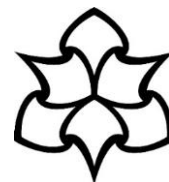


Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees

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New for 2020-2021

The Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees are reviewed annually. Changes may be made throughout the year, so please refer to the [Graduate School website](#) for the latest version of this document.

This document is owned and updated by the Manchester Metropolitan University Graduate School on behalf of Academic Board. Queries should be directed to the Graduate School (gsresearchdegrees@mmu.ac.uk).

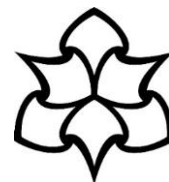
Introduction

Manchester Metropolitan University produces a suite of documents that outline the formal regulations and procedures for postgraduate research degrees.

The **Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees** provide the operational detail to support students and staff with the examination and assessment processes.

This document should be read alongside the regulations and the other supporting documentation available on the [Graduate School webpages](#).

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Implementation Date	October 2020		
Amendments since approval	Details of Revision	Date of Revision	Revisions approved by:
3.2 Internal Examiners	Clarification on who is eligible to be an internal examiner.	21/01/2021	Research Degrees Committee



1. Examination procedures

1.1 Master's by Research

The examination for the Master's degree (by Research) shall have only one formal stage:

- i) The submission and assessment of the thesis.

Where necessary, examiners can request an oral examination or other appropriate assessment in support of this assessment.

1.2 MPhil, PhD and Professional Doctorate

For, PhD, MPhil and Part B of the Professional Doctorate, the examination shall have two formal stages:

- i) The submission and preliminary assessment of the thesis
- ii) Its subsequent defence by oral examination, or approved alternative examination, as provided in the [Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees for the programme](#).

1.3 General arrangements

All teaching, supervision and examination of research degrees will be in the English language.

The University Research Degrees Committee, acting as the Assessment Board for research degrees, shall establish general procedures for the conduct of examinations and shall consider and approve award recommendations.

Academic staff, including supervisors, advisors and other research degree students registered with the University may, with the explicit consent of the student to be examined, attend the oral examination as non-examining observers. Any individuals attending in this capacity must take no part in the oral examination, and provide written agreement in advance to maintain confidentiality of the subject matter of the thesis and the outcome.

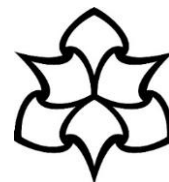
The examiners shall make recommendations according to the [Regulations](#).

1.4 Assessing students with disabilities

Where students with disabilities and other special educational needs require alternative assessment arrangements, they must inform their Principal Supervisor and must ensure that they have a Personal Learning Plan in place so that reasonable adjustments can be made for their examination. The student's Personal Learning Plan will be drawn up by a [member of the Disability Support Team](#) (a Disability Advisor), and will offer recommendations for support that could be put in place. The Graduate School should be kept informed about any requirements in the Personal Learning Plan that will require alternative assessment arrangements so that this information can be relayed to the examination team.

1.5 Other circumstances

A student should inform the Graduate School in writing of any exceptional factors or mitigating circumstances that should be brought to the attention of the examiners at the same time as the thesis is submitted.



2. Nomination and appointment of examiners

The examination team shall be able to assess the student's conduct of research and be able to assess whether the [degree outcomes](#) have been met along with the contribution to knowledge. The examination team shall normally comprise an external examiner and an independent internal examiner. The examination will be chaired by an independent chair. At least one of the examiners shall have experience of examining UK research degree students at the level of the award or higher. The student shall take no part in the appointment of examiners and shall not have contact with the examiner(s) between their appointment and the oral examination. All persons who act as an examiner shall declare any potential conflicts of interest prior to appointment.

The examination team shall be proposed by the Principal Supervisor before being approved by the University Research Degrees Committee or delegated authority. The examiners shall be appointed and approved at least three months before the expected date of thesis submission.

Principal Supervisors propose examination teams using the Application for Approval of Examiners form in SkillsForge. This form is submitted to the Graduate School for approval. The proposed examination team will be considered to ensure that

- the examiners are experienced in research in the general area of the thesis
- where practicable, have specialist experience in the topic to be examined, and
- ensure that the examining team is independent from the student and the supervisory team.

