



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Instructions to examiners for research degree examinations 2024/25

Doctoral College Operations (DCO)
Leeds Doctoral College
rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk

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General Information

Useful Resources

Please see below for links to relevant University of Leeds website pages for information relating to your role as a research degree examiner.

- [Examiners' Preliminary report form template](#) (completed before the viva)
- [Examiners joint report form template](#) (completed after the viva)
- [Video-streaming viva policy](#)
- [Format and presentation requirements for theses](#)
- [Ordinances, Regulations and Programmes of Study for Research Degrees](#)¹
- [The University's Code of Conduct – Professional Behaviours and Relationships](#)
- Note for External Examiners: The University will process information about your role as external examiner in accordance with the [Staff Privacy Notice](#).
- Note for Internal Examiners: all Internal Examiners have access to the [Briefing for Experienced Examiners](#). This summarises the main aspects of the role of the internal examiner and the Leeds examination system. It should not take more than 10-15 minutes. You may find it helpful to review this alongside these Instructions.

External Examiner Fees and Expenses

The External Examiner's fee is paid by Doctoral College Operations (DCO). Expenses associated with examination are paid by the Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) School. Information on fee and expenses payments will be included in the appointment paperwork sent to the examiners with the thesis.

Export Controls

UK Export Controls restrict the transfer or disclosure of sensitive goods, software, and technology (know-how and other information), known collectively as items, to recipients and destinations outside of the UK. This includes physical exports, electronic transfers (via email, file sharing, virtual meetings, access to controlled data while overseas, etc.), and transfers by any other means (verbal communication). All examiners are asked to bear this in mind during the examination of a thesis. If the PGR's research is in [any of the subject areas designated as High Risk or as one of the Dual-Use categories](#) accessing the thesis or participating in the viva from outside the UK may be covered by Export Control legislation. If this is the case, or if there is any doubt, please contact the PGR's Supervisors as soon as possible.

Questions and further advice

The Thesis Examination team in Doctoral College Operations (DCO) is available to help and answer queries or assist with any issues before, during or after the examination. Please contact us by e-mail: rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk. We can also arrange for a member of the team to speak to you via your University Teams account.

¹ These detail the formal regulations and requirements for the University's research degrees

1. Before the oral examination

Submission of the thesis

- 1.1 Submission of the thesis for examination must be made to Doctoral College Operations (DCO). Theses must not be sent directly to the examiners by the PGR or the Supervisors. The thesis examination team in DCO will distribute the thesis and paperwork to examiners in electronic format, and examiners will receive formal notification of appointment from DCO. If the electronic format of the thesis and documents will cause difficulties, and printed copies are required, please contact the DCO team (rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk).
- 1.2 PGRs are solely responsible for the decision to submit their work for examination and for the thesis which is submitted. Substitute versions of theses, additional pages or supplementary material cannot normally be accepted after submission of the thesis and must not be sent directly to the examiners by the PGR or Supervisors. This applies irrespective of whether the thesis was submitted on or before the maximum time limit.
- 1.3 The thesis is submitted to the examiners on the basis that they 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 must advise the examiners of any specific confidentiality undertakings that are required as a result of commercial agreements. If for this or any other reason you should find your appointment would create some conflict of interest please contact DCO immediately. Please delete copies of the work and any correspondence generated in relation to the work once the examination process has been completed, or upon request from the School.
- 1.4 Examiners are specifically asked to bear in mind that the thesis submitted for examination represents research that may reasonably be expected after completion of the standard period of study. **The thesis must be written in English².**

Preliminary Report Form

- 1.5 Each examiner should read the thesis carefully and independently of the other examiner(s), bearing in mind the criteria for the award of the degree. Before the oral examination, each examiner must prepare a preliminary report and bring this to the examination. This report must contain **brief**, preliminary thoughts but **must not** contain any recommendation relating to the award (or not) of the degree. Each examiner must also complete an [independent preliminary report](#) form in the case of a resubmission following referral.

² With the exception of research degrees in the modern languages where, in certain circumstances approved by the Graduate Board, a thesis may be submitted in a [language other than English](#).

- 1.6 Having read the thesis the examiners should complete a preliminary report form and examine the thesis even if their view is that it does not meet the requirements for the degree as the PGR must be given the opportunity to defend their work at an oral examination.
- 1.7 Each examiner must complete their preliminary report independently of the other examiner(s) before exchange, or discussing the thesis with the other examiner(s).
- 1.8 On the day of the oral examination the examiners should arrange to meet together before seeing the PGR in order to decide upon areas for discussion and any issues on which clarification should be sought. The preliminary reports should be discussed by the examiners and will assist them in deciding upon the structure of the examination and in identifying specific topics for discussion. This discussion will enable the examiners to plan the structure of the oral examination and ensure that all relevant issues are addressed appropriately
- 1.9 The examiners must not discuss their provisional findings with the PGR at any point before the oral examination or give an indication of the likely recommendation until the oral examination has been completed.

Policy on academic integrity

- 1.10 Please [see the academic integrity section later in this document](#) for advice on academic integrity and plagiarism in a research degree examination and the steps to be followed should the examiners have any concerns with plagiarism or other academic misconduct in the thesis or the viva. A Turnitin Originality Report will be shared with the examiners alongside the thesis³.

³ Not including PGRs registered at an Accredited Institution

2. Arrangements for the oral examination

Format for the viva

2.1 There are three possible models for a viva:

- Fully in person (all parties together on campus for a face-to-face viva)
- Fully remote (all parties complete the viva via Microsoft Teams or Zoom)
- Hybrid (some parties are face to face whilst others in the meeting are video streaming). This could include the PGR and internal examiner being co-located on Campus, with the external examiner joining via video-streaming or the examiners being co-located, with the PGR joining via video-streaming [and supervisor if attending and/or Independent Chair if appointed].

2.2 Please consult the [video-streamed viva policy](#) for further advice on agreeing the format of the viva. The internal examiner is responsible for making the arrangements for the oral examination and must contact the external examiner, the PGR and the Independent Chair (if appointed) to arrange a date, time and venue (or online platform) for the examination⁴. For an in-person viva, please ensure that the venue is suitable for an examination.

2.3 The Supervisor(s) should also be kept informed, as the PGR may request that one supervisor attend the oral examination as an observer. Before the oral examination the internal examiner is asked to establish whether a supervisor will be present and that this is in accordance with the wishes of the PGR.

Confirming the Pastoral Support Arrangements (before the viva)

2.4 The examination is normally held – and should be concluded - within office hours, as this is when staff are available to provide advice and support to examiners and PGRs, should this be needed. Due consideration should be given to this when planning the start time of the viva to ensure sufficient time is available. Careful consideration must be given for an online viva where there may be a need to consider two, sometimes three, time zones for a remote viva with an overseas participant/s. Examiners should avoid arranging a viva for the last day before a University closure period (Christmas and Easter) when there will be an extended period post-viva where advice and pastoral support will not be available. Wherever possible, examiners are advised to avoid arranging a viva for a Friday afternoon to ensure that support is available before the weekend, should this be needed.

2.5 The internal examiner is asked to confirm that pastoral support (normally via the supervisor or other appropriate member of staff) will be available to the PGR

⁴ If the internal examiner is on a period of leave (for example maternity/paternity leave) and assistance is required with these arrangements please contact your Graduate School Office.

immediately after the viva, should this be necessary. If the supervisor will not be attending the viva as an observer, please check that they, or other appropriate member of staff (e.g. Director of PGR Studies) will be contactable if needed, and available to attend the post-viva outcome and feedback meeting if needed. Please see [the post-viva support Section](#) for further guidance about the arrangements for pastoral support, if needed, after the viva.

Timescale for the viva arrangements

- 2.6 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 Doctor of Medicine (MD)). Delays in arranging the oral examination can cause significant problems for PGRs. The internal examiner is therefore asked to begin making arrangements for the examination immediately upon receiving the thesis to ensure these timescales can be met. Once a date has been agreed the internal examiner is asked to record the date in GRAD (you will have received an email and task).
- 2.7 Delays to the viva can be particularly problematic for PGRs in the UK under the Student visa arrangements. The University has to adhere to strict rules regarding how long it can issue a Confirmation of Acceptance for Study (CAS) for to PGRs who have submitted for examination. If the examination is scheduled outside of 3 months from submission of the thesis, the University may not be able to continue to sponsor the PGR to remain in the UK whilst they are awaiting their viva.

Difficulties/delays to the viva (information of relevance to the internal examiner)

- 2.8 If it is not possible to meet the timescale outlined above, for example where there are other commitments of the examiners, the internal examiner must inform DCO and **must** also keep the PGR, supervisor and Graduate School informed on the progress being made to arrange the examination. Where all parties are in agreement (including the PGR), a short delay can be considered by the University.
- 2.9 The examiners are expected to take account of known religious observances when arranging the oral examination. Examiners are also asked, as far as is possible and reasonable, to accommodate the PGR's prior commitments (e.g. work) and to give sufficient notice of the date to allow the PGR to make appropriate leave arrangements. However, should the examiners experience unreasonable difficulties with the PGR committing to a date the internal examiner is asked to contact DCO who will make further enquiries with the Director of PGR Studies.
- 2.10 It is expected that the PGR will present for the oral examination which will normally be scheduled within 3 months of dispatch of the thesis to the examiners (6 months for MD PGRs). PGRs must make all reasonable efforts to attend for examination in this period, for example making appropriate leave arrangements if in employment and visa/travel

arrangements if travelling from elsewhere. Should exceptional circumstances arise which might prevent them from attending for examination in this period PGRs are asked to contact their Director of PGR Studies at the earliest opportunity.

- 2.11 No award of a research degree can be considered unless the oral examination is completed. If circumstances arise which prevent a PGR from attending for their oral examination they must provide a valid reason supported by documentary evidence (for example a medical note in the case of illness). Cases will be considered by the Graduate Board's Progression & Examinations Group. If a PGR is able to provide a substantiated valid reason for their unavailability/absence permission may be given to delay, postpone or reschedule an oral examination. However, if a PGR is unable to provide a substantiated valid reason, this may result in them being withdrawn from the University with no further opportunity to complete the oral examination.
- 2.12 No PGR will normally be granted a postponement to the oral examination of more than 12 months from the date the thesis is sent out to the examiners (15 months for MD). Bearing in mind that examiners may become unavailable for various reasons, and a once original topic may not remain so indefinitely, it is normally unlikely that a request for a postponement to the examination exceeding these periods will be granted.

