UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

CODE OF PRACTICE ON ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH DEGREE THESES

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Code of Practice applies to Postgraduate Registered Students undertaking programmes defined in the University's Regulations as research degree programmes. In this Code of Practice "Postgraduate Researcher" (PGR) means a Postgraduate Registered Student undertaking a research degree programme.

1.2 This Code of Practice sets out the processes and procedures for the assessment of all research degree theses.

1.3 It is recognised that the unit responsible for certain aspects of the assessment of PGRs varies for good reason across the University and may be either the College or the Principal Academic Unit (PAU). For the sake of brevity the following Code of Practice refers only to the PAU except when referring to those aspects of the procedures which are clearly a University-level responsibility. All references to the PAU should therefore be interpreted as referring to the College, School or department in accordance with practice in the particular part of the University concerned. References to the Head of PAU include their nominee as appropriate.

1.4 The terms "viva voce" and "oral examination" are interchangeable. Throughout this Code of Practice, the phrase oral examination will be used.

2. Nomination of Examiners

2.1 PGRs must submit a "Notice of Intention to Submit a Research Degree Thesis" form to their lead supervisor at least three months before they intend to submit their thesis so that examiners can be nominated. In signing the form the supervisor is acknowledging the impending submission, but is not confirming that the thesis is fit for submission or that the submission will be successful. The signed form should be sent to Research Student Administration in Registry.

Where the thesis contains confidential material and restricted access to the thesis is required, this must be applied for at the time the Intention to Submit a Research Degree Thesis form is submitted. The examiners will be informed of the confidential nature of the material.

2.2 The receipt by Research Student Administration of the Notice of Intention to Submit a Research Degree Thesis form will trigger the nomination of examiners process. It is expected that supervisor(s) and PAUs will have begun the process on an informal basis during the final stages of the completion of the thesis (see paragraph 6.1.15 Responsibilities of Postgraduate Researchers in the Code of Practice: Supervision and Monitoring of Progress of Postgraduate Researchers).

2.3 Research Student Administration will send a "Nomination of Examiners for Research Degrees" form to the PAU for completion by the PGR's supervisor and approval by the Head of PAU. Where the latter is also the PGRs supervisor, the nomination should be approved by the member of academic staff within the PAU with responsibility for PGRs. The completed form should be returned with any supporting documentation to Research Student Administration.

2.4 PGRs must be offered the opportunity to comment on the choice of examiners. Where the PGR raises concerns, the PAU should determine whether the concerns are valid; discuss the concerns with the PGR and confirm the reasons for the nominations proceeding or advise the PGR of the alternative examiners to be nominated.

2.5 Those approving the nominations must ensure that the proposed examiners meet the criteria (see Section 4 of this Code of Practice) and that they have been asked informally to act as examiners.

2.6 The PAU should ensure that the proposed examiners are aware of the University's timescale for the examination of theses (normally eight weeks where an oral examination is to be held; six weeks in other cases) and also of the proposed date of submission of the thesis by the PGR. PAUs should also ensure that nominees know what is expected of them as examiners (see Appendix A of this Code of Practice). Nominees should be asked about their availability should there be unforeseen delays in the submission of the thesis.

2.7 The nomination of a Chairperson should be made at the same time as the nomination of the examiners. (See Appendix A, Section C for information on the characteristics and duties of the Chairperson).

2.8 In the case of MRes degrees, PAUs may appoint examiners for each cohort in accordance with the procedures set out above with the exception of paragraphs 2.1, 2.3 and 2.4 which will then not apply. All other sections of this Code of Practice shall apply.

3. Number of Examiners to be Appointed

3.1 At least one internal examiner and at least one external examiner should be appointed for each PGR, except where the PGR is a member of staff of this University.

3.2 Where the PGR is a current member of staff, with a contract of employment with this University for more than 15 hours per week, two external examiners shall be appointed. This requirement shall also apply to former members of staff who were employed by the University for two thirds or more of their period of study whose contract of employment was for more than 15 hours per week, to current honorary members of staff and former honorary members of staff who held an honorary contract for two thirds or more of their period of study.

3.3 Where no internal examiner can be appointed, for example in extremely specialised subject areas and for some jointly awarded degrees, two external examiners will be appointed.

