

Research Degrees: Guidance notes series

#7. SUBMISSION AND EXAMINATION

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7. SUBMISSION AND EXAMINATION

Related documents

Policy 2R: Regulations for Postgraduate Research Students
<http://portal.solent.ac.uk/documents/academic-services/academic-handbook/section-2/2r---regulations-for-pgr-students.pdf?t=1534525946909>

Academic Handbook 2L: Student Academic Misconduct Policy
<http://portal.solent.ac.uk/documents/academic-services/academic-handbook/section-2/2l-student-academic-misconduct.pdf?t=1535126909597>

RD3WU, RD6E and RD7DEC forms available online

Further reading

Solent Researchers library guide on Reference Management
<https://libguides.solent.ac.uk/c.php?g=657980&p=4665038>

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. The submission of a thesis for examination is at the sole discretion of the student, subject to satisfying the conditions of eligibility required by the regulations for postgraduate research students.
2. While a student would be unwise to submit the thesis for examination against the advice of their supervisors, it is his/her right to do so. Equally, students should not assume that a supervisor's agreement to the submission of a thesis guarantees the award of the degree.
3. A student must ensure that the thesis is submitted to Doctoral Student Administration before the expiry of their registration period. Students with exceptional circumstances must complete an application to extend this period prior to the expiry of their registration period (*see Guidance note #8*).

WRITING UP

4. Writing-up normally follows the phase of the research where the bulk of the data collection / experimental work and analysis has been undertaken. Substantial drafts of sections of the thesis will normally already be in place. 'Writing-up' generally applies to the writing, refining and editing of final drafts preparatory to submitting the completed thesis for assessment.
5. Students will normally apply to transfer to 'writing-up fee' in their final year of study. As outlined in *Guidance Notes #5 and #6*, the Transfer and annual Progression panel may be appropriate points at which to consider transition to 'writing-up' status depending on the progress of the student to that point. A panel may make a recommendation that the student and supervisory team consider making the application, or the doctoral student and their supervisory team may make that decision.
6. For further information and guidance on duration and processes of applying for 'writing-up' status *see Guidance note #3*.

PRE-SUBMISSION

7. Preparation for submitting the thesis is an important phase of the programme of study and there are a number of key steps to the preparation that should be factored in to a timetable for completion between the student and the supervisory team to ensure everything progresses smoothly at this stage.
8. Sufficient time in advance of the submission of the final thesis should be allowed for the following:
 - a) Nomination of examiners;
 - b) Comments and feedback from the supervision team on the whole draft thesis;
 - c) Proof-reading the final thesis for typographical, grammatical and formatting errors
 - d) Agreement on the final title of the thesis; and
 - e) Arranging for copies of the thesis to be printed and set in temporary bindings for submission to Doctoral Student Administration.

9. A student submitting their thesis for examination is referred to as a 'candidate'.
10. The writing, preparing and submitting of the thesis within the permitted registration period is the candidate's responsibility.
11. The thesis must be the candidate's own work and in their own words except for quotations from published and unpublished sources which must be clearly identified and acknowledged using the Harvard referencing system or an agreed system appropriate to their discipline.
12. All successful theses are kept in the University Library. In preparation for the final version of the thesis, candidates might find it useful to look at other theses to guide them in achieving the required standard.
13. Exceptionally, a student who has completed the transfer stage and is registered for the PhD may request in writing, at the time of submitting their PhD thesis, that the thesis be considered for MPhil.

NOMINATION OF EXAMINERS

14. At least six months before a student expects to have completed their thesis for submission for examination they should agree with their supervision team who might be appropriate to invite to act as external examiner(s).
15. It is important to begin these discussions early, as confirmation of the examination panel takes some time and having the arrangements in place will ensure that your viva can take place within reasonable time of your submission.
16. The Director of Studies/supervisory team must complete form **RD6E** parts **A, B and C** and include **CVs of the proposed examiners**. This must be submitted to Doctoral Student Administration for the Chair/Deputy Chair of Research Degrees Committee (RDC) to approve.
17. The examination cannot be arranged until approval has been given for the nominated examiners. In special circumstances, the relevant Doctoral Hub Scrutiny Panel may recommend examiners.
18. A student will take no part in the arrangement of the oral examination (viva) and must have no contact relating to the examination with the internal or external examiner(s) between the appointment of the examiner and the oral examination. A student contacting an examiner between their appointment and before the viva will be treated as academic misconduct.
19. Once a thesis has been submitted, members of a supervisory team will have no direct contact with examiners. Requests for contact for any reason must be made only through Doctoral Student Administration.
20. A student will be examined by at least two, and normally not more than three, examiners of whom at least one will be an external examiner. Where a student is also a member of University staff, the examiners must all be external.
21. The examination team as a whole should have substantial experience of successful supervision and examination of research degree students.