3. The oral examination

The Oral Examination

- 3.1 In addition to presenting a thesis, PGRs in all subjects are required to present themselves for an oral examination on matters relevant to their thesis. On the first occasion that a thesis is submitted the examiners must, in all cases, conduct an oral examination at which PGRs are required to present themselves and answer questions posed by the examiners (for arrangements on resubmission please see Section 8).
- 3.2 The role of the oral examination is to ensure that the work reaches the University standards for the degree; that the work has been written by the PGR; and that the work is understood by the PGR.
- 3.3 The University does not have specific regulations regarding the length of the oral examination or what should be discussed except that the thesis should be discussed with the PGR. The oral examination also gives the PGR the opportunity to answer questions in areas where the examiners are not satisfied. Where the evidence in the thesis is not compelling, the examiners should use the oral examination to encourage the PGR to provide convincing evidence that the stated criteria can be met and reflect on this in their report. Some examiners will also wish to satisfy themselves of the PGR's general level of understanding in the subject area. Good practice guidance on the conduct of the oral examination is [given in a later section](#).
- 3.4 The examiners must not discuss their provisional findings with the PGR at any point before the oral examination or give an indication of the likely recommendation until the oral examination has been completed.
- 3.5 The oral examination must be conducted in English.⁵ **Recording of the viva by any parties is not permitted.**
- 3.6 Those present at the oral examination will be the PGR, the external examiner(s), the internal examiner(s), the independent chair (if appointed, see below) and the supervisor as an observer if it is decided that they should be present ([see below](#)). In some cases, as part of any reasonable adjustments, the presence of a supporter/support worker/note taker or specialist mentor may have been agreed. These arrangements will be communicated to the examiners by the School before the viva. No other parties are permitted to attend the final examination. Advice on academic integrity and attendees in a research degree viva is included in Section 16.
- 3.7 The oral examination should run continuously and be completed within a day (but please refer to the good practice guidance on the conduct of the oral examination regarding short comfort breaks).

⁵ With the exception of research degrees in the modern languages, where, in certain circumstances approved by the Graduate Board, the viva might, with the agreement of the external examiner, be conducted in a language other than English

- 3.8 The process of notifying the PGR and supervisor of the outcome of the examination should normally take place after the viva but, in any event, must take place within 24 hours of the viva. Please see the [after the viva section](#) for further advice.

Reasonable Adjustments

- 3.9 The Graduate School is responsible for communicating any agreed adjustments and support arrangements for a final examination to the PGR, the Supervisor and the examiners. The Internal Examiner has responsibility for facilitating on the day any reasonable adjustments to the oral examination, which will have been agreed upon in advance. Guidance on these arrangements can be found [later in this document](#).

Additional tests

- 3.10 The examiners may require the PGR to pass any tests which they prescribe. This could include a short presentation to the examiners at the start of the viva. Please give the PGR at least 2 weeks' notice if this is required. One purpose of these tests might be to establish that the thesis is the work of the PGR.

The role of the supervisor

- 3.11 PGRs 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 PGR. If attending as an observer, the supervisor must remain silent during the examination. The Supervisor may not participate in the viva and takes no part in the academic judgement and the decision making process. The Supervisor must leave after the oral examination (with the PGR) so the examiners can discuss their recommendation.
- 3.12 Before the oral examination the internal examiner is asked to establish whether a supervisor will be present and that this is in accordance with the wishes of the PGR. In cases where a PGR has more than one supervisor, only one supervisor is permitted to attend the oral examination. The internal examiner is responsible for ensuring that the supervisor remains silent and that their presence at the oral examination is unobtrusive. The examiners may ask the supervisor to leave if they feel that their presence may jeopardise the smooth running of the oral examination.
- 3.13 If not present as an observer the supervisor (or appropriate individual e.g. Director of PGR Studies or Advisor) is required to be available for contact if necessary. Pastoral support (normally via the supervisor or other appropriate member of staff) must be available to the PGR immediately after the viva, should this be necessary. Please see the [post-viva section](#) for further advice.

The role of the independent chair (if appointed)

- 3.14 In some circumstances an independent chair may be appointed for an examination. The role of the independent chair is to ensure that the examination is conducted fairly

and professionally, and in accordance with University regulations. The independent chair is not expected to be an expert in the subject area, although they should be from a cognate discipline. As such the independent chair is not expected to read the thesis or play a role in academic examination of the PGR and should not question the PGR on the work being examined at the oral examination. It is important that the independent chair does not become an 'extra' examiner.

- 3.15 The Internal Examiner is required to contact the Independent Chair when making arrangements for the date of the oral examination. The independent chair is required to attend the meeting with the examiners prior to the oral examination and be present for the duration of the oral examination and the post-viva discussions. After the oral examination the Independent Chair is required to sign the examiners' report front sheet and complete a brief report. A pro forma for this purpose is provided and should be submitted alongside the examiners' final report form. Further details are given in the [eligibility criteria for the appointment of examiners](#).
- 3.16 An Independent Chair can be appointed for an online or hybrid viva at the request of the examining team. If the examiners wish to request the appointment of an Independent Chair, please contact the thesis examination team in DCO⁶ who will make arrangements via the Graduate School.
- 3.17 Where a Chair is only appointed because of the video-streamed format of the viva, the Chair must be present for the duration of the viva but it may not be necessary for them to be present for the pre or post viva discussions. The Independent Chair may choose to attend, or the team may request that the Independent Chair is present at either or both. If not attending the full pre-viva meeting, it is good practice for the Chair to speak with the examiners briefly before the viva for example to establish what role the Independent Chair will take during the viva.

Problems on the day

- 3.18 Where unforeseen circumstances arise on the day of the oral examination, for example an examiner is unable to attend for any reason (e.g. illness etc.) immediate consideration should be given to postponing and rescheduling the oral examination. The internal examiner is responsible for ensuring all parties are informed of any postponement (including the PGR, Supervisor(s), Graduate School and DCO). If circumstances arise which prevent a PGR from attending for their oral examination the internal examiner is asked to notify the Graduate School immediately.
- 3.19 The Thesis Examination team in Doctoral College Operations is available to help and answer queries or assist with any issues on the day. Please contact us by e-mail: rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk. We can also arrange for a member of the team to speak to you via your University Teams account.

⁶ rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk

4. Regulations for award and possible recommendations

Regulations for award

- 4.1 The [Ordinances, Regulations and Programmes of Study for Research Degrees](#)⁷ detail the formal regulations and requirements for all of the University's research degrees. A separate information booklet is provided to examiners detailing the criteria for award of the particular research degree under examination.

Learning Outcomes

- 4.2 The University has approved learning outcomes for each research degree programme. These are listed in the separate booklet (sent to the examiners with the thesis) detailing the criteria for award of the particular research degree under examination.
- 4.3 Achievement is assessed by the examination of the thesis and performance under oral examination. However, examiners will not be expected to monitor/assess all the Learning Outcomes at the time of the viva. The main emphasis of the viva will be upon the research achievement and it may be difficult at that stage to assess expertise in 'generic and subject/professional skills'.
- 4.4 Instead, an ongoing process of monitoring and evaluation should be recorded within the Faculty/School (in the University's system for maintaining a record of the research degree candidature). Within three months of the commencement of study the University requires a training needs analysis to be conducted, and a training plan to be agreed between the PGR and the Supervisor(s). The PGR's progress against the training plan is then reviewed regularly, as part of the transfer and annual progress reviews. Examiners may ask that the School make available these records at the viva to enable them to audit the arrangements that have been made. This will typically include the training plan, training record and any relevant extracts from the progress reports where progress with the agreed training plan is reviewed. The Internal Examiner can access the training plan and training events log in the Graduate Record of Achievement and Development (GRAD).
- 4.5 Examiners are not required to comment on achievement against the learning outcomes as part of their report form, although comments are invited.

Covid-19: Assessment of Learning outcomes and criteria for award

- 4.6 The following guidance is given to PGRs, Supervisors and Examiners

⁷ [Ordinance X \(Research Degrees\)](#)

- It is recognised that in some cases the research plans, and the thesis submission, may have to change from what was originally intended. This might include changes to the methodology, experimental design, plans for data collection, or refining the scope or the emphasis of the original research project. However the **quality** of the thesis is expected to be equivalent to that produced at other times. The Learning Outcomes and criteria for award are unchanged.
- Flexibility may be considered, if appropriate, on the **quantity** of material expected in the thesis, whilst ensuring that the quality of the submission is preserved, and that the examiners still have a sufficient body of research to assess that the criteria for award and [learning outcomes](#) have been met. This may not always be easily quantifiable, but Supervisors, in consultation with Directors of PGR Studies and Heads of Graduate Schools, are encouraged to consider how best to interpret this for their disciplines. The [Regulations to Ordinance X, and the Programme of Study entries](#), set down the normal maximum length for each thesis submission, but the University does not specify a minimum length for any of its research degrees. The maximum limits are not intended to be interpreted as a requirement for the length of a thesis, and in certain disciplines this may normally be considerably shorter.
- PGRs are invited to submit a Covid-19 impact statement alongside their thesis⁸, which describes any impact of Covid-19 on their research plans and thesis submission and what changes to the research project design/plans had to be made as a consequence, for example:
 - How the Covid-19 pandemic impacted the research project.
 - What steps were taken to mitigate against the disruption.
 - Any decisions taken to change direction or focus, or re-design the research plans in response to Covid-19.
- The impact statement will be shared with the examiners with the thesis submission. Examiners will be asked to consider this statement, and to be flexible in considering how a PGR may demonstrate they have met the learning outcomes and what constitutes such evidence. Examiners should be sympathetic to any Covid-19 related circumstances that may have impacted the research or necessitated a change of direction or emphasis from that which may originally have been planned, whilst still ensuring that learning outcomes for each award have been met, based on the quality of the thesis submission and the PGR's defence in the oral examination. Examiners are invited to include comments in relation to a Covid-19 impact statement provided by the PGR in the relevant section of the joint report form.
- A PGR may have used the impact statement to document how their ability to work was affected during the pandemic due to academic or personal circumstances. In some cases adjustments to individual research projects may have been needed to enable PGRs to complete to their original timetable. Any changes needed to the scope or

⁸ A discussion of this might also be included in the thesis, if appropriate and the Supervisor(s) will be best placed to advise on the most appropriate location and form for this

emphasis of the project will be described in the statement and should be considered in accordance with the guidance above. In other cases these mitigating circumstances will have been dealt with by additional support and time (via a suspension or extension of studies) prior to submission of the thesis, to allow more time to complete the original project plans. The University has an established position on mitigating circumstances which is set out [in this document](#). Any mitigating circumstances which may have affected the PGR during their period of study should never lead the examiners to award a research where the work is not felt to be of the appropriate standard.

