



University of
St Andrews

Assessment of postgraduate research students

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1.0	Converting policy previously held on a webpage to a standalone document. Amended to include examination procedures for		Emily Feamster, Academic Policy Officer, Principal's Office	6/6/2019

	MSc(Res) and MSt(Res) students.			
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Assessment of postgraduate research students

1. Rules for the submission of dissertations / theses / portfolios

1.1 Forms and presentation of masters and doctoral submissions

All dissertations, theses or portfolios submitted for a research degree should meet the requirements set out in the [Postgraduate Senate Regulations](#).

With the exception of submissions by portfolio, single- or multi-authored papers may not be directly reproduced or repeated as a standard chapter, although they may be included as appendices. However, chapters based on published work may be included in a postgraduate research thesis, as long as:

- the relevant publication(s) and collaborations are acknowledged and cited;
- the author of the thesis is the major contributing author of the material that is included in the thesis;
- the material is integrated in to the structure and narrative of the thesis.

1.2 Variation of word limit

It is expected that word limits will be strictly observed and that theses in excess of the prescribed word limits will not be accepted for examination. Nevertheless, exceptionally a student may seek permission to submit for examination a thesis, dissertation or portfolio that exceeds the prescribed word limits. For example, an extension to the word limit may be sought if the extension includes a substantial piece of text on which the thesis is a commentary. In such cases the student must present a request in writing to the Pro Dean for consideration. Reasons for the request should be fully stated, and a letter of support from the principal supervisor must accompany the request.

1.3 Variation of format of thesis submission

Where appropriate, research students may apply to the Pro Dean for a research thesis to be submitted in a medium other than a bound typescript and/or without a corresponding electronic copy. Reasons for the request should be fully stated, and a letter of support from the principal supervisor must accompany the request.

1.4 Submission of PhD thesis in foreign language

The languages other than English which may normally be permitted for the submission of a PhD are those inextricably associated with a particular academic discipline taught in the University, in which (in addition to the usual scholarly qualities) native or near-native proficiency in the language is expected of PhD graduates. These languages are, at the present time: French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish.

Submission in a language other than English will be considered for the degree of PhD. It is expected that the thesis for all other research degrees will normally be written in English, even for degrees in the Modern Languages. Only in circumstances where a PhD thesis was written with permission in a foreign language, and was not

deemed satisfactory, may a thesis be submitted for a lower degree award in a language other than English.

Special permission to submit the thesis in a language other than English must be sought from the Pro Dean, in a reasoned case presented by the school's Director of Postgraduate Studies, accompanied by written statements by the candidate and the supervisor. The reasoning should normally refer to the following points, as a minimum:

- confirmation that the candidate is enrolled for doctoral study in the School of Modern Languages, and that the request has the support of the school;
- an evaluation of the candidate's competence to complete the thesis in the language proposed;
- confirmation that the thesis will contain very substantial references to cultural material (film, text, speech, etc) generated in the language of study;
- confirmation that submission in the language of study will enhance the international accessibility of the research to other scholars within the discipline of study as a whole;
- confirmation of the availability of appropriately qualified supervisors and internal/external examiners.

The following will apply:

- No argument will be accepted that is based on a candidate's relative inability to write in English.
- Permission must be sought as early as possible and at all events by the end of the first year of study.
- Permission to change languages will not normally be granted after more than one year of full-time study.
- In addition to the thesis itself, a thesis written in a language other than English must be accompanied by a summary of 2,000 to 3,000 words in English as well as the usual 300-word abstract.
- The oral part of the examination will be conducted in English, and the candidate must demonstrate an ability to hold a linguistically accurate discussion of the research in an appropriately academic register.
- In addition to the title in a language other than English, the thesis must bear an English translation of the title. Both titles will appear in all official documentation.
- External examiners will be notified of the language of the thesis before they are appointed.
- The linguistic accuracy, stylistic qualities and scholarly presentation of a thesis in a language other than English will be judged in the same way as they would be in English.
- None of the above points should hinder co-tutelle arrangements in any faculty which stipulate that a thesis may be submitted in the language of a partner institution.

1.5 Submission of thesis and electronic publication of theses

MSc(Res) and MSt(Res) students will submit their final thesis electronically via MMS. The School may require additional paper copies but there is no requirement to submit a print copy centrally. MSc(Res) and MSt(Res) students are not required to submit a final copy of their thesis to the Library.

MPhil and PhD students must submit a sufficient number of bound copies of their thesis / portfolio for use by each member of the examining committee and also the supervisor.

It is the University's intention to store all MPhil and PhD theses in electronic as well as print format. A copy of the approved thesis in electronic format must therefore be lodged in the Library along with one hard bound copy of the thesis.

