

Appointment of Examiners for MPhil, PhD and DProf Degrees by the Research Degrees Committee

Guidelines for nomination of research degree examiners

1. To ensure the standing of the University of London Degree and the robustness of its and the RVC's quality assurance mechanisms, the aim of the appointment mechanism is to appoint examiners who are able and who are seen to be able to make fair and independent assessment of the candidate and their thesis and that the standards are consistent with those of the rest of the University.
2. For all students registered for a research degree at the RVC, examiners for MPhil, PhD and the research component of the DProf examinations are approved by the Research Degrees Committee (RDC). The RDC meets four times a year before Academic Board. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that examiners are approved in a timely manner. It is strongly recommended that nominations are submitted to the meeting occurring no later than 4 months before anticipated submission of the thesis.
3. The Committee should have sufficient time to consider nominations, with sufficient information to an informed decision, but, if necessary, time to discuss any alternatives with the supervisor before the candidate submits their thesis.
4. The process of nomination should take place between 4-6 months before the likely submission. This will ensure that examiners have been formally approved, appointed and agreed to act before the candidate submits their thesis, and that the examination process can start immediately on submission of the thesis. Under no circumstances should students be asked to identify or contact prospective examiners.
5. Supervisors must complete a standard [examiner nomination](#) form. Forms are found on the Graduate School site on RVC Learn in the [Thesis & Dissertation Submission section](#). They must be submitted to the Postgraduate Programme Management Team via pgadmin@rvc.ac.uk no later than one month ahead of the Committee meeting. Notice of meetings are posted on the Intranet and supervisors are contacted by email.
6. The thesis title included on the examiner nomination form will be the one approved for use on the thesis submission. Any title changes, after examiner nomination approval has been given, would need to be approved by the RDC Chair before submission.
7. A draft abstract of the thesis must be attached to the form. (This is solely for the suitability of the examiners and need not be the final thesis abstract).
8. The supervisor is asked to nominate two examiners:
 - one must be external to the University of London.

- One is normally an internal examiner from within the University of London. The appointment of an examiner from the Royal Veterinary College is strongly discouraged.
 - At least one examiner is expected to have experience of examining University of London PhDs. If there is no-one in any of the other schools/Colleges of the University of London who would be able to examine the thesis, two external examiners and an Independent Chair with experience of examining for the University of London or an examiner from the RVC may be nominated to serve.
 - A visiting Professor to the RVC, but in a different research group to the candidate, may be nominated as an internal examiner provided there is no connection between them and the candidate.
 - The internal examiner should normally have examined at least one University of London PhD or supervised PhD students to completion, under UoL regulations, within the last 5 years. If they have not done so, either the external examiner should have experience of examining University of London PhDs or an independent chair should be appointed who has the necessary experience.
9. Both examiners will be experts in the field of the thesis but not necessarily in all parts of the precise topic. Many theses are interdisciplinary and the aim should be to appoint a team of examiners who between them cover all aspects of the work presented by the candidate. It may sometimes be necessary to appoint examiners to achieve this, and in that case the supervisor should nominate three examiners to act jointly. Supervisors are asked to state briefly why each examiner is appropriate for their role and why the pairing of the examiners is particularly suitable.
 10. The examiners should have had no direct involvement in the candidate's research or close connections with either the candidate or the supervisor which might inhibit objective examination. It is accepted that examiners will normally be acquainted with the supervisor and occasionally the candidate; this in itself is not a bar to acting as an examiner.
 11. Supervisors must be mindful of all current and previous connections between candidate, supervisors and proposed examiners. Such connections may be kinship, professional, academic or personal and may include, for example, co-publication, joint submission/holding of grants, etc. They must be clearly stated on the nomination form. Supervisors are asked to ensure that at least 5 years has passed since they published, supervised or held a joint grant with a proposed examiner.
 12. Supervisors are requested to avoid repeatedly nominating the same person as an examiner, either as an internal or an external. The same examiner should not be nominated for two consecutive students examined within a 3-year period, without good reason for so doing

13. Normally, no examiner should be appointed to examine an RVC research degree more than once during any given academic year.
14. Academic staff who have played a role in considering a candidate's transfer from MPhil to PhD degree during annual appraisal are ineligible to serve as internal examiners.
15. Former members of academic staff of the University of London who resigned or retired are not normally eligible to serve as external examiners until the expiry of 3 years from their departure from the University.
16. Retired University teachers who are still active in their fields, and who retain close links with their department, may be appointed as examiners.
17. Before nominating an external examiner from overseas, supervisors must first ensure that the nominee is familiar with the format of the University of London research degree and associated examination. Supervisors must also confirm who will pay the travel costs associated with examiners from overseas. Copies of the RVC guidelines for research degrees examiners that can be sent to nominees are available from pgadmin@rvc.ac.uk.
18. It may be appropriate for a visiting lecturer to another College to be an external examiner to the candidate.
19. If an independent chair is appointed, they will neither be required to read nor to examine the candidate's thesis. Their role will be to oversee the examination process and ensure that it complies with University of London and RVC regulations and procedures.

Completion of the Nomination Form

1. The following information is needed for each examiner:
 - Title;
 - Full Name and Address;
 - Email address and contact telephone number;
 - Expertise in relation to the thesis;
 - A short CV (maximum 2 pages); The CV should only include education background, employment, research interests, experience of supervising and examining PhD students and publications from the last 5 years;

- Experience of PhD examination in the University of London and elsewhere in the United Kingdom or supervised PhD students to completion, under UoL regulations, within the last 5 years. If none, then their experience of PhD supervision must be cited (it is accepted that an academic has to examine a PhD thesis for the first time; such a person must be paired with an examiner who has experience of examining PhD theses, at least one of which must be for the University of London);
 - Any past or current connections with the candidate/supervisor (professional, academic or persona);
 - If appropriate, why two *external* examiners have been appointed and confirmation that at least one of these has experience of examining University of London research degrees;
 - If appropriate, a statement indicating the reasons for the nomination of an examiner from outside the UK, assurance that they are familiar with the format of the University of London research degree and its associated examination, and confirmation that the Department will pay travel and other expenses.
2. The supervisor(s) will normally approach those they are nominating as examiners ahead of submission of the nomination form to the Research Degrees Committee. However, it should be made it clear in doing so that approval is dependent on the Research Degrees Committee.
 3. Viva voce examinations for research degrees will normally be held face-to-face. In circumstances where this may be logistically or otherwise practically challenging, permission may be given to conduct a viva using video conferencing facilities such as Zoom or Teams. This can be either in a hybrid format (meaning at least two participants are face-to-face in a room on campus, and one or more participants join the examination remotely) or fully online (all participants join the examination remotely, using the video conferencing technology).

As the College of registration is the RVC, it is the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) at the RVC that gives permission for an oral examination to take place via video conferencing. Permission for the viva to take place using video conferencing facilities will be sought when supervisors submit examiner nominations for consideration by RDC. Explanation will need to be provided as to why it is preferable to use video conferencing facilities rather than conduct the viva face-to-face (this may for example include one of the examiners and/or the candidate being overseas) and it must be confirmed that all participants have agreed to the proposed format of the oral examination. The RDC has the right to disallow a hybrid or fully online viva if there does not seem to be good reason for doing so. Student preference alone, without logistical or other practical issues complicating a face-to-face examination, will not normally be a reason for approving a hybrid or fully online viva. Extenuating circumstances can be put forward (this can be in confidence, eg

via the Advice Centre) for which holding a viva using video conferencing facilities is recommended as a 'reasonable adjustment' to the assessment process.

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