The Principal Supervisor and the examiners will be notified when the examining team has been approved.

Examinations shall not take place until the examiners have been approved.

In exceptional circumstances, the University Research Degrees Committee or delegated authority may act directly to appoint a new examination team and arrange the examination of a student.

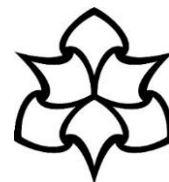
Where an examination cannot be held within six months of thesis submission, the University Research Degrees Committee or delegated authority may rescind the appointment of all or any of the examiners and appoint new examiners as appropriate.

3. The role of examiners

3.1 Independent Chair

For research degree students who are required to undertake an oral examination, an independent chair shall be appointed with previous research degree examining experience. The independent chair will have completed the 'Chairing a Viva' training within 3 years of the date of the viva. The chair shall be responsible for ensuring the associated administration of the oral examination is completed satisfactorily, including confirmation of the recommended outcome of the examination. The chair will not examine the thesis but may, on request, have a copy made available to them.

A chair is not required for Master's degree (by Research) as there is no oral examination. If an oral examination is specifically requested by the examiners following a resubmission, a chair will be required.



3.2 Internal Examiners

The internal examiner shall be a current member of academic staff of the University. The internal examiner should ensure that they have up to date knowledge of Manchester Met's [Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees](#). An internal examiner with limited or no research degree examination experience may be approved if all of following circumstances apply:

- (a) they have experience of supervising a research student to successful completion at the level of the award or higher for at least 50% of the student's registration period;
- (b) the Principal Supervisor has provided a supporting statement to the Approval of Examiners form
- (c) the nomination is approved as appropriate by the Head of Faculty Research Degrees;
- (d) They have attended the university workshop (or refresher workshop) on supervising and examining research students within 3 years of the date of the viva.

An independent internal examiner shall be defined as an examiner who has not been a supervisor or advisor to the student, but must have relevant knowledge of the thesis subject area. An internal examiner should not have been involved as a panel member or Chair in the Final Formal Review and in no more than one formal progression milestone.

Independence implies independence in all respects relating to both the specific programme of work and any close personal relationships with any member of the supervisory team or student. A professional working relationship does not exclude a person from acting as internal examiner.

3.3 External Examiners

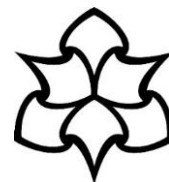
External examiners shall be independent of Manchester Metropolitan University and of any collaborative partner organisation where the Manchester Metropolitan University research degree is being undertaken, and shall not have acted as the student's supervisor or advisor at any point during their research degree(s). The external examiner(s) ensures that the thesis is of a standard comparable with the sector standards.

The external examiner shall not be a current member of staff of Manchester Metropolitan University. Former members of the University shall not be an examiner until at least five years have elapsed since they left their post. The external examiner must declare any potential conflict of interest and must not have worked collaboratively with members of the supervisory team in the last five years, or the student at any point of their research degree. The University Research Degrees Committee or delegated authority shall not normally appoint an external examiner more than twice in three years to examine a research degree. The external examiner must have examined at or above the level of award in the UK before. If this is not the case, the Principal Supervisor must upload a supporting statement to the Approval of Examiners form to outline the reasons for their nomination and ensure other examiners have substantial examination experience.

3.4 Other considerations

A student who is also a member of University staff will have two external examiners, to ensure the integrity of the examination process. This includes students on contracts which are explicitly part PhD and part employment, such as GTA5/GRA5 and students who have an employment contract due to the nature of their funding (e.g. DTA students).

Students who are appointed to a substantive staff role at the University during any stage of the research programme up to the submission of thesis will require two external examiners. What is



considered substantive will depend on the nature of the role. The Principal Supervisor should seek advice from the Graduate School.

If a student is appointed to a staff position after thesis submission, they should discuss with their Principal Supervisor, who will seek advice from the Graduate School.

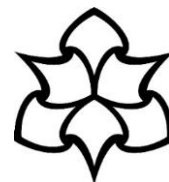
A student who holds a PhD contract for part-time teaching will be exempt from this regulation. Students who hold other contract types should discuss their employment status with their Principal Supervisor. Principal Supervisors will seek advice from the Graduate School.

