Guide for Research Degree Internal Examiners
2013-2014

www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/handbooks.html

Please read the whole of this document before you conduct the examination. As Internal Examiner for a research degree candidate you are responsible for assuring fairness and consistency of the examination process by ensuring University of Leeds procedures, processes and criteria are followed. This document is designed to assist you in this process.

This Guide should be read in conjunction with the separate Instructions to Examiners for the relevant degree concerned – these are available at:
http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/thesesubmissionandexamination/staff/instructions.html
What’s new for 2013/14

i. Release of the final, joint report of the examiners to candidates and supervisors

For candidates submitting for examination from 01/09/13, the joint examiners’ report (completed after the viva) will be sent to the candidate and their supervisor(s) by RSA after approval by the Examinations Group. Please bear this in mind when completing the report. The independent, preliminary reports (completed before the viva) are not automatically released to the candidate but will be released if requested. In the event of an adverse academic decision (referral, MPhil award on PhD or fail) candidates will be advised that the preliminary reports are available on request. See page 13 for further information.

ii. No notes for guidance template

Prior to September 2013 a separate Notes for Guidance template for referred candidates was used to give feedback to the candidate on the reasons for the thesis having been referred and feedback under each of the criteria for award. As the full, joint report of the examiners will now be released to the candidate there is no longer a need for a separate Notes for Guidance template, as the reasons for the thesis having been referred and how it measured up to each of the criteria for the award of the degree will be covered in the examiners’ report. Instead, examiners are now asked to prepare Notes for Guidance on a separate sheet headed “Notes for Guidance” and send these in with the report. See page 11 and the separate report form template for further information.

iii. Documents required on resubmission

To assist the Examiners when considering the resubmitted thesis, the candidate will now be asked to supply a summary of how the revised thesis has responded to changes suggested by examiners in the Notes for Guidance alongside their resubmitted thesis. See page 17 and the separate Instructions to Examiners for further information.

iv. Attendance of the supervisor at the viva

A revised statement on the attendance of the supervisor at the viva is provided. The position has not changed, in that the supervisor may attend as an observer with the permission of the candidate, but the statement sets out more clearly the University’s expectations if the supervisor will be in attendance. See page 7 for further information.

v. Revised category names

Minor Editorial Corrections has been renamed “Editorial and Presentational Corrections”. Stated Minor Deficiencies is now called “Minor Deficiencies”. A clear description for each category and the types of corrections which might be included is given in the Instructions to Examiners.

vi. Confirming Editorial and presentational corrections or minor deficiencies

The preferred method for confirming you are satisfied that any corrections have been completed is now by email to rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk. RSA will also continue to accept your signature on the Thesis Deposit Form. As candidates have a period of up to 3 months to return their hard bound thesis and Thesis Deposit Form to RSA, email is the preferred method as it ensures RSA has more immediate confirmation that the corrections have been completed and removes the need for follow-ups with the internal examiner. See pages 13-14.

vii. Ethical review of the research

The University Research Ethics Committee recognises that in some cases it may be beneficial for examiners to have access to more detailed ethics information to see how candidates have dealt with the ethical issues of their research. Further advice is given in the separate Instructions to Examiners. Requests can be made to RSA (rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk).
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1.1. Arrangements and timescales for the oral examination (viva)

The internal examiner is responsible for making the arrangements for the viva. Once you have received the thesis you must contact the External Examiner and candidate to arrange a date, time and venue for the viva. The Supervisor, Postgraduate Research Tutor and Administrator in the School/Faculty should also be informed of the arrangements. Please ensure that the venue for the viva is in a suitable environment. The viva is normally held in the parent school within Office hours.

Every effort should be made for the viva to take place within 6 weeks of receiving the thesis but Examiners are asked to accept a maximum time scale of 3 months in which to examine the thesis (6 months in the case of MD candidates). Once you have an agreed date for the viva it would be helpful if you could advise RSA by email: rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk.

1.2 Difficulties in arranging dates

If it is not possible to meet the time scale outlined above, for example where there are other commitments of the Examiners, please inform RSA. You must also keep the candidate and supervisor informed on the progress being made to arrange the examination. Where all parties are in agreement (including the candidate), a short delay can be considered by the University. However Examiners are asked to be mindful that, particularly for overseas candidates in the UK under the Tier 4 visa arrangements, any delay to the viva beyond the normal 3-month period could be particularly problematic. The University has to adhere to strict rules regarding how long it can issue a Confirmation of Acceptance for Study (CAS) for to students who have submitted for examination. Delays in arranging the viva could mean that a student has to apply and pay\(^1\) for two visas to cover the examination period.

The Examiners are expected to take account of known religious observances when arranging the viva. Examiners are also asked, as far as is possible and reasonable, to accommodate the candidate’s prior commitments (e.g. work commitments) and to give sufficient notice of the date of the viva to allow the candidate to make appropriate leave arrangements. However, should the Examiners experience unreasonable difficulties with the candidate committing to a viva date the Internal Examiner is asked to contact RSA for further advice. RSA will make further enquiries with the Postgraduate Research Tutor.

1.3 Preliminary Report Form

You should read the thesis carefully and independently of the External Examiner, bearing in mind the criteria for the award of the relevant degree. Having read the thesis you are obliged to complete a preliminary report form and examine it even if your view is that it does not meet the requirements for the degree as the candidate must be given the opportunity to defend their work at a viva.

