

Guidance for Research Degree Examiners

Guidance for examiners is available on the [Doctoral College web pages](#). Research students are no longer required to submit printed copies and all thesis submissions are now digital with the thesis submitted through the research student management system called [MyPGR](#). Examiner nomination, thesis retrieval, pre-viva reports, examination and post-viva joint reports must be completed through MyPGR.

Please read the relevant sections of this guidance carefully before the examination. Attention is also drawn to the section related to examining research degree candidates impacted by COVID19. For guidance on accessing and using MyPGR, please refer to the [MyPGR Guidance for Examiners](#).

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Examiners Responsibilities

All research degrees are examined by two examiners and at least one must be from outside the University of Leicester. Examiners are appointed based on their expertise and external examiners additionally appointed based on their objectivity by ensuring there is no conflict of interest in their appointment. Examiners assess the thesis independently and then examine the student and must jointly reach a decision on the examination outcome. Members of academic staff who are examined for a research degree must be examined by two external examiners.

In some circumstances it is necessary to appoint an independent chair. Chairs do not play a role in assessing the thesis or examining the student, and they ensure best practice is followed during the examination.

Internal Examiners

Internal examiners are the key point of contact for the student and the external examiner regarding the viva. Internal examiners can seek help and guidance from the school/departmental administrator or PGR Tutor but are ultimately responsible for setting the exam date and coordinating the examination and joint reports. Internal examiners are also responsible for confirming thesis amendments where either minor or major amendments are recommended by the examining team.

Under the University regulations, internal examiners are responsible for the following:

1. Co-ordinating the viva and communicating arrangements to the research student and the external examiner.
2. Inputting examination details such as the time, date and location of the viva within MyPGR (or liaising with a school/departmental administrator to do so).
3. Undertaking an independent assessment of the thesis in advance of the viva and completing the independent pre-viva report which must be submitted via MyPGR at least one day before the viva voce examination takes place.
4. Conducting the viva with the external examiner and agreeing a joint decision on the outcome following completion of the examination.
5. Advising the research student of the decision made by the examining team.
6. Providing the research student with a verbal description and written report (except for minor corrections) on the changes and corrections required by the examining team.
7. Preparing a joint post-viva report with the external examiner and submitting this via MyPGR.
8. In the case of minor or major amendments, assessing the changes and corrections made to the thesis by the research student and then confirming whether these have been completed satisfactorily.
9. In the case of a resubmitted thesis, deciding jointly with the external examiner whether a further viva is required, and if no viva is required reaching a joint decision on the outcome.

External Examiners

External examiners are critical in ensuring objective examination and ensuring the expectations for the award of research degrees are consistent across the UK higher education sector. External examiners are not expected to coordinate the viva but they must participate equally in the assessment of the thesis and the student. Where both examiners are external to the University, one must be designated to confirm the thesis amendments if either minor or major amendments are recommended by the examining team.

Under the University regulations, external examiners are responsible for the following:

1. Undertaking an independent assessment of the thesis in advance of the viva and completing the independent pre-viva report which must be submitted via MyPGR at least one day before the viva voce examination takes place.
2. Conducting the viva with the external examiner and agreeing a joint decision on the outcome following completion of the examination.
3. Agreeing a joint decision on the outcome following completion of the examination.
4. Preparing a joint post-viva report with the external examiner and submitting this via MyPGR.
5. If the examining team does not include an internal examiner and has required either minor or major amendments, assessing the changes and corrections made to the thesis by the research student and then confirming whether these have been completed satisfactorily.
6. In the case of a resubmitted thesis, deciding jointly with the external examiner whether a further viva is required, and if no viva is required reaching a joint decision on the outcome.

Chairs

Chairs are appointed where it is deemed necessary to provide further assurance that the viva is conducted in accordance with the regulations and standard practice for the discipline. Chairs are typically appointed where standard examiner appointment criteria or examination format cannot be met or where the Head of School/Department or Dean of the Doctoral College feel a chair is necessary or beneficial to the examining team. A chair is always appointed where both examiners are external to the University.

Chairs are not members of the examining team and do not participate in the examination of the thesis prior to the viva or questioning of the student during the viva. They should remain independent observers of the viva unless they feel it is necessary to intervene to ensure good practice is followed or where they believe guidance is needed in conducting the exam.

Chairs should be a reassuring presence for the student and a helpful source of advice and guidance to examiners in preparing for the viva examination and reaching a joint decision. Chairs should be appointed based on their experience but it is helpful for them to be familiar with the specific regulations and procedures for research degree examinations.

Under the University regulations, chairs are responsible for the following:

1. Providing the examining team with administrative and/or procedural advice as needed.
2. Ensuring that the examining team's joint decision on completion of the viva voce examination is consistent with the decisions permitted under these regulations.
3. Completing a post-viva chair's report and submitting the report through MyPGR.

