

Procedure for the Appointment of Examiners for Research Degrees

This procedure applies to the appointment of examiners for the following Imperial College London research degrees:

- i. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- ii. Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
- iii. Doctor of Medicine (Research) (MD(Res))
- iv. Doctor of Engineering (EngD)

1. To ensure the good standing of an Imperial College London research degree and the robustness of its quality assurance procedures in academic terms, the aim of this procedure is to appoint the examiners who will be able, and be seen to be able, to make a fair and independent assessment of the candidates and their thesis.
2. The role of examiners is, further, to ensure that appropriate and consistent standards for an Imperial College London research degree prevail across all faculties such that the standing of an Imperial degree is commensurate at least with the standing of corresponding degrees awarded by other members of the Russell Group of universities.
3. Each research degree candidate should be examined orally on their thesis by no less than and normally no more than two examiners, one internal and one external to the university. At least one of the examiners shall have had experience of examining a research degree at a research-intensive UK university. The examiners should be experts in the field of the thesis, so that the content of the thesis is covered by a combination of the expertise of the examiners.
4. Under specific conditions, for example, whether the internal examiner does not meet the level of experience outlined in 5, or where the interdisciplinary nature of research demands multiple experts, the candidate could be examined by more than two examiners (but not normally more than three).
5. The role of internal examiner is essentially that of custodians of the university regulations and standards. Staff appointed as internal examiners for MPhil, PhD, EngD or MD (Res) examinations should fulfil the following criteria:

All staff:

- a. must have supervised at least one Imperial PhD or EngD or MD (Res) student to successful completion at the university, and
- b. must have acted as an assessor for either/or a successful Imperial/PhD transfer, an Early Stage Assessment or a Late Stage Review, normally on at least three occasions, and
- c. ideally, they must have experience of examining research degrees at Imperial College London. Staff with no prior experience of examining research degrees at Imperial College London may be considered for appointment subject to a briefing on university regulations and examination procedures by the candidate's Director

of Postgraduate Studies.

6. Staff with no prior experience of examining research degrees (at Imperial College London, or elsewhere) may be considered as an internal examiner subject to the appointment of a second internal panel member who fulfils the criteria for appointment. Where a second internal examiner is required, both internal examiners are expected to fully engage in the examination process. Departments should brief the second internal examiner on their responsibilities and the expectations for the role.
7. In addition, Lecturers and Senior Research Fellows must have successfully completed their probation period (including completion of the mandatory training course *Fundamentals of Supervising PhD Students* and/or their prescribed faculty courses).
8. Senior Lecturers, Readers, Professors and Principal Research Fellows joining the university must have attended an induction course covering; teaching practice: research student supervision; the conduct of university examinations and the adherent regulations; pastoral care.
9. The external examiner should be a recognised international expert normally with experience of examining a research student at a leading university. The external examiner ought normally to be a Reader or Professor (or equivalent in an overseas university or if nominated from outside the higher education sector) and their role is essentially that of the subject expert.
10. Visiting and Honorary academic and research staff are not permitted to serve as internal or external examiners for research degree examinations.
11. The candidate's main supervisor is normally responsible for submitting the nominations for examiners to the Director of Postgraduate Studies in their department¹. Supervisors are required to submit their examiner nominations for consideration via the PGR Milestones platform accessible via the MyImperial staff and student portal.
12. The following persons may **not** be appointed to examine a research candidate: the candidate's supervisor(s); the candidate's mentor; anyone who has played a significant advisory role in the candidate's research; anyone who has published with the supervisor in the last five years.
13. In proposing examiners, supervisors must be mindful of all connections between candidate, supervisors, mentors and proposed examiners. Such connections may be kinship, professional, academic or personal and may include, for example, co-publication, joint holding of grants, etc. Supervisors are asked to declare any such connections in the examiner nomination form. Supervisors are also asked to state briefly why each examiner is appropriate for their role and why the pairing of the examiners is particularly suitable.
14. A person who has been involved in the assessment of a candidate's Early Stage Assessment or Late Stage Review is not debarred from serving as one of the examiners of the final thesis (but see point 13 above): this connection must be stated and the rationale justified on the nomination form.

¹ Any reference to "department" or "departmental" may include Imperial College London schools, institutes or centres, as appropriate.

15. The department's Director of Postgraduate Studies (or nominee) shall be responsible for agreeing the supervisor's proposed examiners on behalf of the department prior to submission to the Registry.
16. Upon receipt of the examiner nominations duly endorsed by the Director of Postgraduate Studies (or nominee), the Registry shall normally proceed to confirm the appointment of examiners. Upon Registry confirmation of appointment, a formal invitation will be issued to examiners on behalf of the university. The confirmation of appointment to the examiners will invite them to confirm that there are no connections between them and the candidate that would render an examining role inappropriate.
17. Where the Registry has concerns or doubts about one or more of the proposed examiners with regards to their eligibility for appointment in accordance with this procedure, the nomination may be referred to one of the Early Career Researcher Institute's (ECRI) Deputy Directors (Academic) for confirmation or advice.
18. Where a department wishes to appoint more than two examiners for a candidate for reasons other than to meet the minimum examining experience criteria outlined in point 5, the nominations shall be referred by the Registry to one of the ECRI Deputy Directors (Academic) for consideration and approval.
19. Where a candidate's thesis is referred for re-submission, the same examiners are normally expected to examine the revised thesis. Any request to change on or more of the examiners upon re-submission of the thesis for examination shall be referred by the Registry to the ECRI Deputy Directors (Academic) for approval.
20. An individual should not normally be appointed an External Examiner if they:
 - a. Have previously been involved in the supervision or assessment of the student in question.
 - b. Were previously a member of the same research group as the student in question.
 - c. Are a former member of university staff, except where a period of five years has passed and subject to 20 (a) and (b) above.
 - d. Are a former student of the university, except where a period of five years has passed and subject to 20 (a) and (b) above.
 - e. Have previously held an Honorary or Visiting appointment with the university, except where a period of five years has passed and subject to 20 (a) and (b) above
21. Where a department wishes to propose an examiner from outside the UK, they should consider the environmental impact in terms of examiner travel, and it is expected that the viva will be arranged to minimise the potential cost to the university of the overseas examiner's travel expenses. A remote or hybrid viva may be appropriate in some cases.
22. In proposing an external examiner, the department is agreeing to cover any expenses costs that exceed the maximum amount provided by the Registry.
23. External examiners may be drawn from academia, industry or other professions. It is the responsibility of departments to ensure that the examiners being proposed fulfil the criteria set out in this document.
24. Departments should avoid the overuse of individual examiners.

25. The university will retain a record of all nominations referred to the Early Career Researcher Institute for review. Information relating to referred nominations will be reported to the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee on an annual basis.

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