- In order to be eligible for the award of the degree, all PGRs must complete an oral examination and the thesis submitted for examination must meet the stated criteria for award of the degree and the specified learning outcomes must be met. While the thesis may be shorter or contain fewer case studies than might otherwise be expected as a result of the difficulties encountered, it should still meet the criteria for award.
- The focus should be on the **quality** of the thesis submission, together with the PGR's defence in the oral examination. In the case of doctoral awards, for example, the examiners will be expected to reach an academic judgement on whether there is a sufficient quality – and quantity – of original research, with the appropriate rigour of analysis and independent critical ability and matter suitable for publication to have met the learning outcomes for award. In considering 'matter suitable for publication' at doctoral level, the expectation is that the thesis will contain original work which is of publishable quality in appropriate, peer-reviewed journals (or publication in other form as appropriate for the field of research).
- When commenting on the extent to which the thesis contains matter suitable for publication, Examiners are invited to comment on work which has already been published and/or may comment on parts of the thesis which could form the basis of an appropriate publication following some reworking. Examiners are also invited to comment on any other noteworthy outputs (such as data sets, code, practice/ practice documentation, protocols or other resources of value to the research community), although these cannot substitute for the requirement that the thesis contains matter suitable for publication.
- Recommendations for award ultimately remain an academic judgement for the appointed examiners. All recommendations for award are considered at the next meeting of the Graduate Board's Progression & Examinations Group. The Graduate Board has delegated authority to the Progression & Examinations Group to ratify examination results and award research degrees, subject to it being satisfied that the criteria for the award of the degree have been met.

Types of Recommendation

- 4.7 Examiners are asked to submit **one** of the following recommendations based on the assessment of the written thesis and the PGR's performance in the viva:

- a) that the degree be awarded (without corrections)
- b) that the degree be awarded subject to editorial and presentational corrections
- c) that the degree be awarded subject to the correction of minor deficiencies
- d) that the thesis be referred for resubmission
- e) that no research degree be awarded

4.8 In the case of PhD submissions only, the following recommendations are also available:

- a) that the degree of MPhil be awarded (without corrections)
- b) that the degree of MPhil be awarded subject to editorial & presentational corrections
- c) that the degree of MPhil be awarded subject to the correction of minor deficiencies
- d) that the thesis be referred for resubmission for the degree of MPhil

4.9 In all other cases, no PGR may be recommended for the award of a degree other than for which they have submitted.

4.10 For Masters by Research or MPhil submissions, where the work is of exceptional merit, the examiners may recommend the award of the degree with distinction. Please see the separate information booklet for the research degree under examination.

Award (without corrections)

4.11 If the PGR has met the required learning outcomes for the programme, and the thesis satisfies the requirements for the award of the degree and does not require any minor alterations the Examiners may recommend the award of the degree without corrections.

Award subject to editorial and presentational corrections (complete within 4 weeks)

4.12 If the PGR has met the required learning outcomes for the programme, and the thesis satisfies the requirements for the award of the degree but is found to contain minor editorial errors, the examiners may recommend the award of the degree subject to editorial and presentational corrections.

- 4.13 Editorial and presentational corrections must be specifically confined to the correction of trivial errors, typographical errors, and simple mistakes of fact or the insertion of headings or other 'signpost' material for the sake of clarity.
- 4.14 A PGR is normally required to correct editorial and presentational corrections within 4 weeks of the date of the oral examination. Please ensure the PGR receives the details of any editorial/presentational corrections and is clear about how long they have to complete them. The PGR does not receive this information formally from DCO and it is the responsibility of the internal examiner to ensure that the PGR and supervisor are fully informed. Bearing in mind the timescale runs from the date of the oral examination please ensure this information is sent promptly.
- 4.15 The internal examiner must confirm that the corrections have been completed in writing to DCO (email rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk). The name of the PGR cannot appear on a pass list until such confirmation has been received.

Award subject to the correction of minor deficiencies (complete within 12 weeks)

- 4.16 If, after the viva, the PGR has met the required learning outcomes for the programme, and the thesis satisfies the requirements for the award of the degree but is found to contain deficiencies which are genuinely minor in nature, the examiners may recommend the award of the degree subject to correction of minor deficiencies.
- 4.17 It is expected that minor deficiencies will be confined to changes which are genuinely minor in nature (e.g. rewriting of sections, correcting calculations, small amounts of further experimentation or data collection, clarifying or expanding arguments and the correction of minor typographical errors) and should not be used when substantial additional work or research is required, when whole chapters have to be substantially rewritten or if the methodology requires substantial revision. "Referral" for resubmission should be considered in those circumstances⁹ (see below). A **summary** of the nature of the minor deficiencies is required in the examiners' report.
- 4.18 A PGR is normally required to correct minor deficiencies within 12 weeks of the date of the oral examination, however, an extension to this period can be arranged by the School if more time is required in individual cases. Further advice can be found in the [later section of these instructions](#).
- 4.19 The examiners' recommendation must be reached solely on academic grounds and whether or not the thesis satisfies the criteria for award, the required learning outcomes have been met and the changes required to the thesis are minor in nature. It should not be determined by the candidate's personal circumstances and/or whether the examiners feel the PGR will be able to complete the required corrections within a 12-week period. Even if the examiners are aware that a PGR's personal circumstances are

⁹ On a first submission only. A second referral is not possible. Recommendations available on a resubmitted thesis are outlined in section 8

such that correction of the thesis within the normal 12 week period is unlikely, a decision to award should still be made if the view of the examiners is that the thesis satisfies the requirements for the award of the degree, subject to the correction of minor deficiencies. If circumstances exist/arise which may prevent the PGR from completing the corrections within a 12-week period, a case for an extension to the correction period should be made by the School (see [later section of these instructions](#)).

- 4.20 After the oral examination the examiners must agree the minor deficiencies which require correction. The PGR must be provided with clear and comprehensive guidance detailing the minor deficiencies which require correction. It is essential that clear, comprehensive and sufficient detail is given such that, if complied with by PGR, it will lead to confirmation of the corrections and the award of the degree.
- 4.21 The internal examiner is responsible for ensuring that the PGR is provided with guidance on the minor deficiencies requiring correction in writing, normally within one working day of the oral examination.
- 4.22 The internal examiner must confirm that the corrections have been completed, after consultation with the external examiner if requested, in writing to DCO (email rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk). See the [later section of these instructions](#) for further advice. The name of the PGR cannot appear on a pass list until such confirmation has been received.

Referral

- 4.23 The decision to “refer” a thesis is normally interpreted as signifying that, although the thesis is potentially of a standard to merit the award of the degree concerned it does not, at this stage, satisfy the requirements for award and certain sections and/or aspects of the thesis are in need of alteration and improvement and a re-examination of the work will be required. It is expected that the PGR will be able to complete the alterations within a reasonable time. If the examiners recommend referral for resubmission, the PGR will be required to revise the thesis, which may entail further research or any other activity required by the examiners, and then resubmit this to the University for re-examination.
- 4.24 An unsatisfactory thesis should be referred when, despite certain defects in the thesis itself and/or the PGR’s performance in the oral examination (and such other tests as may have been prescribed) there is, in the case of doctoral degrees, evidence of the potential of a successful submission from the originality, independence, scope and significance of the PGR’s research. For MPhil and Mastership by Research PGRs careful consideration should similarly be given to the PGR’s potential and to the criteria for the award of that degree. If the thesis does not possess this potential, the examiners should send forward a recommendation that the degree be not awarded (see below).

- 4.25 A thesis may also be referred in cases where the PGR does not completely satisfy the examiners through their performance at the oral examination (and in such other tests the examiners may have prescribed) that the award of the degree is justified at this stage.
- 4.26 Even if the examiners are aware that the PGR's personal circumstances are such that revision of the thesis is unlikely, a decision to refer the thesis should be forwarded if it is believed that the thesis and the PGR are potentially of the necessary standard.
- 4.27 The examiners' report must give a clear summary of the reasons for referral. It should be clear that a thesis has been referred on the basis that the submitted thesis fell short of what is required for the award of the degree and that the nature and seriousness of the changes required fall outside of what could be reasonably described under the heading of minor deficiencies. The early section of the report (questions 2-6) should be consistent with the recommendation not to award the degree at this stage, and should provide a clear indication of which of the criteria for award have not yet been fully met.
- 4.28 In the event of a referral, the examiners must prepare clear and comprehensive notes for guidance, which must be submitted at the same time as the report of the examination for consideration by the Graduate Board's Progression & Examinations Group. The examiners must not give these directly to the PGR as they must first be reviewed by the Progression & Examinations Group. Please see later in this document for [further advice on preparing the notes for guidance](#).
- 4.29 If the examiners' recommendation is that the thesis be referred, it is the practice for the original examining team to act again, except in exceptional circumstances. Further information on the re-examination process, including timescales for resubmission can be found [later in this document](#).

Distinction between award with minor deficiencies and referral

- 4.30 For the benefit of examiners the following guidance is given on the distinction between a 'pass subject to the correction of minor deficiencies' and a referral for resubmission
- 4.31 A 'pass subject to the correction of minor deficiencies', implies that the work, taken as a whole, is of the required standard for the degree for which it has been submitted, although it requires some further (minor) corrections before the award can be confirmed. A referral, by contrast, implies that the work, taken as a whole, does not currently meet the required standard for the relevant award, although it could do so with substantial further work.
- 4.32 It is expected that minor deficiencies will be confined to changes which are genuinely minor in nature (e.g. rewriting of sections, correcting calculations, clarifying or expanding arguments and the correction of minor typographical errors) and should not be used when substantial additional work or research is required, when whole chapters

have to be substantially rewritten or if the methodology requires substantial revision. Referral for resubmission should be considered in those circumstances.