COVID19 Impact

COVID19 has had a serious impact on research students and their ability to perform research which requires access to physical materials, laboratories and field data collection. The pandemic has also placed significant stress on many students, particularly those with caring responsibilities and those with underlying health conditions. Limited financial support has restricted the ability to provide additional time to fully compensate time lost due to the pandemic.

Regardless of the source of support, very few students have received the financial assistance or time required to fully compensate the time lost and delay caused by the pandemic. The University, consistent with the sector and funder guidance, have advised students to revise projects wherever possible to deliver within funding windows and reduced timescales. Many students have been forced to redesign their research projects, shift their aims and complete their thesis within shorter periods of time. Whilst the University has been as supportive as possible, granting additional time and financial support where possible, it has not been possible to fully mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the research degree candidates and their work.

Examiners are requested to examine research degree theses with these limiting factors in mind and to adjust their expectations accordingly whilst maintaining the expectations of quality for the degree each thesis is submitted for.

Revised Expectations within the Thesis

Inevitably, the necessary revision of research projects has led to the reduction in scope and scale of many studies and the quantity of data available. Where alternative approaches have been taken and studies reduced, students have been advised that the quality of their thesis argument and the originality and novelty of their approach to answering their research question(s) should not be compromised. The quality indicators under which research degree theses are assessed remain applicable with due consideration given to the need to reduce the research or studies that inform the thesis.

Key quality indicators in assessing research degrees are:

- The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, generated through original research of a quality comparable to a peer reviewed publication (doctoral degrees only).
- An understanding of applicable techniques for research and enquiry.
- The systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge presented in the thesis and demonstrated in answers during the viva.
- Well-constructed and supported argument that is presented in a thesis
- The conception, design and delivery of a project that generates new knowledge or assesses knowledge at the forefront of discipline in a novel way.
- The ability to place research within the wider context of the field of study.

In some cases it may not have been possible to form new knowledge, as a result of lost or inconclusive data that would have normally been corrected with additional research. In such circumstances examiners are asked to consider all aspects that demonstrate rigour commensurate with a research degree, such as taking a novel approach to broaden our understanding of pre-existing knowledge, developing new concepts or hypotheses posed on detailed examination of the evidence available, or reproduction of previous work in a new or novel way.

Examiners are asked to recognise the restrictions placed on students and to appreciate the reduction in scope and scale of their project or the data used. It is essential that the expected standard of the

degree is retained and therefore the quality expectation (according to the quality indicators above) is retained as far as possible.

COVID19 Impact Statement

Research students have been advised to include an impact statement detailing how their research has been affected by Covid19. Students have been asked to note the extent to which projects have been hampered by reduced access to research facilities and materials and how data collection and research time may have been cut short.

The impact statement should summarise what limitations were placed on the study which would have been expected under normal circumstances. Students may also include statements on how the pandemic delayed their research and disrupted their ability to work on their research and write their thesis. Statements should also detail what revisions were made to the project to enable the delivery of the project within a reduced timeframe.

The Covid19 Impact statement is not mandatory, but has been advised for students whose projects have been seriously impacted by the pandemic.

Expectations for Amendments

It is important that the ongoing impact of the pandemic is recognised and therefore appropriate consideration of limiting factors is made in recommending amendments to the thesis. It should be noted that restrictions on access to research materials and facilities, as well as travel and interaction with human participants may continue for a long time. Individual circumstances may also prevent extended and sustained research activity where it would be possible under normal circumstances. Amendments should be achievable under the circumstances and therefore examiners should carefully consider how candidates can make the necessary changes to their thesis before requiring them as amendments.

Before the Viva Voce Examination

Prior to the viva each examiner must read the thesis thoroughly and complete an independent report on their observations of the thesis being examined. This independent report will be shared with the other examiner once they too have completed their report. Independent pre-viva reports ensure the separate views of both examiners are recorded and serve as a basis for approaching the oral examination, assisting examiners in identifying areas of weakness and strength and areas of clarity. The pre-viva reports may serve as a useful reference for drafting the post-viva report.

Receiving the Thesis

Examiners will receive an email notification that the thesis is available within MyPGR. The thesis may be downloaded as a PDF. Theses are no longer printed and mailed by the Doctoral College Office. If an examiner wishes to read the thesis in print, the examiner should either print the thesis on their own or contact the candidate's school/department to arrange printing and delivery. For guidance on accessing the thesis and using MyPGR, please refer to the [MyPGR Guidance for Examiners](#).

Where the candidate to be examined is registered for a practice-based degree there is also a requirement to review and assess the practical component of the submission. If this cannot be supplied digitally, the candidate's school/department will be responsible for making the assessment arrangements and confirming this to all members of the examining team.

