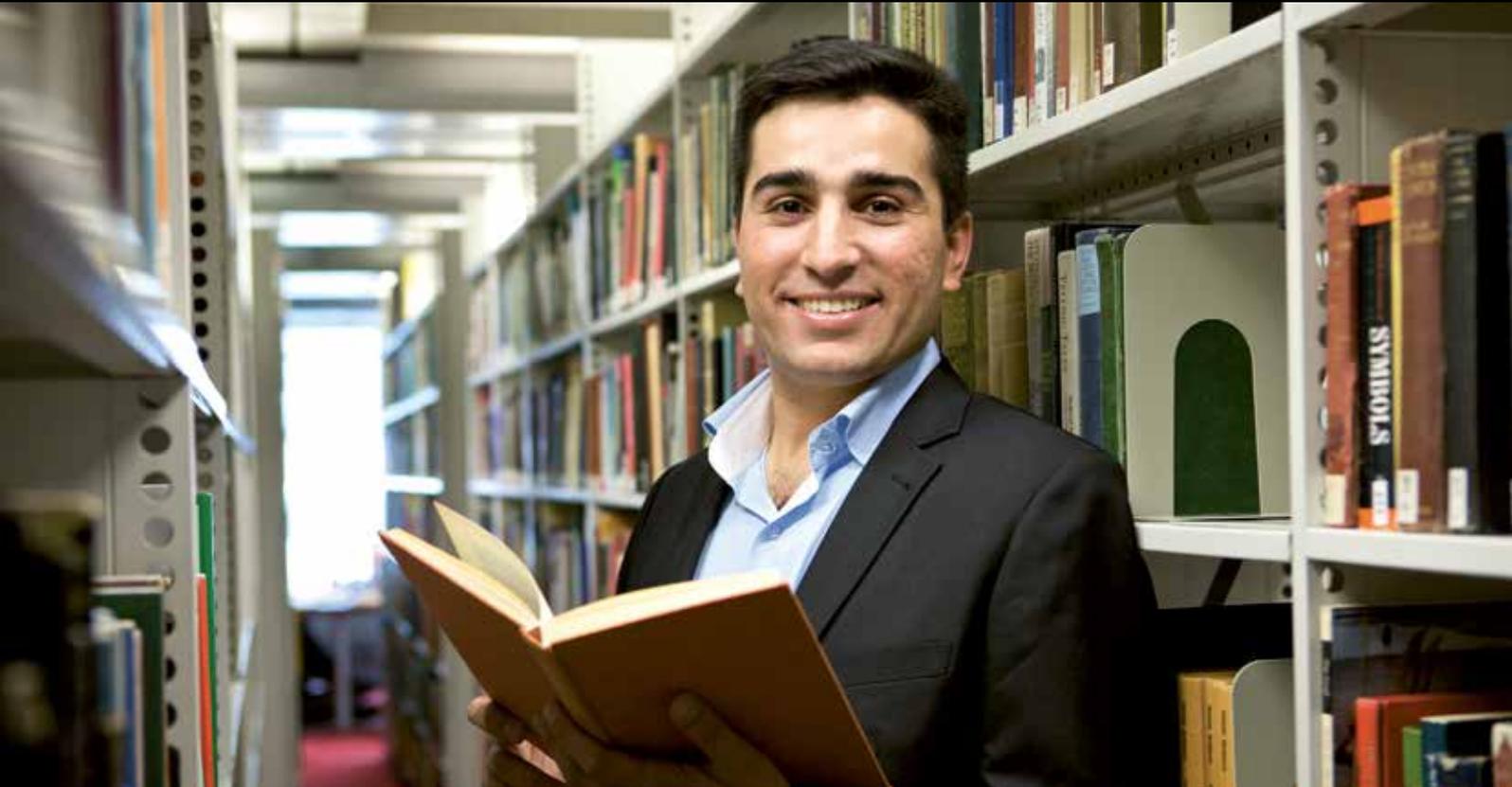




Guidance for Research Degree Examiners



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Pre-viva

Receiving the thesis and completing the pre-viva report

The Graduate School Office will send out research degree students' theses to the examining team by post as soon as the examining team has been formally approved by the Graduate Dean.