At all times ensuring the independence of the examination process will be the primary consideration in determining the appointment of external examiners. Advice should be sought from the Graduate School if there is any uncertainty over whether two external examiners are required.

3.5 Timeline

The normal timeframe following the submission of the thesis is as follows:

Action	Timeframe (cumulative)
Student - submits the thesis to the Graduate School - completes and signs the declaration form	By the thesis submission deadline date
E-thesis is submitted through Turnitin. and the originality report is generated and sent to the Principal Supervisor for checking. The Principal Supervisor checks the originality report and signs the declaration form. The thesis is forwarded to the examiners. <u>If there is an oral examination:</u> The Principal Supervisor liaises with the independent chair, the examiners and the student to agree a mutually convenient location, date and time for the oral examination.	2 – 4 working weeks
Examiners are given 6 weeks to read the thesis and submit their examiners' report form.	6 working weeks
Oral examination takes place (if applicable).	In total, this takes place approximately 12 working weeks from the date of the thesis submission.
The recommended outcome is presented to the Assessment Board.	Assessment boards are held on a regular basis.
The written outcome of the oral examination is confirmed (where this applies).	Within five working days of the Assessment Board



4. Preliminary assessment of the thesis

The thesis is sent to the examiners for examination.

The thesis is read and given a preliminary assessment* by each of the examiners, separately, who then submit independent reports to the Graduate School.

In completing the reports, each examiner must consider whether the thesis provisionally satisfies the requirements of the degree (including confirmation that the word limit has not been exceeded), meets the [outcomes](#) for the degree and, where possible, make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of the oral examination.

***NB:** Master's by Research students do not normally have an oral examination (unless this is requested by the examiners), so their examination outcome is determined by the assessment process noted in the Examination Outcome section of this document.

The examiners are given six weeks to complete their preliminary assessment of the thesis and submit their reports. During this period, the Principal Supervisor will liaise with the student and the examination team to agree a mutually convenient date, time and location for the oral examination to take place.

Once a date has been agreed, it is the Principal Supervisor's responsibility to organise the examination and complete the details on the Notification of Arrangements for Oral Examination form. An email notification is sent to the student's Manchester Met student email address and examination team in advance of the examination taking place to confirm the information. In the email notification the student will be asked to complete a consent form, which indicates whether they are willing to consent to the attendance of observers at their oral examination. These may include supervisors, advisors, other academic staff or research students registered with the University. It is entirely for the student to decide whether or not they wish observers to be present and, if they do give permission, who they want to attend. It is advisable that they permit a member of their supervisory team to attend as they can take notes on the student's behalf, however, it is not compulsory. Only students and staff from Manchester Metropolitan University (or exceptionally an external supervisor/advisor) will be permitted to attend a research student's oral examination.

5. The oral examination (viva voce)²

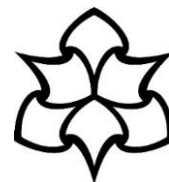
The examiners and Independent Chair will have a private pre-examination meeting prior to the oral examination to set the agenda. The research student will then be invited into the examination room by the examiners.

If the examination is longer than two hours, the student will be entitled to a short break.

At the conclusion of the examination, the research student (along with any observers) will be asked to leave the room, and the examiners will discuss the outcome. This may take between 30 minutes to one hour. Following their deliberations, the student will be invited back into the room and informed of the recommended outcome.

NB All examination outcomes are provisional until confirmed by the Assessment Board.

² If the oral examination is being conducted via Video Conferencing, refer to the Viva by Video-Conference Policy in addition to this section.



6. Examination outcomes

After examining the thesis presented by a candidate and considering the results of the oral examination, the examiners shall make a recommendation as outlined in the [regulations for the degree under examination](#). Where the degree regulations specify outcomes, the timescales for these outcomes are set out below:

- i) The student **be awarded the degree with no revisions to the thesis being required**.
- ii) The student **be awarded the degree subject to minor revisions** being made to the thesis. The revisions should be capable of being completed by the student within **two months from receipt of the written outcome**.
- iii) The student **be awarded the degree subject to major revisions** being made to the thesis. The revisions should be capable of being completed by the student within **six months from receipt of the written outcome**. The examination team will provide the detail of the required revisions at the end of the oral examination. Both examiners will check the amendments.
- iv) The student **be referred in the first examination** and be permitted to revise and re-submit the thesis for re-examination for the degree as provided for in the Regulations. A resubmission may include the substantial restructuring of the thesis and should be capable of being completed within 12 months. Examiners can recommend either:
 - a. Resubmission without oral examination
 - b) Resubmission with oral examination.
- v) The student **be awarded a lower qualification**. This can be made subject to minor or major revision. The revisions should be capable of being completed by the student within **the timescales outlined above**.
- vi) No award be made to the student and no resubmission be permitted.