Note: In Sections 3.2 and 3.3 above, the Chairperson, who should have some knowledge of the subject area of the thesis in general terms, should undertake the administrative duties of the internal examiner, in addition to chairing the oral examination. (See also Appendix A of this Code of Practice).

3.4 Members of the supervisory team should not be appointed as examiners or the Chairperson of the oral examination.

3.5 Joint PhDs with partner institutions should be examined in accordance with the agreement signed with the partner institutions. However, this University's minimum requirements for the examination process must be met.

4. Criteria for the Nomination of Examiners and Chairperson of the oral examination

4.1 When nominating examiners the Head of PAU should be aware of the requirement for those who are not UK nationals to provide evidence of their right to work in the UK. Before making the nomination, the nominee's eligibility to work in the UK must be checked.

4.2 *The examiners should:*

4.2 .1 be specialists in the general subject area of the thesis.

4.2 .2 hold qualifications at least equal to the degree which they are examining, unless there is compensating academic or professional status or experience *(e.g. specialist in subject area of thesis and has published widely, but only has master's degree).*

4.2 .3 have good research experience, be research active and have published in peer reviewed publications.

4.2 .4 hold a current academic appointment within higher education; although appropriate persons from outside higher education (e.g. a senior scientist at a research institute, a professional practitioner or a person based in a relevant industry) who holds a similar position which gives familiarity with research (and research degrees) may be appointed.

4.2 .5 have recent experience (within the last five years) of examining research degree theses and/or a clear understanding of the task to be undertaken.

4.3 *The examiners should not:*

4.3 .1 have had a substantial direct involvement with the PGR's work (unless it is a resubmitted thesis). Where staff involved in progress reviews and members of the PAU Progress Panel (sometimes known as "internal assessors") are nominated to act as internal examiners, the Head of PAU (or nominee) should confirm on the Nomination of Examiners form that the nominee has not had a direct involvement with the PGR's work to ensure that there is no conflict of interest. (For example, consideration should be given to the amount of feedback given to the PGR by the proposed internal examiner and whether they are sufficiently independent of the PGR's work to enable them to carry out the role of internal examiner.)

4.3 .2 be members of the PGR's supervisory team.

4.3 .3 have been a PGR of the University within the last four years.

4.3 .4 be a probationer.

4.3 .5 currently be a PGR.

4.3 .6 *for external examiners only:* have been a member of staff of the University within the last four years. It should be noted that acting as an external examiner for a taught programme is not classed as being a member of staff in this instance.

4.4 External examiners should not be appointed on a regular basis such that their familiarity with the PAU might prejudice objective judgement.

4.5 A person not on the University of Birmingham's payroll but holding an honorary University of Birmingham title or having been awarded the title of Recognised Supervisor of the University of Birmingham may be appointed as an internal but not as an external examiner. *Note: In such cases, it may be appropriate for the Chairperson of the oral examination to undertake the administrative duties of the internal examiner (See also 3.3 of this Code of Practice).*

4.6 The original examiners should normally re-examine a thesis that has been resubmitted after revision. Where examiners are no longer able to act for any reason, PAUs should nominate replacement examiners, and set out the reasons for the replacement(s). Examiners, in their letter of appointment, will be advised that if the thesis is subject to revision and resubmission and that, if for any reason they are not re-appointed to re-examine the thesis, their reports will be made available to the new examiners. (See also 8.6 regarding recommendations open to new examiners of a resubmitted thesis.)

4.7 The Chairperson for the oral examination must be a member of academic staff and should be independent and impartial. They should not be a member of the PGR's supervisory team, should not have had any direct involvement in the PGR's work or have been involved in the nomination of examiners. The formal approval of the nomination of examiners on behalf of the PAU should not preclude the Head of the PAU from chairing the oral examination.

4.8 Where a PAU wishes to nominate an examiner or chairperson who does not meet the criteria above, an exceptional case should be made in Section 5 of the Nomination of Examiners form, setting out the proposed examiner's particular suitability to examine the thesis or suitability to chair the oral exam (as applicable). The case will be considered by the Senate or Delegated Authority.