Completing the Pre-viva Report

Examiners must independently complete a pre-viva report at least one day before the viva. Pre-viva reports are submitted through MyPGR. It is important to submit the pre-viva report and to ensure that it has been 'confirmed' within MyPGR, as this ensures best practice has been followed and compliance with QAA expectations around transparent examination of research degrees. It is also important to submit the report in sufficient time to allow the other examiner to also read the report prior to the viva. This will ensure both examiners are aware of each other's observations and will make planning the viva questions easier.

The pre-viva report is accessed through the MyPGR Examination screen or through the task list at the top of the application. The report itself is started by selecting 'Submit Pre-viva report' and then entering text in the text field or uploading a document. Examiners are also asked to indicate if any occurrence of plagiarism or academic misconduct is suspected. For guidance on completing the pre-viva report and using MyPGR, please refer to the [MyPGR Guidance for Examiners](#).

The pre-viva report should address the following:

- A summary of the thesis
- If the candidate has demonstrated broad understanding of their discipline
- If the candidate has demonstrated that they understood and applied appropriate research techniques and methodology
- The thesis strengths
- The thesis weaknesses
- If the candidate has used a consistent and well supported argument
- If the conclusion matches the analysis and achieves the aims set out in the thesis
- Any particular issues that should be addressed in the oral examination

Examiners should provide a very brief summary of what the thesis is about and the contribution or argument it makes. This is a helpful way of identifying parts of the thesis which do not pertain to the argument or support the conclusion and the key parts of the thesis which may require further development to merit the award of the degree for which it is being submitted.

If there are concerns of plagiarism within the thesis or academic misconduct such as falsified or manipulated data or unethical research practices, these should be flagged within the report and the Doctoral College Office (pgresearch@leicester.ac.uk) should be informed immediately (see below).

Plagiarism and Poor Academic Misconduct

'The University's primary functions of teaching and research involve a search for knowledge and the truthful recording of the findings of that search. Any action that is knowingly taken by a research student which involves misrepresentation of the truth shall be considered as academic dishonesty and as such is an offence which the University believes should merit the application of very severe penalties' (Senate Regulation 9.148).

The thesis must be the result of the research student's own work. Where parts of the thesis are the result of work undertaken by or with others this must be explicitly acknowledged in the thesis text and/or references. The thesis must be the result of work undertaken by the research student over their period of registration and must not have been submitted previously for another degree, with the exception of a PhD by publication.

Plagiarism is where the student uses someone else's work or idea and passes it off as their own. Plagiarism can take several forms and ranges from the blatantly obvious of directly copying another's work without quoting or citing the source of the material to the less obvious of using someone else's observations without referencing their work.

Examiners should also look out for evidence of research misconduct, where a thesis may refer to unethical research practice or include data manipulation. Misconduct may include but is not limited to:

- Copying work or using work written by another student
- Soliciting or commissioning work
- Pretending ownership of another's ideas
- Falsifying results
- Undertaking research without appropriate ethical approval

If either plagiarism or academic misconduct is suspected please notify the Doctoral College Office (pgresearch@le.ac.uk) as soon as possible.

The Viva Voce Examination

Research degrees are awarded after the successful defence of a thesis through an oral examination. The purpose of the oral examination is to confirm the authorship of the thesis and the work informing it, to ensure the student can place their work in the wider context of the field and to provide an opportunity for clarifying parts of the thesis. It should also be an opportunity to highlight the strengths of the thesis and to help the student consider further investigation and publication.

The viva is a supplementary means of assessing the work presented within the thesis and should not be considered in isolation of the written work presented. It is important to understand that the viva can be a very stressful experience for students and therefore efforts should be made to keep the student as calm as possible.

Assessment of the thesis and the answers given by the student during the viva should be made based on the award descriptors for the degree submitted.

Award Descriptors

Each doctoral degree has a distinct award descriptor, as defined by the University Senate and meeting the standard set within the FHEQ framework (level 8 – doctoral and level 7 masters). Under these frameworks, holders of doctoral degrees are expected to develop an original practical, conceptual or technological understanding of a topic through critical analysis and the interpretation and evaluation of complex information. Holders can also extend a field of knowledge by contributing original knowledge and thinking and use advanced skills and techniques to address problems and complex, often interacting, factors. Doctoral degree holders can formulate and use appropriate methodologies and approaches and can critically evaluate actions, methodologies and results.

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

To be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy the research student must satisfy the examiners by means of a thesis which makes a distinct and original contribution to knowledge in the discipline and contains work which is considered to be worthy of publication.

The research student must demonstrate a broad knowledge and understanding of their discipline and its associated research techniques and show that these have been successfully applied.

For research students registered for the degree of PhD and who will submit a practice based thesis, both components of the thesis must form a coherent whole which meets the requirements for the award of the degree.