22. A research degree student registered at Solent or another University cannot act as an examiner.

Internal examiners

23. Internal examiners will have experience of the general area of the student's work and will not be a member of the student's supervisory team.
24. Where an internal member of an examination panel has recently left the University after a student's viva, and the student has been given major amendments with resubmission, their continuation in the role may be in the interests of the student and they may be invited to continue.

External examiners

25. External examiners will have experience of the specialist area of the student's thesis and demonstrate a consistent and extensive record of relevant publications. Normally the external examining team should have completed a minimum of two examinations. The external examiner(s) must be independent of the University and not have acted previously as the student's supervisor or advisor, and have no other conflict of interest involving the research student.
26. Former members of staff of the University should not be approved as external examiners until at least three years after the termination of their employment with the University.
27. A nomination for an examiner who has been in formal collaboration, or who has authored a research paper, with a member of the supervisory team within three years prior to the examination, would not normally be regarded as independent.
28. The Chair/Deputy Chair RDC should ensure that the same external examiner is not approved so frequently that their familiarity with the University might prejudice objective judgement.

SUBMISSION OF THE THESIS

29. Submission must include the following actions:
- a) The thesis must be submitted electronically to the online submission tool Turnitin and the report must be included as part of the submission (the Director of Studies must confirm that they have reviewed the Turnitin report and there are no associated issues to raise on **part J** of the **RD7DEC** form),
 - b) The thesis must be presented both electronically to and in two hard copies, with the format and temporary binding following the University's guidance (*see below*), to Doctoral Student Administration.
 - c) The completed by the University's thesis declaration form (**RD7DEC**).
30. Enquiries about the format, binding or number of copies should be made to Doctoral Student Administration in good time.

Form RD7DEC

31. Candidates must complete parts **A to I** of the RD7DEC form. This includes;

- a) Identification of any aspects of the thesis which have previously been published, or
- b) Where published work has been jointly authored with others, which parts of the work(s) are the student's responsibility;
- c) Any aspects of the thesis which have already been submitted for a degree or comparable award; and
- d) A declaration of research integrity

Thesis format

32. All the following requirements must be adhered to in the format of the thesis.

33. The thesis must be presented in English.

34. The thesis must be presented in a permanent and legible form either in typescript or print. The size of character used in the main text, including displayed matter and notes, shall not be less than 2.0mm for capitals and 1.5mm for X-height (that is, the height of a lower-case x)

35. The printed version must be single sided. The margin at the left hand binding edge of the page must be no less than 40mm; other margins must not be less than 15mm.

36. Double or one-and-a-half spacing must be used in the typescript except for indented quotations or footnotes, where single spacing may be used.

37. Pages must be numbered consecutively through the main text, including photographs and/or diagrams included as whole pages.

38. The thesis must normally be in A4 format; permission may be granted for submission in another format where it is clear that the contents of the thesis may be better expressed in that format; a candidate using a format larger than A4 should note that the production of microfiche copies and full-size enlargement may not be feasible.

39. The title page must give the following information:

- a) The full title of the thesis
- b) The full name of the author
- c) That the degree is awarded by Solent University
- d) The award for which the thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Solent University
- e) The collaborating establishments (if any), and
- f) The month and year of submission

40. A specimen title page is provided below:

<p>The origins of the Farmers' Co-operative in Wessex</p> <p>John Smith</p> <p>A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Solent University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy</p> <p>If appropriate: This research programme was carried out in collaboration with the Borchester Farmer's Club</p> <p>October 2013</p>
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41. An abstract of approximately 300 words must be bound into the thesis, and should provide a synopsis of the thesis stating the nature and scope of the work undertaken and the contribution made to the knowledge of the subject treated.
42. The abstract should also be copied electronically to research.degree@solent.ac.uk when the electronic version of the thesis is submitted.
43. The thesis must include a copyright statement, immediately following the title page in the following form:
- a) 'This work is the intellectual property of [the author]. You may copy up to 5% of this work for private study, or personal, non-commercial research. Any re-use of the information contained within this document should be fully referenced, quoting the author, title, university degree level and pagination. Queries or requests for any other use, or if a more substantial copy is required, should be directed to the owner(s) of the Intellectual Property Rights'.
 - b) *Note: If there are other owners of the IP they must also be named here.*
44. The finished thesis must include a statement of the candidate's objectives and must acknowledge published or other sources of material consulted (including an appropriate bibliography) and any assistance received.
45. When a candidate's research is part of a collaborative group project, the thesis must indicate clearly the candidate's individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration.
46. The candidate is free to publish material in advance of the thesis, but reference must be made in the thesis to any such work. Copies of the published material should either be bound in with the thesis or placed in an adequately secured pocket at the end of the thesis.

