





THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

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## College of Science and Engineering

The following guidance is intended to complement the PGR Assessment Regulations:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/policies-regulations/regulations/assessment>

The University's handbook on the external examining of research degrees can be accessed here:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/pgrexternalexamininghandbook.pdf>

### Examination timeframe

It is the aim of the University to hold the viva within three months of the start of the examination process, if at all possible.

### Nomination of examiners

Once a student has notified the College of their intention to submit their thesis, the College PGR team will contact the relevant School and ask for examiners to be nominated.

Usually there are two examiners: one internal and one external. If the student has been a member of staff at the University of Edinburgh during their research degree, they may have one internal and two external examiners. EngD students require two external examiners: one academic and one industrial.

### Submission of thesis

Following thesis submission, the College PGR team will send the thesis and examination paperwork to the appointed examiners as soon as possible, providing the examiners have been appointed.

### Pre-viva report (Part I)

The Part I report should be submitted to the College PGR team at least one week before the viva. This report should be completed independently by each examiner. Once both examiners have submitted their pre viva reports to College, examiners can exchange their reports and discuss their initial assessments.

### Oral examination (*Viva voce*)

The oral examination (*Viva voce*) is held to assess a student's doctoral or MPhil thesis. The oral examination is used to establish a student's knowledge of the field of their research and to confirm that the work is the student's own. The oral examination allows the examiners to assess whether the thesis and the student's defence of it satisfy the requirements for the award of the degree, as set out in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations.



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### Organising the viva

Arrangements for the oral examination are the responsibility of the internal examiner, who also chairs the meeting unless a Non-Examining Chair is appointed.

The Internal Examiner is responsible for communicating the date, time and location of the oral examination and the names of all participants to all those who are to be present.

Supervisors may attend the viva with the consent of the students and examiners, but they will not participate in or comment during the oral examination.

The Internal Examiner should check with the student's supervisor if the student has a Schedule of Adjustments and if any adjustments will be required for the viva.

Once arranged, the Internal Examiner should inform the College PGR team of the viva date.

### Location of viva

The normal expectation is that the oral examination will be held on campus in Edinburgh.

All viva examinations should be conducted in an office or meeting room that is well suited (i.e. the room should be large enough to comfortably accommodate all participants for several hours, offer privacy and should not be overly affected by outside noise).

In exceptional circumstances, arrangements can be made for remote assessment by video link. This requires agreement from the College PGR Board of Examiners, the student and all examiners.

To submit a request to hold a viva by video link, the internal examiner should email a copy of the remote viva request form to the College PGR team. Further information on oral examinations by video link can be found in the PhD by Research oral examinations by video link guidance:

[http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/videolinked\\_phd\\_oral.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/videolinked_phd_oral.pdf)

### Examiner discussion

Before commencing the viva, the examiners will often have a pre-viva meeting. If the examiners have not already done so, they can discuss their independent initial assessments of the thesis, plan the structure of the viva, and agree on the questions they wish to ask the candidate.

The examiners may tell the candidate what their views are at the end of the oral examination, however, they must make it clear that their view is a recommendation to the College PGR Board of Examiners and is not a final decision.



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### Post-viva report (Part II)

Available viva outcomes are specified in the Postgraduate Research Assessment Regulations. The examiners should submit a joint post-viva report (Part II) to the College PGR team within 2 weeks of the viva.

A list of the corrections required to the thesis should be included in the *Critique to Candidate* section of the report, which will be sent to the student by the College PGR Team once the outcome has been formally ratified. Corrections are limited to the feedback given in the examination. Further additional corrections cannot be requested by the Examiners while the thesis is being corrected by the candidate.

### Feedback report (Part III)

Each examiner is asked to complete a feedback report (Part III) after the viva. This is for Quality Assurance purposes, to ensure that the examiner felt the assessment process was satisfactory and to raise any issues or concerns they may have regarding the examination and our surrounding procedures.

### Ratification of outcome

The examiners' reports will be considered at the next available College PGR Board of Examiners meeting. The College PGR Board of Examiners meets once a month, and is chaired by the Dean of Postgraduate Research, Prof Antony Maciocia.