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\(^1\) At June 2012 a postal application from within the UK is £394. The cost for each dependant is £197. Applications in person cost much more.
You must complete your Preliminary Report before the day of the examination. This report is to assist the Examiners to prepare for the examination. This report must not contain any recommendation relating to the award (or not) of the degree. On the day of the viva the Examiners should arrange to meet before the viva and bring their completed preliminary report to this meeting and discuss the contents of each report before seeing the candidate. This discussion will enable the Examiners to plan the structure of the viva and ensure that all relevant issues are addressed appropriately. Keep copies of all Preliminary Reports as they must be attached to the Examiners’ Joint Report after the viva. If there is more than one Internal Examiner please ensure that both Internal Examiners complete individual Preliminary Report Forms (see 1.8).

1.4 Confidentiality of theses

The thesis is submitted to you on the basis that you will treat the contents, and any issues relating to the candidature, as strictly confidential in the periods before, during and following the examination, until such stage as the work may be published in accordance with normal academic custom. The School concerned will advise you of any specific confidentiality undertakings that are required as a result of commercial agreements. If for this or any other reason you should find that your appointment as Examiner would create some conflict of interest please contact RSA immediately.

1.5 Video conferencing for a viva

The expectation is that the viva will take place in Leeds with all appointed examiners present in the room with the candidate. However in exceptional circumstances the Examinations Group may give consideration to the use of video conferencing/Skype. Permission must be sought in advance. [http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/policies.html#thesis](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/policies.html#thesis)

1.6 Policy on plagiarism (Under review)

In the event that the Examiners encounter any concerns with possible plagiarism in the thesis, the University has published procedures for investigating plagiarism in research degree work prior to, and within, the submission for a research degree. Further advice can also be sought from the thesis examination section in RSA: [http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/policies.html#thesis](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/policies.html#thesis)

1.7.1 External Examiner’s Expenses (sent by RSA to the external examiner)

Please ensure that the needs of the External Examiner(s) are met - hospitality, accommodation, etc. External Examiners are considered as “VIP” visitors for car parking on campus and the Head of School (or Dean) can be asked to reserve a VIP parking space where necessary. The School is responsible for the payment of the expenses and a claim form is sent to the External Examiner with the thesis. This should be completed by the External and returned to the candidate’s School for payment. Standard class travel only (or equivalent cost) will be reimbursed, unless expressly preauthorised by the School concerned. Some Schools set a budget for this so please check with the candidate’s School in the event of any queries.
1.7.2 **External Examiner’s Fee – Green form (sent by RSA to the external examiner)**

RSA is responsible for the payment of the fee only. A form for this purpose is sent to the External Examiner with the thesis and letter of appointment. This can be left with the Internal at the viva and returned to RSA with the Examiners’ Report after the viva.

1.8 **Second (joint) Internal Examiner**

In cases where a second (joint) Internal Examiner is appointed the second (joint) Internal is appointed as a full examiner of the thesis and is required to read and examine the thesis under the relevant University procedures. The second (joint) Internal Examiner must, in addition to reading and examining the thesis:

- Complete a Preliminary Report Form;
- Fully participate in the oral examination;
- Ensure that the examination is performed in line with the University’s regulations and procedure;
- Ensure the Examiners’ report is completed in line with the criteria for the degree being examined;
- Sign the Examiners’ Report;
- Give feedback to the first Internal on procedural matters, where appropriate, after the viva.

It is not necessary for both Internal Examiners to check any corrections to the thesis. The first Internal Examiner can undertake this task alone.

1.9 **Ethical Review of the research**

The University Research Ethics Committee recognises that in some cases it may be beneficial for examiners to have access to more detailed ethics information to see how candidates have dealt with the ethical issues of their research. Further advice is given in the Instructions to Examiners. Requests can be made to thesis examination section of RSA (rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk).

1.10 **Supporting Disabled Postgraduate Research Students**

Advice to examiners on supporting disabled PGR students through the examination process can be found in the Instructions to Examiners. As Internal Examiner you are responsible for facilitating on the day any reasonable adjustments to the oral examination, which will have been agreed upon in advance. Advice is also available on the RSA website at: [http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/support/disability.html](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/support/disability.html)
Section 2: The day of the oral examination (viva)

As described above, the Examiners should arrange to meet beforehand to plan the viva. The examiners should not discuss their provisional findings with the candidate at any point before the viva or give an indication of the likely recommendation until the viva has been completed.

2.1 Purpose of the viva

The role of the viva is to ensure that the work reaches the University standards for the degree; that the work has been written by the candidate; and that the work is understood by the candidate.

2.2 Length and format of the viva

The viva should run continuously and be completed within a day (but please refer to the good practice guidance in section 2.6 regarding short, comfort breaks). The examination must be conducted in English, with the exception of the School of Modern Languages and Cultures, where, in certain circumstances, the viva might, with the agreement of the external examiner, be conducted in a language other than English. Please see the policy for further advice: http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/assets/word/policies/Sub_thesis_otherlang12.doc.