First submissions and resubmissions

Each examiner will be sent:

- a soft-bound copy of the research student's thesis
- details of the other members of the examining team and their contact details
- a copy of the examiners' joint report template
- a form and guidance for claiming fees and expenses (external examiners only)

Examiners will be notified by email when the thesis has been issued.

Practice-based degrees

Where the research student is registered for a practice-based degree there is also a requirement to review and assess the practical component of the submission.

Where this cannot be sent by post (i.e., in cases where the practical component relates to an exhibition or visual display) then the research student's department will be responsible for making the assessment arrangements and confirming this to all members of the examining team.

Completing the pre-viva report

Each examiner is required to complete an independent assessment of the thesis before the viva exam takes place which should:

- consider whether the research student has demonstrated a broad knowledge and understanding of their discipline and its associated research techniques
- assess whether the research student has applied the techniques, as appropriate, to their thesis
- summarise the main argument of the thesis
- comment on its strengths and weaknesses
- highlight any particular issues that the examiners would like to draw out in the viva exam

Where the practical element of a practice-based degree is being considered, the pre-viva report should consider both the thesis and the practical element.

Particular concerns/queries that examiners would like to raise before the viva exam takes place should be raised via the Graduate School Office.

Returning the pre-viva report

Examiners should return their signed pre-viva reports to the Graduate School Office by email before the viva takes place.



Pre-viva

Arranging the viva exam

The internal examiner (or chair where two external examiners are appointed) is responsible for arranging the viva exam including agreeing a suitable time with all parties, booking a suitable room/equipment and making any specific arrangements relating to the assessment of the practical element of a practice-based degree submission

Accommodation

Accommodation for external examiners can be booked at College Court:

College Court
Knighton Road
Leicester
LE2 3UF

Tel: 0116 244 9669

Email: info@collegecourt.co.uk

Booking travel for external examiners

Examiners who travel to the University for a viva exam using their own car can claim mileage at the approved rate (see page 13 for further details).

Where departments wish to book flights, train or hire cars for external examiners they should do so directly and forward the invoice to the Graduate School Office for payment.

Off-campus viva exams

In **very exceptional circumstances** departments may need to request that viva exams are held off-campus.

Exceptional circumstances include instances where international research students are unable to secure a visa to travel to the UK. Exceptional circumstances do not include instances such as inclement weather, illness by any member of the examining team, conflicting engagements, or financial issues.

Where an off-campus viva is being sought the request should be made to the Graduate School Office with as much advance notice as possible and departments are asked to note that very specific criteria apply.

Expenses

In addition to the fee paid to examiners, the Graduate School Office can pay reasonable expenses for travel/accommodation, normally up to £250.00.

Where total expenses exceed £250.00 the balance will need to be paid by the research student's department.



The viva exam

Exam conduct

The viva exam should be a positive experience for the research student and should be conducted in a fair, transparent, and professional manner. The research student should be put at their ease as far as possible during the exam.

Viva exam purpose and conduct

The purpose of the viva exam is to:

- demonstrate that the thesis is the research student's own work
- confirm that the research student understands what they have written and can defend it verbally
- investigate the research student's awareness of where their original work sits in relation to the wider research field
- establish whether the thesis is of a sufficiently high standard to merit the award of the degree for which it is submitted
- allow the research student to clarify and develop the written thesis in response to the examiners' questions

The research student should be put at their ease as far as possible during the examination.

If an examination chair is present they will be expected to write a short report on the conduct of the exam and this should be appended to the examiners' joint report paperwork.

Timing of the viva exam

Research degree viva voce exams must be held:

- within 3 months of examiners receiving the thesis
- at the University including, where appropriate, University Hospitals of Leicester sites

Attendees to the viva exam

Only the research student to be examined and the examining team (including a chair where one has been appointed) should be present during the viva exam.