Doctor of Medicine (MD)

To be awarded the degree of Doctor of Medicine the research student must satisfy the examiners by means of a thesis in any branch of medicine, surgery, or medical science, which has been specifically composed for the purpose, includes a review of the relevant background literature, contains a critical account of original laboratory based or clinical research, carried out personally by the research student, that constitutes a significant contribution to knowledge, and contains work which is deemed worthy of publication.

Doctor of Psychology (PsyD)

To be awarded the degree of Doctor of Psychology the research student must satisfy the examiners by means of a thesis which has been specifically composed for the purpose and constitutes a significant contribution to knowledge and includes:

- A critical literature review (the topic normally being relevant to the research question addressed in the main study)
- A self-contained research paper which reports on the main study and which conforms to the requirements of a peer reviewed journal appropriate to the research topic
- A reflective critique of the research process, and constituting a contribution to knowledge.

Doctor of Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy)

To be awarded the degree of Doctor of Clinical Psychology the research student must successfully complete all taught elements to the appropriate standard described in the relevant programme specification and satisfy the examiners by means of a thesis which makes a distinct and original contribution to knowledge in the discipline and contains work which is considered to be worthy of publication.

The research student must demonstrate a broad knowledge and understanding of their discipline and its associated research techniques and show that these have been successfully applied.

Doctor of Education (EdD)

To be awarded the degree of Doctor of Education the research student must successfully complete all taught elements to the appropriate standard described in the relevant programme specification and satisfy the examiners by means of a thesis which makes a distinct and original contribution to knowledge in the discipline and contains work which is considered to be worthy of publication.

The research student must demonstrate a broad knowledge and understanding of their discipline and its associated research techniques and show that these have been successfully applied.

Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

To be awarded the degree of Master of Philosophy the research student must satisfy the examiners by means of a thesis which demonstrates a satisfactory record of research, a broad knowledge and understanding of the field of study and associated research techniques, and shows that these have been successfully applied.

The thesis must present evidence of a critical survey of knowledge in the discipline but does not need to be a distinct and original contribution to knowledge of their discipline or to be of publishable quality.

For research students registered for the degree of MPhil and who will submit a practice based thesis, both components of the thesis must form a coherent whole which meets the requirements for the award of the degree.

Degree by published work (PhD and MD only)

To be awarded research degree by published work, the research student must satisfy the examiners by means of a thesis which comprises a substantial number of inter-related published works or clinical case studies comparable in size to a doctoral thesis in the discipline. The published works should form a coherent whole and must together make a distinct and original contribution to knowledge. A substantial proportion of the research presented in the inter-related works must have been carried out personally by the research student. The research student must demonstrate a broad knowledge and understanding of their discipline and its associated research techniques and show that these have been successfully applied.

Defining Characteristics for Evaluating Research Degrees

Good research and good theses have a number of defining characteristics. Examiners should look for these within the written thesis and in the answers given to their questions during the viva. Some of the important characteristics to look for are:

Command of the topic

- Extensive treatment of relevant literature
- Appreciation of relevant criticisms and debates
- Application of appropriate theories and methods
- Identification of underpinning principles
- Insightful view of topic

Argument

- Established logic with connections between sections of the thesis
- Well evidenced and supported claims
- Appreciation of perspective and a strong defence of this view
- A clear link between the research question(s) analysis and outcomes

Coherence

- Relevance of thesis sections to the argument
- Consistency of ideas and concepts
- Consistency in presentation
- Systematic analysis and discussion

Depth and Breadth

- Fully developed research question(s)
- Thorough explanation of concepts and ideas
- Worthwhile results and conclusions that expand knowledge or display novelty

Independence

- Original interpretation of evidence beyond just face value
- Evident intellectual contribution towards the formation of the study
- Grounded assertions through independent analysis
- Explanation of problems and choices, demonstrating judgement

Critical thinking

- Self-assessment and recognition of alternative viewpoints
- Critical discussion of study aims and scope

- Exploring conclusions beyond immediate face value
- Gaps or exceptions are identified and explained

Accuracy

- Concise language and clear writing
- Accurate and complete citations
- Accuracy in presenting data
- Clearly stated aims and purpose of study
- Well-organised thesis with distinct chapters, introduction and conclusions

Planning the Questions

The examination should be carried out by both examiners and the questions should therefore be asked equally by both examiners. The pre-viva reports are a good starting point and examiners should compare these to identify areas of shared interest and concern, as well as areas of disagreement or singular opinion. Examiners should discuss the weight of the concerns and identified areas of strength and use these to prioritise areas for discussion.

It is suggested that examiners note who will be responsible for asking questions or initiating discussion on specific sections. This will ensure an equal distribution of the questions and discussion. Observations and follow-on questions will inevitably follow and vivas tend to fall into a conversational pattern. Examiners should remain cognisant of the need to cover all the major points raised in the thesis and address all their concerns, so should ensure lengthy tangents are avoided.