The Postgraduate Research Assessment Regulations authorises the College PGR Board of Examiners to modify or change the examiners' recommendation where appropriate.

### Notification of outcome

After the Board has ratified the examination recommendation, the College PGR team will notify the student of the outcome within 5 working days of the meeting. The notification will be sent by email to the student's University of Edinburgh email address.

A separate communication will be sent to the internal examiner, Graduate School and supervisor with a copy of the examination paperwork and details of the deadline for submission of thesis corrections (if applicable).



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### Thesis corrections

Once the corrections have been completed, the candidate should send their revised thesis directly to the internal examiner (and external examiner, if requested) for review and approval.

If the examiner(s) approve(s) the corrected version of the thesis, they must notify the College by completing the Certificate of Corrections which is available from the College PGR team.

After the Certificate of Corrections has been received by the College, the PGR team will send a 'Final Submission Request' email to the student providing full instructions on how to submit the final version of their thesis.

If the Certificate of Corrections is submitted before the viva recommendation has been ratified by the Board of Examiners, then the 'Final Submission Request' email will not be sent until after the Board of Examiners has ratified the examination paperwork.

### Award and graduation

Once the College PGR team is in receipt of the final thesis copy, and providing all necessary documentation has been approved, a letter confirming that the College has recommended the student to receive an award will be issued.

### External examiner fees and expenses

A fee of £175 is paid to each examiner for assessing a PhD, EngD or MPhil thesis. Payment will be processed by direct bank transfer on receipt of the external examiner fee claim form and examiner feedback form (Part III). The completed forms should be sent by email to the College PGR team.

It is no longer a requirement for external examiners to present their Right to Work documents for verification in order to receive their fee.

Examiners may claim reasonable travel and other expenses. The expenses claim form should be completed and submitted to the College PGR team. Scans of all receipts should also be included.



## External examiner checklist

All forms should be submitted to the College PGR Team at [pgrcse@ed.ac.uk](mailto:pgrcse@ed.ac.uk)

### **Submit Part I (pre viva) report before viva**

Each examiner must complete the report independently. As well as selecting 'Yes' or 'No' to each question, examiners are asked to provide comment.

Once both examiners have submitted their pre viva reports to College, examiners can exchange their reports and discuss their initial assessment of the thesis.

### **Complete Part II (post viva) report with internal**

The internal examiner will submit this report to College within 2 weeks of the viva.

### **Submit Examiner Fee Claim form**

Upon receipt of this form and submission of the examination paperwork (Part I, II and III), the College PGR Team will process an examination fee of £175.

### **Submit Expenses Claim form**

If you need to claim expenses, this form should be submitted to the College PGR Team along with scanned copies of any receipts.

### **Submit Part III report**

Examiners are invited to provide feedback for Quality Assurance purposes.

### **Review thesis corrections and sign Corrections Certificate**

Only required if you have indicated in the post viva report that you wish to review and approve the thesis corrections.



## Internal examiner checklist

All forms should be submitted to the College PGR Team at [pgrcse@ed.ac.uk](mailto:pgrcse@ed.ac.uk)

### Organise viva

1. Agree date of viva with External Examiner(s), Non-Examining Chair, Student and any observers.
2. Check with the student's supervisor if the student has a Schedule of Adjustments and if any adjustments will be required for the viva.
3. Book a room for the viva if it is taking place in person.
4. Inform the College PGR Team of the viva date.
5. Complete and submit the remote viva request form if the viva will be held remotely.

### Submit Part I (pre viva) report before viva

Each examiner must complete the report independently. As well as selecting 'Yes' or 'No' to each question, examiners are asked to provide comment.

Once both examiners have submitted their pre viva reports to College, examiners can exchange their reports and discuss their initial assessment of the thesis.

### Complete Part II (post viva) report with external

The internal examiner should submit this report to College within 2 weeks of the viva. The signatures of all examiners (excluding any Non-Examining Chair) must be present on the recommendation page and the *Critique to Candidate* section.

### Submit Part III report

Examiners are invited to provide feedback for Quality Assurance purposes.

### Review thesis corrections and sign Certificate of Corrections

This should be completed once the student has submitted their revised thesis and the corrections have been reviewed and approved. The external examiner should also sign this if they had requested to review the thesis corrections.