5. Appointment of Examiners and Chairperson

5.1 The appointment of the examiners and the chairperson are formally confirmed when the thesis is sent for examination.

5.2 PGRs are advised of the names of the examiners and Chairperson when the thesis is sent to the examiners.

5.3 The acceptance of an invitation to act as an examiner is on the understanding that examiners are willing to have their reports made available to the PGR, their supervisor and Head of the PAU. Where examiners have comments that they might wish to draw to the attention of the University, these should be raised separately from the report on the thesis and sent directly to Research Student Administration.

5.4 Examiners are advised of the standard required of the thesis and the range of recommendations available to them as defined in the Regulations for the degree concerned, via the "Guidance Notes for Examiners of Research Degree Theses".

5.5 Research Student Administration should be notified by the PAU of any changes to examiners and chairperson.

6. Format and Submission of the Theses for Examination

6.1 An electronic version of the thesis should be submitted to Research Student Administration in the format as set out in Regulation 7.4.2 and outlined in the Library Services "Guide to Presenting your Thesis" available on the Thesis Submission and Examination web pages.

6.2 When submitting the thesis for examination, the PGR must also submit the following:

- an electronic exact copy of the thesis for a plagiarism check via plagiarism detection software in accordance with guidance issued by the PAU. A thesis will not be sent for examination until the PAU has confirmed that the plagiarism check has been completed and the thesis cleared for examination;
- a declarations form;
- where applicable a third party declaration form.

6.3 Where a PGR is registered on a research programme with mandatory taught elements, a thesis will not be sent for examination until all mandatory taught requirements have been completed (as per University regulation 7.2.1) and recorded on the University's central student records.

7. The Oral Examination

7.1 *The Requirement to hold an Oral Examination is:*

7.1 .1 Obligatory for doctoral degrees

7.1 .2 For masters degrees, the decision on whether to hold an oral examination shall be taken with the agreement of both the internal and external examiners. An oral examination must be held in all cases where examiners are proposing that the masters thesis be revised and resubmitted or rejected.

7.1 .3 Obligatory after a doctoral thesis has been resubmitted.

7.1 .4 A PGR may apply to the Senate or Delegated Authority for an exemption to the requirement to attend an oral examination. Exemptions shall be granted only in

exceptional circumstances. Where an exemption is granted, the examiners should make appropriate alternative arrangements to clarify any points of ambiguity and satisfy themselves that the thesis is the PGR's own work.

7.2 Arrangements for the Oral Examination

7.2 .1 It is the responsibility of the internal examiner (or the Chairperson if no internal examiner is appointed) to make the arrangements for the oral examination.

7.2 .2 The internal examiner should notify the Chairperson, external examiner(s) and the PGR, in writing, giving at least two weeks' notice, of the date, time, venue and names of those attending.

7.2 .3 (i) The viva may not be recorded or broadcast in any format.

(ii) With the prior approval of the Senate or Delegated Authority the oral exam may be held by video / teleconferencing (see below).

7.2 .4 It is expected that the oral examination will be held at the University of Birmingham. If, in exceptional circumstances, it is held elsewhere or held by video conferencing or by telephone link, the following points must be taken into consideration when seeking approval from the Senate or Delegated Authority.

7.2 .5 All parties must agree to the venue or video conferencing or telephone link, especially the PGR.

7.2 .6 Facilities and conditions must be similar to those at the University of Birmingham.

7.2 .7 If video conferencing or telephone links are used, to ensure the quality of the sound links between locations have been tested; that time differences between the two locations do not disadvantage the PGR by the examination taking place at an inappropriate time of day or night.

7.2 .8 Ensure that there are no interruptions, except in extreme emergency.

7.2 .9 No reason for the PGR to claim procedural irregularity on the grounds of a change of location or video conferencing or telephone link after the oral examination.

7.2 .10 The PGR's PAU would be liable for any expenses incurred in travelling to the oral examination by all concerned, including the PGR, if the examiners requested a location outside the University of Birmingham.

7.3 Purpose/Aim of the Oral Examination

The oral examination

7.3 .1 Provides the PGR with an opportunity to defend their thesis.

7.3 .2 Assists the examiners in their decision as to whether or not the PGR has met the requirements for the degree.

7.3 .3 Examines the general field within which the subject of the thesis lies.

7.3 .4 Allows detailed discussion of the thesis.

7.3 .5 Explores the ideas and theories proposed in the thesis.

7.3 .6 Clarifies points of ambiguity.