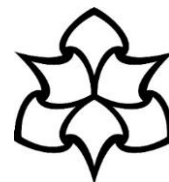
Outcomes of the examination are recorded on the outcome form in SkillsForge and should include all required revisions (in detail) where this is the recommended outcome. This form is completed and signed by the chair and examiners within five working days of the oral examination. The recommended outcome and details of the revisions will be reviewed and approved by the Assessment Board prior to them being sent to the student. The Assessment Board may raise queries with the Independent Chair. The oral examination process is then complete.

7. Assessment Board

7.1 Role of the Assessment Board

For the purpose of satisfying the provisions of this guidance, the Faculty Research Degrees Committee acts as the Assessment Board for research degrees. Their role is to ensure:

- The outcomes that the examiners have recommended reflect the detail provided in the outcome report, with reference to the regulations.
- that the (doctoral) outcomes are being adhered to from a Governance and Quality Assurance perspective in relation to awards of the university



In all cases, having considered the recommendation, the Assessment Board shall submit its final recommendations for an award on behalf of the Academic Board for University; who will provide final approval.

7.2 Disagreement between examiners

If there is a disagreement among the examiners such that they are unable to agree on a recommendation, the Assessment Board shall appoint an additional examiner. The role of the additional examiner shall be to review the thesis and the original examiners' reports, and recommend an examination outcome. In reaching a decision, the University Research Degrees Committee acting as the Assessment Board shall consider the reports of all examiners.

8. Re-assessment and resubmission

8.1 Re-assessment

In the case of minor revisions or major revisions being required, the corrected thesis should be submitted directly to the nominated examiner(s) for approval, and the Graduate School should be copied into the email.

The original examiners will normally undertake the re-examination. In the event of non-availability, new examiners will be appointed. The University Research Degrees Committee, or delegated authority, may require that an additional external examiner be appointed for the re-examination.

Students who fail to resubmit their amendments by the date specified may be deemed to have failed their degree and may be withdrawn by the University.

8.2 Resubmission

The student shall be required to revise and re-submit for re-examination and approval within a period of time specified by the University Research Degrees Committee or delegated authority, as indicated in the regulations for the degree being examined.

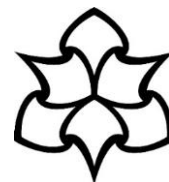
Students will be required to pay a revise and resubmission fee. Please see [the Regulations for the Payment of University Fees](#) for full details.

The original examiners will normally undertake the re-examination. In the event of non-availability, new examiners shall be appointed by completing a new Approval of Examiners form. The University Research Degrees Committee or delegated authority may require that an additional external examiner be appointed for the re-examination.

The research student will be required to submit their thesis following the same formatting and submission requirements as with their initial thesis, and must complete and sign a resubmission form.

The student is also required to provide a separate document, clearly indicating the changes they have made and highlighting where exactly in their thesis the changes can be located (i.e. page number/chapter) for the examiners. They may be required to undertake a second oral examination as part of the resubmission process if requested by the examiners.

As with the initial thesis for examination, the electronic thesis will be uploaded to Turnitin. A copy of the originality report, e-thesis and resubmission form will be sent to the Principal Supervisor who will check the originality report against the thesis before signing off the resubmission form to

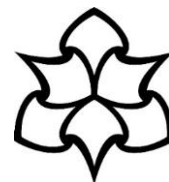


confirm that there is no plagiarism or academic misconduct. Following receipt of the resubmission form and confirmation of the above from the Principal Supervisor, the thesis can go forward for re-examination. As with the initial examination, the examiners will have six weeks in which to re-examine the thesis and submit their report.

