

LTC13D070

Title: Review of the Instructions to Examiners for the degrees of Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD

Author: Melanie Steele, Quality & Information Manager, PGR Service

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Issue

To consider the revisions proposed to the Instructions to Examiners, Regulations and associated documents for the Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD as a result of the review of the PhD Instructions to Examiners by the working group set up by the PGR Executive. Whilst the initial scope of the review was solely to review the Instructions to Examiners for the PhD there are a great deal of similarities between the Instructions to Examiners for the PhD and those for the MPhil and Masters by Research. The Academic Director for Research Degree Programmes has therefore endorsed this extension of the scope of the review.

Recommendations

LTC members are asked to consider and approve the attached revisions to:

1. The combined Instructions to Examiners for the degrees of Master of Philosophy, Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Arts by Research, Master of Laws by Research, Master of Music by Research and Master of Science by Research **(Document 1)**
2. Rules for the Form of Theses and Dissertations

The associated changes required to the Regulations for the PhD, MPhil and Masters by Research are included within the separate paper circulated to LTC on the Revisions to Research Degree Regulations.

There are also associated changes necessary to the Code of Practice for Research Degrees and Sections 3, 8 and 9 of the Research Degree Policy Documents, which will be considered by the PGR Executive at its next meeting on 15 May 2014.

Resource Implications

No significant resource implications are anticipated although the operation of the revised Instructions to Examiners will need to be underpinned by new processes.

Risk Implications

There are no material risks to the University associated with the approval of these amendments. The greater use of electronic forms should reduce the risk of loss of hard copy forms and supporting documentation.

Equality and Diversity

It is not envisaged that any of the recommendations contained in the report will impact detrimentally on groups with protected characteristics.

Timing of decisions

Approval by LTC at its May meeting would allow the regulatory and other amendments to be enacted and in place for the 2014-15 academic year.

Further Information

Please contact Melanie Steele, x3870 m.steele@uea.ac.uk for enquiries about the content of the paper.

Background

The PGR Executive endorsed at its meeting on 17 January 2014 the setting up of a working group to review the Instructions to Examiners for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, which were last reviewed in February 2006. The working group was chaired by the SSF Faculty Associate Dean (PGR) and included representatives from each Faculty and the Norwich Bioscience Institutes. The working group met twice in March 2014 and their final report is attached in Appendix A.

The working group made the eight following recommendations:

1. Two independent reports to be submitted by the examiners before the viva.
2. A joint report with an agreed recommendation to be submitted by the examiners after the viva.
3. The role of the Internal Adviser to be removed from the viva process, with any advice required by the examiners before the viva to be provided by the School/Institute Director of Postgraduate Research
4. The appointment of an independent Chair where the two examiners are external to the University and/or where an external examiner is not present in the room (video link).
5. Vivas by videoconference to be permitted in exceptional circumstances but only if the candidate gives their explicit, written agreement.
6. An electronic copy of the thesis to be sent to examiners by default, along with a soft bound copy if requested by the examiner(s) on appointment.
7. A reduction in the range of recommendations available to examiners of the PhD to five options:
 - i. Pass (no corrections)
 - ii. Pass subject to corrections (to be corrected within 6 months of the viva, reviewed by internal examiner).
 - iii. Referral for resubmission within 12 months (amendments reviewed by both examiners). The option of an MPhil available at first submission if the candidate does not wish to resubmit.
 - iv. MPhil award (with or without corrections)
 - v. Fail

8. A second oral examination on a first submission to be an option available only via a concession from the Director of Research Degree Programmes.

These recommendations are reflected in the proposed revisions to the Instructions to Examiners, Regulations and associated documents. In addition changes have been made to terminology to reflect changes in governance and administrative structures since 2006.

The range of recommendations for the MPhil and the Masters by Research have been reduced in accordance with the changes recommended by the working group for the PhD. The proposed deadlines for minor corrections for the MPhil and Masters by Research reflect the current doubling in the Regulations of the period specified for the PhD. An additional section on 'Support for postgraduate research degree candidates with disabilities' has been added to reflect recent changes made to the Degree Entry Form regarding reasonable adjustments.



Instructions to Examiners for the Degrees of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Master of Arts by Research, Master of Laws by Research, Master of Music by Research and Master of Science by Research

General Provisions

1. These Instructions are to be read in conjunction with the Regulations for the degree concerned.
2. Alterations to these Instructions may be made in line with any changes to the Regulations and only with the approval of the Postgraduate Research Executive (acting with authority delegated from the Learning and Teaching Committee of the Senate).
3. In all cases the Head of School or School / Institute Director of Postgraduate Research may act on behalf of the Board of the School.

In all cases the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes or Faculty Associate Dean (Postgraduate Research) may act on behalf of the Postgraduate Research Executive.

In all cases the Head of the Postgraduate Research Service or their nominee acts on behalf of the Registrar and Secretary.

4. In these Instructions, Head of School should be taken to refer also to the Chair of the Institutes Graduate Studies Committee for candidates based in the John Innes Centre, The Sainsbury Laboratory, The Genome Analysis Centre or Institute of Food Research.