Students will likely be nervous and to try to achieve the best viva experience for the student and examiners, examiners should try to put students at ease as much as possible. It is recommended that students are eased into questions by asking them initial openers designed to get them used to responding to answers and speaking.

Remember to:

- Compare pre-viva reports and prioritise areas of discussion
- Plan questions or points of discussion ahead of time
- Divide questions or discussion points between examiners
- Link questions to identifying the quality indicators and defining characteristics listed in the sections above
- Set a few easy questions or discussion points early on
- Consider both strengths and weaknesses
- Consider the time
- Discuss what's next for the student.

Exam Purpose

In planning the questions and conducting the viva it is important to remember the purpose of the exam itself. Examiners will already have read the thesis and will have an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the research and the argument presented in the thesis. Therefore the purpose of the exam is to:

- Demonstrate that the thesis is the research student's own work
- Confirm that the research student understands what they have written and can defend it verbally

- Investigate the research student's awareness of where their original work sits in relation to the wider research field
- Establish whether the thesis is of a sufficiently high standard to merit the award of the degree for which it is submitted
- Allow the research student to clarify and develop the written thesis in response to the examiners' questions.

Exam Conduct Steps

The viva is a closed examination and is not open to the public. Only the student, examiners and, if required, the chair should be present. A student's supervisor should only attend at the request of the student and must not participate in the exam; they should remain a silent observer throughout the exam. For students with disabilities, a support person may be permitted to assist the student with their disability, but must not participate in the examination process by providing answers to the student or questions. All examinations and corresponding reports must be in English. Vivas should follow the steps outlined below:

Step 1

- Discuss independent pre-viva reports
- Plan questions to ensure balance between examiners
- Estimate the time and consider a pre-planned break if needed.

Step 2

- Invite the student into the room
- Introductions of everyone present
- Inform the student of overall process (questions, private examiner discussion, outcome and discussion of next steps)
- Remind student that they can request a break and where they can find the facilities

Step 3

- Questions – ease into with simple and generic introductory question
- Probing questions on weaknesses and gaps in thesis and follow-on questions
- Remember to also highlight strengths

Step 4

- Ask student to leave room for private discussion
- Discuss with examiner; compare notes against pre-viva reports and use student's answers to assess the weaknesses and what still needs to be addressed
- Consider the amount of correction required and the time needed to complete any corrections to reach a decision and agree the outcome

Step 5

- Invite student back into room
- Deliver the joint decision
- Explain required amendments and the next steps for the student in relation to their thesis
- Discuss next steps for student beyond research degree study (e.g. opportunity for further research or publication of thesis/ thesis parts).

Step 6

- Complete the joint examiners' report and sign off within MyPGR.

Exam Conduct

Students should be invited into the room with both examiners (and chair where necessary) already present. It is important to recognise that the situation may be stressful to candidates and so every effort should be made to put them at their ease as far as possible and to calm them if they become exceptionally nervous. It is recommended that the first questions asked by examiners be kept light and used as a means of easing the student into the situation. Questions such as 'What led you to the research topic?' or 'what part of your research did you find most interesting?' may be good starter questions. Asking the student to briefly summarise their thesis may also be a good way to begin with questions.

The outcome of the exam is not determined until the exam has been completed and examiners have reached a joint decision. Therefore, students should not be informed of what their expected outcome is until they are invited back to hear the joint decision of examiners at the end of the viva. The performance of students within the viva should not solely determine the exam outcome, although performance may be a factor if students are unable to explain shortcomings within their thesis or if they are unable to answer questions to the point their authorship of their thesis is in question.

Questions should lead to a conversational style of discussion, where the student answers questions, sometimes asks questions for clarification and then further questions or observations are made. Both examiners must share in questions and there should be an equal balance between who is asking. At times it may be necessary to keep students on track and examiners should be aware of keeping the discussion to topic to ensure all questions are addressed. Questions should be used to probe areas of weakness within the thesis and gaps in research. This will help determine the amount of further research that is (or in some cases, based on the student's answers may not be) necessary. It is also good practice to highlight the strengths of the thesis.

There is significant variation in how long exams last, and the length of time depends heavily on the research topics and discipline. Where the viva is running particularly long or where it is evident the student is fatiguing, it is recommended that a break is given immediately. There is no limit to the number of breaks and the student should feel comfortable in requesting a break if they need it.

Once all questions/points have been sufficiently discussed, the student should be asked to leave the room to allow the examiners privacy to discuss their joint decision over the exam outcome. Students should be informed approximately how long the examiners plan to discuss the joint decision and instructed on how they will be informed when they can return to the room.

It is necessary to reach a joint decision over the viva outcome. Examiners should consider the thesis against the award descriptors above and consider the changes necessary to bring it to the academic standard expected of the award. The answers given by the student during the exam should enable examiners to assess the additional work and time needed for making the amendments.