7.3 .7 Satisfies the examiners that the thesis is the PGR's own work.

7.4 Conduct of the Oral Examination

7.4 .1 The oral examination should be held in a suitable room without interruption.

7.4 .2 The Chairperson, internal, external examiner(s) and PGR must be present and the oral exam must be re-arranged if any of them are unavailable to attend. No other person may attend except with the unanimous approval of the Chairperson and examiners and approval by the Senate or Delegated Authority. Supervisor(s) should not be present at the oral examination, but should be available on the day.

7.4 .3 Time should be made available on the day of, and before the oral examination, for examiners to meet and discuss their preliminary independent reports and to discuss the approach to the oral examination.

7.4 .4 The Chairperson should introduce those present, putting them at their ease, explaining the format that the oral examination will take and what happens afterwards. The Chairperson must be present throughout the oral examination proceedings and will only intervene if there is a danger of misunderstanding, unfairness, bias or unprofessional behaviour.

7.4 .5 Each examiner should contribute, but with the external taking the lead.

7.4 .6 There are no rules governing length. It is at the examiners' discretion to make the oral examination as long or short as they think necessary. Short breaks are permitted if necessary/ requested.

7.4 .7 There may be intense questioning, but it should be non-aggressive.

7.4 .8 No-one, at any time, should indicate the likely outcome.

7.5 After the Oral Examination

7.5 .1 The Chairperson should ask the PGR to withdraw.

7.5 .2 The examiners should deliberate.

7.5 .3 The examiners, through the Chairperson, may invite the PGR and supervisor(s) to hear the recommendation (provisional only).

7.5 .4 The report should be completed and submitted, together with the thesis and the list of corrections or revisions (where appropriate), to Research Student Administration, ideally immediately after the conclusion of the oral examination but, in any case, by the required date.

8. Report Form and Recommendations Available to Examiners

8.1 The date by which the examination process should be completed and the reports submitted to Research Student Administration will be clearly stated in examiners' letters of appointment and on the first page of the report form. Examiners are required to complete the examiner's report form as follows:

Part One

8.1 .1 An independent report before any oral examination is held. Examiners should note any matters that they may wish to raise at the oral examination. The reports are not made available to the PGR at this stage in the examination process and are shared with the other examiner before the oral examination. The independent report should address the following areas:

(a) Was the nature and purpose of the research made clear and was this substantially achieved?

(b) To what extent does the thesis demonstrate that the PGR has an adequate understanding of the subject and knowledge of the literature?

(c) Has the appropriate methodology for the study been chosen? Is the methodology then used effectively? Are the findings interpreted in a valid way?

(d) Is there coverage of recent and relevant literature in the field of study which shows critical appraisal and an original synthesis?

(e) What evidence is there of independent critical and analytical skills, and the ability to evaluate evidence?

(f) Is there an understanding of the theoretical field associated with the study? Is the linkage and balance between practical investigation and theory satisfactory?

(g) Is the thesis clearly written and presented? Is the style and structure of the thesis satisfactory?

(h) For MPhil and Doctoral thesis to what extent does the thesis show evidence of originality and make a contribution to knowledge? Does it contain matter suitable for publication?

(i) What is your view of the overall quality of the research described in the thesis?

(j) Is the abstract an adequate summary of the work presented?

Part Two

8.1 .2 Where an oral examination is held, a separate or joint report should be submitted following the oral examination. This should take into consideration the independent reports and the PGR's performance in the oral examination.

Part Three

8.1 .3 A final, where possible, agreed recommendation

Part Four

8.1 .4 Clear guidance to PGRs on corrections/revisions: detailed advice to the PGR in order that any corrections and/or revisions may be carried out satisfactorily.

8.2 The PGR, supervisor(s) and Head of PAU will be formally notified of the outcome of the examination by Research Student Administration and sent copies of examiners' reports in order that they may benefit from examiners' comments and advice.

8.3 Examiners' recommendations: MRes, MA/MSc by research and MPhil

Following the initial submission and examination of the PGR's work for the degree of MRes, MA/MSc by research or MPhil, the examiners shall make one of the following recommendations to the Senate or Delegated Authority:

8.3 .1 That the degree for which the thesis was submitted be awarded.