- 4.33 Referral should be used when a thesis does not fully satisfy the requirements for the award of the degree for which it has been submitted, but does demonstrate the potential to satisfy those requirements. It is recognised that the scale of the work needed to transform a referred thesis into one which fully satisfies the requirements for the award will vary. The maximum time period allowed for resubmission following referral is intended to represent the maximum amount of time allowed, and it is recognised that many PGRs will be able to resubmit more quickly than this. There is no minimum referral period and the PGRs may resubmit at any point in the referral period once the work has been completed.
- 4.34 Examiners are also asked to bear in mind that the recommendation to award must be reached solely on academic grounds and should not be determined by the candidate's personal circumstances and/or whether the examiners feel the PGR will be able to complete any required work within a 12-week period. A decision to award should be made if the view of the examiners is that the thesis satisfies the requirements for the award of the degree, and the corrections required are genuinely minor in nature. The Progression & Examinations Group will look sympathetically on requests for an extension to the normal 12-week period for correction of minor deficiencies. A case for an [extension to the correction period](#) can be made by the School. Examiners are invited to email Doctoral College Operations (rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk) if they feel that the minor deficiencies they require are likely to need an extension to the 12-week period

PhD submission referred for resubmission for MPhil

- 4.35 In the event of a PhD thesis referred for resubmission for MPhil, in addition to the guidance in the section above, the examiners' report must also explain:
- The reasons for referral for MPhil with specific reference to the learning outcomes/criteria for MPhil award. This must explain why the submitted thesis does not, at this stage, satisfy the requirements for award and why the examiners believe the thesis is potentially of a standard to merit MPhil award (following resubmission).
 - Why the examiners do not believe there is the potential to satisfy the requirements for PhD award by a referral for PhD resubmission. A thorough and detailed account must be provided explaining why the examiners believe the criteria for PhD award could not be met by referral for resubmission for PhD, with specific reference to the learning outcomes/criteria for the award for the degree of PhD

Award of MPhil on a PhD submission

- 4.36 Examiners are permitted to recommend the award of the degree of MPhil to PGRs who, following an oral examination, fail to achieve the standard for the award of a PhD but who nevertheless satisfy the criteria for the award of the degree of MPhil. In these circumstances the degree of MPhil may not be awarded with distinction. An oral examination must take place in all cases. It should be noted, however, that in the case of a first submission the examiners should always recommend referral for the degree of PhD if they believe that the submission and the PGR are potentially of PhD standard¹⁰.
- 4.37 The examiners' report must clearly outline the reasons for recommending the award of MPhil, giving positive examples of how the thesis meets the criteria for the award of MPhil and how the learning outcomes for MPhil award have been met. The report must also clearly outline why the criteria for PhD award had not been met and, in the case of a first submission, why these could not be met by referral for resubmission for PhD. The joint examiners' report will be sent to the PGR after approval by the Progression & Examinations Group and they will be advised that the preliminary reports are available on request.

Fail

- 4.38 The decision to 'fail' a submission should be reached solely on academic grounds as it implies that the thesis is itself irredeemable or that the PGR does not possess the necessary academic abilities. It should accordingly not take any account of personal circumstances which may have a bearing on the PGR's opportunity to revise the submission. An oral examination must take place in all cases.
- 4.39 In the event of a recommendation that a degree be not awarded examiners are asked to ensure that a **thorough and detailed** account 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. The joint examiners' report will be sent to the PGR after approval by the Progression & Examinations Group and they will be advised that the preliminary reports are available on request.

¹⁰ A PGR whose submission has been referred for resubmission for PhD may, with the approval of the Head of School and the Graduate Board, elect to resubmit the thesis (in a suitably revised form) for examination for the degree of MPhil, under the normal examination requirements for that degree.

5. Immediately after the viva (including post viva support)

- 5.1 Examiners are advised to inform the PGR and supervisor(s) of the recommendation that they are making without waiting for official confirmation of the result by the Progression & Examinations Group, provided that it is made clear that it is subject to the approval of the Group. The process of notifying the PGR and supervisor of the outcome should normally take place after the examination but, in any event, must take place within 24 working hours of the oral examination.

Notifying the PGR of a successful outcome and any corrections

- 5.2 It is the responsibility of the internal examiner to ensure that the PGR is informed of any editorial & presentational corrections or minor deficiencies. The PGR will not receive this information from DCO. Bearing in mind the timescale runs from the date of the oral examination, please ensure this information is provided promptly. In the case of minor deficiencies, the internal examiner is responsible for ensuring that the PGR is provided with guidance on the minor deficiencies requiring correction in writing, normally within one working day of the oral examination.
- 5.3 Some examiners may choose to provide specific editorial comment, either as a separate list of corrections or marked in a copy of the thesis given to the PGR after the viva. However, the University does not expect Examiners to proof-read the thesis and there is no requirement or expectation that examiners will identify all typographical errors requiring correction. It is sufficient for examiners to state that the thesis must be thoroughly proof-read, as part of any corrections required to the thesis after the viva.

Informing the PGR and post-viva support: referral, MPhil award on PhD or fail

- 5.4 It must be recognised that some PGRs will be disappointed by the outcome of their examination and may be upset on receiving the examiners' feedback. Examiners are asked to note the following, which is applicable irrespective of the format of the viva. Before the viva, the internal examiner will have confirmed that pastoral support (normally via the supervisor or other appropriate member of staff) will be available to the PGR immediately after the viva, should this be necessary. In the case of the above recommendations examiners are asked to:
- Ensure before the post-viva feedback meeting that the Supervisor (if not already in attendance at the viva) or other agreed member of staff is available to be called into the meeting if needed.
 - Notify the Graduate School and the Director of PGR Studies (and Supervisor if not in attendance at the viva) of the outcome the examiners are making as soon as possible so that appropriate follow-up pastoral support and signposting to support and well-being or other services can be provided after the viva, if needed.
 - Inform the PGR of the recommendation the examiners have reached and, as appropriate, provide a verbal summary/feedback on the reasons for this.

- Advise the PGR that the examiners will submit their full report and recommendation to the University which will give full feedback on the recommendation, and that the PGR will be sent a copy of this after review by the Progression & Examinations Group. The PGR will receive information from the Doctoral College Operations team throughout this process.
- Advise the PGR they can contact their Graduate School and/or Director of PGR Studies for any advice relating to the next steps in the process, and who will also follow-up with signposting to appeal information (see 5.7 below), if needed.

- 5.5 In the event that a PGR becomes extremely distressed on receiving an adverse academic decision the examiners are advised to contact the supervisor or other appropriate member of staff as agreed in advance and invite them to join the post-viva meeting to provide support.
- 5.6 In the event that the examiners become concerned about a PGR's wellbeing or behaviour on receiving an adverse academic decision they should immediately inform the PGR's Head of School, Graduate School Manager or Graduate School Office staff who will help refer the PGR to more specialist support services (such as the Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service). Staff concerned about a PGR can ask for advice by contacting [Counselling and Wellbeing](#) (9am – 5pm Mon-Fri). Graduate School staff will be able to advise on the relevant support pathway if needed. Out of hours emergency advice should be sought from Security on EXT 32222 or 0113 343 2222.
- 5.7 In some circumstances PGRs may appeal against an adverse academic decision using the [Appeals Procedure](#). The appeal must reach the University within 20 working days of the PGR receiving formal confirmation of the decision from DCO, after approval of the examiners' report by the Progression & Examinations Group. PGRs considering submitting an appeal should be strongly encouraged to seek independent advice and support from the [LUU Student Advice Centre](#) (advice@luu.leeds.ac.uk). There are also a number of other support services available to PGRs. Details are available on the [SES website](#).

Failure to reach an agreement - separate reports after the oral examination

- 5.8 Examiners are reminded that although the process of notifying the PGR and supervisor of the outcome will normally take place after the oral examination it must take place within 24 hours of the examination. This period can be used by the examiners to discuss the recommendation and to endeavour to reach an agreement.
- 5.9 In the exceptional circumstances of a failure to reach agreement on the recommendation (within the 24 hour period available) the internal examiner is asked to contact DCO immediately. The procedure to be followed is available from DCO. The internal examiner will be asked to advise the PGR in writing that the examiners are unable to reach an agreement on the recommendation and that they will be submitting separate final report forms to the University. The examiners must then submit separate, independent final reports along with their preliminary reports, to DCO within 5 working days of the viva.

6. Completing the joint examiners' report

Timescales for the report

- 6.1 The internal examiner is responsible for ensuring that the [joint examiners' report](#) is fully completed and signed. This should be done before the external leaves the post-viva meeting. The examiners must sign the front page of the report form. Scanned /electronic signatures are accepted. Where a scanned or electronic signature isn't available, email confirmation (from an Institutional email address) can be accepted.
- 6.2 The joint report must be countersigned by the Director of PGR Studies (or Head of School). The internal examiner should email the report to the Graduate School to arrange for the Director of PGR Studies countersignature. The GSO should then return the report to DCO (SharePoint) within 10 working days of the examination, together with the preliminary reports, and the report from the Independent Chair (if appointed).
- 6.3 In the event of a referral, in addition to the final report the examiners must also prepare notes for guidance (see section 8). The notes for guidance must not be issued by the School or the Examiners to the PGR. The notes for guidance will be issued by DCO after the Progression & Examinations Group has scrutinised them together with the examiners' report. **Schools/Examiners are not permitted to issue informal notes for guidance to the PGR.** If any oral advice is given before the Group has approved the official guidance, it must be stressed to the PGR that the advice given is informal.

Completing the joint report template

- 6.4 All sections of the report must be typed using the template provided [here](#). Please ensure that you answer all questions clearly and fully 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 contained, for example in the case of a doctoral award, evidence of originality, independent critical ability and matter suitable for publication. The report should be solely based on the academic assessment of the work against the criteria for award and learning outcomes and examiners should avoid including any personal information in the report form template (e.g. general issues reported to have arisen during the candidature or any mitigating circumstances). If examiners identify any general issues that they feel need to be recorded they are asked to do so following the [separate feedback process below](#).
- 6.5 The examiners' report must be consistent with the recommendation reached on the thesis. In the case of an adverse decision, it must be clear in the early sections of the

report (questions 2-6) why the submitted thesis fell short of that required for the award of the degree and which of the criteria for award had not been fully met.