Role and Responsibilities of the examiners

5. Each candidate will be examined by two or more examiners approved by the Faculty Associate Dean (Postgraduate Research) (or Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes for Category A students), at least one of whom shall be an External Examiner. (In the case of Category A students all the examiners shall be external and an Independent Chair will be appointed.)
6. The examiners shall:
 - participate in the oral examination of the thesis
 - each prepare and submit an independent preliminary report form to the Postgraduate Research Service at least five working days prior to the date of oral examination
 - meet prior to the oral examination to discuss the preliminary reports and to decide upon areas for discussion and any areas where clarification should be sought.

- prepare and submit a joint final report on the thesis and the oral examination, which should also detail recommendations for the award of the degree or referral for revision and/or resubmission
- where a thesis is being referred back to the candidate for corrections or resubmission, liaise with the other examiner(s) to draw up a single agreed list of corrections or areas for revision
- The examiners may seek guidance and advice on regulatory and procedural matters from the School / Institute Director of Postgraduate Research, who will be available to brief the examiner(s) and respond to queries prior to the oral examination

7. The External Examiner(s)

The External Examiner(s) shall:

- undertake duties as described in the University of East Anglia's Code of Practice for the External Examiners' System for Research Awards at UEA (Research Degree Policy Documents Section 8)

8. The Internal Examiner(s) shall in addition:

- liaise with the External Examiner to arrange the date, time and location of the oral examination
- inform the candidate of the date, time and location of the oral examination
- notify the Postgraduate Research Service of the date, time and location of the oral examination
- act as Chair for the oral examination
- liaise with the Primary Supervisor to clarify any issues arising from the formal report, requirements for corrections or recommendations for revision of the thesis

Where only External Examiners have been appointed the Independent Chair will undertake certain responsibilities of the Internal Examiner as indicated in these Instructions.

9. The Independent Chair (where appointed to participate in an oral examination under the provisions of Instructions 5, 16 and 34) shall:

- in the case of an examination conducted exclusively by External Examiners, take on the role and responsibilities of the Internal Examiner in respect of coordinating the arrangements for the oral examination of the thesis as set out in Instruction 8 above
- in the case of an examination conducted exclusively by External Examiners, liaise with the Primary Supervisor and the External Examiners to clarify any issues arising from the formal report, requirements for corrections or recommendations for revision of the thesis
- attend and remain present for the duration of the oral examination, as well as the post-examination decision making but not participate in the questioning of the

candidate or the decision making itself

- act on behalf of the University in ensuring that the examiners are aware of, and adhere to, the University's regulations and procedures
- produce a brief report after the oral examination, confirming that they are satisfied that the oral examination has been conducted fairly and according to University procedure

Further guidance on the role and responsibilities of the Independent Chair are set out in Section 9 of the Research Degree Policy Documents: The Role of the Independent Chair.

Criteria for the awards of research degrees

10. Before recommending the award of the degree for which the candidate is registered, the examiners shall satisfy themselves as to:

- (i) the extent of the work submitted;
 - the examiners should satisfy themselves that the candidate's work shows evidence of adequate industry and application
 - in the case of work done jointly or under direction, it is important that the extent of the candidate's own contribution should be ascertained
- (ii) the merit of the work submitted;

The examiners should satisfy themselves that the candidate's work provides evidence that the candidate:

- has taken due account of previously published work on the subject
- has the ability to conduct original investigations
- is able to test ideas, whether the candidate's own or those of others

For Masters by Research

- has the ability to obtain appropriate conclusions from the research undertaken

For MPhil

- understands the relationship of the theme of the investigations to a wider field of knowledge

The thesis should represent a significant contribution to knowledge

For PhD

- understands the relationship of the theme of the investigations to a wider field of knowledge.

The thesis should represent a significant contribution to the development of understanding, for example, through the discovery of new knowledge, the

connection of previously unrelated facts, the development of a new theory or the revision of older views.

- (iii) the manner of its presentation;

The examiners must satisfy themselves that the style and general arrangement of the thesis are satisfactory (as specified in Section 3 of the Research Degree Policy Documents: Submission, Presentation, Consultation and Borrowing of Theses)

For practice-based PhD programmes in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities

- (iv) in the case of the **Creative and Critical Writing** programme in the School of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing, the examiners shall, in addition, satisfy themselves as to:

- the quality of the writing in the candidate's original literary text
- the merit of the associated critical text

- the candidate's critical understanding of the creative process

- the candidate's critical understanding of the relationship between the original literary text and contemporary or traditional achievements in the genre

- (iv) in the case of the **Professional Practice** programmes in the School of Art, Media and American Studies, the examiners shall, in addition satisfy themselves as to:

- the quality of the candidate's practice as submitted

- the merit of the associated written commentary

- the candidate's critical understanding of wider contexts for their practice, including creative, curatorial, educational, media studies, or film and TV business contexts; whether contemporary or historical

- the original contribution made by the submission both to an enhanced professional practice by the candidate and to its wider context in practice-based research and theory.