There are effectively four outcomes with some variation on the conditions of most outcomes; examiners can recommend either a pass (usually subject to corrections), resubmission, lower award, or failure (outcomes explained below in further detail). It is very rare that candidates pass without any required amendments or fail outright. Most examiners will need to consider whether the required amendments constitute minor or major changes, major changes or a resubmission, or whether a thesis should be referred for resubmission or a lower award given. In distinguishing which side of the threshold a thesis falls, examiners should consider the award descriptors and make a judgement as to the extent of revisions required (see section below).

Once a joint decision on the viva outcome is made, examiners should invite the student back in the room and inform them of the decision straight away. The outcome should be explained to the student and how the assessment of amendments will work. The student should be permitted to ask any questions that they have concerning the process for assessing amendments.

At the end of the viva it is recommended that examiners discuss next steps with the candidate, including what could be investigated further and what parts of the thesis may be publishable.

Video Conference Examinations

During the COVID19 pandemic, all viva examinations have been held by video conference with all parties in separate locations. Aside from the current conditions imposed by the pandemic, conducting a viva virtually should only be used in exceptional circumstances, such as prohibitively high costs, imposed travel restrictions beyond the candidate's control, illness or restricted mobility.

Where examination by video conference is requested, it must be of the shared opinion of the student, supervisor and examiners that video conferencing is the only viable medium for conducting the examination and that examination in person is not possible or would cause undue hardship to the student.

If the viva is being conducted by video conference, please refer to the [specific guidance on SharePoint here](#).

Viva Voce Examination Outcomes

Following the viva exam, both examiners must agree an outcome which will be communicated to the student by the examiners. The outcome, the length of time to make amendments or resubmit, and general comments on the required corrections (specific for minor amendments) should all be explained to the student. Examiners can choose the following outcomes:

Doctoral degrees

- award of the doctoral degree with merit (MD only, immediate award)
- award of the doctoral degree (immediate award)
- award of the doctoral degree subject to minor amendments (1-3 months for amendments)
- award of the doctoral degree subject to major amendments (3-6 months for amendments)
- referral for resubmission of the doctoral degree (6-12 months for amendments)
- award of a lower degree (PhD, EdD, DSocSci only, immediate award)*
- award of a lower degree subject to minor amendments (1-3 months for amendments)*
- referral for resubmission of a lower degree (PhD and EdD degrees only, 6-12 amendments)
- fail**

MPhil degree

- award of the degree (immediate award)
- award of the degree subject to minor amendments (1-3 months for amendments)
- award of the degree subject to major amendments (3-6 months for amendments)
- referral for resubmission of the degree (6-12 months for amendments)
- fail**

*Students examined for the degree of PhD or EdD can be awarded an MPhil if their thesis meets the requirements for a Masters of Philosophy degree (see above). The MPhil award can also be subject to further minor amendments if required.

**** Note that it is unusual for a thesis to be failed outright. Students examined for the degree of DSocSci or EdD can still be awarded the degree of MSocSci or MEd based on the successful completion of the taught components for the degree.**

Where examiners are in the position of choosing between a referral for resubmission for the degree for which the research student submitted or awarding a lower degree the examiners may, if they wish, take the research student's wishes into account. Note that it is unusual for a thesis to be failed outright.

Amendments

No Amendments: No corrections are required. The student will need to submit the final version to the Library through MyPGR following the examination and the award can be made once the internal examiner has confirmed this. The version of the thesis submitted to examiners will be the final archived version held in the Leicester Research Archive.

Minor Amendments: are largely typographical or grammatical and may include corrections to references and/or diagrams and the re-writing of small sections of text. Where examiners recommend minor amendments, details of the amendments should be given to the research student at the viva exam to enable them to make the necessary changes right away. Examiners should indicate how much time the student has to complete their amendments, a minimum of one month and a maximum of up to three months is allowed.

The research student will complete the required corrections and submit their amended thesis through MyPGR. Amendments are confirmed by the internal examiner only (or designated external examiner if there is no internal on the panel) and once confirmed, that version of the thesis submitted to examiners will be the final archived version held in the Leicester Research Archive.

Major Amendments are more substantial and may include substantial re-writing of parts of the thesis. Where examiners recommend major amendments, the required amendments must be outlined within the joint report submitted through MyPGR. Examiners should indicate how much time the student has to complete their amendments, a minimum of three months and a maximum of up to six months is allowed.

The research student will be able to access the report with the required amendments. The research student will complete the required corrections and submit their amended thesis through MyPGR. Amendments are confirmed by the internal examiner only (or designated external examiner if there is no internal on the panel) and once confirmed, that version of the thesis submitted to examiners will be the final archived version held in the Leicester Research Archive.

Referral for Resubmission: A referral for resubmission should be made where the examining team agrees that the research student should undertake further research or repeat completed research and/or re-write or restructure large parts of the thesis. Where examiners refer the research student for resubmission, the required amendments must be outlined within the joint report submitted through MyPGR. Examiners should indicate how much time the student has to resubmit their thesis, a minimum of six months and a maximum of up to twelve months is allowed.