It is also the University's intention to support the appropriate dissemination of research material by electronic means. Supervisors and students should therefore think carefully about the [copyright](#) and [intellectual property](#) consequences of their work from the outset, and the Library and GRADskills will offer advice and training. The copyright of a thesis normally belongs to the author but students must still complete their declarations via MySaint.

At the point of the submission of a thesis for examination, the candidate and supervisor must fill in the section of the declaration (see [additional guidance](#)) which relates to embargoes of work where publication would have commercial, professional, legal or ethical consequences. Embargoes of all or part of the print and/or electronic copy of the thesis must be accompanied by a brief justification. The standard maximum embargo period is five years in the first instance.

2. Examination for MSc(Res) and MSt(Res) students

The thesis for a Master of Science by Research or Master of Studies by Research degree should be submitted electronically, although the School reserves the right to request print copies in addition. Each thesis will be examined by at least two internal examiners as assigned by the School. The examination of a thesis should normally be completed within three months of the date of submission. The examiners will jointly agree an outcome from the options set out in the [Postgraduate Senate Regulations](#). In most cases an oral examination will not be required, although the examiners may request that an oral examination take place if they deem it necessary. All outcomes will be moderated by an external examiner.

3. Examination for MPhil and PhD students

3.1 Nature of assessment

Theses, dissertations and portfolios submitted for any research degree are to be assessed in accordance with the relevant [Postgraduate Senate Regulations](#).

3.2 Use of videoconferencing in the Viva

In all circumstances the student must be in the presence of the internal examiner/convenor. There are some exceptional circumstances when it may be

permissible for the external examiner to conduct the examination through video conferencing. Permission must be requested and received from the Pro Dean (Postgraduate Research) before arrangements can be made for the external examiner to participate via video conferencing. Circumstances in which permission for this approval might be sought include:

- Medical, personal or family difficulties.
- Unforeseen travel disruptions.
- International travel requirements, across three or more time zones, that do not fit with the examiner's planned activities.

If these circumstances arise and permission for an examination involving video conferencing is granted, the convenor must ensure that the examination is conducted in accordance with the guidance given in [Use of videoconferencing in a Viva](#).

3.3 Examining committees and their operation: research degrees

i. The appointment of the Examining Committees

When appointing an examining committee for a postgraduate research degree, the relevant Head of School, after consultation with supervisors, must nominate an examination committee at least 6 weeks prior to submission of the thesis. If the committee has not been nominated by the School and agreed by the Pro Dean by the time the thesis is submitted, there may be delays in the examination process. Nomination forms for an Examination Committee should be signed either by the Head of School or by the Director of Postgraduate Studies under the authority of the Head of School. Candidates should be given the opportunity to comment on the composition of the examination committee. Candidates do not have a right of veto, but may appeal to the Pro Dean if there is no resolution of a dispute at school level.

The Committee should consist of at least two examiners:

- An internal examiner who is a permanent member of staff of the University. The internal examiner will normally also act as the convenor.
- An external examiner

In some situations, such as when two external examiners are appointed, a separate convenor may be nominated to ensure that all processes and regulations are observed.

The following applies to the appointment of external examiners:

- Only persons of seniority and experience who are able to command authority in the relevant field of study should be appointed. Appointees should normally hold, or have recently held, an academic appointment in a University.
 - In certain circumstances, however, it may be appropriate to appoint from outside the higher education system, e.g. from industry or the professions, or from the higher education systems of other countries.

- There should be no significant conflicts of interest in the appointment, such as any on-going joint research between the external examiner and supervisor or student.
- If the external examiner is resident abroad, the school should explicitly state, as part of the nomination and approval process, that it is willing to pay the cost of travel to St Andrews.
- Former St Andrews members of staff or research students should not be invited to become external examiners before at least four years have elapsed.
- Members of other Universities who are part of pooling arrangements which relate to the candidate's area of study may not normally act as external examiners.
- Academic staff from Edinburgh and Stirling Universities who are part of the EastChem pool and SASP (St Andrews and Stirling Graduate Programme in Philosophy) may act as internal examiners for PhD students in St Andrews.