The University does not have specific regulations regarding the length of the viva or what should be discussed except that the thesis should be discussed with the candidate. Some Examiners will also wish to satisfy themselves of the candidate's general level of understanding in the subject area. The viva also gives the candidate the opportunity to answer questions in areas where the examiners are not satisfied. For instance, in the case of a PhD degree, evidence of originality and independent critical ability is required and, where the evidence in the thesis is not compelling, the Examiners should use the viva to encourage the candidate to provide convincing evidence that the stated criteria can be met. Additional tests can also be set by the Examiners. This could include a short presentation to the examiners at the start of the viva. Please give the candidate at least 2 week's notice if this is required. One purpose of these tests might be to establish that the thesis is the work of the candidate.

2.3 Attendance of the Supervisor at the viva

Students may invite one of their supervisors to be in attendance at their viva as an observer. A supervisor may only attend with the prior permission of the candidate. If attending as an observer, the supervisor must remain silent during the examination. S/he may not participate in the viva and takes no part in the academic judgement and the decision making process. S/he must leave the room after the viva (with the candidate) so the examiners can discuss their recommendation.

Before the viva you should establish whether a supervisor will be present and that this is in accordance with the wishes of the candidate. The internal examiner is responsible for
ensuring that the supervisor remains silent and that their presence at the viva is unobtrusive. The examiners have the right to ask the supervisor to leave the examination if they believe their presence may jeopardise the smooth running or integrity of the oral examination.

Those present at the viva will be the candidate, the external examiner(s), the internal examiner(s) and one of the supervisors (as an observer if it is decided that they should be present). In cases where a candidate has more than one supervisor, only one supervisor is permitted to attend the viva. If not present as an observer the supervisor is required to be available for consultation if necessary (ideally in the School but contactable by telephone is acceptable).

2.4 Advising the candidate of the outcome

The recommendation is normally given to the candidate immediately after the viva but in any event, must take place within 24 hours of the examination. In the unlikely event that the examiners are unable to come to agreement please contact RSA for guidance (Thesis Examination section: 34003).

2.5 Problems on the day of the examination

In cases of emergency on the day of the viva (e.g. train cancelled, external unwell, candidate fails to arrive, etc) you must contact RSA (Thesis Examination section: 34003).

2.6 Good practice guidelines for the conduct of oral examinations

Before the viva the internal examiner should ensure logistic arrangements are in place to make all parties comfortable and to minimise distractions to the examination. Examiners may find the following good-practice guidance helpful in conducting the viva. The examiners should:

- consider the layout of the room (table, chairs, availability of a whiteboard/pens, refreshments etc) and practicalities such as ensuring all mobile phones are switched off and placing a do not disturb sign on the door. There should be a room where the candidate (and supervisor if attending) can wait during the examiners’ discussions. Unless required for the purposes of a presentation/demonstration by the candidate, the use of electronic equipment/devices during the viva by candidates or examiners (or the supervisor if in attendance) is not permitted.

- invite the candidate into the room and introduce those present and their roles in the viva (the Supervisor, if present, is not involved in the decision making process). Aim to put the candidate at ease as far as possible;

- explain the purpose of the viva (see 2.1 and 2.2 above) and go through the format for the examination and how things will work;

- explain the possible recommendations the examiners can make (see below);

- explain to the candidate that after the viva s/he will be asked to withdraw from the
room (along with the supervisor, if present as an observer) whilst the examiners confer on their decision before asking them to return;

- ask the candidate if they have any questions and advise him/her to seek clarification should any part of the process or the questioning be unclear;

- allow the candidate time to collect their thoughts and develop responses to the questions posed by the examiners. Allow the candidate to consult their copy of the thesis (which may be annotated with notes/post-it notes) during the viva if it helps them;

- although the viva will normally run continuously, respect any request a candidate may make for a short break and may wish to suggest a break in the case of longer vivas (for example should a viva reach two hours). In the event of a candidate becoming distressed, examiners are advised to offer the candidate a break in order to compose him/herself before continuing with the viva. If a candidate is unable to continue, examiners must contact RSA (Examinations section: 34003);

- at the close of the examination ask the candidate if they feel the examination has covered all points they were expecting and give them the opportunity to raise any points in relation to the thesis which they feel were not covered;

- on completing the viva, instruct the candidate (and Supervisor if attending) to leave the room in order for the examiners to discuss the final recommendation on the basis of the thesis and the viva. Only the examiners must be present for this part of the process;

- invite the candidate (and supervisor if attending) back into the room and inform them of the recommendation. A single recommendation must be made (as set out in the "Instructions to Examiners");

- inform the candidate & Supervisor of the outcome of the viva and that it is subject to confirmation by the Graduate Board. If you are unable to reach a decision at the viva you must do this within 24 hours of the examination and inform the candidate and supervisor;

- outline the next stages in the process to the candidate, depending on the outcome of the viva, including communication of any corrections to the thesis (see section 3 below).
Section 3: Immediately after the viva – action in the event of individual recommendations

After the viva the examiners will need to:

- Advise the candidate of the recommendation being sent forward (within 24 hours) and ensure s/he is clear about the next stages of the process (see below)
- Prepare the final, joint report of the examiners, including signing the front sheet (see section 4).
- In the event of a referral, prepare the notes for guidance (see section 5).
- Please also retrieve the copy of the thesis that is in the possession of the External Examiner and ensure s/he is clear about the fee and expenses claim process (see section 1.7).

3.1 Pass (no corrections)

The candidate can be advised to prepare their final thesis in hard bound format and submit one copy of this to RSA within 3 months of the viva along with a Thesis Deposit Form (and eThesis if required).