- (v) in the case of the **Musical Composition** programme in the School of Music, the examiners shall, in addition, satisfy themselves as to:

- the quality of the candidate's original compositions

- the coherence and originality in invention as well as in the treatment of musical techniques of the composition

- the merit of the associated written commentary

- the exposition of the creative process

- the candidate's critical understanding of the relationship of the submitted compositions to contemporary musical thought

11. In making their judgement on the award of the degree, examiners shall take into account that the substance and significance of the thesis should be of a kind which might be reasonably expected of a capable and diligent candidate after the number of years of full-time (or equivalent) study specified in the Regulations.
12. Where an examiner suspects that there may have been plagiarism, collusion or any other form of malpractice, the examination process must be suspended whilst the University's Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct in Research are pursued. Advice should be sought as soon as is practicable from the Head of the Postgraduate Research Service or their nominee.

The Oral Examination

13. There shall be an oral examination of the thesis, except where the provisions of Regulation 11 and Instruction 54 are invoked.
14. The oral examination shall normally be held within three months of the submission of the thesis.
15. The oral examination should be held in Norwich. The School / Institute Director of Postgraduate Research may permit, in exceptional circumstances, with the agreement of the candidate and examiners, the oral examination to be held at another location with all parties present.
16. In exceptional circumstances the Faculty Associate Dean (Postgraduate Research) may agree to an oral examination by video-conference. The agreement of the candidate to this arrangement must be given. Where an oral examination is held via video-conference an Independent Chair will be appointed, who will be responsible for taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the candidate is not disadvantaged in any way compared to the normal situation of a face-to-face oral examination.
17. Supervisors will not normally be permitted to attend the oral examination. However it is good practice to invite the Primary Supervisor to attend when the examiners communicate their recommendation to the candidate to ensure that both the supervisor and the candidate have a clear understanding of any amendments specified by the examiners.
18. An electronic copy of the submitted thesis will be sent to examiners for oral examination purposes, unless a soft-bound copy is requested at the time of appointment. The candidate should bring a soft-bound copy of the thesis to the oral examination for reference during the discussions. The examiners shall return any soft-bound copies of the thesis to the Postgraduate Research Service after the oral examination, from which the candidate will collect them.
19. During the oral examination of the thesis the examiners shall question the candidate on the thesis and subjects related to it so as to further test the candidate with reference to the criteria for the award of the degree set out in the Regulations and in Instructions 28-30.
20. Where the examiners agree on their recommendation they should communicate the outcome to the candidate (and Primary Supervisor if present) at the end of the oral examination, although emphasising that this is subject to confirmation by the University. If, for whatever reason, this is not possible they should indicate to the candidate when he/she will be notified.

The Examiners' Reports

Preliminary reports

21. Prior to the oral examination the examiners shall each prepare independent preliminary reports, using the pro-forma supplied by the Postgraduate Research Service. The report should be sent to the Postgraduate Research Service, at least five working days prior to the oral examination taking place, so that the reports can be circulated between all the examiners (and the Independent Chair, where appointed). It is responsibility of the Internal Examiner to ensure that the preliminary reports have been considered by all examiners prior to the oral examination.
22. The report shall comment on the following:
 - the examiner's preliminary view of the candidate's performance as evidenced in the thesis, highlighting any particular strengths and any areas of concern
 - the major issues which the examiner wishes to explore in the oral examination. This will not preclude the examiner raising additional issues during the course of the oral examination
 - a **provisional** recommendation based on the options set out in Instructions 28-30 below. Where the examiner is unable to make a provisional recommendation this should be noted on the report pro-forma
23. Independent preliminary reports are required both when a thesis is first examined and also when a resubmitted thesis is assessed by the examiners, whether or not a second oral examination is to take place.
24. The independent preliminary reports will not be automatically released to the candidate and the supervisory team but will be made available if requested once the examination process has been completed.

Final report

25. Following the oral examination the examiners shall complete a joint report, using the pro-forma supplied by the Postgraduate Research Service. In the exceptional circumstances of a failure to reach agreement in the recommendation and report, the examiners should submit separate independent final reports. **The joint report should normally be completed on the day of the oral examination.** Any variance of opinion concerning the award between preliminary reports and the final report(s) must be explained in the latter.
26. The examiners shall submit their final report to the Postgraduate Research Service (together with any additional information, such as details of corrections or revisions, as set out in Instructions 43-51) within 10 working days after the oral examination. The Postgraduate Research Service will send the reports to the School / Institute Director of Postgraduate Research for action in accordance with Instructions 35 - 36.
27. The report shall comment on the following:
 - the candidate's performance as evidenced in the thesis and the oral examination
 - recommendation as set out in Instructions 28-30 below
 - any additional comments, which may include comparability against standards in other research-led universities

The report should be detailed enough to provide the Head of School or nominee with sufficient information, to make their own assessment of the merits of the thesis.

The final joint examiners' report will be made available to the candidate and the supervisory team.

If an examiner has comments of a more general nature such as those relating to procedure or academic standards these can be addressed under separate cover to the Head of School or the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes.