The following applies to the appointment of internal examiners and conveners:

- Conveners of examination committees should be academic or academic related members of staff of the University who will not be retiring or departing the University up to six months after the expected date of submission. In some cases, e.g. if a member of staff knowledgeable in the subject area is not available, two external examiners should be appointed with an internal convener to administer the examination process.
- Conveners are responsible for arranging the date of the oral examination and informing Registry and the school's Director of Postgraduate Studies. The convener is responsible for assuring that the oral examination takes place in an appropriate setting, that the candidate is given the opportunity to answer reasonable questions, and that on conclusion all appropriate forms are completed.
- For the MD (by research thesis), the examining committee shall be a convener and two external examiners. Where a member of university staff is submitting for any higher degree by thesis or dissertation the examining committee should contain two external examiners and an internal examiner who should act as convener.
- A supervisor may not be appointed to an examination committee and is not permitted to attend the oral examination even as an observer.
- As an internal examiner, the convener should be sufficiently distant from the candidate and supervisor, both academically and personally, to ensure an impartial and objective opinion of the thesis. It is accepted, however, that in small departments there will inevitably have been some academic interaction between the convener and candidate.

The purpose of the oral examination is to:

- ensure the candidate's authorship of the thesis;
- discuss points arising from the examiners' reading;
- discuss the wider context of the candidate's specific area of research;
- clarify areas of uncertainty or doubt.

The University expects work at postgraduate research level to be scholarly, substantial, significant and lucid.

ii. Procedures followed by the examining committee

The principal supervisor should inform the examining committee of any special circumstances that may have affected the student's performance during the period of study.

The examination of a thesis should normally be completed within three months of the date of submission. If the examining committee is unable to convene within three months, then the Pro Dean may either authorise a short extension or advise that a new committee should be appointed.

In appropriate circumstances and subject to the agreement of the candidate and all members of the examining committee, the oral examination may be held by video conferencing. This requires the approval of the relevant Dean. In these instances, the examining committee must adhere to the guidelines on the use of videoconferencing for oral examinations.

Examiners are expected to prepare independent written reports on the thesis prior to the oral examination, and they should express a provisional judgement on the thesis on these reports. If academic misconduct is suspected then the [Good Academic Practice Policy](#) should be followed

Examiner's reports should be submitted at least five working days before the oral examination to Registry, which will make them available to the convener of the examining committee only when all reports have been received. In order to maintain independence, examiners should not confer with one another about the thesis or their judgements prior to all reports having been submitted. These reports will remain confidential unless requested as part of a freedom of information request or appeal.

iii. The Recommendations of the examining committee

After examination, the examining committee may make a recommendation from the relevant options set out in the [Postgraduate Senate Regulations](#).

The examiners may tell the candidate their recommendation informally during or after the oral examination, but the candidate will be notified officially of the result of the examination only after the Pro Dean has approved the recommendation of the examining committee.

The examiners must prepare an agreed final report which will be made available by the convener to the candidate within two weeks of the examination regardless of the result, containing any recommendations for changes before resubmission, reasons for referral, and commentary on the future direction of successful theses.

The award of a lower degree for the PhD / DLang / EngD/DEng may only be made where the examiners are convinced that the thesis fulfils completely the requirements for that degree, and may not be recommended purely as a compensatory award.

In the case either of a thesis which is rejected or recommended for a lower degree, the convener of the examining committee must provide the candidate with a detailed written statement of the reasons why the thesis has not been accepted for the original degree.

If there are minor revisions to be made to the thesis, these will be conveyed to the candidate in writing by the convener. Note that the supervisor's role does not end after the examination and that the supervisor should offer guidance to the candidate on achieving the required revisions. The revised thesis should then be examined by the internal examiner within two weeks of receipt of the revised thesis. The convener is responsible for reporting to Registry via MySaint that the corrections or revisions have been successfully completed.

Where the thesis is more seriously flawed and the examining committee has recommended a resubmission for the same degree after major revision, the candidate will obtain a clear and detailed statement in writing of the aspects of the thesis requiring amendment from the convener. In such cases, the supervisor continues to have an important role after the examination. The supervisor should offer guidance to the candidate, in consultation with the convener or, where necessary, the other members of the examining committee, on achieving the required changes.

When the examiners have recommended that the degree should be awarded, one copy of the thesis in the correct binding must be deposited in the [University Library](#) before the student is able to graduate. The thesis has to be bound in blue, black or red covers, with the title of the thesis and the name of the candidate printed on the front cover and the name of the candidate and the degree awarded on the spine unless faculty has given permission for another format to be used. At the same time, the student must also provide an electronic copy of their work to the library in an agreed format.

A candidate who is dissatisfied with the result of an examination has the right of appeal and details of the appeals procedure can be obtained from the Senate/Court Office, see the policies on [Student Academic Appeals](#) and [Academic Complaints](#).

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1.0	Converting policy previously held on a webpage to a standalone document. Amended to include examination procedures for MSc(Res) and MSt(Res) students.		Emily Feamster, Academic Policy Officer, Principal's Office	6/6/2019