

Title: Updates to Research Degree Regulations
Authors: Dr Vivien Easson, Head of Postgraduate Research Service
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Issue

This paper provides a summary of changes proposed to regulations for research degrees. These changes, if approved by Senate in June 2014, should take effect on 1 August 2014.

Recommendations

1. That all changes to regulations for research degree students should take effect on 1 August of a new academic year, so as to coincide with HESA reporting years. Current postgraduate research students will be contacted during July to inform them of the changes.
2. That terminology in research degree award regulations should be updated as follows to reflect current practice and be clearer to students:
 - a. "Board of School" to be changed to "Head of School or nominee"; *
 - b. "School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality" to be changed to "School or Institute Director of Postgraduate Research";
 - c. "Associate Dean (LTQ)" to be changed to "Associate Dean (PGR)";
 - d. School names shall be updated where appropriate to reflect upcoming reorganisations in HUM and FMH;
 - e. "Registrar and Secretary (or nominee)" to be changed to "Head of Postgraduate Research Service or nominee" to be clearer to students which Service area processes thesis submission;
 - f. "Learning and Teaching Committee" to be changed to "Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes" unless "Postgraduate Research Executive" is more appropriate in that case;
 - g. "Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee" to be changed to "Faculty Graduate School Executive";
 - h. The reference to the Senate in approving examiners shall be amended to refer to the Faculty Associate Dean of Postgraduate Research.
3. That a clarification shall be added as follows: "In these Regulations, unless explicitly stated otherwise, Head of School may be taken to refer also to the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee of the John Innes Centre, The Sainsbury Laboratory and The Genome Analysis Centre or Institute of Food Research for candidates based in those Institutes. The Head of School's nominee shall normally be the School Director of Postgraduate Research, and there may also be a nominated Institute Director of Postgraduate Research for candidates based in those Institutes listed above."
4. That a clarification shall be added to make it clear that the authority of the relevant persons comes from the Senate via the relevant role or committee.
5. That the regulations for the degrees of Master of Philosophy, Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Medicine, and Masters Degrees by Research should be updated as in the Appendix to the paper on Probationary Periods for Research Degree Students to introduce a probationary status for all candidates on these programmes with effect for students with date of initial registration on 1 October 2015 or later and a system of including a review of probationary status (confirmation review) at an annual review meeting within the first year of full-time study (or equivalent), and then agreeing an action plan and scheduling a continuation review meeting if progress is not judged to be satisfactory. If progress is also not satisfactory at the continuation review meeting the student's registration may be withdrawn.
6. That the regulations for the degrees of Master of Philosophy, Doctor of Philosophy and Masters Degrees by Research should be updated as in Appendices 1 to 3 attached to reflect the revisions made to the

Instructions to Examiners for these programmes (see the separate paper on the Review of the Instructions to Examiners for the degrees of Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD).

Resource Implications

No resource implications except those for item 5 which are described in the Probationary Periods for Research Degree Students paper.

Risk Implications

These changes attempt to manage the risk associated with admitting weak candidates to research degrees by providing a structured and consistent approach to academic progress monitoring.

Equality and Diversity

No implications except those for item 5 which are described in the Probationary Periods for Research Degree Students paper.

Timing of decisions

A decision is required at the May 2014 Postgraduate Research Executive and to be noted at the May 2014 Learning and Teaching Committee to allow approval of regulatory changes by the June 2014 Senate which will take effect from 1 August 2014.

Further Information

Contact Vivien Easson, x1835 v.easson@uea.ac.uk for enquiries about the content of the paper.

Appendices: detailed changes to regulations in relation to the revised Instructions to Examiners

1. Changes to regulations for Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
2. Changes to regulations for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
3. Changes to regulations for Masters by Research (MA by Research, MSc by Research etc.)

1 Changes to regulations for Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

Sections 11-14 The Thesis and Examination currently read:

“11 A candidate shall be examined orally on the thesis and on subjects relevant to it. The examination shall normally be held within three months of the date of submission of the thesis. Exceptions to this shall require approval by the Learning and Teaching Committee. In exceptional circumstances the Learning and Teaching Committee of the Senate may, on sufficient grounds submitted by the examiners and on the recommendation of the Board of the School, excuse the candidate from the oral examination or agree to its replacement by a written examination.