Members of the research student's supervisory team may attend the viva exam as observers; however, the attendance of members of the supervisory team is at the discretion of the examining team and only with the prior permission of the research student.

The research student's first supervisor should normally be available at the time of the viva exam in case the examining team needs to contact them.



The viva exam

Examiner responsibilities

Internal examiners are responsible for:

- making all arrangements for the viva exam, including any subsequent re-viva if the student is referred for resubmission, and communicating these arrangements to the research student and the external examiner(s)
- notifying the Graduate School Office of the date and time at which the viva voce exam will take place
- ensuring that they are familiar with senate regulations specifically relating to available award descriptions and viva outcomes
- undertaking an assessment of the thesis in advance of the viva exam and completing an independent pre-viva report which must be submitted to the Graduate School Office at least one day before the viva takes place
- conducting the viva exam with the external examiner(s) and agreeing a joint decision with them
- advising the research student of the decision made by the examining team
- providing the research student with a verbal report (minor amendments) or written report (major amendments or referral for resubmission) on the amendments required by the examining team
- preparing a joint post-viva report with the external examiner(s) and submitting this to the Graduate School Office together with a copy of the written report on amendments required by the examining team
- assessing the amendments made by the research student and then confirming whether these have been completed satisfactorily (where minor or major amendments were specified)
- assessing the resubmitted thesis and, if needed, conducting a further viva exam if the examining team has decided that the research student should be referred for resubmission

External examiners are responsible for:

- undertaking an assessment of the thesis in advance of the viva exam and completing an independent pre-viva report which must be submitted to the Graduate School Office at least one day before the viva takes place
- conducting the viva exam with the internal examiner and agreeing a joint decision with them
- agreeing with the internal examiner the amendments that the student will be asked to make
- preparing a joint post-viva report with the internal examiner
- assessing the amendments made by the research student and then confirming whether these have been completed satisfactorily if the examining team comprises two external examiners (and either minor or major amendments were specified)
- assessing the resubmitted thesis and, if needed, conducting a further viva exam if the examining team has decided that the research student should be referred for resubmission

Examination chairs are responsible for:

- providing the examining team with administrative and/or procedural advice as needed
- submitting a chair's report detailing the conduct of the viva which should take place in a professional, fair and transparent manner
- ensuring that the examining team's joint decision on completion of the viva exam is consistent with approved award descriptions and viva outcomes

If the examining team comprises two external examiners and does not include an internal examiner, the chair of the viva will also be responsible for making all arrangements for the exam, including any subsequent re-viva if the research student is referred for resubmission, and communicating these arrangements to the research student and the external examiners.



The viva exam

Award descriptions

To award a research degree the examiners must be satisfied that the research student's thesis meets the relevant award description.

In all cases the thesis must be:

- the result of the research student's own work. Where parts of the thesis are the result of work undertaken by or with others this must be explicitly acknowledged in the thesis text and/or references
- the result of work undertaken by the research student over their period of registration – except where the thesis comprises inter-related published works or clinical case studies

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

To be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy the research student must satisfy the examiners by means of a thesis which makes a distinct and original contribution to knowledge in the discipline and contains work which is considered to be worthy of publication.

The research student must demonstrate a broad knowledge and understanding of their discipline and its associated research techniques and show that these have been successfully applied.

For research students registered for the degree of PhD and who will submit a practice based thesis, both components of the thesis must form a coherent whole which meets the requirements for the award of the degree.

