner wished to draw to the University's attention the issue of the unacceptable use of illustrations based on published figures used without the approval of the copyright owner. S/he felt that this issue should be emphasised in the University's instructions to students preparing theses for submission.

### **Statistics**

In 2008-9 the University issued Pass Lists for a total of 249 Research Degrees overall (see attached table). This represents a 10.7% increase on the number for 2007-8.

### **Research Degree Passes 2008-9**

School	PhD	PhD by publication	Professional doctorates	MPhil	MEd	MA / MSc/ LLM by Research	Total
AHP	1 (0)	0 (1)		1 (1)			2 (2)
AMS	0 (0)						0 (0)
BIO	48 (52)			1 (0)		2 (2)	51 (54)
CAP	14 (13)					6 (1)	20 (14)
CHE	1 (-)						1 (0)
CMP	13 (10)			0 (0)		3 (1)	16 (11)
DEV	13 (9)					2 (0)	15 (9)
ECO	2 (2)					1 (0)	3 (2)
EDU	11 (11)	1 (0)	3 EdD (5)		1 (1)	0 (0)	16 (17)
ENV	28 (37)					4 (0)	32 (37)
FTV	10 (5)					1 (0)	11 (5)
HIS	10 (3)			1 (0)			11 (3)
LCS	1 (0)						1 (0)
LLT	0 (0)					0 (1)	0 (1)
LAW	2 (2)					0 (1)	2 (3)
LIT	7 (10)	0 (2)				0 (1)	7 (13)
MTH	2 (4)	1 (0)					3 (4)
MED	6 (4)	0 (0)	20 ClinPsyD (19) 5 MD (3)				31 (26)
MUS	4 (1)	0 (1)				2 (1)	6 (3)
NBS	4 (2)						4 (2)
NAM	1 (0)					3 (4)	4 (4)
PHI	0 (1)			0 (0)			0 (1)
PSI	4 (4)						4 (4)
SWP	2 (4)	0 (0)		0 (1)			2 (5)
WAM	6 (5)					1 (0)	7 (5)
<b>Total</b>	<b>190 (179)</b>	<b>2 (4)</b>	<b>28 (27)</b>	<b>3 (2)</b>	<b>1 (1)</b>	<b>25 (12)</b>	<b>249 (225)</b>

Figures for 2007-8 in brackets.