12 The examiners having examined the candidate shall send their reports and recommendations to the Board of the School concerned. If the examiners do not agree in their recommendations or if for any other reason the Board of the School needs a further opinion, the Board shall recommend to the Senate the appointment of an additional external examiner who shall conduct a further examination of the candidate. For the duration of this process, the School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality shall act in place of the Head of the School as Chair of the Board of the School.

13 The Board of the School having considered the reports and recommendations of all the examiners shall then proceed in one of the following ways:

- (1) if the thesis and performance in the oral examination are of sufficient merit it shall recommend that the candidate be approved for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy;
- (2) if the thesis and performance in the oral examination are of sufficient merit, but that minor corrections are required, it shall recommend that the candidate be approved for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, subject to completion of minor corrections within (a) six weeks or (b) if the required corrections are of a presentational nature, within one week;
- (3) if the thesis and performance in the oral examination are not of sufficient merit for the degree of Master of Philosophy it shall recommend:
either (a) that the candidate be permitted to submit a revised thesis. Such a candidate shall submit a revised thesis within one year and may be required to undergo further oral examination. A candidate shall not be allowed to submit a revised thesis on more than one occasion;
or (b) that no degree be awarded.

In all cases the recommendations of the Board of the School shall be laid before the Registrar and Secretary (or nominee) who shall ensure that appropriate action is taken on behalf of the Senate.

14 A candidate who submits a satisfactory thesis but who fails to satisfy the examiners in the oral examination may be permitted by the Learning and Teaching Committee, on the recommendation of the examiners and of the Board of the School, to take a second oral examination or a written examination within six months.”

This shall be replaced by the following text; section numbering may also be altered where necessary. Please note that section 14 has been removed as an option for the examiners and will only be available by concession from the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes.

New text:

11 A candidate shall be examined orally on the thesis and on subjects relevant to it. The examination shall normally be held within three months of the date of submission of the thesis. Exceptions to this shall require approval by the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes. Prior to the oral examination of the thesis the examiners shall each prepare independent preliminary reports regarding the candidate's performance. In exceptional circumstances the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes may, on sufficient grounds submitted by the examiners and on the recommendation of the Head of School or nominee, excuse the candidate from the oral examination or agree to its replacement by a written examination.

12 The examiners having examined the candidate shall send their joint final report and recommendation to the Head of the School concerned or their nominee. If the examiners do not agree in their recommendation or

if for any other reason the Head of School or nominee needs a further opinion, the Head of School shall recommend to the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes the appointment of an additional external examiner who shall conduct a further examination of the candidate. For the duration of this process, the School/Institute Director of Postgraduate Research shall act in place of the Head of School as Chair of the Board of the School.

13 The Head of School or nominee having considered the final report and recommendation of the examiners shall then proceed in one of the following ways:

- (1) if the thesis and performance in the oral examination are of sufficient merit they shall recommend that the candidate be approved for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy;
- (2) if the thesis and performance in the oral examination are of sufficient merit, but that minor corrections are required, they shall recommend that the candidate be approved for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, subject to completion of minor corrections within three months
- (3) if the thesis and performance in the oral examination are not of sufficient merit for the degree of Master of Philosophy they shall recommend:
 - either* (a) that the candidate be permitted to submit a revised thesis. Such a candidate shall submit a revised thesis within one year and may be required to undergo further oral examination. A candidate shall not be allowed to submit a revised thesis on more than one occasion;
 - or* (b) that no degree be awarded.

In all cases the recommendations of the Head of School or nominee shall be laid before the Head of the Postgraduate Research Service or nominee who shall ensure that appropriate action is taken on behalf of the Senate.

2 Changes to regulations for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Sections 11 to 14 The Thesis and Examination currently read:

“11 A candidate shall be examined orally on the thesis and on subjects relevant to it. The examination shall normally be held within three months of the date of submission of the thesis. Exceptions to this shall require approval by the Learning and Teaching Committee. In exceptional circumstances the Learning and Teaching Committee of the Senate may, on sufficient grounds submitted by the examiners and on the recommendation of the Board of the School, excuse the candidate from the oral examination or agree to its replacement by a written examination.

12 The examiners having examined the candidate shall send their reports and recommendations to the Board of the School concerned. If the examiners do not agree in their recommendations or if for any other reason the Board of the School needs a further opinion, the Board shall recommend to the Senate the appointment of an additional external examiner who shall conduct a further examination of the candidate. For the duration of this process, the School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality shall act in place of the Head of the School as Chair of the Board of the School.