Doctor of Medicine (MD)

To be awarded the degree of Doctor of Medicine the research student must satisfy the examiners either:

- by means of a thesis in any branch of medicine, surgery, or medical science, which has been specifically composed for the purpose, includes a review of the relevant background literature, contains a critical account of original laboratory-based or clinical research, carried out personally by the research student, that constitutes a significant contribution to knowledge, and contains work which is deemed worthy of publication

or

- by submission, with the approval of the MD Degree Board of Studies, of collected inter-related published works or clinical case studies embodying original work, of which a substantial proportion has been carried out personally by the research student, and constituting a significant contribution to knowledge

Doctor of Psychology (PsyD)

To be awarded the degree of Doctor of Psychology the research student must satisfy the examiners by means of a thesis which has been specifically composed for the purpose and constitutes a significant contribution to knowledge and includes:

- a critical literature review (the topic normally being relevant to the research question addressed in the main study)
- a self-contained research paper which reports on the main study and which conforms to the requirements of a peer-reviewed journal appropriate to the research topic
- a reflective critique of the work
- a service evaluation or audit report based on the student's area of practice or service setting.



• *The viva exam: Award descriptions continued*

Doctor of Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy)

To be awarded the degree of Doctor of Clinical Psychology the research student must successfully complete all taught elements to the appropriate standard described in the relevant programme specification and satisfy the examiners by means of a thesis which makes a distinct and original contribution to knowledge in the discipline and contains work which is considered to be worthy of publication.

The research student must demonstrate a broad knowledge and understanding of their discipline and its associated research techniques and show that these have been successfully applied.

Doctor of Education (EdD)

To be awarded the degree of Doctor of Education the research student must successfully complete all taught elements to the appropriate standard described in the relevant programme specification and satisfy the examiners by means of a thesis which makes a distinct and original contribution to knowledge in the discipline and contains work which is considered to be worthy of publication.

The research student must demonstrate a broad knowledge and understanding of their discipline and its associated research techniques and show that these have been successfully applied.

Doctor of Engineering (EngD)

To be awarded the degree of Doctor of Engineering the research student must successfully complete all taught elements to the appropriate standard described in the relevant programme specification and satisfy the examiners by means of a thesis which makes a distinct and original contribution to knowledge in the discipline and contains work which is considered to be worthy of publication.

The research student must demonstrate a broad knowledge and understanding of their discipline and its associated research techniques and show that these have been successfully applied.

Doctor of Social Sciences (DSocSci)

To be awarded the degree of Doctor of Social Science the research student must successfully complete all taught elements to the appropriate standard described in the relevant programme specification and satisfy the examiners by means of a thesis which makes a distinct and original contribution to knowledge in the discipline and contains work which is considered to be worthy of publication.

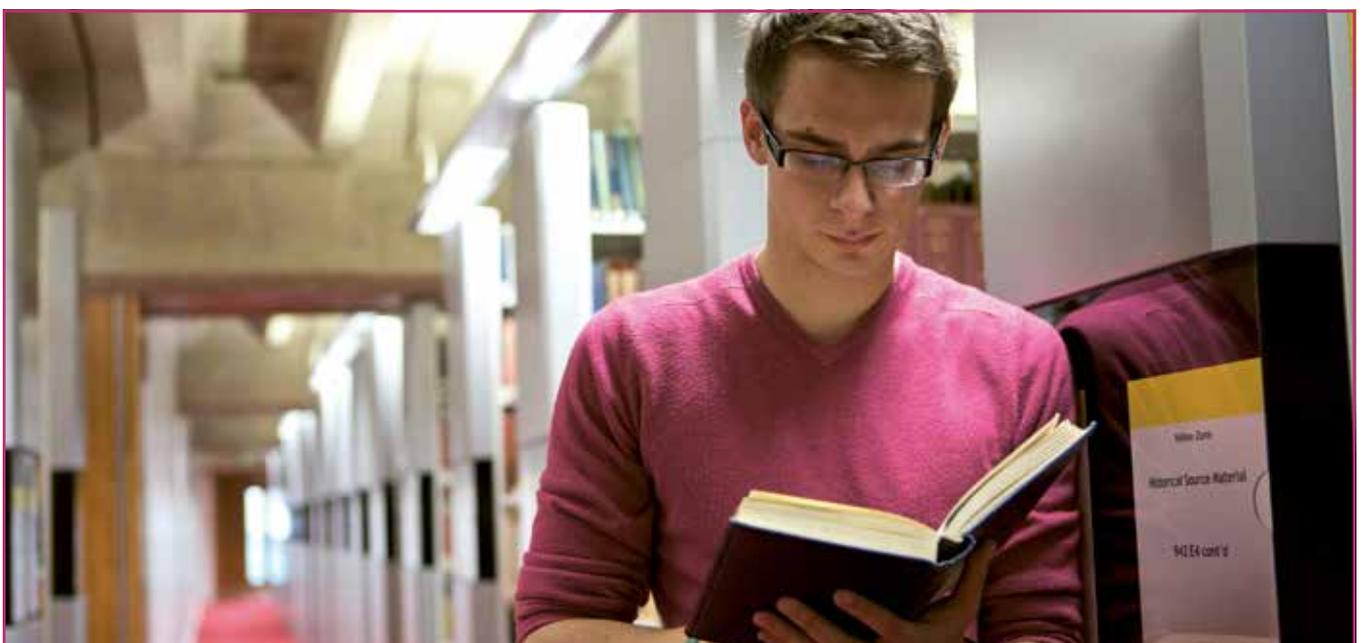
The research student must demonstrate a broad knowledge and understanding of their discipline and its associated research techniques and show that these have been successfully applied.

Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

To be awarded the degree of Master of Philosophy the research student must satisfy the examiners by means of a thesis which demonstrates a satisfactory record of research, a broad knowledge and understanding of the field of study and associated research techniques, and shows that these have been successfully applied.

The thesis must present evidence of a critical survey of knowledge in the discipline but does not need to be a distinct and original contribution to knowledge of their discipline or to be of publishable quality.

For research students registered for the degree of MPhil and who will submit a practice based thesis, both components of the thesis must form a coherent whole which meets the requirements for the award of the degree.



The viva exam

Exam outcomes

Following first submission of the thesis examiners can choose from these specified outcomes:

Doctoral degrees

- award of the doctoral degree
- award of the doctoral degree subject to minor amendments
- award of the doctoral degree subject to major amendments
- referral for resubmission of the doctoral degree
- award of a lower degree (PhD, EdD, DSocSci only)
- award of MPhil subject to minor amendments (PhD and EdD degrees)
- award of MSocSci or MEd (DSocSci and EdD degrees)
- referral for resubmission for MPhil (PhD and EdD degrees)
- fail

MPhil degree

- award of the degree
- award of the degree subject to minor amendments
- award of the degree subject to major amendments
- referral for resubmission of the degree
- fail

Lower awards

Student examined for the degree of PhD or EdD

Examiners can award an MPhil if the thesis meets the requirements for the degree. The award can be subject to minor amendments if required.

Student examined for the degree of DSocSci or EdD

Examiners can award the degree of MSocSci (degree of DSocSci) or MEd (degree of EdD) where the student has successfully completed the taught components for the degree.

Student examined for the degree of MPhil, DClInPsy, PsyD or EngD

There are no lower award options

Where examiners are in the position of choosing between a referral for resubmission for the degree for which the research student submitted or awarding a lower degree the examiners may, if they wish, take the research student's wishes into account.

Fail of the degree

It is unusual for a thesis to be failed outright at first submission stage.

Where examiners are considering this they may wish to discuss their decision with the Graduate School Office before proceeding.

If this recommendation is made a full report is essential giving reasons for the decision.

Advice

Procedural and regulatory advice for examiners can be sought from the Graduate School Office.



The viva exam

Amendments – definitions, timescales and advising the research student

Definitions

Minor: Amendments are largely typographical or grammatical and may include corrections to references and/or diagrams and the re-writing of small sections of text.

Major: Amendments are more substantial and may include substantial re-writing of parts of the thesis.

Referral for resubmission: A referral for resubmission should be made where the examining team agrees that the research student should undertake further research or repeat completed research and/or re-write or restructure large parts of the thesis.