Both the Examiners’ copies of the thesis can be returned to the candidate.

3.2 Editorial & presentational corrections (to be corrected in 4 weeks of the viva)

Formerly ‘Minor Editorial Corrections’. These must be corrected and returned to the internal examiner for approval within 4 weeks from the date of the viva. Please ensure the candidate receives the details of any editorial/presentational corrections and is clear about how long they have to complete them. The candidate does not receive this information formally from RSA and it is the responsibility of the Internal Examiner to ensure that the candidate and supervisor are fully informed of what corrections are required. Bearing in mind the timescale runs from the date of the viva please ensure this information is sent promptly.

Both the Examiners’ copies of the thesis can be returned to the candidate.

3.3 Minor deficiencies (to be corrected within 12 weeks of the viva)

Formerly ‘Stated Minor Deficiencies’. These must be corrected and returned to the internal examiner for approval within 12 weeks from the date of the viva. Please ensure the candidate receives the details of the minor deficiencies that must be addressed in writing within 1 working day of the viva and is clear about how long they have to complete them. The candidate does not receive this information formally from RSA and it is the responsibility of the Internal to ensure that the candidate and supervisor are fully informed.

Both the examiners’ copies of the thesis can be returned to the candidate.
3.4 Referral for resubmission (see section 5 for further advice)

The examiners should clearly explain their reasons for not recommending the award of the degree at this stage, ensure that the candidate is clear about the next stages in the process and that they will be sent the examiners’ report and notes for guidance by RSA after approval by the Examinations Group².

The RSA website gives further advice on the referral and resubmission process and it may be helpful to direct the candidate to this:
http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/thesessubmissionandexamination/students/referral.html.

One copy of the thesis must be returned to RSA. The other copy can be given back to the candidate.

3.5 MPhil award on a PhD submission

The examiners should clearly explain their reasons for not recommending the award of the PhD degree, ensure that the candidate is clear about the next stages and that they will be sent the report by RSA after approval by the Examinations Group³. If you are recommending the award of MPhil with corrections please ensure that you give the candidate details of the corrections required and the timescales for completing these.

One copy of the thesis must be returned to RSA. The other copy can be given to the candidate.

3.6 Fail

The examiners should clearly explain their reasons for not recommending the award of the degree, ensure that the candidate is clear about the next stages and that they will be sent the examiners’ report by RSA after approval by the Examinations Group².

One copy of the thesis must be returned to RSA. The other copy can be given back to the candidate.

² In some circumstances research degree students may appeal against an adverse academic decision. Details of the procedure can be found at:
http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/policies.html
Section 4: After the oral examination

4.1 Completing the examiners’ report (see Annex I for good practice advice)

You are responsible for ensuring that the final, joint Examiners’ Report Form is fully and correctly completed and signed. This should be done before the External leaves.

All sections of the report must be typed using the template which is provided at: http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/thesissubmissionandexamination/staff/report_forms/report_form.html. You will need to sign and attach the front page which was provided in hard copy with the thesis (and contains information specific to the candidate.) Original signatures are needed on the final report – electronic signatures cannot be accepted.

Please ensure that you answer all questions as fully and possible and include in your responses specific examples from the thesis. The report must stand alone from the thesis, and any publications which may have arisen from it, and it must be clearly evident from reading the report itself that the thesis\(^3\) contained, for example in the case of PhD, evidence of originality, independent critical ability and matter suitable for publication. Remember that this is a joint report and the answers should indicate it is the view of all the examiners (language like “We feel” rather than “I feel” should be used). Annex I of this document gives further good practice advice on completing the report form.

The joint, examiners’ report should be countersigned by the Postgraduate Research Tutor (or Head of School) and returned to RSA, together with the copies of the completed preliminary reports. Where the examiners recommend that a thesis be referred, notes for guidance must also be prepared (see section 5) and submitted with the examiners’ report.

4.2 Graduate Board’s Examinations Group

The recommendation of the examiners is subject to approval by the Graduate Board’s Examinations Group, which will consider the examiners’ report at its next meeting. This Group awards research degrees subject to it being satisfied that the criteria for the award of the degree have been met. Members consider the content of each examiners’ report form to establish that the criteria for the award of the degree has been met and that the recommendation sent forward covers the basic points required by the University, as well as being clear and unambiguous. Each Faculty is represented on this Group. http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/graduate_board/examinations.html#membership.

It is important that the examiners answer each section of the report clearly with specific examples from the thesis\(^3\). The Group will ask for further information if it is not satisfied that the recommendation has been clearly and sufficiently justified. Please respond to such queries as quickly as possible to avoid any unnecessary delay to candidates. Delays in response will prevent the award of the degree being made to the candidate and may affect their eligibility to attend a degree ceremony.

\(^3\) Where the evidence in the thesis is not compelling the examiners should use the viva to encourage the student to provide convincing evidence that the stated criteria can be met and reflect on this in the examiners’ report.
The Examinations Group views the examiners’ report as an important source of feedback to candidates on the assessment of their work. For this reason, from session 2013/14 the final, joint report of the examiners will now be sent to the candidate and the supervisor by RSA after it has been approved by the Examinations Group. The preliminary reports of the examiners are not automatically released to the candidate but will be released on request\(^4\) (please see Annex I for further advice).