- 6.6 As this is a joint report, the answers must indicate it is the view of all the examiners (the use of “I” must be avoided).

Recognising Research Excellence in Doctoral Research Submissions

- 6.7 The University has arrangements by which research excellence in doctoral research degree submissions can be recognised. Research excellence would be expected to principally reflect outstanding achievement in the thesis and oral examination at a level significantly above what would be expected for the award of a doctoral degree where the PGR has fulfilled all requirements for award either without corrections or with either editorial & presentational corrections or minor deficiencies.
- 6.8 Evidence might be identified from the thesis as well as from associated research outputs. This might include, but is not limited to: major theoretical or methodological contribution; acceptance for publication of sections in major journals; patents; prizes for completed work; marketable software; original equipment; new therapies; major exhibitions or performances arising from the practical part of a practice-based degree, the potential for significant impact on the research field, policy or professional practice.
- 6.9 Examiners are invited to comment in the Examiners’ Report Form on any research excellence which is identified in the submission and provide further information in support of this recommendation. If the recommendation is approved by the Progression & Examinations Group the text provided by the examiners in this section will be included in a letter of congratulations sent to the PGR from the Dean of the Leeds Doctoral College, and therefore the text should stand alone without relying on other sections of the report.

General feedback on the examination process

- 6.10 The University welcomes feedback from examiners on the examination process at the University of Leeds. The examiners’ report should be based on the academic assessment of the PGR’s work and, as such, examiners are asked not to use the report form to provide general feedback on process. If examiners wish to submit separate comments or provide any general comment or feedback regarding the examination process which they wish to bring to the attention of the Graduate Board they are invited to do so by emailing rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk. Any feedback provided will be considered by the Graduate Board’s Progression & Examinations Group as part of its regular reviews of policy and procedures.

Graduate Board's Progression & Examinations Group

- 6.11 The Graduate Board has delegated authority to its Progression & Examinations Group to award research degrees subject to it being satisfied that the criteria for the award of the degree have been met. The examiners' report and recommendation must be approved by the Progression & Examinations Group. The Group meets 8 times each session¹¹. Each Faculty is represented on this Group.
- 6.12 Members consider the content of each examiners' report form to establish that the criteria for the award have been met and that the recommendation sent forward covers the basic points required by the University. It is important that examiners answer each section of the report forms clearly. The Group will ask for further information if it is not satisfied that the recommendation has been clearly and sufficiently justified or if specific examples are lacking. The report and recommendation of the examiners cannot be approved until the Group is satisfied that the additional information supplied addresses the concerns raised with the report.

Release of the Examiners' Report to the PGR

- 6.13 The Progression & Examinations Group consider the joint examiners' report an important source of feedback to PGRs on the assessment of their work. For this reason, the joint examiners' report will be released to the PGR and their Supervisor by DCO after approval by the Group. Please bear this in mind and ensure your report only relates to the criteria for the award and that any criticism is fair and measured.
- 6.14 Examiners should note that the University does not impose any restrictions on PGRs as to who can see the report and they may subsequently share the report with anyone, including sponsors, publishers or other interested parties. For this reason, the Progression and Examinations Group may ask for any minor editorial issues identified in the report to be corrected before the report is shared with the PGR. DCO will contact the internal examiner where any minor edits are needed.
- 6.15 The independent, preliminary reports (completed before the viva) are not automatically released to the PGR but will be if requested. In the event of an adverse academic decision (referral, MPhil award on PhD or fail) PGRs will be advised that the preliminary reports are available on request.

¹¹ To ensure that the PGR receives their notes for guidance as soon as possible, recommendations for referral are considered on a continuous basis by at least 3 members of the Group and do not have to wait for the full meeting of the Group.

7 After successful examination (4/12 week corrections)

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

Role of the internal examiner during the correction period

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

Checking editorial and presentational corrections or minor deficiencies

- 7.3 The PGR normally has 4 or 12 weeks from the oral examination to complete and return the corrections to the internal examiner for checking. The external examiner may request to be consulted on the corrections carried out by the PGR if they wish, and should be informed when these are completed. Please make every effort to check the corrections in a reasonable timescale and provide timely feedback to the PGR. This is particularly important around graduation deadlines.
- 7.4 To assist in the process of checking and approving the corrections the PGR is expected to provide information outlining what corrections they have made. This could be in the form of tracked changes or supplied as a separate list (to be agreed between the internal examiner and the PGR).

Confirming approval of editorial & presentational corrections or minor deficiencies

- 7.5 The internal examiner must confirm to Doctoral College Operations that the PGR has completed the corrections to their satisfaction. Once the corrections have been checked and approved the internal examiner must:
- (i) **Inform Doctoral College Operations:** that you are satisfied with the corrections carried out, by email to rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk.
 - (ii) **Inform the PGR:** that you are satisfied with the corrections carried out and that they can now go ahead and submit the final eThesis. The PGR can arrange for submission of the final eThesis within a period of 1 month.

Extensions to the normal 4/12-week correction period

- 7.6 For PGRs who have been recommended for award, it is important that clear deadlines are in place for the correction of the thesis. Therefore the PGR normally has 4 weeks

(editorial & presentational corrections) or 12 weeks (minor deficiencies) from the date of the viva to complete and return the corrections to the internal examiner for checking.

- 7.7 The University does not prescribe whether a PGR is expected to work full-time on their corrections, or a number of hours per day, as it is acknowledged that at this point in many PGRs will already have taken up other responsibilities and commitments. In keeping with this, the Progression & Examinations Group will normally approve a period of extension if PGRs experience difficulties during the correction period and need extra time because of, for example, illness, work or family commitments.
- 7.8 A case for an extension to the correction period must be made using GRAD (via the Director of PGR Studies) to Doctoral College Operations. For PGRs recommended for the award of the degree and completing either editorial and presentational corrections or minor deficiencies, please bear in mind that, given the correction periods themselves are only 4 and 12 weeks, requests for long extensions (more than 4 or 12 weeks respectively) are unlikely to be approved unless the circumstances are exceptional.

Failure to complete corrections to the satisfaction of the internal examiner

- 7.9 Recommendations for award subject to editorial and presentational corrections or minor deficiencies cannot be confirmed unless the internal examiner is satisfied that the required corrections have been carried out to a satisfactory standard such that all the criteria for award have been met. It is normally expected that the corrections will be carried out to a satisfactory standard on the first attempt.
- 7.10 However if after checking the corrections, the internal examiner is of the view that not all of the required corrections have been carried out to a satisfactory standard, exceptional permission may be sought from the Progression & Examinations Group to allow the PGR one further period of time in which to address any outstanding corrections so that the conditions for award can be fully met. Please contact your Graduate School in these circumstances as a case must be made by the Director of PGR Studies for consideration by the Progression & Examinations Group (PEG).
- 7.11 Normally only one additional correction period and attempt at the corrections will be permitted. The period allowed will not normally exceed one-month. If after this period the internal examiner is still not satisfied with the corrections carried out - and the School/Faculty/University is satisfied that appropriate accommodation has been made for any extenuating circumstances to give the PGR adequate time to carry out the required corrections (see above) - the PGR will be deemed not to have complied with the requirements for award. The candidature will come to an end with no research degree awarded. Cases will be referred to PEG (or three members of the Group acting on its behalf).

8 Report and Notes for Guidance for a referral

Timescale for the report and notes for guidance

- 8.1 In the event of a referral, the examiners must also prepare notes for guidance, which must be typed, headed 'notes for guidance' and submitted with the examiners' report (within 10 working days of the viva) for consideration by the Progression & Examinations Group. It is useful to negotiate a timetable for the production of the notes for guidance. Where it is not possible to meet this timescale please contact Doctoral College Operations for further advice (rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk).

Examiners report and reasons for referral

- 8.2 The early section of the report (questions 2-6) should be consistent with the recommendation not to award the degree at this stage, and should provide a clear indication of which of the criteria for award have not yet been fully met. The examiners' report must give a clear summary of the reasons for referral detailing why the submitted thesis does not, at this stage, satisfy the requirements for award, and what evidence there is that the thesis is potentially of a standard to merit award (following a period of further work and resubmission) and the individual PGR is capable of making the changes required.
- 8.3 It should be clear that a thesis has been referred on the basis that the submitted thesis fell short of the standard required for the award of the degree and that the nature and seriousness of the changes required fall outside of what could be reasonably described under the heading of minor deficiencies. The time the examiners feel the PGR will need for corrections should have no bearing on the academic decision reached on the submitted work and must not be quantified within the report or notes for guidance. The PGR may resubmit at any point in the referral period once the work has been completed and the thesis is ready.

Format and content of the Notes for Guidance

- 8.4 The notes for guidance must clearly indicate the necessary and sufficient conditions which, if complied with by the PGR and provided that the thesis as a whole is satisfactory, will lead to a recommendation by the examiners that the degree be awarded. A PGR who carries out the instructions in the notes for guidance to the required standard should normally be considered to have met the requirements for the award. At a re-examination, the examiners must not introduce new criteria to be met, although they may offer advice on further work that might be required for publication and/or future development of the work. For this reason, it is essential that the notes are sufficiently detailed to give the PGR suitable guidance to achieve the required standard. However, the detail in the notes should not stifle the initiative of the PGR.