Recommendations available to the examiners

PhD candidates

28. Following the oral examination for a PhD degree the examiners shall conclude the report by selecting one of the specific recommendations listed on the Examiners' Report Form:

- (i) that the candidate has achieved the criteria for the award of a PhD and should be awarded the degree of PhD; (any minor typographical errors detected by the examiners should be corrected before the thesis is hard bound and an electronic copy deposited in the Library).
- (ii) that the candidate has achieved the criteria for the award of a PhD and should be awarded the degree of PhD subject to the completion of minor corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the nominated examiner (as set out in Instructions 43-45). The deadline for completion of the minor corrections shall normally be six months from the date of notification to the candidate by the Postgraduate Research Service;
- (iii) ***First submission only (not available at resubmission)***: that the thesis in its current form does not demonstrate achievement of the criteria for the award of a PhD, but that there is a reasonable basis for believing that the thesis could meet the requirements for the award of a PhD if additional time (12 months) were to be given to revising the thesis.

Where the thesis currently demonstrates achievement of the criteria for the award of an MPhil the candidate will be given the option of submitting a revised thesis for the PhD **or** of being recommended for the award of the MPhil (with or without minor corrections). A candidate who is given this option shall be allowed a period of not more than ten working days from receipt of formal notification of the outcome of the examination to decide which of these alternatives to accept.

If a candidate opts to revise the thesis, this shall be by a stated deadline, which will normally be 12 months from notification of the result by the Postgraduate Research Service;

- (iv) that the candidate has not achieved the criteria for the award of a PhD but the candidate has achieved the criteria for the award of an MPhil and should be awarded an MPhil (any minor typographical errors detected by the examiners should be corrected before the thesis is hard bound and an electronic copy deposited in the Library).

OR

that the candidate has not achieved the criteria for the award of a PhD, but has achieved the criteria for the award of an MPhil and should be awarded an MPhil subject to the completion of minor corrections to the satisfaction of the

nominated examiner. The deadline for completion of the corrections will normally be three months from notification of the result by the Postgraduate Research Service in the case of minor corrections;

For a first submission there should be no reasonable basis for believing that the thesis could meet the requirements for the award of a PhD if additional time were to be given to revising the thesis;

- (v) that the candidate has not met the criteria for the award of a PhD or MPhil and therefore should not be given an opportunity to submit a revised thesis.

For a first submission there should be no reasonable basis for believing that the thesis could meet the requirements for the award of a PhD or MPhil if additional time were to be given to revising the thesis;

MPhil candidates

29. Following the oral examination for the MPhil the examiners shall conclude the report by selecting one of the specific recommendations listed on the Examiners' Report Form:

- (i) that the candidate has achieved the criteria for the award of an MPhil and should be awarded the degree of MPhil (any minor typographical errors detected by the examiners should be corrected before the thesis is hard bound and an electronic copy deposited in the Library).
- (ii) that the candidate has achieved the criteria for the award of an MPhil and should be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the completion of minor corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the nominated examiner (as set out in Instructions 43-45). The deadline for completion of the minor corrections shall normally be three months from the date of notification to the candidate by the Postgraduate Research Service.
- (iii) ***First submission only (not available at resubmission)***: that the thesis in its current form does not demonstrate achievement of the criteria for the award of an MPhil, but that there is a reasonable basis for believing that the thesis could meet the requirements for the award of an MPhil if additional time (12 months) were to be given to revising the thesis. The candidate shall be invited to submit a revised thesis by a stated deadline, which will normally be 12 months from notification of the result by the Postgraduate Research Service.
- (iv) that the candidate has not met the criteria for the award of an MPhil and therefore should not be given an opportunity to submit a revised thesis.

For a first submission there should be no reasonable basis for believing that the thesis could meet the requirements for the award of an MPhil if additional time were to be given to revising the thesis;

Masters by Research candidates

30. Following the oral examination for the Masters by Research the examiners shall conclude the report by selecting one of the specific recommendations listed on the Examiners' Report Form:

- (i) that the candidate has achieved the criteria for the award of a Masters by Research and should be awarded the degree of Masters by Research (any minor typographical errors detected by the examiners should be corrected before the thesis is hard bound and an electronic copy deposited in the Library);

- (ii) that the candidate has achieved the criteria for the award of a Masters by Research and should be awarded the degree of Masters by Research subject to the completion of minor corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the nominated examiner (as set out in Instructions 43-45). The deadline for completion of the minor corrections shall normally be three months from the date of notification to the candidate by the Postgraduate Research Service;
- (iii) ***First submission only (not available at resubmission)***: that the thesis in its current form does not demonstrate achievement of the criteria for the award of a Masters by Research, but that there is a reasonable basis for believing that the thesis could meet the requirements for the award of a Masters by Research if additional time (6 months) were to be given to revising the thesis. The candidate shall be invited to submit a revised thesis by a stated deadline, which will normally be 6 months from notification of the result by the Postgraduate Research Service;
- (iv) that the candidate has not met the criteria for the award of a Masters by Research and therefore should not be given an opportunity to submit a revised thesis.