4.3 Role of the internal examiner during the (4/12 weeks) correction period

After successful examination candidates must carry out any editorial and presentational corrections or minor deficiencies to the satisfaction of the internal examiner within the prescribed time period\(^5\). Individual pages of the thesis must be fully corrected and it is not possible simply to provide an errata page. Candidates are advised to consult with their supervisor(s) throughout this process.

The internal examiner does not take a supervisory role during the correction period. You may, however, be required to provide clarification of the corrections required. Candidates are advised to consult with their supervisor in the first instance where clarification is required. Supervisors may contact internal examiners on behalf of candidates when further clarification would be helpful.

4.4 Confirming editorial and presentational corrections or minor deficiencies

The candidate has 4 or 12 weeks from the date of the viva to complete and return the corrections to you for checking. Every effort should be made to check the corrections in a reasonable timescale and provide timely feedback to the candidate. This is particularly important around graduation deadlines where even a short delay in checking and approving the corrections could lead to the candidate not being eligible to attend the ceremonies.

To assist in the process of checking and approving the corrections it is strongly recommended that the candidate provides you with information outlining what corrections they have made to their thesis. This could be in the form of tracked changes or supplied as a separate list. You can agree the preferred format for this with the candidate.

As internal examiner, you will need to confirm to RSA that the candidate completed the corrections within the prescribed time period to your satisfaction. The external examiner should be consulted on the corrections carried out by the candidate if s/he wishes.

Once you have checked the corrections and are happy with the changes made you can notify RSA in one of two ways:

\(^4\) In the case of an adverse academic decision (referral, MPhil award on PhD or fail) the candidate advised that the preliminary reports are available on request.

\(^5\) The 4 or 12 week deadline is for the candidate to complete & return the corrections to the Internal Examiner for approval. Candidates must then submit 1 copy of their bound thesis (and eThesis) to RSA within 3 months of the Internal Examiner approving the corrections.
(i) **Preferred method:** by email to RSA at rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk.

(ii) by signing the *Thesis Deposit Form* (which will be completed by the candidate and passed to you with the corrections for checking)

If you experience any problems with the candidate completing and returning the corrections by the 4/12 week deadline please contact the thesis examination section in RSA for further advice (rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk). In exceptional circumstances the Examinations Group may consider an extension to a correction deadline. Further advice can be found in the policy published at: [http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/policies.html#thesis](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/policies.html#thesis)

### 4.5 Hard bound thesis

Once you have confirmed you are happy with the corrections the candidate can have the final version of their thesis hard bound and deliver this to RSA, along with their completed Thesis Deposit Form. One copy of the hard bound thesis is required for the award of the degree. However candidates are advised to check with their School/Supervisor whether a second hard bound copy of the thesis is required.

Where the candidate is recommended for the award of the degree without corrections, the final hard bound thesis (and any required eThesis) must be submitted to RSA by no later than 3 months after the date of the viva. If the recommendation was editorial and presentational corrections or minor deficiencies, the deadline is 3-months after the internal examiner has approved the corrections.

### 4.6 eThesis (see: [www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/thesis/students/ethesis/ethesis.html](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/thesis/students/ethesis/ethesis.html))

Candidates who commenced doctoral study from September 2009 onwards are also required to submit an exact pdf copy of their final thesis (the “eThesis”) in addition to the hard bound copy. This is a condition of award and a candidate’s name cannot be included on a pass list until the eThesis has been provided. Doctoral students who commenced doctoral study prior to September 2009 are strongly encouraged to submit an eThesis. MPhil and Mastership by Research candidates are exempt from this requirement.

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*Please note this slight change to process for 2013/14.* Previously signature on the Thesis Deposit Form was listed as the preferred format or notifying RSA. To prevent any delays with RSA receiving this notification and to avoid the need for follow-up the preferred method is now by email to RSA as soon as you have finished checking the corrections.
5.1 Notes for guidance

If the recommendation is that the thesis be referred for resubmission the Examiners must also prepare notes for guidance and return these to RSA with the final examiners’ report and the preliminary report forms. The notes for guidance must be typed, headed “notes for guidance” and attached to the final examiners’ report form.

Please bear in mind that it is often difficult to produce the notes for guidance once the external examiner has left the examination and therefore it is useful to negotiate a timetable with the external examiner for the production of the notes for guidance. The completed report and notes for guidance should be forwarded to RSA within 10 working days of the viva. Where it is not possible to meet this timescale please contact RSA for further advice (Examination section: 34003).

5.2 Format & Content of the Notes for Guidance

The notes for guidance must clearly specify the sections or aspects of the thesis which are in need of improvement. The notes for guidance have a semi-legal status and must clearly indicate the necessary and sufficient conditions which, if complied with by the candidate, and provided that the thesis as a whole is satisfactory, will lead to a recommendation for the award of the degree.

The University takes this as meaning that if the candidate follows the advice and guidance given by the Examiners in its entirety in revising the thesis the degree must be awarded (albeit possibly with corrections). For this reason it is essential that the notes are sufficiently detailed to give the candidate suitable guidance to achieve the required standard. However, the detail in the notes should not stifle the initiative of the candidate. As a consequence no additional written guidance other than the examiners’ report and notes for guidance (sent by RSA) is to be given to the student. The Notes are to assist the candidate in the process of revision and resubmission of their thesis but may not necessarily include specific editorial comment.