8.5 Examiners are asked to bear in mind the following when preparing the notes for guidance:

- The Notes for Guidance must clearly set out what needs to be done in order for the thesis to reach the standards required for the award of the degree. The Notes must specify the sections or aspects of the thesis which are in need of improvement and provide sufficiently detailed information about what work is required to enable the PGR to revise the thesis for resubmission to meet the standard required for award.
- There is no set format for the notes. These can be arranged on a page by page, chapter by chapter or areas of deficiency basis, whichever is appropriate for the nature of the problems to be solved. It is not expected that the Notes should exceed 10-12 pages in length.
- The notes must be clear and unambiguous. Avoid the use of phrases such as “would benefit from” “might like to consider” etc. which suggest an element of option to the changes, and instead use more direct language (“the revised thesis *must*”).
- These are **joint** notes for guidance and must indicate it is the view of all the examiners (“I” must not be used – replace with “we”). A separate list of corrections from each examiner is unacceptable as it introduces the possibility of inconsistencies, contradictions and duplications. Instead the corrections should comprise one single set of clear corrections and guidance.
- Please ensure that the notes for guidance are free from typographical errors. The use of emotive language or personal comments is unacceptable.
- Where the Notes for Guidance request / require substantive extra work which may have cost / resource implications and might prove impractical or impossible for the PGR to undertake, examiners are asked to comment on possible alternatives if the further work is not possible. Examples might be further experiments or gathering extra survey data.
- At this stage, examiners cannot include an indication that a second oral examination will not be required. The final decision 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 PGR submitted, University regulations require that a second oral examination must be held.
- The Examiners are not expected to proofread the thesis and there is no requirement for the notes to include details of all typographical errors requiring correction. It is sufficient to state that the thesis must be thoroughly proofread before resubmission. Should the examiners choose to provide specific editorial comment these could be

included in the body of the notes or marked in a copy of the thesis given to the candidate (with a reference to this in the notes).

- Alongside their resubmitted thesis, PGRs are required to provide a summary of how their revised thesis has responded to changes listed by examiners in the Notes for Guidance. Sufficient detail, with examples, should be included to clearly show how and where they have responded to the examiners' concerns. This will assist the Examiners when considering the resubmitted thesis. PGRs are advised that there is no set format for this document and they may present this in a format which best reflects the changes they have made. If the examiners require a specific format for the response they must include this detail in the notes for guidance.

Release of the Notes for Guidance to the PGR

- 8.6 The notes for guidance must not be issued by the School/Examiners to the PGR. The notes for guidance will be issued by Doctoral College Operations after the Graduate Board's Progression & Examinations Group has scrutinised them together with the examiners' report. The approved examiners' report and notes will be issued as quickly as possible by DCO after approval by the Group. The PGR will be advised that the preliminary reports are available on request
- 8.7 Schools/Examiners are not permitted to issue informal notes for guidance to the PGR. If any oral advice is given before the Group has approved the official guidance, it must be stressed to the PGR that the advice given is informal.

Role of the examiners during the referral period

- 8.8 If the Examiners' recommendation is that the thesis be referred, it is the practice for the original examining team to act again for the resubmission, except in exceptional circumstances.
- 8.9 The roles of examiner and supervisor must be transparently separated during the period between the first examination and the resubmission and the examiners must maintain independence from the work before it is resubmitted. For this reason, the Examiners must not take a supervisory role during the referral period¹². The internal examiner may, however, be required to provide clarification of the notes for guidance. PGRs 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 PGRs when further clarification is required.

¹² Supervisors are asked to provide up to 6 supervision meetings a year during the referral period.

9 Examination of a resubmission following referral

Resubmission following Referral

- 9.1 PGRs are normally required to resubmit within the following maximum period from the date the notes for guidance are issued and to pay the re-examination fee.

Doctoral submissions	within 18 months
MPhil submission	within 15 months
PhD submission referred for resubmission for MPhil	within 12 months
Mastership by Research submission	within 9 months

- 9.2 Examiners may wish to bear in mind that the referral periods give the maximum time limit for a referred thesis to be resubmitted and that a PGR may resubmit at any point in this period once the work has been completed and the thesis is ready. PGRs are solely responsible for the decision to submit their work for examination.
- 9.3 If circumstances arise which prevent the PGR from resubmitting their thesis within the normal period, a case for an extension to the referral period can be submitted by the Director of PGR Studies to Doctoral College Operations.
- 9.4 A PGR whose submission has been referred for resubmission for PhD may, with the approval of the Head of School and the Graduate Board and on payment of the entry fee, elect to resubmit the thesis (in a suitably revised form) for examination for the degree of MPhil, under the normal examination requirements for that degree. Resubmission must take place within 12 months from the date the notes for guidance are issued.

Examiners' individual report for a resubmission

- 9.5 Each examiner 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.

Timescale for the examination of a resubmitted thesis

- 9.6 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 in which to complete the examination (including a second oral examination if required).

Examination of a resubmitted thesis

- 9.7 The original examiners' report and notes for guidance (following the first viva) will be provided to the examiners with the resubmitted thesis. Alongside their resubmitted

thesis, PGRs are required to provide a summary of how their revised thesis has responded to changes listed by examiners in the Notes for Guidance. This will assist the Examiners when considering the resubmitted thesis.

- 9.8 Examiners are reminded that the notes for guidance 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”.
- 9.9 The University takes this as meaning that if the PGR follows the advice and guidance given by the examiners in its entirety in revising the thesis, and provided that the thesis as a whole is satisfactory, the degree must be awarded (albeit possibly with corrections). If, on resubmission, the alterations and improvements required in the notes for guidance have been carried out to the satisfaction of the examiners, and the thesis as a whole remains satisfactory, a recommendation should be forwarded for the award of the degree. At re-examination, the examiners must not introduce new criteria to be met, although they may offer advice on further work that might be required for publication and/or future development of the work.
- 9.10 It is possible that some PGRs may not (for various reasons and sometimes for defensible academic reasons) follow all the advice and guidance given in the notes for guidance. In these cases the examiners should consider the thesis as a whole and reach a decision whether or not the thesis now meets the appropriate minimum standard for the award of the degree, or whether one of the other options set out is appropriate.
- 9.11 Where the subject may have moved on during the period when the PGR has been revising the thesis, **the originality / publishability criteria should be taken relative to the date when the first submission was made**. This may be of particular relevance if there have been extensions/suspensions during the referral period.

Recommendations following resubmission

- 9.12 PGRs are not permitted to present a thesis for re-examination on more than one occasion. A second referral is not possible and on resubmission a PGR will either:
- (i) Be recommended for the award of the degree (subject in some cases to editorial and presentational corrections or the correction of minor deficiencies);
 - (ii) Fail.
- 9.13 In the case of a resubmission for the degree of PhD only, the PGR may also be recommended for the award of the degree of MPhil (subject in some cases to editorial and presentational corrections or the correction of minor deficiencies).

Second oral examination following resubmission

- 9.14 All examiners consider the re-submission and a second oral examination may be held if the examiners deem it appropriate. If the Examiners are in agreement that the thesis now meets the requirement for the award of the degree for which the PGR submitted it may not be necessary for a second oral examination to be held. This is a decision that examiners are asked to take after reading the resubmitted thesis and completing their preliminary report.
- 9.15 However, the examiners may not recommend that a thesis be failed, or the award of a lower degree, without a second oral examination. Therefore if, after reading the resubmitted thesis, the examiners reach a preliminary view that the PGR has not fulfilled the requirements for the award of the degree for which they submitted it is essential that a second oral examination be held to ensure that the PGR 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.
- 9.16 After completing the individual report, the internal examiner should contact the external examiner to discuss the examination and agree whether or not a second oral examination is necessary.

If a second oral examination is required

- 9.17 An independent chair must be appointed in cases where a second oral examination is required on a resubmitted thesis. If a second oral examination is required the internal examiner is asked to contact Doctoral College Operations immediately (rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk). Doctoral College Operations will arrange with the School for the appointment of an independent chair.
- 9.18 The internal examiner is then asked to make the arrangements for the oral examination with the external examiner, the independent chair (once appointed) and the PGR. Doctoral College Operations (rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk), the supervisor(s) and the PGR administrator in the Faculty/School should also be informed of the examination date once agreed (the internal examiner should do this via the GRAD viva workflow).
- 9.19 The examiners must not discuss their provisional findings with the PGR or their Supervisor at any point before the second oral examination. Examiners must not give an indication of the likely recommendation until the oral examination has been completed.
- 9.20 If a second oral examination is required the process for informing the PGR follows that for the first examination. This should normally take place after the viva but, in any event, must take place within 24 hours of the oral examination. Please see [earlier](#)

[section](#). After the oral examination, the examiners must then complete a final, joint examiners' report (see below).

If a second oral examination is not required

- 9.21 If a second oral examination is not required, the internal examiner is asked to take steps to inform the PGR, supervisor(s) and PGR administrator in the School/Faculty of the recommendation the examiners are sending forward. Please ensure the PGR receives notification of the outcome and details of any minor corrections as soon as possible.
- 9.22 The examiners must then complete a final, joint examiners' report (see below). Please record the date the PGR was informed of the recommendation (and any corrections) in the box provided on the front of the examiners' report form. Doctoral College Operations will use this date to calculate the 4/12 week deadline for any corrections.

Completing the final, joint examiners' report for a resubmission

- 9.23 The internal examiner is responsible for ensuring that the final, joint examiners' report is fully and correctly completed and signed. Normally, original, ink signatures are needed but scanned /electronic signatures are accepted for a video streamed viva. Where a scanned or electronic signature aren't available, email confirmation (from an Institutional email address) can be accepted.
- 9.24 All sections of the report must be typed using the [template provided](#). **Please ensure that you use the template specifically for a resubmission** and that you answer all questions fully and include in your responses specific examples from the thesis. The joint examiners' report form for a resubmission must "stand alone" from that completed after the first examination and examiners are asked to complete all sections in full, with reference to the resubmitted thesis. The use of the phrase "as first report" is not acceptable.
- 9.25 The internal examiner should pass the completed forms to the Graduate School, who will arrange for the joint, examiners' report to be countersigned by the Director of PGR Studies (or Head of School). This will then be returned to Doctoral College Operations, together with the copies of the completed preliminary reports. The report is then considered by the Graduate Board's Progression & Examinations Group (as for the first examination).

10 Good Practice Guidelines for the conduct of the viva

Please see the earlier sections of this document for details of the steps that need to be taken before, during and after the viva, including:

- [Preliminary reports](#)
- [Before the viva](#)
- [During the Viva](#)
- [Possible outcomes](#)
- [Informing the PGR of the outcome](#)
- [Completing your examiners' report](#)
- [Advice on post-viva support](#)

Examiners may find the following good practice helpful in conducting the examination:

- Invite the PGR into the room (or video call). Introduce those present and clarify roles. If either the supervisor or an independent chair is in attendance, clearly explain their role. You can [find advice on the role of the supervisor earlier in the document](#) here [and the role of the independent chair \(of attending\) here](#).
- Aim to put the PGR at ease as far as possible. Explain the purpose of the oral examination and go through the format for the examination and how things will work. The examiners share responsibility for questioning the PGR during the oral examination. Explain the possible recommendations the examiners can make.
- Explain to the PGR that after the viva they will be asked to withdraw from the room (or video call) (along with the supervisor, if present as an observer) whilst the examiners confer on their decision before asking them to return.
- Ask the PGR if they have any questions and advise them to seek clarification should any part of the process or the questioning be unclear (or if they find any issues with sound quality in the case of a video call).
- The PGR should also be told that they may request a break(s) during the examination and that they may consult their copy of the thesis if it helps them (which may be annotated with notes/post-it notes) during the examination if it helps them.