The research student will be able to access the report with the required amendments. The research student will complete the required corrections and resubmit their thesis through MyPGR. The examining team will need to determine whether a further viva exam is needed. This decision will be taken once both examiners have had the opportunity to assess the resubmitted thesis. The second viva exam should normally take place within three months of the resubmitted thesis being received.

After the Viva Voce Examination

Once the viva exam is complete, examiners will need to jointly complete a post-viva report within MyPGR. The student will have a specified period to complete any amendments and then, depending on the outcome of the original viva, the amendments will be checked by the internal examiner or be considered as a second thesis submission by both examiners. If an exam chair was appointed the chair will also need to complete a report within MyPGR.

Post-viva Report

Both examiners should participate in drafting the post viva report, which should reflect their joint observations and decision. It is the responsibility of the internal examiner (or designated external if no internal examiner on panel) to submit the report within MyPGR. This is then confirmed by the other examiner within MyPGR. The report is the official record of the joint decision of the examiners and must be signed off by both examiners. The report will be viewable by the student and supervisor and in the case of students receiving more substantial amendments will be used to understand the changes required. Within the report examiners must indicate the recommended outcome, the time for making any required amendments, and detail comments on the thesis and oral examination. A series of tabs within the MyPGR form will guide examiners in completing all sections of the report. For guidance on completing the post-viva report in MyPGR, please refer to the [MyPGR Guidance for Examiners](#).

It is important that the report is completed in as much detail as possible, particularly where examiners require amendments to the thesis. Students will be able to access the post-viva report and will refer to the report for the required major amendments and resubmission.

Where the research student is being assessed for a practice-based degree the assessment should consider both aspects of the submission as a whole.

Report Sections:

Recommendation – In this section examiners indicate what the outcome is

Deadline – In this section examiners indicate the length of time for the student to make amendments or resubmit. The option for the number of months is dependent on the outcome. Students can resubmit their thesis at any point within the specified limit. If a student requires more time, they must request this separately through MyPGR, and any extension to the amendment deadline is subject to approval from the Dean of the Doctoral College.

General requirements – In this section examiners confirm mandatory requirements have been met. Examiners are asked to confirm if the thesis is the candidate's own work, work completed during registration at the University of Leicester, comply with format under University of Leicester regulations, approval of abstract and confirmation of the word count not exceeding the limit (note students may have requested an extension to their word limit), also whether the thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge and contains work worthy of publication.

Detailed comments – In this section examiners are asked to detail observations on the topic, thesis structure, content and style with particular emphasis on strengths and weaknesses. Examiners must also list all required amendments in this section. It is important to explain all required amendments in sufficient detail to avoid unnecessary clarification from the student and their supervisors.

Oral examination – In this section examiners should confirm the date of the oral examinations and provide a summary of the examination itself and the candidate's performance.

Examiners' decision – This final section is a confirmation of the report and authorisation of the joint decision.

Chair's Report

Where there is an examination chair, they must complete a chair's report within MyPGR after the viva exam. The purpose of the chair's report is to verify the exam conduct and to report any problems or concerns in the way the exam was conducted. The Chair's report will be viewable by examiners, the student and supervisors. For guidance on completing the chair's report in MyPGR, please refer to the [MyPGR Guidance for Examiners](#).

The chair's report is a free text report and has a single confirmation and text box. In the text box, it is recommended that a brief account of the exam is given in regards to the way it was conducted. Chairs should detail any concerns that they have and any parts of the oral exam that did not follow normal practice.

Confirming Amendments

Where required amendments are either minor or major, it is the responsibility of the internal examiner (or designated external where no internal examiner is appointed) to review these and confirm whether they have been satisfactorily completed or not.

Where a research student has been referred for resubmission, their amended thesis will be re-examined by both members of the examining team. Examiners should assess the revised thesis against the list of amendments issued to the research student and the award descriptions as outlined above.

Where examiners have concerns that these have not been adequately addressed, they should seek advice from the Doctoral College Office (pgresearch@leicester.ac.uk).

The reviewing examiner should confirm amendments within MyPGR once they are satisfied that the amendments have been completed satisfactorily. This will trigger an award being made to the research student.

Resubmission

Resubmitted theses must be reviewed by both members of the original examining team and both examiners must agree whether a second viva is needed. If the resubmitted thesis is towards the same degree, examiners should read the thesis against the same criteria as the original submission. If the thesis has been submitted for a lower award, examiners should read the thesis against the requirements of the lower degree outlined above. Examiners must assess the amendments made to the resubmitted thesis against those they required previously in the joint report. If one or more examiner is unable to re-examine the thesis, further advice should be sought from the Doctoral College Office (pgresearch@leicester.ac.uk).