8.3 .2 Where the thesis is a qualifying thesis that the degree of MRes, MA / MSc by research or MPhil be awarded with or without the option of proceeding to further work for a doctoral degree. If the PGR chooses the former and is subsequently awarded the doctoral degree, then the degree of MRes, MA/MSc or MPhil will not be awarded.

8.3 .3 That the degree of MRes, MA/MSc by Research or MPhil be awarded after the PGR has made minor corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal examiner.

8.3 .4 Where the thesis is a qualifying thesis that the degree of MRes, MA / MSc by Research or MPhil be awarded as appropriate after minor corrections to the thesis with or without the option of proceeding to further work for a doctoral degree.

8.3 .5 That the degree of MRes, MA/MSc by Research or MPhil be awarded after the PGR has made major corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of all the examiners.

8.3 .6 Where the thesis is a qualifying thesis that the degree of MRes, MA/ MSc by Research or MPhil be awarded as appropriate after major corrections to the thesis with or without the option of proceeding to further work for a doctoral degree.

8.3 .7 That the thesis be referred for revision and re-submission.

8.3 .8 That the PGR, having submitted a thesis for the award of an MPhil degree be awarded an MA/MSc by Research, as appropriate, if necessary after the PGR has made minor or major corrections or revisions to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners. The PGR shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9.

8.3 .9 That the thesis be rejected without opportunity for resubmission and the PGR not be awarded the degree for which the thesis was submitted. The PGR shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9. A Postgraduate Certificate may be awarded for the successful completion of taught modules.

8.4 Examiners' recommendations - Doctoral degrees

Following the initial submission and examination of the thesis for a doctoral degree, the examiners shall make one of the following recommendations to the Senate or Delegated Authority:

8.4 .1 That the degree for which the thesis was submitted be awarded.

8.4 .2 That the degree for which the thesis was submitted be awarded after the PGR has made minor corrections or revisions to the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal examiner.

8.4 .3 That the degree for which the thesis was submitted be awarded after the PGR has made major corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of all the examiners.

8.4 .4 That the thesis be referred for revision and re-submission for the degree for which the thesis was previously submitted.

8.4 .5 That the PGR, having submitted a thesis for the award of a doctoral degree be awarded a Research Masters or the related Taught Masters degree, as appropriate, if necessary after the PGR has made minor or major corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners. The PGR shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9.

8.4 .6 That the PGR, having submitted a thesis for the award of a doctoral degree, the thesis be referred for revision and resubmission for an appropriate Research Masters degree.

8.4 .7 That the thesis be rejected without opportunity for resubmission and the degree for which the thesis was submitted not be awarded. The PGR shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9. A

Postgraduate Certificate may be awarded for successful completion of taught modules.

8.5 Following the examination of a thesis resubmitted for a research degree, the examiners shall make one of the following recommendations to the Senate or Delegated Authority, as appropriate, either:

8.5 .1 That the degree for which the thesis or other work was submitted be awarded; or

8.5 .2 That the degree for which the thesis was submitted be awarded, where appropriate, after completion of minor corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal examiner;

8.5 .3 That the degree for which the thesis was submitted be awarded, where appropriate, after completion of major corrections to the satisfaction of all examiners;

8.5 .4 That the PGR, having resubmitted a thesis for the award of a doctoral degree, be awarded an alternative Research Masters or Taught Master's degree, as appropriate after completion of minor or major corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners. (The PGR shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9.); or

8.5 .5 That the PGR, having submitted a thesis for the degree of MPhil, be awarded an MA/MSc by Research, as appropriate, if necessary after the PGR has made minor or major corrections or revisions to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners. The PGR shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9.

8.5 .6 That the thesis or other reports be rejected without opportunity for resubmission and the degree for which the thesis was submitted not be awarded. The PGR shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9. A Postgraduate Certificate may be awarded for successful completion of taught modules.

8.6 Where one or more examiners of a revised and resubmitted thesis have been replaced, the examiners will have the full range of options available that were available at the first examination of the thesis.

8.7 In cases where the examiners agree and an adequate report has been submitted and the recommendation is to award the degree subject to minor or major corrections, action to advise the PGR will be taken by Research Student Administration without reference to any academic authority.