For a first submission there should be no reasonable basis for believing that the thesis could meet the requirements for the award of a Masters by Research if additional time were to be given to revising the thesis;

Resolving Disagreement

- 31. Where the examiners cannot agree on the recommendation or on the extent of the work required to bring a thesis to a passing standard the examiners shall refer the matter to the Head of School.
- 32. The Head of School or their nominee (who shall normally be the School/Institute Director of Postgraduate Research) shall seek to establish consensus between the examiners.
- 33. If consensus cannot be achieved, the Head of School or their nominee shall consider the contents of the individual examiner's reports and form a view as to whether there is sufficient evidence within the reports on which to base a recommendation to the Head of the Postgraduate Research Service or guidance to the candidate on the work that needs to be done.
- 34. Where consensus cannot be achieved and where the Head of School or their nominee feels that they have insufficient evidence upon which to make a recommendation to the Head of the Postgraduate Research Service, they shall recommend to the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes the appointment of an additional External Examiner in accordance with Regulation 12.

Where an additional External Examiner is appointed to conduct a further examination of the candidate under Regulation 12, the additional External Examiner and an Independent Chair shall be present at the examination.

Action by Head of School or their nominee

- 35. On receipt of the examiners' report, the School/Institute Director of Postgraduate Research will consider the contents of the report and the recommendation of the

examiners and

either

endorse the recommendation on behalf of the Head of School and return the endorsed reports to the Postgraduate Research Service

or

take action as set out in Instruction 36.

36. Where the examiners are agreed in their recommendation, but where the Head of School or their nominee has reason to question the recommendation, for example if there has been apparent procedural irregularity or where the recommendation does not correspond with the contents of the final report, the Head of School or their nominee shall decide whether

- to seek further clarification from the examiners; or
- refer the matter to the examiners for reconsideration on the basis of concerns which shall be set out in writing to the examiners; or
- decide whether the opinion of a further External Examiner is required

37. Where the Head of School or their nominee decides that they require the appointment of an additional External Examiner to inform their decision, a case shall be put to the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes.

38. If the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes concurs with the recommendation that the opinion of an additional External Examiner is required, the additional External Examiner shall be provided with a copy of the thesis and may at their discretion require the candidate to attend for a further oral examination of the thesis and topics associated with it.

The additional External Examiner will submit an independent formal report to the Head of School or their nominee as set out in Instructions 25-27.

The report from the additional examiner shall be considered by the Head of School or their nominee together with the report of the original examiners.

The reports of all the examiners, together with the comments and recommendations of the Head of School or their nominee shall be submitted to the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes for decision.

39. On receipt of the endorsed examiners' reports the Postgraduate Research Service shall send a copy to the candidate and the Primary Supervisor.

Action by the Head of the Postgraduate Research Service or their nominee

40. On receipt of the endorsed examiners' report, the Head of the Postgraduate Research Service or their nominee will notify the candidate in writing of the decision, enclosing a copy of the examiners' report and, where applicable, a deadline for completion of any corrections or submission of a revised thesis.

41. Where the examiners and the Head of School or their nominee agree that the candidate be approved for the degree awarded, the Head of the Postgraduate Research Service or their nominee will write to the candidate requesting that they

submit one hard bound and one electronic copy of the thesis. Once the hard bound and electronic copy of the thesis have been received, the result shall be published and the candidate informed by a letter from the Head of the Postgraduate Research Service or their nominee;

42. If the examiners and the Head of School or their nominee agree that the candidate be approved for the degree, subject to minor corrections, the Head of the Postgraduate Research Service or their nominee shall await written confirmation from the nominated examiner that the required corrections have been satisfactorily completed and will then write to the candidate requesting that they submit one hard bound and one electronic copy of the thesis. Once the hard bound and electronic copy of the thesis have been received, the result shall be published and the candidate informed by a letter from the Head of the Postgraduate Research Service or their nominee;

Minor Corrections

43. Minor corrections may take the form of
- (i) the correction of typographical, spelling and grammatical errors or
 - (ii) limited revisions of material in the thesis that the examiners specify in detail and which in their judgement is necessary for the thesis to reach an acceptable standard. This can include omissions (for example, in the literature review), rewriting of paragraphs or chapters and other improvements which do not materially alter the conclusions or conceptual framework of the thesis.
44. The examiners must be agreed that the candidate will be able to achieve the amendments within six months of notification for the PhD or within three months for the MPhil and Masters by Research, without the need of a further oral examination. Minor corrections should not entail a significant amount of further research or analysis; alterations of a more substantial nature will require resubmission of the thesis.
45. Where the candidate is required to complete minor corrections (Instruction 28ii, 29ii or 30ii), the examiners should provide the Postgraduate Research Service with an agreed list of the corrections to be made, within ten working days of the oral examination. Examiners should ensure that corrections specified within the copy of the thesis are limited to typographical errors or omissions.