The outcomes from resubmission are specified in the degree regulations for the degree being examined.

9. Complaints and Appeals

A student may submit a complaint or appeal and request a review of an examination decision (for further information see the [Student Complaints Procedure and University Academic Appeals Procedure](#)).



Appendix 1: Guidance on fees and expenses for external examiners

These notes of guidance supplement Manchester Metropolitan University's [Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees](#) and [Financial and Legal Services policies](#).

Useful contacts

- The Graduate School, gsresearchdegrees@mmu.ac.uk, +44(0)161 247 3623

Payment of examining fees and expenses

Manchester Metropolitan University postgraduate research degrees external examiners will be paid an examining fee and are entitled to claim for expenses (travel and subsistence) incurred in carrying out official University business. Please note that the examining fee is a one-off payment to include not only the initial examination but also any subsequent outcome (resubmission/revisions).

In order to arrange payment, examiners will be emailed a link to the expenses claim form (FIN1C - Occasional Worker Form) when the thesis is sent.

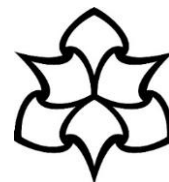
Examining fees and expenses claims will be made following the oral examination or, in the case of a Master's (by Research) student, after the examination of the thesis. All expense claim forms must quote the name of the student to whom the claim relates. Forms should be submitted, along with original receipts, as soon as possible after the oral examination (or examination of a thesis in the case of a Master's (by Research) student) to the Graduate School for processing:

The Graduate School
Manchester Metropolitan University
Business School, 2.01
Oxford Road
Manchester
M15 6BH
gsresearchdegrees@mmu.ac.uk

Examiners should retain copies of claim forms and receipts in case of loss when posted.

Examining fees

Programme	Fee
Master's (by Research)	£100
Master of Philosophy (MPhil)	£100
Doctor of Philosophy	£150
Professional Doctorate	£150



Travel and subsistence

Expense	Rate
Higher rate car mileage (first 50 miles of each journey) up to a maximum of 10,000 miles in the tax year	45p per mile
Lower rate car mileage (after first 50 miles of each journey, or for all miles once 10,000 maximum miles at higher rate reached)	25p per mile
Motorcycle – any distance	24p per mile
Bicycle	20p per mile
Rail fare	Standard Class only
Bed and Breakfast hotel accommodation	No fixed rate**
The following may be claimed as a contribution to the cost of subsistence:	
Under 5 hours	0
Breakfast (must leave home before 6am)	£5
5-10 hours (one meal rate)	£5
Over 10 hours (two meal rate)	£10.00
Late evening meal (must be working after 8pm)	£15

External examiners, wherever possible are asked to travel by Standard Class rail. However, should they choose not to do so, they will be reimbursed up to the Standard Class rate.

In all cases, claim forms **must** be supported by valid original receipts (photocopies will not be accepted). Please note that credit card, debit card or bank statements are not acceptable forms of receipt to support expenses claims; therefore, examiners should always request an official receipt.

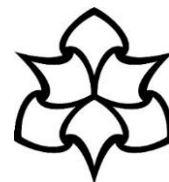
Ticket stubs or receipts must be attached to the claim form in support of any travel/subsistence expenses. Please note that some railway tickets are retained at the end of the journey by automatic barriers, so a receipt should always be requested at the point of purchase. If the ticket is booked online as an 'e-ticket', i.e. there are no separate physical travel tickets issued, then a copy of the booking web page should be retained, printed, and attached to any claim being made prior to sending it to the Graduate School.

**** Overnight accommodation**

Please note that if overnight accommodation is required, this must be agreed in advance of making a reservation by contacting the Graduate School for formal approval from the Faculty budget holder.

Payments

Fees and expenses will normally be paid directly into the examiner's bank account. The examining fee will be processed through the Payroll system and will be assessed for any income tax and National Insurance deductions. The net pay, after any statutory deductions, will be paid directly into the bank account and a payslip will be sent to the examiner's home address.



If a claim is received in the Graduate School by the 11th of each month, prior to the payroll cut-off date, payment should be made at the end of the same month.

Queries

Queries regarding claiming fees/expenses should be directed to the Graduate School gsresearchdegrees@mmu.ac.uk.