13 The Board of the School having considered the reports and recommendations of all the examiners shall then proceed in one of the following ways:

- (1) If the thesis and performance in the oral examination are of sufficient merit it shall recommend that the candidate be approved for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy;
- (2) If the thesis and performance in the oral examination are of sufficient merit, but that minor corrections are required, it shall recommend that the candidate be approved for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, subject to completion of minor corrections within (a) three months or (b) if the required corrections are of a presentational nature, within six weeks;
- (3) If the thesis and performance in the oral examination are not of sufficient merit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy but there is reasonable expectation that the thesis, if revised, could reach the standard required for the degree, the Board shall recommend either that the candidate be asked to submit a revised thesis or that the candidate be given the option either of submitting a revised thesis or of being approved for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy. A candidate who is given this option shall be allowed a period of not more than fourteen days from receipt of formal notification of the outcome of the examination to decide which of these alternatives to accept;

A candidate who submits a revised thesis shall do so within one year and may be required to undergo further oral examination. A candidate shall not be allowed to submit a revised thesis on more than one occasion;

- (4) If the thesis and performance in the oral examination are not of sufficient merit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and the Board is not of the opinion that the candidate should be permitted to submit a revised thesis, it shall, if the thesis and performance in the oral examination are of sufficient merit for the degree of Master of Philosophy, recommend that the candidate be approved for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy. In the event of the need for substantive amendments the Board may recommend that the candidate be permitted to re-submit the thesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy in not more than six months;
- (5) If the thesis and performance in the oral examination are not of sufficient merit to entitle the candidate to the degree of Master of Philosophy it shall recommend that no degree be awarded.

In all cases the recommendations of the Board of the School shall be laid before the Registrar and Secretary who shall ensure that appropriate action is taken on behalf of the Senate.

14 A candidate who submits a satisfactory thesis but who fails to satisfy the examiners in the oral examination may be permitted by the Learning and Teaching Committee, on the recommendation of the examiners and of the Board of the School, to take a second oral examination or a written examination within six months.”

This shall be replaced by the following text; section numbering may also be altered where necessary. Please note that section 14 has been removed as an option for the examiners and will only be available by concession from the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes.

New text:

11 A candidate shall be examined orally on the thesis and on subjects relevant to it. The examination shall normally be held within three months of the date of submission of the thesis. Exceptions to this shall require approval by the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes. Prior to the oral examination of the thesis the examiners shall each prepare independent preliminary reports regarding the candidate's performance. In exceptional circumstances the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes may, on sufficient grounds submitted by the examiners and on the recommendation of the Head of School or nominee, excuse the candidate from the oral examination or agree to its replacement by a written examination.

12 The examiners having examined the candidate shall send their joint final report and recommendation to the Head of the School concerned or their nominee. If the examiners do not agree in their recommendations or if for any other reason the Head of School or nominee needs a further opinion, the Head of School shall recommend to the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes the appointment of an additional external examiner who shall conduct a further examination of the candidate. For the duration of this process, the School/Institute Director of Postgraduate Research shall act in place of the Head of the School as Chair of the Board of the School.

13 The Head of School or nominee having considered the final report and recommendation of the examiners shall then proceed in one of the following ways:

- (1) If the thesis and performance in the oral examination are of sufficient merit they shall recommend that the candidate be approved for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy;
- (2) If the thesis and performance in the oral examination are of sufficient merit, but that minor corrections are required, they shall recommend that the candidate be approved for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, subject to completion of minor corrections within six months;
- (3) If the thesis and performance in the oral examination are not of sufficient merit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy but there is reasonable expectation that the thesis, if revised, could reach the standard required for the degree, they shall recommend either that the candidate be asked to submit a revised thesis or that the candidate be given the option either of submitting a revised thesis or of being approved for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy. A candidate who is given this option shall be allowed a period of not more than fourteen days from receipt of formal notification of the outcome of the examination to decide which of these alternatives to accept;

A candidate who submits a revised thesis shall do so within one year and may be required to undergo further oral examination. A candidate shall not be allowed to submit a revised thesis on more than one occasion;

- (4) If the thesis and performance in the oral examination are not of sufficient merit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and the Head of School or nominee is not of the opinion that the candidate should be permitted to submit a revised thesis, they shall, if the thesis and performance in the oral examination are of sufficient merit for the degree of Master of

Philosophy, recommend that the candidate be approved for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy (with or without corrections).