The Postgraduate Research Service shall communicate the list of corrections to the candidate and Primary Supervisor. It is the responsibility of the Primary Supervisor to ensure that the candidate understands the work to be done and to seek clarification on any areas of uncertainty with the examiners.

The candidate shall submit the corrected thesis in electronic format to the Postgraduate Research Service, who will send the thesis to the Internal Examiner. The Internal Examiner will review the thesis and be responsible for confirming in writing to the Postgraduate Research Service that the required corrections have been completed to their satisfaction, and therefore that the pass list may be issued.

In the case of an examination conducted exclusively by External Examiners, the examiners shall decide which examiner will be responsible for reviewing the thesis and confirming to the Postgraduate Research Service that the minor corrections have been completed. The name of the chosen examiner shall be entered onto the Examiners' Report Form.

Once confirmation that the minor corrections have been completed has been received by the Head of the Postgraduate Research Service or their nominee, they will write to the candidate to ask them to submit two copies of the thesis in accordance with rules approved by the Senate. Once the hard bound and electronic copy of the thesis have been received, the result shall be published and the candidate informed by a letter from the Head of the Postgraduate Research Service or their nominee;

Resubmission

46. Where a thesis has been resubmitted in accordance with Instructions 28iii, 29iii or 30iii the revised thesis shall be sent to the original examiners.
47. The examiners, having read the revised thesis, shall confer and decide whether or not they require the candidate to undergo a further oral examination as set out in Regulation 13(3). A further oral examination should be held where one or both of the examiners deem this to be necessary to the examination process or if the examiners are considering either a recommendation not to award a research degree (fail) or a recommendation to award a lower degree.
48. If a further oral examination is required, the Internal Examiner (or Independent Chair in the case of a candidate being examined exclusively by External Examiners) shall liaise with the other examiner(s) to arrange the examination, which should take place within three months of the date of resubmission.
49. The procedures for the examination of a resubmitted thesis are essentially the same as for the initial submission of the work and independent reports and a joint report are required as set out in Instructions 21-27. The oral examination will be conducted in accordance with Instructions 13-20.
50. The examiners shall conclude the final report with one of the specific recommendations set out in Instructions 28-30, noting that further resubmission is not permitted.

The examiners should submit their final report to the Postgraduate Research Service (together with any additional information as set out in Instructions 43-51) within ten working days after the oral examination or, where an oral examination is not required, once the examiners have decided upon their recommendation.

The examiners shall return any soft-bound copies of the thesis to the Postgraduate Research Service, from which the candidate will collect them.

The Postgraduate Research Service will send the report to the Head of School for action in accordance with Instructions 35-36.

51. If the examiners do not agree on the outcome of the examination of the revised thesis the Examiners and Head of School shall act in accordance with Instructions 31-34.

Support for postgraduate research degree candidates with disabilities

52. Postgraduate research degree candidates with disabilities, and their supervisors and examiners, can access a wide range of support from the Disability Team in the Dean of Students Office (www.uea.ac.uk/services/students/disability).

Information on any reasonable adjustments should be made available to the examiners following discussions between the candidate, the supervisory team and the University's

Disability Team. 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. These arrangements ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to the oral examination so that postgraduate research candidates with disabilities are not disadvantaged by the process for examination. Examiners should continue to make their recommendations based on satisfactory evidence of fulfilment of the criteria set out in Instructions 28-30.

Extenuating Circumstances

53. The candidate and / or the Primary Supervisor may bring to the attention of the examiners any factors which may have affected the conduct of the research project, the preparation of the thesis or performance in the oral examination and which may assist the examiners in the performance of their duties. This information should be communicated via completion of the relevant section of the Degree Entry form, which will be sent to the examiners with the copy of the thesis where relevant.

However, the examiners should make their recommendations based on satisfactory evidence of fulfilment of the criteria set out in Instructions 28-30 and are therefore limited in the degree to which extenuating circumstances may be compensated for.

54. In exceptional circumstances where there is satisfactory evidence that the candidate would be unable to attend an oral examination or where attendance at the oral examination would involve great hardship to the candidate or where unforeseen circumstances prevent a scheduled oral examination from taking place and to reschedule the oral examination is not practicable, the requirement for an oral examination may be waived or a written examination substituted for the oral examination. In such circumstances the Internal Examiner should contact the Postgraduate Research Service as soon as the circumstances present themselves to seek advice.

Where the requirement for an oral examination of the thesis is to be waived or a written examination substituted for an oral examination, the Head of the candidate's School of Study shall seek the approval of the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes.

Approved:	HDC	1 March 1972
Amended:	HDC	14 October 1983
Amended:	HDC	8 May 1985
Amended:	HDC	17 February 1988
Amended:	HDC	25 May 1988
Amended:	LTQC	24 May 1999
Amended:	LTQC	8 January 2001
Amended:	GSPG	14 February 2006
Amended:	PGRO	August 2012
Amended:	LTC	June 2014

Rules for the Form of Theses and Dissertations

A small change is required to paragraph 9 to reflect the sending out of the thesis to examiners in electronic format as the default position.