Where a second viva is needed this should be recorded within MyPGR. For guidance concerning the resubmission process within MyPGR, please refer to the [MyPGR Guidance for Examiners](#).

Fees and Expenses for External Examiners

The University pays external examiners £175 to examine/re-examine a PhD/MD thesis and £120 to examine/re-examine a professional doctorate degree thesis.

Where viva examinations take place on campus, the University pays reasonable out of pocket expenses and travelling expenses up to the value of first class rail fare. One night's accommodation can be paid where the distance travelled requires this and the candidate's School/Department should

arrange accommodation at College Court wherever possible. The Doctoral College Office will pay a total of £250.00 expenses (this is in addition to the fee), any balance in excess of this must be paid by the candidate's School/Department for payment.

External examiners should claim fees and expenses on the claims form. Forms can be requested from and should be returned to Doctoral College Office (pgresearch@le.ac.uk).

Eligibility to Work in the United Kingdom

It is a condition of UK immigration law that the University verifies and retains appropriate documentary evidence of the right to work in the UK of anyone appointed to undertake work. This includes external examiners and applies to examiners of all nationalities. Unfortunately, the University is unable to pay the examination fees where viva exams take place in the UK and no eligibility documentation is provided.

Verification of Documents

To comply with this requirement external examiners must bring their eligibility to work in the UK documentation with them to the viva. Eligibility documentation must be checked and verified by the school/department on the day of the viva and scanned copies of all documentation should be sent to the Doctoral College Office.

If external examiners are travelling to the viva from abroad and entering the UK under the "permitted paid engagements" route then the Doctoral College Office should be contacted if a formal appointment letter is needed for this purpose. Examiners may also need written confirmation of the arrangements for the viva from the candidate's School/Department in support of their application.

Any queries about eligibility to work in the UK should be directed to the Doctoral College Office by emailing pgresearch@le.ac.uk.

Acceptable Forms of Documentation:

- A passport showing that the holder, is a British citizen or a citizen of the United Kingdom or Colonies having the right of abode in the United Kingdom.
- A residence permit, registration certificate or document certifying or indicating permanent residence in the UK issued by the Home Office, the UK Border Agency or UK Visas and Immigration to a national of a European Economic Area country or Switzerland.
- A Biometric Residence Permit issued by the UK Border Agency or UK Visas and Immigration to the holder which indicates that the person named in it is allowed to work in the United Kingdom for a period covering the date of the viva exam (Leave to Remain) or has no time limit on their stay in the United Kingdom (Indefinite Leave to Remain).
- A passport or other travel document endorsed to show that the holder is exempt from immigration control, is allowed to stay indefinitely in the United Kingdom, has the right of abode in the United Kingdom, or has no time limit on their stay in the United Kingdom.
- An Immigration Status Document or letter issued by the Home Office, the UK Border Agency or UK Visas and Immigration to the holder with an endorsement indicating that the person named in it is allowed to work in the United Kingdom for a period covering the date of the viva exam or has no time limit on their stay in the United Kingdom, when produced in combination with an official document giving the person's National Insurance Number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
- A full birth certificate issued in the United Kingdom which includes the name(s) of at least one of the holder's parents, when produced in combination with an official document giving the

person's National Insurance Number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.

- A full adoption certificate issued in the United Kingdom which includes the name(s) of at least one of the holder's adoptive parents when produced in combination with an official document giving the person's National Insurance Number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
- A birth certificate issued in the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or Ireland, when produced in combination with an official document giving the person's National Insurance number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
- An adoption certificate issued in the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or Ireland, when produced in combination with an official document giving the person's National Insurance Number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
- A certificate of registration or naturalisation as a British citizen, when produced in combination with an official document giving the person's National Insurance Number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
- A letter issued by the Home Office, the UK Border Agency or UK Visas and Immigration to the holder which indicates that the person named in it is allowed to stay indefinitely in the United Kingdom when produced in combination with an official document giving the person's National Insurance Number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
- A work permit or other approval to take employment issued by the Home Office, the UK Border Agency or UK Visas and Immigration when produced in combination with either a passport or another travel document endorsed to show the holder is allowed to stay in the United Kingdom and is allowed to do the work in question, or a letter issued by the Home Office, the UK Border Agency or UK Visas and Immigration to the holder or the employer or prospective employer confirming the same.
- A Certificate of Application issued by the Home Office, the UK Border Agency or UK Visas and Immigration to or for a family member of a national of a European Economic Area country or Switzerland stating that the holder is permitted to take employment which is less than 6 months old when produced in combination with a positive confirmation letter from our Employer Checking Service.
- An Application Registration Card issued by the Home Office, the UK Border Agency or UK Visas and Immigration stating that the holder is permitted to take employment, when produced in combination with a positive confirmation letter from our Employer Checking Service.