5.3 Good practice advice on the format and content of the notes is as follows:

- The notes for guidance must be typed and headed “notes for guidance”
- The notes for guidance must be clear and unambiguous – for example avoid including phrases like “would benefit from” “might like to consider” etc. Instead use language like “the candidate should”, “the revised thesis must”.
- The use of emotive language or personal comments should be avoided.
- The notes for guidance must be free from typographical errors.
- Please do not include at this stage a recommendation that a second oral examination will not be required. The final decision on this cannot be made until after considering the resubmitted thesis. If the resubmitted thesis does not meet the requirements for the award of the degree for which the candidate submitted, University regulations require that a second oral examination must be held. So the
notes are not inconsistent with University regulations the Group asks that the notes do not give any indication at this stage that a second viva won’t be needed.

- Remember that these are joint notes for guidance – the answers should indicate it is the view of all the examiners (language like “We feel” rather than “I feel” should be used). A separate list of corrections from each examiner should be avoided as it introduces the possibility of inconsistencies, contradictions and duplications. Instead the corrections should be combined into one single set of clear corrections and guidance.

5.4 Release of Notes for Guidance to candidates

Please do not give the notes for guidance directly to the candidate. The notes for guidance must not be issued by the school to the candidate. The Graduate Board’s Examinations Group must scrutinise them together with the examiners’ report, at the next meeting of the Group, and approve the recommendation of the Examiners and the notes for guidance. Schools are not permitted to issue informal notes for guidance to the candidate. Any advice given to the candidate, at the time of the viva or immediately after the viva, is informal.

The examiners’ report and approved notes will be issued to candidates by Research Student Administration as quickly as possible after the meeting of the Examinations Group. Copies of the approved report and notes for guidance will also be sent to the supervisor, PGRT and internal examiner at the same time. In some cases the Examinations Group may request additional information or clarification of the report or notes for guidance from the Examiners to ensure that these are clear and unambiguous. Please respond to such queries as quickly as possible to avoid any unnecessary delay to candidates.

5.5 Return of the soft-bound (referred) thesis to RSA

Please ensure one copy of the referred thesis is returned to Research Student Administration immediately after the viva (one of the copies originally sent to the examiners). The other copy can be returned to the candidate. The University is required to retain one copy until such stage as the candidate resubmits a revised thesis. This copy can be made available again to the examiners during the re-examination if required.

5.6 Role of the Internal Examiner during the referral period

The Internal Examiner does not take a supervisory role during the referral period. You may, however, be required to provide clarification of the notes for guidance. Candidates are advised that they should consult with their supervisor in the first instance where clarification is required. Supervisors are asked to contact internal examiners on behalf of candidates when further clarification is required.
Section 6: Examination of a resubmitted thesis (following referral)

Please also refer to the separate Instructions to Examiners (provided with the thesis) for further advice on examining a resubmitted thesis.

6.1 Examining team

The University has maximum time limits for resubmission of the thesis (see the separate Instructions to Examiners) however the candidate may resubmit at any point in the referral period, once the amendments have been made and the thesis ready for resubmission. A resubmitted thesis is subject to the same examination process as the first submission, with the thesis being submitted by the candidate to RSA for dispatch to the Examiners. **Candidates must not send their theses directly to the examiners.** Both the Internal and External Examiners will examine the resubmitted thesis. It is usual practice for the same examining team to act again except in exceptional circumstances.

6.2 Individual Report Form

All Examiners must read the resubmitted thesis independently of the other examiner(s) and complete an Examiner's Individual Report before discussing the resubmission with the other examiners. Particular attention should be given to question 2 which asks the Examiners to comment on the extent to which the candidate has addressed the issues raised in the Notes for Guidance.

6.3 Second oral examination

Please refer to separate Instructions to Examiners for further advice. **Every effort should be made to complete the re-examination within 6 weeks of receiving the resubmitted thesis but Examiners are asked to accept a maximum time scale of 3 months (6 months in the case of MD candidates) in which to complete the re-examination.** All examiners consider the re-submission and a second viva may be held if the examiners deem it appropriate.

You will need to complete your independent preliminary report form before discussing the resubmitted thesis with the external examiner and deciding whether or not a second viva is needed.

It should be noted that if, after reading the resubmitted thesis, the examiners reach a preliminary view that the candidate has not fulfilled the requirements for the award of the degree for which they submitted, it is essential that a second viva be held to ensure that the candidate is given every opportunity to defend the work. This applies in the event of the Examiners considering either a recommendation not to award a research degree (fail) or a recommendation to award the degree of MPhil on a PhD resubmission.

The report and notes for guidance completed after the first examination will be provided to the Examiners with the resubmitted thesis. To assist the Examiners when considering the resubmitted thesis, the candidate is asked to supply a summary of how the revised thesis
has responded to changes suggested by examiners in the notes for guidance alongside their resubmitted thesis.

6.4 Possible examination outcomes

You will be sent the examiners’ report form template for resubmissions. This clearly indicates the options which are available to the Examiners following consideration of the resubmitted thesis. **A second referral is not possible** and the candidate will either pass (subject in some cases to the correction of editorial and presentational corrections or minor deficiencies) or fail when the examiners consider the revised submission. For PhD resubmissions, the examiners may also consider the award of the degree of MPhil (subject in some cases to the correction of editorial and presentational corrections or minor deficiencies).