DURING the viva

- Allow the PGR time to collect their thoughts and develop responses to the questions posed by the examiners. Allow the PGR to consult their copy of the thesis.
- Wherever possible, examiners should pose succinct and focussed questions and avoid asking multi-part questions. Instead, where possible, ask one question at a time and use follow-up questions as necessary. Examiners should actively listen to the PGR's

answers. If the PGR gives a poor answer, try to rephrase the question in a different way and give them another opportunity to produce a better response.

- Although the oral examination will normally run continuously and be completed within a day, respect any request a PGR may make for a short break. The Examiners or the independent chair (if present) may also wish to suggest a break at appropriate points in the examination.
- At the close of the examination ask the PGR 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. (For a video viva, check with the PGR at the end of the viva whether they were happy with how it was conducted from a practical point of view and if there is anything they would like noted).
- On completing the oral examination, instruct the PGR (and supervisor if attending) to leave the room (or video call) in order for the examiners to discuss the final recommendation on the basis of the thesis and the viva. Only the examiners (and independent chair if appointed, and if attending all parts of the viva) must be present for this part of the process.

AFTER the viva

- Invite the PGR (and supervisor if attending) back into the room (or video call) and inform them of the recommendation. A single recommendation must be made based on the assessment of the written thesis combined with the PGR's performance in the viva. You can find [advice on the different recommendations earlier in this document](#). Outline the next stages in the process to the PGR, depending on the outcome of the oral examination, including communication of any corrections to the thesis.
- Inform the PGR & supervisor that the outcome is subject to confirmation by the Graduate Board.
- The process of notifying the PGR and supervisor of the outcome should normally take place soon after the viva. If you are unable to reach a decision at the viva you must do this within 24 hours of the viva and inform the PGR and supervisor.
- Consult the advice on post-viva support [earlier in the document here](#) if needed, including advice on the appeal process.

11 Guidance on Thesis Length

- 11.1 PGRs have been given the following advice: During the examination of your thesis your examiners will be considering both the quality and value of your work and the way in which you have chosen to present your review, results, arguments and conclusions. Your ability to express your findings in a clear and concise manner will be under examination and excessive length or too discursive a style will be judged a weakness. Your supervisor is, of course, best placed to advise you on the desirable length and form of your submission within the University's limits. The University expects that theses will normally not exceed the following maximum lengths¹³:

MA, MSc, MSc(Eng) and MEd	30,000 words (100 pages)
MPhil	60,000 words (200 pages)
PhD (including Integrated PhD & Master)	100,000 words (300 pages)
EdD	55,000 words (185 pages)
DPaedDent	50,000 words (170 pages)
DHSC	50,000 words (170 pages)
MD	80,000 words (250 pages)
DClinPsychol	40,000 words (135 pages) ¹⁴
Practice-led PhD	A minimum word limit of 15,000 and a maximum word limit of 50,000
Practice-led MPhil	A minimum word limit of 10,000 and a maximum word limit of 30,000

Please note that the above limits include all appendices & footnotes but not bibliographies/reference lists. It should be noted that the maximum limits are not intended to be interpreted as a requirement for the length of the thesis and that in certain disciplines the thesis may be considerably shorter - you should seek further advice from your Supervisors or Director of PGR Studies.

- 11.2 In the event that the Progression and Examinations Group approved the submission of an over length thesis, a copy of the case will be included in the paperwork provided to the examiners. In all cases it remains open to the examiners to reach an academic judgement on whether the additional length is justified or should be reduced as part of any corrections to the thesis.
- 11.3 Guidance on thesis length and the assessment of learning outcomes in light of the Covid-19 pandemic are provided [earlier in this document](#)

¹³The page limits given here are an approximation based on you having presented your thesis (text size, spacing) in accordance with these regulations. If your thesis is longer than the page limit but still within the word limit the Graduate School should send confirmation (including the word count) to rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk

¹⁴**DClinPsychol only:** In exceptional cases, with the approval of their supervisor(s), PGRs may include appendices (up to 20,000 words maximum) which will not be counted towards the overall word length of the thesis.

12 Guidance on Publications

Distinction between the publication requirements at Doctoral and Masters Level

12.1 For the benefit of examiners the following guidance is given:

Doctoral level Publication requirement: “Matter suitable for publication”

At doctoral level, the expectation is that the thesis will contain original work which is of publishable quality in appropriate, peer-reviewed journals (or publication in other form as appropriate for the field of research e.g. monograph). When commenting on the extent to which the thesis contains matter suitable for publication, Examiners are required provide an academic judgement on the extent to which the thesis contains matter suitable for publication in appropriate peer-reviewed journals or in other form as appropriate to the field of research. The response must identify aspects of the thesis that are of publishable quality, independently of whether or not publication has already taken place. (In the case of practice-led research only, the examiners should provide an academic judgement on the extent to which the body of creative practice produced by the PGR in pursuit of the degree is worthy of public presentation).

When commenting on the extent to which the thesis contains matter suitable for publication, Examiners are invited to comment on work which has already been published and/or may comment on parts of the thesis which could form the basis of an appropriate publication following some reworking. Examiners are also invited to comment on any other noteworthy outputs (such as data sets, code, practice/ practice documentation, protocols or other resources of value to the research community), although these cannot substitute for the requirement that the thesis contains matter suitable for publication.

MPhil/Masters by Research Publication requirement: Material at a level suitable for publication

It is acknowledged that the breadth and depth of critical analysis shown at MPhil & Masters by Research level might be more limited than that at doctoral level on account of the much narrower focus of the research, less extensive range of sources and shorter thesis. However it is expected that the quality of the research demonstrated would still be at a level suitable for publication (in reputable journals/publications as appropriate to the field of research). It is expected that the work could contribute an element towards a broader published work even if there might not be the volume of work needed for publication by itself. When commenting on the extent to which the thesis contains material at a level suitable for publication, Examiners are required to give an academic judgement on work already published and/or the potential to contribute an element towards a broader published work even if it is unlikely to be published by itself.

Use of jointly or solely authored publications in the thesis

- 12.2 Guidance is given to PGRs on the use of their published work within a thesis, including identifying the contribution of others to the work. This is especially important when chapters might have been based on jointly authored publications as the examiners will need to be able to clearly identify the work directly attributable to the PGR to determine whether there is a substantially original contribution by the PGR and whether this contribution is at the appropriate level to merit the award of the degree. PGRs are

required to indicate their contribution to the work and that of the other authors at the point of examination entry, and include this information clearly on the title pages of the thesis. To assist the Examiners, the statement is included with the thesis, along with copies of any publications. Examiners can view the [full guidance](#) given to PGRs.

Alternative style of doctoral thesis including published *material*

- 12.3 This model of submission is currently only available to PGRs registered in the Faculties of Environment, Engineering and Physical Sciences (former Engineering Schools only), Biological Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health and Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures where an approved protocol is in place. Under this protocol, published material can be included in the thesis without the need for the work to be rewritten and integrated into individual chapters of the thesis. Advice is provided to examiners in the separate booklet enclosed.

13 Disability Support

Supporting Disabled Postgraduate Researchers – advice to examiners

13.1 Disabled PGRs, and their supervisors and examiners, can access a wide range of support from [Disability Services](#). The process for identifying and agreeing support and reasonable adjustments for the final oral examination is set out in a [separate document](#). This document, which is intended to provide a single point of reference for PGRs and staff in Disability Services, Schools/Faculties and DC:

- Summarises the routine adjustments with clear precedents which can be accommodated without prior approval by the Progression & Examinations Group.
- Provides examples of adjustments which may be facilitated with prior approval by Progression & Examinations Group, with a framework and timescale for these
- Summarises the support available to all PGRs in preparation for assessment.
- Summarises the support that can be considered for a video-streamed viva.

13.2 It is important that the need for reasonable adjustments is identified well in advance of the final examination to allow due consideration to be given prior to examination. Schools are asked to work in partnership with PGRs, and Disability Support where required, to identify when reasonable adjustments may be required for oral examination; and what those reasonable adjustments might be. A framework and timetable is included in the separate document.

13.3 The Graduate School is responsible for communicating any agreed adjustments and support arrangements to the PGR, the Supervisor and the examiners. The Internal Examiner has responsibility for facilitating on the day any reasonable adjustments to the oral examination, which will have been agreed upon in advance. Guidance on these arrangements can also be sought from the Thesis Examination Section of Doctoral College Operations (rp_examinations@adm.leeds.ac.uk).

Accessibility and Support for Examiners

13.4 If an internal examiner would like to discuss and arrange any adjustments for the examination process, please contact your Graduate School Office or DCO. If an external examiner wishes to discuss and arrange any adjustments to the examination process this can be done either through the internal examiner or by contacting the [Thesis Examination Team in DCO](#) who will be very happy to help.

14 'Mitigating Circumstances' for PGRs

- 14.1 As set out in the [Policy on suspensions and extensions](#), for PGRs the Graduate Board accommodates 'mitigating circumstances' by considering a period of suspension or extension of study which will lengthen the overall candidature and delay the deadline for submission of the thesis for examination. Guidance on the assessment of learning outcomes in light of the Covid-19 pandemic are provided [earlier in this document](#).
- 14.2 In order to be eligible for the award of the degree, all PGRs must complete an oral examination and the thesis submitted for examination must meet the stated criteria for award of the degree and the specified learning outcomes must be met. Any mitigating circumstances which may have affected the PGR during their period of study should not be taken into account as part of the assessment of the thesis and should never lead the examiners to award a research degree where the work is not felt to be of the appropriate standard. However, such factors might be taken into account by the University when determining whether any reasonable adjustments to the examination process should be considered, for example in the case of a disability, or whether any support is needed in order to complete any amendments to the thesis after the viva.