Timescales

Minor: 1-3 months **from the date of the viva.**

Major: 3-6 months from the date that the Graduate School Office formally advises the research student in writing.

Referral for resubmission: 6-12 months from the date that the Graduate School Office formally advises the research student in writing.

Where a referral for resubmission is required the examining team will need to determine whether a further viva exam is needed. This decision shall be taken once both examiners have had the opportunity to assess the resubmitted thesis. The second viva exam should normally take place within three months of the Graduate School Office issuing the resubmitted thesis.

Advising the research student

Where examiners are recommending **minor amendments**, details of the amendments should be given to the research student at the viva exam. The research student should be advised to pass their completed amendments directly to the internal examiner for review.

Where examiners are recommending **major amendments** the required amendments should be outlined on the joint report form together with the amendments period. The Graduate School Office will write to the research student upon receipt of the completed and signed joint report and confirm the amendments to be completed, the timescale for completing these and advise the research student that they should pass their amendments directly to the internal examiner for review.

Where examiners are referring the research student for **resubmission** the required amendments should be outlined on the joint report form together with the amendments period. The Graduate School Office will write to the research student upon receipt of the completed and signed joint report and confirm the amendments to be completed and the timescale for completing these and for submitting two soft-bound revised theses to the Graduate School Office for re-assessment.



The viva exam

Completing the examiners' joint report

The examining team should reach a joint agreement on the outcome of the assessment.

Where examiners are unable to reach a joint decision they should contact the Graduate School Office for advice as to whether an additional external examiner should be appointed and a further viva exam held.

Completing the examiners' joint report

After reaching an agreed outcome both examiners must complete an examiners' post-viva joint report form.

A bespoke form will be emailed to all members of the examining team for this purpose when the thesis is issued. If a further copy is required this can be sought from the Graduate School Office.

It is important that the report is completed in as much detail as possible, particularly where examiners require amendments to the thesis. Examiners are asked to note that research students who are asked to undertake major amendments to the thesis, referred for resubmission or failed will be sent a copy of the joint report form by the Graduate School Office as a matter of course.

Where the research student is being assessed for a practice-based degree the assessment should consider both aspects of the submission as a whole.

Where amendments are required, examiners should note the period of the amendments on the front of the joint report.

The report should be signed as an original document or contain scanned email signatures - we are unable to accept typed signatures.

Completing the chair's report

Where there is an examination chair, they should complete and return a chair's report form, detailing the conduct of the viva.

Returning the examiners' joint report

The completed and signed joint report should be returned to the Graduate School Office by email or post.



Post-viva

Receiving, assessing and confirming post-viva amendments

In most cases research students will be required by their examining team to undertake amendments to their thesis.

Where these amendments are either minor or major it is the responsibility of the internal examiner (or designated external where no internal examiner is appointed) to review these and confirm whether they have been satisfactorily completed or not. Where a research student has been referred for resubmission, their amended thesis will be re-examined by both members of the examining team.

Receiving minor or major amendments

These will be submitted directly to the internal examiner (or designated external examiner where no internal examiner is appointed) by the research student.

The research student should provide the amendments in the form that the reviewing examiner deems appropriate (i.e., in hard form or electronically).

Receiving a referred thesis

Research students who are required to resubmit their thesis will do so by submitting two soft-bound versions to the Graduate School Office who will process and send these out to the examining team for re-assessment.

It is a requirement that, for resubmitted theses, the members of the examining team agree whether a second viva is needed. Where a second viva is needed the Graduate School Office should be informed by email.

Assessing the amendments

Examiners should assess the revised thesis against the list of amendments issued to the research student and the award descriptions as outlined on pages 7-8.

Where examiners have concerns that these have not adequately been addressed they should seek advice from the Graduate School Office.

Confirming amendments

Once the reviewing examiner is satisfied that the amendments have been completed satisfactorily they should notify the Graduate School Office of this by completing and submitting a confirmation of amendments form.

This will trigger an award being made to the research student.

Awards are normally made on the first day of each month.