You are reminded that every effort should be made to complete the re-examination within 6 weeks of receiving the resubmitted thesis but Examiners are asked to accept a maximum time scale of 3 months (6 months in the case of MD candidates) in which to complete the re-examination.

After a decision on the resubmitted thesis has been reached (either after discussion between the Examiners or after a second viva if this was necessary) you will need to complete the final, joint Examiners’ Report Form along with the External Examiner. The report form and the examiners’ individual report form must be returned to RSA (after countersignature by the PGRT) for consideration by the Examinations Group at its next meeting.

If a second viva was not required, you must take steps to inform the candidate and supervisor of the recommendation the Examiners are sending forward. Please ensure the candidate receives notification of the outcome and details of any minor corrections or minor deficiencies as soon as possible. Please also ensure that the PGR administrator in the School/Faculty is kept informed.
Recommended Good Practice when completing the Final Examiners’ Report

As Internal Examiner you are responsible for ensuring that the final, joint Examiners’ Report Form is fully and correctly completed and signed (original signatures are needed). This should be done before the External leaves. All sections of the Report must be typed using the template provided:
http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/forms/forms_thesissubmission.html

The report must stand alone from the thesis, and any publications which may have arisen from it, and it must be clearly evident from reading the report itself that the thesis’ contained, for example in the case of PhD, evidence of originality, independent critical ability and matter suitable for publication. The report should be consistent with the preliminary reports. If there were issues identified in the preliminary reports that were successfully addressed in the viva this should be reflected in the report.

Remember that this is a joint report – the answers should indicate it is the view of all the examiners (language like “We feel” rather than “I feel” should be used). Some good practice advice is provided on the attached pages.

Graduate Board’s Examinations Group

The Graduate Board has delegated authority to its Examinations Group to award research degrees from the University. The Group awards research degrees subject to it being satisfied that the criteria for the award of the degree have been met. Members consider the content of each Examiners’ Report form to establish that the criteria for the award of the degree has been met and that the recommendation sent forward covers the basic points required by the University, as well as being clear and unambiguous. Each Faculty is represented on this Group.
http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/graduate_board/examinations.html#membership.

It is important that the Examiners answer each section of the Report forms clearly and concisely. The Group will ask for further information if it is not satisfied that the recommendation has been clearly and sufficiently justified. The report and recommendation of the Examiners cannot be approved until the Group is satisfied that the additional information supplied by the Examiners addresses the concerns raised with the report by the Group. Please respond to such queries as quickly as possible to avoid any unnecessary delay to candidates. Delays in response will prevent the award of the degree being made to the candidate and may affect their eligibility to attend a degree ceremony.

Where the evidence in the thesis is not compelling the Examiners should use the viva to encourage the student to provide convincing evidence that the stated criteria can be met and reflect on this in the Examiners’ report.
Release of Examiners’ Reports to candidates – new from 2013/14

The Examinations Group views the joint examiners’ report (completed after the viva) as an important source of feedback to candidates on the assessment of their work. For this reason, the joint examiners’ report will be sent to the candidate and their supervisor(s) by RSA after approval by the Group. Please bear this in mind when completing the report. Please ensure your report only relates to the criteria for the award and that any criticism is fair and measured. Examiners should note that the University does not impose any restrictions on candidates as to who can see the report. The candidate may subsequently share the report with anyone, including sponsors, publishers or other interested parties. The independent, preliminary reports (completed before the viva) are not automatically released to the candidate but will be released if requested. In the event of an adverse academic decision (referral, MPhil award on PhD or fail) candidates will be advised that the preliminary reports are available on request.

Use of acronyms when completing examiners’ report forms

Examiners, should, as far as possible, avoid the use of acronyms as this would help to ensure that readers, including members of the Group, who are not subject specialists, to understand the comments made. Whilst considered by a representative from the Faculty, reports are not considered by experts in the areas concerned and that this should be kept in mind.

Examiners’ Report forms for candidates who have resubmitted for examination

The Examiners’ Report form for a resubmission must “stand alone” from that completed after the first examination and Examiners are asked to complete all sections of the report in full, with reference to the resubmitted thesis. The use of the phrase “as first report” should be avoided.
| (i) Nature and purpose of the investigation | Ensure that there is an adequate description of the nature and purpose of the investigation – a summary of the research undertaken by the candidate. | This could be lifted from question 1 of the preliminary report form where examiners are asked to give a brief summary of the subject matter of the thesis. |
| (ii) Evidence of originality | Ensure that the report describes the evidence of originality, with an indication of any such evidence. **Specific examples from the thesis should be cited.** | Specific examples from the thesis itself must be given. The report must stand alone from any publications which may have arisen from the research/thesis. |
| (ii) Evidence of independent critical ability | Ensure that the report describes the evidence of independent critical ability, with an indication of any such evidence. **Specific examples from the thesis should be cited.** | Where the evidence in the thesis is not compelling the examiners should use the viva to encourage the student to provide convincing evidence that the stated criteria can be met and reflect on this in the report. |
| (iv) Matter suitable for publication | Ensure that the report addresses the extent to which the thesis contains matter suitable for publication. The response should identify both the part(s) of the thesis containing work of publishable quality and cite instances of where the work has or might be published (which should be appropriate for the field of research). | If examples from both the thesis and the publication/journal are not provided it is likely the Group will request further information before approving the Examiners’ report. Where the candidate has already published from the thesis copies of the publications and a statement of how this work has been used in the thesis is included with the examiners’ paperwork to assist the examiners. The Instructions to Examiners give for guidance on the publications requirements at doctoral and Masters level. |
| (v) Overall style and presentation of the thesis | Comments on the written style and overall presentation of the thesis should be provided | One word answers should be avoided. |
| (vi) Performance at the oral examination | Comments on the performance of the candidate in the oral examination should be provided. The Examiners response should reflect how the candidate responded to questions about the thesis. | The examiners must be satisfied that the work submitted reaches the standard for the degree and that the candidate has written the work submitted and can demonstrate the he/she has a good understanding of their area of research. One word answers should be avoided. |

