

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES RESEARCH DEGREE EXTERNAL EXAMINERS<sup>1</sup>

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- 1.1. This document outlines the typical duties expected of the post-holder. The descriptions of the post cannot be exhaustive and the post-holder may be required to undertake other duties, normally these will be broadly in line with the listed key responsibilities. Roles and responsibilities may also be subject to change.
  
2. **Summary of post:**
  - 2.1. Research degree External Examiners are from outside the College. They are appointed, according to specific criteria, set by College. A period of five years should normally lapse before a former member of academic staff, or a former student of the College, can be appointed as an External Examiner to the College.
  
  - 2.2. Research degree External Examiners are required to inform the Academic Registrar if they have any connections with the candidate or his/her supervisor which they consider would make it desirable for the College to reconsider the appropriateness of their appointment as one of the examiners. These connections could be either personal or professional. It is accepted however, that examiners will usually be acquainted with the supervisor, and sometimes the candidate, and that this itself is not a bar to acting as an examiner. Any connections so notified will be considered by the Academic Registrar, in consultation, as appropriate, with the Director of the Graduate School.
  
3. **Duties and Key Responsibilities:**
  - Ensuring compliance with College policies and regulations, including the key policies and procedures relating to examination.
  
  - Being familiar with the following key document: [The QAA Quality Code for Higher Education](#)
  
  - To write an independent preliminary report on the candidate's thesis. The report should be written after reading the thesis but before conferring with the co-examiner(s). The preliminary report should identify the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis and comment on the novelty of the data and the extent to which they represent advancement in knowledge and understanding of the discipline. The report should also identify particular areas to be explored with the candidate during the viva voce examination, and if possible, a tentative recommendation for the result of the examination. Tentative

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<sup>1</sup> This applies to external examiners appointed to PhD, MPhil, EngD and MD[Res] examinations.

recommendations should not be indicated to the candidate in advance of the viva voce examination.

- To exchange the preliminary report with the other co-examiner(s) before conducting the viva voce examination.
- To agree with the other co-examiner(s) and the candidate's supervisor, in advance of the viva voce examination, any advance preparation the candidate will need to undertake for the viva voce examination, for example to prepare a presentation on the thesis.
- To meet with the other co-examiner(s), prior to meeting the candidate, to agree the structure of the viva voce examination and who will take responsibility for questioning the candidate on particular topics / subject matter.
- To conduct a viva voce examination, together with the other co-examiner(s) of the thesis and complete an examination report form for this. The viva voce examination should normally be held within 3 months of the despatch of the thesis. The purpose of the viva voce examination is to examine the candidate on the subject of the thesis, and if the examiners see fit, on subjects relevant thereto.
- To establish, in consultation with the other co-examiner, whether all the requirements for a thesis submitted for the examination have been met (these are set out in the Academic Regulations) and that the thesis and work reported in it are genuinely the work of the candidate.
- To give the candidate adequate opportunity, encouragement and time to explain his/her research and to defend the thesis during the viva voce examination.
- To make a report to the Academic Registrar if there appears to be evidence that the examination regulations have been breached, for example if the co-examiners suspect that plagiarism has occurred or if ethical guidelines have been broken.
- To make a report to the Academic Registrar should a candidate make comments to the co-examiners which put them under moral pressure or offers any kind of incentive. In such cases the viva voce examination should be terminated.
- To submit, together with the other co-examiner(s), a joint report on the examination of the candidate. The examination report form, joint report and preliminary reports must be submitted to the College normally within 2 weeks of the date of the viva voce examination.
- Where appropriate, to agree a list of minor modifications to the thesis either at the viva voce examination or shortly afterwards and to agree who will take responsibility for approving these.

- If major modifications to the thesis are required, to re-examine the thesis and where necessary, attend a second viva voce examination.
- To draw to the attention of the Academic Registrar cases where the candidate has not addressed satisfactorily issues of copyright and other intellectual property rights within their thesis.
- To assist the College with its Procedures for Representations Concerning Candidates for Research Degrees, as appropriate.

Approved by QAAC  
April 2012

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