Post-viva

Fees and expenses

The University pays external examiners £175 to examine/re-examine a PhD/MD thesis and £120 to examine/re-examine an MPhil/professional doctorate degree thesis.

In addition the University pays reasonable out of pocket expenses and travelling expenses up to the value of first class rail fare. Up to £250.00 of expenses will be reimbursed by the Graduate School Office and the balance of claims in excess of this will be passed to the research student's department for payment.

Accommodation and travel expenses

One night's accommodation can be paid where the distance travelled requires this.

Travel to the viva by car is reimbursed at the rate of 45p per mile for the first 80 miles and 31p per mile thereafter.

Claiming fees and expenses

External examiners should claim **fees and all expenses** on the claims form sent out with the research student's thesis.

The form requires a National Insurance number and this is needed together with confirmation of the examiner's gender which can be confirmed by ticking the relevant box (it is not always possible to tell from the titles of Dr or Professor).

The claims form and all receipts should be left with the internal examiner at the viva exam, or sent by post to:

Graduate School Office
University of Leicester
University Road
LEICESTER
LE1 7RH

Eligibility to work in the UK

It is a condition of UK immigration law that the University verifies and retains appropriate documentary evidence of the right to work in the UK of anyone that is appointed to undertake work for the University. This includes external examiners and applies to examiners of all nationalities.

Unfortunately the University is unable to pay the examination fee where eligibility documentation is not provided.



Post-viva

Eligibility to work in the UK

It is a condition of UK immigration law that the University verifies and retains appropriate documentary evidence of the right to work in the UK of anyone appointed to undertake work. This includes external examiners and applies to examiners of all nationalities.

Verification of documents

External examiners must bring their eligibility to work in the UK documentation with them to the viva. This needs to be an original document and should be brought in person.

Eligibility documentation should be checked and verified by the department on the day of the viva and scanned copies of all documentation should be sent to the Graduate School Office by email.

If external examiners are entering the UK from abroad under the “permitted paid engagements” route then the Graduate School Office should be contacted if a formal appointment letter is needed for this purpose. Examiners may also need written confirmation of the arrangements for the viva from the research student’s department in support of their application.

Unfortunately the University is unable to pay the examination fee where eligibility documentation is not provided.

Acceptable forms of documentation

Nationals of the EEA and Switzerland

- A passport showing that the holder, or a person named in the passport as the child of the holder, is a British citizen or a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies having the right of abode in the United Kingdom.
- A passport or national identity card showing that the holder, or a person named in the passport as the child of the holder, is a national of the European Economic Area or Switzerland.
- A residence permit, registration certificate or document certifying or indicating permanent residence issued by the Home Office, the Border and Immigration Agency or the UK Border Agency to a national of a European Economic Area country or Switzerland.
- A permanent residence card issued by the Home Office, the Border and Immigration Agency or the UK Border Agency to the family member of a national of a European Economic Area country or Switzerland.
- A Biometric Residence Permit issued by the UK Border Agency to the holder which indicates that the person named in it is allowed to stay indefinitely in the United Kingdom, or has no time limit on their stay in the United Kingdom.
- A passport or other travel document endorsed to show that the holder is exempt from immigration control, is allowed to stay indefinitely in the United Kingdom, has the right of abode in the United Kingdom, or has no time limit on their stay in the United Kingdom.
- An Immigration Status Document issued by the Home Office, the Border and Immigration Agency or the UK Border Agency to the holder with an endorsement indicating that the person named in it is allowed to stay indefinitely in the United Kingdom or has no time limit on their stay in the United Kingdom, when produced in combination with an official document giving the person’s National Insurance Number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
- A full birth certificate issued in the United Kingdom which includes the name(s) of at least one of the holder’s parents, when produced in combination with an official document giving the person’s National Insurance Number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.



