



PhD: Guidelines for Examiners of Doctor of Philosophy Theses

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1. Recommendations arising from the Examination

These guidelines have been developed to assist examiners in reaching their conclusions regarding the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the candidate for the body of research presented to the examiner. The following recommendations are available to examiners:

1.1 Award Without Further Examination

The thesis has fulfilled all of the requirements for a research thesis, as listed in part 2 of the examiner's report, and is of such quality that no corrections of any sort are required.

1.2 Award Subject to Typographical Corrections

The award of the degree is clearly appropriate but there are a number of typographical corrections which should be made, including errors in spelling, syntax, grammar, punctuation, capitalisation or in the references.

1.3 Award Subject to Conditions

The examiner acknowledges that in the main the thesis is worthy of the award, but there are a number of changes or additions that need to be made that would not substantially alter the conclusions of the thesis. Normally, the changes are of such a nature that the thesis would not need to be re-examined. The examiner should normally provide clear detail as to what is required and the Head of Department/School would be able to make an assessment as to whether the changes have been satisfactorily completed.

1.3.1 Emendations

The recommended changes, whilst more substantial than the correction of typographical or grammatical errors, do not require a return to examiners, but, with the guidance of the examiners' reports, can be adjudicated by the Head of Department. Examples in this category might include the correction of errors or the addition or deletion of material in the text, table of figures or appendices. Changes as substantial as the addition or re-writing of a whole chapter, or the provision of extra data, would normally be considered a revision and not emendations.

1.3.2 Other Conditions

1.3.2.1 The examiner may suggest other conditions on which the award may be granted. Again, normally a thesis would not be re-examined. Such conditions could include updating the literature review to incorporate more recent relevant publications, alterations in the structure of a chapter and some of its content, or explanations or clarifications as to certain questions raised by the

examiner (such answers may need to be incorporated into the thesis as emendations, or may be included in a letter of response from the student to the Head of Department/School).

1.3.2.2 Where a whole chapter needs to be rewritten, this would usually be considered more in the line of a revision, requiring the whole thesis to undergo re-examination. The examiner may on occasion recommend an oral examination to help clarify certain issues (see below).

1.3.3 Where an examiner makes a recommendation of award of the PhD subject to conditions, it is requested that the examiner list the specific typographical corrections, emendations and other conditions that would need to be completed to satisfy the examiner. The University considers all examiners' reports and the provision of this detail will assist the University in reaching its decision.

1.3.4 In cases where the examiner's report is sufficiently detailed that the Head of Department/School can ascertain whether the examiner's concerns have been satisfied, the University would consider awarding the degree subject to conditions rather than requiring that the thesis be re-examined. However, if data were missing, altered conclusions were possible, or the conclusions needed to be tested, a revision and re-examination of the thesis may be more appropriate.

1.4 Revision and Resubmission

1.4.1 The thesis in its current form is not worthy of being awarded the degree, but has many redeeming features. Deficiencies in the thesis may include inadequate experimental work, the failure to include original data in the thesis, inappropriate statistical analyses or incorrect or unsophisticated conclusions drawn (from, for example, a statistical analysis). The changes or additions required for this thesis are such that it is very likely they would alter the conclusions reached, and thus warrant re-examination of the entire thesis. Alternatively, the examiner may not be able to determine whether the conclusions are sustainable because data are missing or inaccessible.

1.4.2 It is appropriate for an examiner to make the recommendation of revise and resubmit if it is felt that new experimental work needs to be undertaken. It should be remembered, however, that there may be practical issues preventing a candidate from being able to undertake more clinical or laboratory experimental work.

1.4.3 In making a recommendation of revise and resubmit, the examiner is asked to estimate the length of time required for any additional research (exclusive of the writing of the revised thesis).

1.5 Non-award

1.5.1 In making the recommendation of non-award, the examiner is of the opinion that the thesis is not salvageable, even with a period of further experimental or research work and a complete rewrite of the thesis. The examiner makes this recommendation on the basis that the research was fatally flawed in its conception, design and execution, and that the conclusions reached are not valid.

1.5.2 If the thesis contains a substantial amount of material that has been published or accepted for publication in peer-reviewed format, then the

recommendation by an examiner of non-award may not be considered reasonable by the PhD Award Sub-Committee. In such a circumstance, additional information may be required. In such cases the examiners may be asked to comment on whether the extent of the student's contribution and the stature of the publication vehicle(s) are appropriate for the award of the degree.

- 1.6 As a general rule, if the examiner feels that the changes that need to be made are more related to the text rather than the research of the thesis, then award under 1.2 or 1.3 above might be considered appropriate. If on the other hand, additional research is required, then a recommendation under 1.4 or possibly 1.5 above might be more appropriate.