Current paragraph 9

(9) A candidate may initially submit a thesis in a secure soft binding sufficiently durable for the assessment process. No Pass List will be issued after successful assessment until a previously soft-bound thesis has been resubmitted in the form outlined in rules (1) to (6) above and the candidate has confirmed that no changes, other than any required by the examiners, have been made to any part of the thesis from that previously assessed. The Pass List will not be issued until both the print version and electronic version of the thesis have been deposited with the University.

Proposed new paragraph 9

(9) A candidate shall initially submit a thesis in electronic format and in a secure soft binding sufficiently durable for the assessment process. No Pass List will be issued after successful assessment until the thesis has been resubmitted in the form outlined in rules (1) to (6) above and the candidate has confirmed that no changes, other than any required by the examiners, have been made to any part of the thesis from that previously assessed. The Pass List will not be issued until both the print version and electronic version of the thesis have been deposited with the University.

No changes are required to the *Rules for the Submission of Work for Higher Degrees* or to *Consultation and Borrowing of Theses*.

Report of the

Working Group to Review the Instructions to Examiners (PhD) – April 2014

To:

The Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes, University of East Anglia

The Instructions for Examiners Working Group (IEWG):

Dr Yann Lebeau (SSF), Chair ; Dr Kenda Crozier (FMH) ; Dr Douglas Yu (SCI) ; Prof Peter Kitson (HUM); Dr Vivien Easson (PGR Service); Prof Trevor Wang (NBI)

Secretariat : Ms Wendy Forsdick (PGR Service)

Remit (from Terms of Reference):

The main duties of the IEWG are to review and comment on the currency of the fitness for purpose of the University's Instructions for Examiners (PhD) and to recommend changes and adjustments. The recommendations should be included in the final report which should specifically address the following issues:-

1. Should the University require Examiners to submit independent reports on the thesis in advance of the oral examination and should the candidate have access to these as well as the final report?
2. If independent reports are submitted in advance of the oral examination would a joint report on the viva with an agreed recommendation be acceptable? The exception being where the examiners disagree.
3. Is the role of the Internal Assessor necessary or in the interests of consistency should this function not be fulfilled by the School PGR Director or their delegate if they are conflicted?
4. Under what circumstances should an Independent Chair and/or supervisor be present during the oral examination and should they provide a separate report on the conduct of the viva?
5. Should the University make provision for an examiner to participate in the oral examination via an audio-visual link?
6. How much variation should the University permit in the form of the thesis submitted for examinations purposes – for instance should we continue to specify that two soft bound copies of the thesis should be submitted or could we permit the distribution of electronic versions of the thesis to examiners?
7. Is the range of recommendations currently available to examiners at the conclusion of the oral examination sufficient? For instance the Working Group may wish to consider the timescales permitted for major and minor revisions and for resubmission and if the Examiners can or should be able to exercise some discretion in setting these.
8. Is it useful to examiners to have the option of a second oral examination on a first submission or should these circumstances be dealt with by resubmission? The requirement for a second oral examination on a first submission may be sufficiently infrequent for it to be dealt with via a concessionary route; for example if the oral examination needs to be halted on medical grounds.

Process:

The IEWG met on Wednesday 12 March and on Friday 21 March, 2014 to 1) exchange views on current UEA instructions for PhD examiners and their fitness for purpose across subjects, and 2) agree on recommendations of changes and adjustments on the points specified in the Terms of Reference.

Documents consulted:

UEA:

Working Group to Review of the Instructions for Examiners (PhD) – 2014 . Terms of Reference

Research Degrees: The Code of Practice - 2013-14

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy Instructions to Examiners and Board of Schools

Guidance Note on the definition of Category 'A' and Staff Candidates

PhD Instructions to Examiners

Research Degree Policy Documents:

Section 8: Code of Practice for the External Examiners' System for Research awards at UEA

Section 9 - The Role of the Internal Adviser

Others:

QAA (2011) UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B11: Research degrees.

Lancaster University. Examination of Research Degrees

University of Exeter. Code of Good Practice: Boards of Examiners for Degrees by Research

University of Leeds. Guide for Research Degree Internal Examiners 2013-2014

University of Leeds. Policy on the use of Video Conferencing or Skype (or equivalent) for a viva

University of York. Policy on the audio-recording of oral examinations for the degrees of MA or MSc by Research, MPhil, PhD and EngD

Recommendations:

1. Examiners' preliminary independent report.

The IEWG **recommends that two independent reports be submitted by the examiners before the viva**. The group considers this to be a quality assurance procedure so those preliminary reports should be produced on a standard form returned to the PGR Service at least five working days before the viva. These reports should not be routinely made available to candidates or supervisory teams but examiners should be informed that they will be available to candidates on submission of a data protection request and/or in the event of an appeal or complaint. The IEWG also recommends that that these independent reports include a **provisional recommendation** with the same options as are available in the final report plus one allowing examiners to suspend their judgement until after the oral examination.

2 . Joint report on the viva

The IEWG **recommends that a joint report with an agreed recommendation be submitted by the examiners**, except where the examiners disagree on the outcome. Examiners should fill in the report form and communicate the outcome to the candidate directly after the viva. A full list of amendments agreed by both examiners should then be sent to the PGR Service as soon as possible, and no later than ten working days after the viva.