8.8 In cases where the recommendation is for resubmission, or award a lower qualification or rejection, reports will be submitted for consideration and, if appropriate, approval by Senate or Delegated Authority.

8.9 The outcome of the examination is confirmed to the PGR by email (sent to both the University and personal email address(es) on record) and includes a copy of the examiners' reports, and where applicable the list of required corrections or guidance for resubmission. The outcome email will confirm the date for submission of a corrected/revised thesis to Research Student Administration and for awards, the date of submission of the final e-thesis.

9. Corrections

9.1 In accordance with Regulation 7.4.7(g), where corrections are required to be made to a thesis, to remove any ambiguity examiners need to be explicit in the guidance given with regard to corrections, and this should be in the form of a detailed list of the required corrections included with the examiners' report form. Where examiners have indicated corrections in the body of theses, reference must be made to this on the examiners' report form.

9.2 The corrected thesis and the document detailing how the corrections have been carried out should be submitted directly to the examiner(s) by email, copying in Research Student Administration by the required date..

9.3 The PGR may raise any queries on the required corrections with the examiners through their supervisor.

9.4 The PGR is permitted one opportunity to complete the minor or major corrections to the satisfaction of the examiners (Regulation 7.4.7(j). Examiners are not permitted to provide feedback to the PGR on corrections prior to the formal submission of the corrected thesis. The student should not contact the examiners directly.

9.5 The award of the degree is withheld until the internal examiner for minor corrections and all examiners for major corrections have confirmed that the corrections have been completed to their satisfaction.

9.6 Where a PGR is also a member of staff so two external examiners have been nominated (as per 3.2) but an internal examiner has also been nominated, the award of the degree is withheld until an external examiner for minor corrections has confirmed that the corrections have been completed to their satisfaction.

9.7 With the approval of the Senate or Delegated Authority, examiners may request further minor corrections to be made following major corrections. Where the examiners require further minor corrections, a comprehensive list of the further corrections should be returned to Research Student Administration, together with an explanation of the reasons for the request for further corrections who will refer the request to the Senate or Delegated Authority for consideration.

Examiners should not request PGRs to carry out any further corrections until the decision of the Senate or Delegated Authority is known.

9.8 Further corrections following minor corrections are not permitted.

10. Revise and Resubmit

10.1 In accordance with Regulation 7.4.7(g), examiners are required to be explicit in the guidance given with regard to the required revisions, and this should be in the form of a detailed report/list of the required revisions in the examiner's report form. Where examiners have indicated revisions in the body of the thesis, reference must be made to this on the examiner's report form.

10.2 The PGR may raise any queries on the required corrections with the examiners through their supervisor. The student should not contact the examiner directly.

10.3 A revised and resubmitted thesis is subject to a full further examination.

11. Failure of Examiners to Reach Agreement

11.1 In cases where the examiners (i.e. those appointed as set out in Regulations 7.4.4) are unable to reach agreement on the recommendation on the outcome of the examination the following shall apply.

11.2 The PGR shall be re-examined by new examiners. The new examiners shall be appointed in accordance with Regulation 7.4.4 except that two external examiners may be appointed if no suitable internal examiner is available. None of the new examiners shall have been an original examiner and the Head of PAU shall not be appointed as a new examiner.

11.3 The new examiners shall conduct a fresh examination of the thesis. They shall not see the reports of the original examiners.

11.4 The PGR, their supervisor and Head of PAU concerned shall have the right to see the reports of the original examiners.

11.5 The thesis may not be amended in any way before re-examination by the new examiners.

11.6 If the new examiners are unable to reach agreement, an appropriately-qualified adjudicator, who may or may not be a member of staff of the University, should be appointed by the Head of College and approved by the Senate or Delegated Authority. The adjudicator should not have been one of the examiners or the chairperson of the oral examinations.

11.7 The adjudicator should make a recommendation based on the thesis and the reports of the original and of the new examiners or approval by the Senate or Delegated Authority. The PGR, supervisor and Head of PAU will be sent a copy of the adjudicator's report and final recommendation.

Appendix A: The Examiners and the Chairperson of the Oral Examination

A Internal Examiner

The internal examiner is expected:

A1 To ensure that the whole examination process is completed within the period allowed (normally, eight weeks where an oral examination is to be held; six weeks in other cases) and to submit reports as requested to Research Student Administration by the required date.