Remember that this is a joint report – the answers should indicate it is the view of all the examiners (language like "We feel" rather than "I feel" should be used).
**Doctoral Reports – the following questions may be required depending on the recommendation made**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minor deficiencies</strong></td>
<td>Only completed in those cases where the recommendation for award is subject to the correction of minor deficiencies. This section should give a brief summary of the nature of the deficiencies. <strong>Do not</strong> complete this section where the recommendation is editorial &amp; presentational corrections. It is not necessary to attach a complete list of the corrections, however this should be provided to the candidate, in writing, within 1 working day of the viva. If an extensive list of deficiencies is attached the Group may require reassurance that these can be completed within 12 weeks before approving the report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research excellence</strong></td>
<td>Only completed in those cases where the examiners have identified research excellence in the thesis where the Examiners wish to recommend this for recognition by the University. The Examiners should provide further information in support of this recommendation. Please note this is only applicable where the examiners are recommending that the degree be awarded with no corrections or with editorial &amp; presentational corrections. If the recommendation is approved by the Group the text provided by the examiners in this section will be included in a letter of congratulations sent to the candidate from the Dean of PGR Studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasons for referral</strong></td>
<td>To be completed in those cases where the recommendation is for referral. A clear summary of the reasons for this recommendation should be provided. In the case of a referral, the Examiners are also required to prepare “notes for guidance” and submit these to RSA with the examiners’ report (and preliminary reports). Good practice advice is given in section 5.3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MPhil award on a PhD submission</strong></td>
<td>In the event of a recommendation for the award of MPhil the Examiners are required to provide: (a) comment on the quality of the research reported in the thesis and whether it contains an independent contribution to knowledge and scholarship and material at a level suitable for publication (with specific examples); (i.e. positive comment on how the thesis has met the criteria for MPhil award); (b) a summary giving the reasons why this decision has been reached by the examiners. This must clearly indicate why the criteria for PhD award have not been met (and cannot be met by referral for PhD on a first submission);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fail</strong></td>
<td>In the event of a recommendation that a degree be not awarded Examiners are asked to ensure that a clear summary of the reasons for failure is provided. In the case of a recommendation for failure on a first submission the Examiners’ Report must also include an explicit statement explaining why referral for resubmission was not an option.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning outcomes</strong></td>
<td>If the Examiners wish to comment on the achievement in the Learning Outcomes they are invited to do so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General feedback</strong></td>
<td>Examiners are invited to bring to the attention of the Graduate Board any general comments/feedback in relation to the examination and assessment process for consideration by the University, favourable or otherwise, that the examiners wish to.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Useful documents relating to Submission and Examination of theses

The following documents relating to the submission and examination of theses are published on the RSA website:

In the Policies section: www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/policies.html

- Thesis Format Regulations
- Good Practice Guidance on Thesis Titles
- Guidance on Ethesis Preparation, Copyright and Publication
- Suspensions/Extensions during the referral period & extensions to correction deadlines
- Guidelines for the use of Video Conferencing
- Procedures for investigating plagiarism in research degree
- Submission of a thesis in a language other than English  
  (applies only to candidates registered in the School of Modern Languages & Cultures)
- Guide for External Examiner Briefings
- Research Excellence Policy
- Inclusion of a CD within a thesis submission

In the Forms section http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/forms/forms_thesissubmission.html

- Examiners Preliminary Report Form
- Examiners Report Form (and instructions)
- Thesis Deposit Form

Graduate Board's Examinations Group Timetable for the award of research degrees: 13/14

The final report (along with the preliminary reports) should be returned to RSA as soon as possible after the viva. Please bear in mind the deadlines below for each meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completed examiners’ reports returned to RSA by no later than:</th>
<th>Examinations Group meeting (all at 2.05pm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday 2nd September 2013</td>
<td>Monday 9th September 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 7th October 2013</td>
<td>Wednesday 16th October 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 4th November 2013*</td>
<td>Monday 11th November 2013*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 6th January 2014</td>
<td>Monday 13th January 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 24th February 2014</td>
<td>Monday 3rd March 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 14th April 2014</td>
<td>Monday 28th April 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 9th June 2014**</td>
<td>Monday 16 June 2014**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional meeting late July/early Aug (TBC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This is the last meeting before the December Degree Ceremonies.

** This is the last meeting before the July Degree Ceremonies.

There can be no flexibility over dates for receipt of examiners’ reports – this is because reports are circulated to the Examinations Group in advance of the meetings. Reports can only be considered by the Examinations Group once they have been correctly completed in accordance with the University’s requirements and have been signed by all the required personnel.