The joint report should include:

- A general comment on the thesis
- A report on the oral examination
- A clear recommendation

If the decision is that the degree should be awarded subject to corrections, the internal examiner should notify the PGR Service of the corrections required within ten working days (with instruction that the thesis should be returned corrected within six months) and the PGR Service should then communicate these to the candidate and supervisory team.

If the examiners' decision is that the thesis should be revised and resubmitted, after a further period of not less than six and not more than twelve months, the examiners should provide the PGR Service with advice in writing concerning the points which should be addressed when revising the thesis and the PGR Service should then communicate these to the candidate and supervisory team.

3. Internal Adviser

The IEWG notes that the appointment of an adviser to support the examiners is not standard practice across the sector and **recommends that any advice required by the examiners before the viva (in addition to the instructions) be provided by email/telephone by the School/Institute Director of Postgraduate Research (PGR director)** (or a senior member of staff nominated by the PGR director and independent of the examination process). If necessary (the external examiner is new to the process), a short briefing to familiarise the external examiner with the requirements of the system in UEA may be organised just before the viva by the PGR director or nominated colleague.

4 Independent chair and supervisor present at viva?

The IEWG notes that the use of a non-examining independent Chair is a more common practice in the sector than the use of an adviser. However, the group does not consider the appointment of a Chair as routinely necessary. The IEWG therefore **recommends the appointment of an independent Chair (from the University but with no direct professional relationship with either the supervisor or the candidate) where the two examiners are external to the university and/or where an external examiner is not present in the room (video link).**

The Chair may be asked to complete a brief report after the oral examination to confirm s/he is satisfied that the examination was conducted in accordance with the University's examination regulations.

The group also considers a Chair to be potentially useful when an internal examiner has had no previous experience in examining PGR theses but felt further information was needed on the cost implications of such measure before a decision was made.

When an independent Chair has not been nominated, the internal examiner should be briefed by the School/Institute Director of Postgraduate Research on how to act as convenor of the examination.

Regarding the **presence of the supervisor in the viva**, the IEWG noted that several universities were allowing the presence of a supervisor during the viva if requested by the candidate, but found no sufficient justification for allowing this. The group therefore recommends that the current arrangement is maintained to preserve the integrity of the examination process. The group considers that the production of pre-viva reports and the presence of a non-examining chair (in some cases) are offering sufficient guarantee of transparency and fairness in the examination.

The supervisor may however attend at the end, when the examiners report to the candidate their decision about the outcome of the examination, but only at the candidate's request.

5. Oral examination via an audio-visual link

The IEWG recommends that the university maintains the principle of the viva as a face to face examination held in the university premises, but that it allows more flexibility in situations where potential external examiners are unavailable to travel to UEA. The group notes that universities such as Leeds and Exeter have clear instructions for running vivas on **Skype or other video conferencing techniques**, and that these could provide templates in setting the regulations at UEA. **The group recommends that this arrangement be allowed in exceptional circumstances and only if the candidate gave their explicit, written agreement.** The group also recommends that the arrangement be approved by the relevant Faculty Associate Dean (PGR) and that these vivas take place in a dedicated room set aside by the university.

6. Thesis submission

The IEWG **recommends that an electronic copy of the thesis be sent to examiners by default**, along with a soft bound copy if they request so in their response to the University's invitation to act as examiner. It is anticipated that examiners will frequently request the electronic copy only and the group suggests that candidates be asked to submit just one soft-bound and one electronic copy (or two soft-bound plus one electronic if two external examiners are involved). A further soft-bound copy of the thesis should be brought by the candidate to the oral examination for reference during the discussion.

7. Range of recommendations

The IEWG unanimously considers the current range of options available to examiners in UEA (nine options in total) to be too large. The documentation available from other universities reveals very different labelling and timescales but generally speaking, no more than six options are available.

The group recommends the following options to be adopted (with possible refinement if necessary):

1. **Pass (no corrections)**: The candidate can be advised to submit their final thesis in hard bound and electronic format (after correcting any very minor grammatical errors signalled by the examiners).

2. **Pass subject to corrections** (to be corrected within 6 months of the viva, reviewed by internal examiner). Amendments under this category may include a) the correction of typographical, spelling and grammatical errors, b) limited revisions of material in the thesis (omissions in literature review, improvements which do not alter the conclusions or conceptual framework of the thesis), c) re-writing paragraphs or a chapter.

3. **Referral for resubmission** within 12 months (amendments reviewed by both examiners). Resubmission should be required when substantial changes are required. The option of an MPhil should be available at first submission if the candidate does not want to resubmit.

4. **MPhil award** (with or without corrections)

5. **Fail**

The group does not consider it helpful to allow examiners to exercise discretion in setting timescales.

8. Second oral examination on a first submission

Considering that there would only be rare cases where a second examination be required, **the IEWG recommends that this be approved by the Director of Research Degree Programmes.**