15 Ethics Review of the Research

- 15.1 All PGRs are required to confirm that they are aware of, and comply with, the University's procedures for the review of ethics issues arising from research involving animals; human participants, their data or their tissue; or the potential for significant environmental impact. PGRs' awareness of the ethical implications of their research, and that ethics approval has been sought and received where necessary, is reviewed at various stages in the candidature including the training needs analysis, the transfer stage and at examination entry. At the point of entry for examination, the Graduate Board requires PGRs (along with their Supervisor & Director of PGR Studies) to confirm that all ethics review requirements have been satisfactorily addressed.
- 15.2 PGRs are asked to include a copy of the ethics approval from the relevant body (e.g. research ethics committee) in the appendix. The University Research Ethics Committee recognises that in some cases it may be beneficial for examiners to have access to the detailed ethics information so they can see how PGRs have dealt with the ethical issues of their research. The documents which make up the ethics application typically include the application form, recruitment material, participant information sheet and consent form. These can be made available to examiners on request. Please inform [DCO](#) in the first instance who will contact the Ethics team. Further information about the University's research ethics policy and requirements for researchers is [available](#).

16 Academic Integrity in research degree examinations

The University of Leeds is committed to upholding high standards in relation to academic integrity. The following section includes information of relevance to examiners on the expectations of PGRs covering academic integrity, and the process that should be followed in the event the examiners identify any possible concerns as part of the examination process.

Plagiarism

- 16.1 All theses will be submitted to Turnitin¹⁵ before the work is sent for examination. The following filters will be applied to all work screened:
- The Exclude Quotes filter will be applied.¹⁶
 - The Exclude Bibliography filter will be applied¹⁷.
 - The Exclude sources that are less than 1% filter will be applied.
- 16.2 Consideration of potential plagiarism cannot rely on the Turnitin Similarity index (% match) alone. An academic judgement will be required whether there is potential plagiarism regardless of the percentage match indicated by the similarity index. There is no minimum % match over which cases are recommended for further investigation. No review or judgement on the Turnitin originality report/similarity index will have been undertaken by DCO. There will need to be academic judgement as to whether matched text is:
- a) Correctly quoted and referenced.
 - b) Common phrases or terminology considered acceptable in the discipline. These matches can be discounted at academic discretion/judgement.
 - c) The PGR's own published work¹⁸. Progression and Examinations Group policy allows for re-use of any material the PGR may have published during their candidature¹⁹. Any part of the thesis which has been taken from the PGR's other academic outputs will have been clearly identified as such at examination entry and on the title pages of the thesis. Re-use of published material in accordance with the policy is acceptable and would not be considered plagiarism/self-plagiarism.
 - d) Where text has been paraphrased from the original source, the original source should be cited and it will then be a matter of academic judgment whether the text has been appropriately rewritten in the PGR's own words, or suggests possible plagiarism.
 - e) Indicates possible plagiarism which requires further investigation.

¹⁵ Except for PGRs registered at an Accredited Institution

¹⁶ From the Turnitin guide: this applies where text has either inverted commas ("x") around it or text has been block indented.

¹⁷ From the Turnitin guide: this applies to any references shown after a Bibliography or References heading

¹⁸ Or own earlier work. Please see [guidance](#) later in this document.

¹⁹ In accordance with the [Alternative Format Thesis Protocol](#). Or in accordance with the [Guidelines on the Use of Solely or Jointly-Authored Publications within a Thesis Submission](#) (where work must be reformatted and, *if necessary*, rewritten to ensure integration with the central arguments of the thesis, but it is recognised that it will sometimes be necessary for sections of already published material to be included word for word in the thesis, as long as all normal practices of citation are followed).

- 16.3 The Turnitin Originality Report will be provided to the examiners as part of the examination pack alongside the thesis. This is intended to assist the examiners when reviewing the thesis for assessment. If when reading of the thesis the examiners suspect possible plagiarism the Turnitin Originality Report can be used to inform the consideration of whether or not possible plagiarism may have occurred, which the examiners may need to report to the University
- 16.4 If the examiners suspect plagiarism within a thesis submission the matter should be reported to the Director of PGR Studies and Graduate School immediately. Where the Director of PGR Studies is one of the assessors/examiners or the Supervisor, the Head of Graduate School or Head of School should be informed. The University has [procedures for the investigation of allegations of academic misconduct](#). The oral examination will be postponed pending the outcome of the plagiarism investigation.

Proof-reading

- 16.5 PGRs are permitted to have their thesis proof-read before submission for examination. Graduate Board has a [PGR Proof-Reading Policy and Guidance](#) which outlines the acceptable support with third-party proof-reading of the thesis, within specific boundaries. PGRs may also have their final thesis (after successful examination) proof-read by a third party as part of any corrections. PGRs are required to declare and acknowledge the use of any proof-reading services on the acknowledgement page of their thesis.
- 16.6 Any proof-reading support which is used must not exceed what is defined in that Policy as acceptable support. If, as part of the examination process, the examiners identify any concerns with suspected breaches of the policy²⁰ this should be reported to the Director of PGR Studies and Graduate School immediately. Where the Director of PGR Studies is one of the examiners or the Supervisor, the Head of Graduate School or Head of School should be informed. Any case which is suspected of breaching this policy may be investigated in accordance with the University's academic misconduct procedures for PGRs.

Artificial Intelligence and Assistance Tools

- 16.7 The University has approved detailed guidance on using generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in a research degree. The [Generative AI Guidance for Postgraduate Researchers](#) has been developed to cover the specific expectations for assessment at PGR level. PGRs must ensure that any use of Gen AI tools remains within the guidelines set out in the guidance, and that any use of AI tools (e.g. for proof-reading) has been declared in their thesis acknowledgements. If, as part of the examination process, the examiners identify any concerns with suspected breaches of

²⁰ For example where the support provided by a third-party proof-reader is considered to have exceeded the boundaries of acceptable support, as defined in the policy or failing to acknowledge support provided by a third-party proof-reader in the thesis

the position this should be reported to the Director of PGR Studies and Graduate School immediately to investigate further.

Materials permitted in a viva

- 16.8 All parties should have access to a copy of the thesis. This may be an electronic version of the thesis open on the computer (for an online viva) so that each party can show their respective screens, or access to a printed copy of the thesis (if this has been arranged or during an in person viva). This may be helpful in conversations about which equation, diagram, etc is being referred to. The PGR may consult their copy of the thesis during the examination if it helps them.
- 16.9 Re-reading of a transfer report or thesis in preparation for the viva is something that is encouraged. In doing so, PGRs may annotate their copy of the thesis with notes/post-it notes to mark errors they identify along the way, or to help when finding particular sections or to jog their memory on points that they may anticipate coming up.
- 16.10 In some cases it may also be useful and legitimate for the PGR to be able to access during the viva other material **created by them during their candidature**. Examples may include (this list is not exhaustive): solely or jointly-authored publications; supplementary data/material; lab books; longer versions of material in the thesis; failed attempts at a proof or experiments that were left out but then informed the direction that was taken. PGRs are advised to discuss with their Supervisors whether to have such material available at the viva, to be accessed if needed. Any such materials should be declared to the examiners at the start of the viva.
- 16.11 Other third-party material (taken to mean any material not created by the PGR themselves during the candidature) is not permitted in the viva, whether in printed/physical form or in electronic format (for example accessing other tabs/pages or material on a tablet or laptop).

Attendees at the viva

- 16.12 Those present at the oral examination will be the PGR, the external examiner(s), the internal examiner(s), the independent chair (if appointed) and optionally one supervisor as an observer (at the invitation of the PGR). In some cases, as part of any reasonable adjustments, the presence of a supporter/support worker/note taker or specialist mentor may have been agreed. These arrangements will be communicated to the examiners by the School before the viva. No other parties are permitted to attend the final examination.

Misconduct in a PGR viva examination

- 16.13 The viva is a University examination and as such must represent a rigorous and secure assessment. It is considered highly unlikely that there might be misconduct in a viva, but examiners are expected to be alert to this possibility. For example, if the PGR appears to be consulting with a third party or using reference material or other

sources of information (other than the thesis or transfer report, or other material produced by the PGR during their studies, as described above)²¹.

- 16.14 If concerns arise, the examiners may wish to seek assurance that the candidate is alone. If the examiners have any concerns about the integrity of the examination, these should be reported to the Director of PGR Studies and the Doctoral College Progression and Examination Team. If concerns arise at an early stage and cannot be resolved, the examiners should postpone the viva pending investigation. If concerns arise close to the end of the viva, or seem to be resolved, the Panel examiners might choose to complete the viva and come to a provisional recommendation pending any post-viva investigation.

²¹All parties should have access to a copy of the thesis. PGRs may consult their copy of the thesis (which may be annotated with notes/post-it notes) during the examination if it helps them.

17 Using GRAD – Information for the internal examiner

Confirming the viva date

- You will receive a task and email notification through GRAD asking you to confirm the viva date. Please record the viva date in GRAD once it has been agreed with the External Examiner and the PGR.
- You can click on the link in the email notification or use your Task menu which will take you directly into the correct page.
- Select the green “Schedule viva” option
- Enter the date (compulsory) time (optional) and location (optional) and confirm
- Please confirm in the notes the [agreed format for the viva](#)
- You will come to a review screen which shows you the email notification. You can edit/add to the notification (if you need to). Click notify to send.
- The email notification will be sent to DCO and your Graduate School so you don’t need to send a separate email to inform them of the date.
- You can find a step-by-step walkthrough in the Guides section of GRAD (select the viva scheduling guide) <https://research.leeds.ac.uk/do/activity/guides/all>

Accessing a copy of the thesis

- The internal examiner can access a copy of the thesis in GRAD.
- You can find the PGR under the examination section of your "My Postgraduate Researchers" section in GRAD or search for them in the search box.
- From the PGR’s main project page Select “Thesis Examination” then select the “Thesis submission” workflow. A copy of the thesis will be available when you select “Thesis”.

Post-viva process

- GRAD does not cover the examiners’ report form process. The report form will continue to be paper-based and is managed outside GRAD. Please follow the established process for completing the report post-viva

The only action an internal examiner is asked to undertake in GRAD is record the viva date
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