A2 To liaise with the external examiner, supervisor(s), PGR and Chairperson in order to arrange a suitable date for the oral examination, if held.

A3 To notify Research Student Administration of any delays in arranging the oral examination.

A4 To notify all those concerned in good time, normally at least two weeks in advance, of the date, time and venue of the oral examination and the names of those who will be attending.

A5 To refer oral examinations to be held outside the University of Birmingham to Research Student Administration to seek approval from the University's Senate or Delegated Authority.

A6 To make appropriate arrangements for the oral examination, including time to discuss the preliminary independent reports with the external examiner.

A7 To ensure that report forms are submitted to Research Student Administration following the oral examination by the required date, including a clear specification of the corrections and/or revisions for onward transmission to the PGR, PGR's supervisor(s) and PGR's Head of PAU.

A8 The external examiner, through the Chairperson of the oral examination, may invite the PGR and supervisor(s), to hear the recommendation (provisional only). The official notification of the outcome, following approval by the Senate or Delegated Authority, where appropriate, will be by email from Research Student Administration.

A9 To complete a "Certification of Corrections" form in cases where a PGR has to make minor or major corrections to the thesis. (Note: This will be a joint responsibility with the external examiner where major corrections are required.)

B External Examiner

The external examiner is expected:

B1 To submit reports as requested to Research Student Administration and to ensure that deadlines for examining theses are met.

B2 To attend an oral examination, if held.

B3 To complete a "Certification of Corrections" form where the PGR is required to carry out major corrections. This is a joint responsibility with the internal examiner.

B4 Where the PGR is required to carry out minor corrections, and two external examiners instead of an internal examiner (normally their responsibility to complete the form) have been appointed, the examiners should nominate which examiner will undertake the checking of the minor corrections and complete a "Certification of Corrections".

C Chairperson

The following is a list of characteristics and duties of the Chairperson:

C1 A member of academic staff, with sufficient ability and maturity to ensure the proper conduct of the proceedings, who has examined research degrees in any university on previous occasions. They may be from a different PAU to the PGR. Once appointed, Research Student Administration should be notified.

C2 Some knowledge of the subject area of the thesis in general terms.

C3 No requirement to read the thesis.

C4 Is not one of the examiners.

C5 Undertakes responsibility for the administrative duties of the internal examiner in cases where no internal examiner is appointed and two external examiners are appointed.

C6 Introduces those present at the oral examination and puts everyone one at ease.

C7 Ensures that those present understand the procedures to be followed.

C8 Is present throughout the oral examination and only intervenes if there is a danger of misunderstanding, unfairness, bias or unprofessional behaviour.

C9 At the end of the oral examination, asks the PGR to withdraw while the examiners deliberate, making it clear to the PGR that the chairperson is not an examiner and will not participate in the substance of the deliberations.

C10 If the examiners wish to advise the PGR and the supervisor(s) of their recommendations, to make sure this is undertaken in a professional way and with as little stress as possible for those concerned, that the PGR knows what is required of them and that this recommendation is provisional only - the PGR must await a formal email from Research Student Administration.

C11 During the oral examination and deliberations, to make brief notes on the Chair Report Form concerning the conduct of the oral examination and to ensure that these are retained, for possible use in the future, for example, in the case of an appeal.

C12 Where there is an unexpected interruption to the oral examination, the Chairperson should take the lead in instigating appropriate action. The Chair should confirm to the PGR and examiners that no further discussions will take place until the viva is reconvened. A record of the time and duration of the break should be in the Chairperson's notes.

A Chairperson should familiarise themselves with the fire evacuation plans for the venue. If a fire alarm occurs during the oral examination, the Chairperson should immediately stop the proceedings and ensure that the PGR and examiners make their way to the relevant assembly point.

If the period of evacuation is not prolonged, and if the Safety or Fire Officer confirms normal use of the building, the viva may be re-started at the discretion of the Chairperson in consultation with the examiners and PGR.

Where it is not possible for the oral examination to continue, the examiners, in consultation with the Chairperson, should determine whether sufficient discussion has taken place for a

final recommendation to be made or whether a new date needs to be arranged to continue the oral examination.

C13 To respond, either individually or as part of a PAU response to a PGR appeal.