- (5) If the thesis and performance in the oral examination are not of sufficient merit to entitle the candidate to the degree of Master of Philosophy they shall recommend that no degree be awarded.

In all cases the recommendations of the Head of School or nominee shall be laid before the Head of the Postgraduate Research Service or nominee who shall ensure that appropriate action is taken on behalf of the Senate.

3 Changes to regulations for Masters by Research

Sections 9 to 11 The Portfolio or Thesis and Examination currently read:

9 A candidate shall be examined orally on the portfolio or thesis and on subjects relevant to it. The examination shall normally be held within three months of the date of submission of the thesis. Exceptions to this shall require approval by the Learning and Teaching Committee. In exceptional circumstances the Learning and Teaching Committee of the Senate may, on sufficient grounds submitted by the examiners and on the recommendation of the Board of the School concerned, excuse the candidate from the oral examination or agree to its replacement by a written examination.

10 The examiners having examined the candidate shall send their reports and recommendations to the Board of the School concerned. If the examiners do not agree upon their recommendations or if for any other reason the Board of the School concerned needs a further opinion, the Board shall recommend to the Senate the appointment of an additional external examiner who shall conduct a further examination of the candidate. For the duration of this process, the School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality shall act in place of the Head of School as Chair of the Board of the School.

11 The Board of the School concerned having considered the reports and recommendations of all the examiners shall then proceed in one of the following ways:

- (1) If the portfolio or thesis and performance in the oral examination are of sufficient merit it shall recommend that the candidate be approved for the award of the degree of Masters by Research.
- (2) If the thesis and performance in the oral examination are of sufficient merit, but minor corrections are required, it shall recommend that the candidate be approved for the award of the degree of Masters by Research, subject to completion of minor corrections within (a) six weeks or (b) if the required corrections are of a presentational nature, within one week.
- (3) If the portfolio or thesis and performance in the oral examination are not of sufficient merit for the degree of Masters by Research it shall recommend:
 - either* (a) that the candidate be permitted to submit a revised portfolio or thesis. Such a candidate shall submit a revised thesis within six months and may be required to undergo further oral examination. A candidate shall not be allowed to submit a revised portfolio or thesis on more than one occasion
 - or* (b) that no degree shall be awarded.

In all cases the recommendations of the Board of the School concerned shall be laid before the Registrar and Secretary (or nominee) who shall ensure that appropriate action is taken on behalf of the Senate.”

This shall be replaced by the following text; section numbering may also be altered where necessary.

New text:

9 A candidate shall be examined orally on the portfolio or thesis and on subjects relevant to it. The examination shall normally be held within three months of the date of submission of the thesis. Exceptions to this shall require approval by the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes. Prior to the oral examination of the thesis the examiners shall each prepare independent preliminary reports regarding the candidate's performance. In exceptional circumstances the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes may, on sufficient grounds submitted by the examiners and on the recommendation of the Head of School or nominee, excuse the candidate from the oral examination or agree to its replacement by a written examination.

10 The examiners having examined the candidate shall send their joint final report and recommendation to the Head of the School concerned or their nominee. If the examiners do not agree in their recommendation or if for any other reason the Head of School or nominee needs a further opinion, the Head of School shall recommend to the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes the appointment of an additional external examiner who shall conduct a further examination of the candidate. For the duration of this process, the School/Institute Director of Postgraduate Research shall act in place of the Head of School as Chair of the Board of the School.

11 The Head of School or nominee having considered the final report and recommendation of the examiners shall then proceed in one of the following ways:

- (1) if the portfolio or thesis and performance in the oral examination are of sufficient merit they shall recommend that the candidate be approved for the award of the degree of Masters by Research;
- (2) if the thesis and performance in the oral examination are of sufficient merit, but that minor corrections are required, they shall recommend that the candidate be approved for the award of the degree of Masters by Research, subject to completion of minor corrections within three months
- (3) if the thesis and performance in the oral examination are not of sufficient merit for the degree of Masters by Research they shall recommend:
 - either* (a) that the candidate be permitted to submit a revised portfolio or thesis. Such a candidate shall submit a revised portfolio or thesis within one year and may be required to undergo further oral examination. A candidate shall not be allowed to submit a revised portfolio or thesis on more than one occasion;
 - or* (b) that no degree be awarded.

In all cases the recommendations of the Head of School or nominee shall be laid before the Head of the Postgraduate Research Service or nominee who shall ensure that appropriate action is taken on behalf of the Senate.