2. Examiner appointed as an Assessor

The University seeks the recommendations of three examiners. In cases where the examiners' recommendations differ, the University attempts to determine whether the examiners have common concerns and, if so, considering comments from the Faculty and the academic unit, the appropriate response. In rare cases the University may appoint an additional examiner who may also be asked to act as an assessor of the examiners' reports. The University makes this decision on the advice of the Faculty.

- 2.1 The examiner-as-assessor is required to complete an initial independent examination of the thesis, based on the same criteria as outlined for all examiners in Section 1 above.

- 2.2 Having considered the thesis and written an examiner's report, the examiner-as-assessor is then required to consider de-identified copies of the examiners' reports and comments of the supervisor and (where appropriate) the Head of Department and candidate and assess whether these comments address valid concerns with the work under examination.

- 2.3 The examiner-as-assessor will then return to the University both an examiner's report on the thesis and an assessor's report on the comments of the other parties, to be forwarded to the head of Department for further comment before the Faculty forwards a recommendation to the PhD Awards Sub-Committee.

3. Oral Examination

- 3.1 Candidates may request that they undergo an oral examination as part of the primary examination process, in which case the examiner would have been notified of this prior to commencing examination of the thesis. The examiner has the option of agreeing to participate in the oral examination process, and if the examiner has agreed to this, the examiner will be provided with more details as to how the examination will proceed (including the possible arrangement of participation via a teleconference or videoconference link).

- 3.2 Most Doctor of Philosophy theses do not include an oral examination as part of the normal examination procedure. In some circumstances an examiner may recommend an oral examination under 1.3.2 if there are concerns as to the candidate's grasp of the subject matter or where the examiner seeks clarification on a number of issues. If this recommendation were made, it would be very helpful for the examiner to provide a list of questions that could be used during the oral examination.

4. Examination of theses containing published work

4.1 In some cases work contained in the thesis will have already been published. The University provides for the possibility that a candidate may include in a thesis (whether in the body, or in one or more appendices) one or more published works of which the candidate is the sole or joint author.

4.2 If a thesis is submitted for examination in this setting, the examiner should assess whether the thesis demonstrates a planned and integrated research project. The thesis should be a consistent and unified whole and the candidate should have critically placed any published works used in the body of the thesis in the context of the appropriate field of study and in the context of the thesis as a whole.

4.3 A candidate who has included published work of which the candidate is not the sole author, must provide evidence to identify satisfactorily the sections of the work for which the candidate is responsible. The University normally takes this to be a signed written statement from all authors of a work attesting to the contribution of the candidate as evidence to satisfactorily identify the sections of the work for which the candidate is responsible.

4.4 In such cases the examiners are asked to comment on whether the extent of the student's contribution and the stature of the publication vehicle(s) are appropriate for the award of the degree. Examiners who express concern regarding a candidate's mastery of the subject matter may wish to recommend an additional oral examination to satisfy any concerns where they deem it necessary.

5. Release of Examiner's Name and Comments to the Candidate

5.1 The examiners' reports are released to the candidate once the examination is completed. An examiner may request that her/his name not be disclosed to the candidate at that time. Should an examiner prefer that his/her identity not be revealed, the inclusion of possible identifiers within the text of the report should be avoided. Notwithstanding the above, examiners should be aware that candidates have the legal right to apply for access to any and all documents relating to the examination of their work, including the names of examiners and assessors. Following such an application it is likely that the University would be required to release examiners' names, regardless of their wishes.

6. Please Note

6.1 The examination process is confidential. An examiner will not be advised of the names of the other examiners who have agreed to act. The University requires that there be no consultation among co-examiners during the examination process and that examiners submit an independent report.

6.2 Examiners must keep the thesis confidential, should not disclose the contents of the thesis including any intellectual property contained in the thesis nor ask others to examine the material in the thesis on their behalf. In cases of multidisciplinary work, examiners may be appointed because of their expertise in a particular area of the research. In all other cases if the examiner feels unable to examine the thesis, the thesis should be returned immediately with a statement to that effect.

6.3 The University and the examiners have undertaken that the examiners' reports will be returned within two months of receipt of the thesis. If you are unable to meet this deadline, please return the thesis immediately. It is necessary to adhere to this deadline.

6.4 The University expects that a revised thesis will normally be examined by the original examiners. Irrespective of your recommendation, it would be appreciated if you could please indicate whether you are prepared to examine a revised thesis.

6.5 In some circumstances the University may also consider it appropriate that the reports of the examiners, together with the comments of the supervisor, be referred to all of the examiners for further comment before a final decision can be reached.