- A full adoption certificate issued in the United Kingdom which includes the name(s) of at least one of the holder's adoptive parents when produced in combination with an official document giving the person's National Insurance Number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
 - A birth certificate issued in the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or Ireland, when produced in combination with an official document giving the person's National Insurance Number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
 - An adoption certificate issued in the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or Ireland, when produced in combination with an official document giving the person's National Insurance Number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
 - A certificate of registration or naturalisation as a British citizen, when produced in combination with an official document giving the person's National Insurance Number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
 - A letter issued by the Home Office, the Border and Immigration Agency or the UK Border Agency to the holder which indicates that the person named in it is allowed to stay indefinitely in the United Kingdom when produced in combination with an official document giving the person's National Insurance Number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
- Non-EEA/Swiss Nationals**
- A passport or travel document endorsed to show that the holder is allowed to stay in the United Kingdom and is allowed to do the type of work in question, provided that it does not require the issue of a work permit.
 - A Biometric Residence Permit issued by the UK Border Agency to the holder which indicates that the person named in it can stay in the United Kingdom and is allowed to do the work in question.
- A work permit or other approval to take employment issued by the Home Office, the Border and Immigration Agency or the UK Border Agency when produced in combination with either a passport or another travel document endorsed to show the holder is allowed to stay in the United Kingdom and is allowed to do the work in question, or a letter issued by the Home Office, Border and Immigration Agency or UK Border Agency to the holder or the employer or prospective employer confirming the same.
 - A Certificate of Application issued by the Home Office, the Border and Immigration Agency or the UK Border Agency to or for a family member of a national of a European Economic Area country or Switzerland stating that the holder is permitted to take employment which is less than 6 months old when produced in combination with a positive confirmation letter from our Employer Checking Service.
 - A residence card or document issued by the Home Office, the Border and Immigration Agency or the UK Border Agency to a family member of a national of a European Economic Area country or Switzerland.
 - An Application Registration Card issued by the Home Office, the Border and Immigration Agency or the UK Border Agency stating that the holder is permitted to take employment, when produced in combination with a positive confirmation letter from our Employer Checking Service.
 - An Immigration Status Document issued by the Home Office, the Border and Immigration Agency or the UK Border Agency to the holder with an endorsement indicating that the person named in it can stay in the United Kingdom, and is allowed to do the type of work in question, when produced in combination with an official document giving the person's National Insurance Number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
 - A letter issued by the Home Office, Border and Immigration Agency or UK Border Agency to the holder or the employer or prospective employer, which indicates that the person named in it can stay in the United Kingdom and is allowed to do the work in question when produced in combination with an official document giving the person's National Insurance Number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.



Resubmissions

The resubmission process and outcomes

Where a research student has been asked to resubmit their thesis or the practical element of a practice-based degree they will do so by submitting two copies to the Graduate School Office and these will be sent out to the examiners by post.

Is a second viva needed?

The resubmitted thesis/practical element should be independently assessed against the list of required amendments given to the research student as part of the original examination and the award descriptions as outlined on pages 7-8.

Following this independent re-assessment, examiners should agree whether a further viva is needed.

If a second viva is required this should be communicated to the research student, with sufficient notice, by the internal examiner (or chair where there is no internal examiner).

Agreeing the award outcome

The award outcome should be agreed by both examiners and must be one of the following:

Doctoral award outcomes:

- Award of the degree
- Award of the degree subject to minor amendments
- Award of a lower degree (DSocSci)
- Award of MPhil subject to minor amendments (PhD & EdD degrees)
- Fail

MPhil award outcomes:

- Award of MPhil
- Award of MPhil subject to minor amendments
- Fail

There is no option to recommend award of a degree subject to major amendments or a second referral where a referred thesis is being re-examined.

Completing an examiners' joint report

In all cases (i.e., whether a second viva was held or not), examiners will need to complete a joint report form. The internal examiner (or chair) will coordinate the completion of the report which should be signed as a joint document by both examiners.

The joint report form will be emailed to the examination team when the referred thesis is issued to the examiners for assessment. A replacement copy can be obtained by contacting the Graduate School Office.