47. The length of the thesis should not normally exceed the following:

- a) PhD 80,000 words
- b) MPhil 40,000 words

48. Where the submission includes material in other than textual form, the written thesis should normally be within the range:

- a) PhD 30,000 - 40,000 words
- b) MPhil 15,000 - 20,000 words

49. Examiners will have regard to the candidate's fulfilment of the University's assessment criteria, where a thesis is submitted significantly under the maximums cited above.

Thesis binding

50. The thesis should be submitted in a temporary binding which is sufficiently secure to ensure that pages cannot be added or removed. A thesis submitted in a temporarily bound form should be in its final form in all respects save the binding.

51. Following successful examination the final thesis must be presented in a permanent electronic format before the degree may be awarded. In such cases, the student must confirm that the contents of the electronic thesis are identical with the version submitted for examination, except where amendments have been made to meet the requirements of the examiners.

Submitting creative work

52. Where the student's own creative work forms, as a point of origin or reference, a significant part of the intellectual enquiry, the presentation and submission of the thesis may be partly in other than written form. Creative work may be undertaken for instance in fine art, design, engineering and technology, architecture, creative writing, musical composition, film, dance or performance (this is not intended as an exhaustive list).

53. The final submission should be accompanied by some permanent record, such as video, photographic record, musical score or diagrammatic representation and, where practicable, should be bound with the thesis.

54. The final submission should include a copy of the edited text(s) or collection of artefact(s), appropriate textual and explanatory annotations, and a substantial introduction and critical commentary which sets the text in the relevant theoretical, historical, critical or design context. The thesis itself must conform to the usual scholarly requirements and be of an appropriate length (see above).

THE VIVA

55. The viva voce is the formal defence of a candidate's research before a panel of examiners following the formal submission of the thesis for examination.

56. There are two stages to the examination of MPhil and PhD theses. Firstly a preliminary assessment of the thesis by the examiners. Secondly its defence in an oral examination (viva voce).

57. Normally the viva will take place 2 or 3 months after the thesis is submitted, making allowance for the examiners to have sufficient time to read and carefully consider the merits of the research.

58. A student will normally be examined orally on their thesis and on the field of study in which their research lies.
59. The oral examination will normally be held in the UK. In special cases, the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC may give approval for the examination to take place abroad or via Skype.

Pre-viva

60. Students should advise Doctoral Student Administration of their predicted date of submission, this date cannot exceed the maximum registration period. Students should notify Doctoral Student Administration as soon as possible if their expected submission date will be subject to change.
61. As soon as submission of the final thesis is completed, Doctoral Student Administration will undertake to make arrangements for the viva, seek the appointment of an independent chair and establish the availability of the previously approved examiners.
62. Doctoral Student Administration will notify the student, supervisory team and examiners of the date and location of the viva.
63. Doctoral Student Administration will send a copy of the thesis and the University's regulations to each examiner, together with the examiners preliminary report form (**RD8**) and appropriate guidance.
64. Each examiner must read and examine the thesis and submit on form RD8 an independent preliminary report to Doctoral Student Administration at least five working days before the viva is held.
65. In completing the preliminary report, each examiner should consider whether the thesis provisionally satisfies the requirements of the degree and where possible make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of the oral examination.
66. The preliminary report forms are to be completed independently and without formal or informal consultation between examiners, whether external or internal. An examiner having received the thesis and wishing to contact another examiner, the student or any member of the supervisory team should do so only via Doctoral Student Administration.
67. Once all preliminary reports (RD8) have been received by Doctoral Student Administration, they will be circulated to the other examiners before the viva takes place.
68. A viva cannot normally take place unless all preliminary reports (RD8) have been submitted to Doctoral Student Administration.
69. A candidate can request that one member of the supervisory team be present at the viva as an observer, but they may not take part. The candidate must give written authorisation to Doctoral Student Administration before an invitation will be issued to the named supervisor. It is entirely the student's choice whether to invite a supervisor to be present.

Conduct of the viva

70. Where a student is ill during the viva, they must notify the University, providing documentary evidence, and the University will reschedule the examination.
71. Where for reasons of disability or comparable valid cause the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC is satisfied that a student would be under serious disadvantage if required to undergo an

oral examination, an alternative form of examination may be approved. Such approval must not be given because a student's knowledge of English is inadequate.

72. Where evidence of cheating or plagiarism in the preparation of the thesis or other irregularities in the conduct of the examination come to light subsequent to the recommendation of the examiners, the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC will consider the matter, if necessary in consultation with the examiners and take appropriate action.
73. The viva will be conducted by the examiners and will be chaired by an independent, senior, experienced staff member of the University.
74. Recording of the viva will not normally be permitted.
75. Examiners may elect to indicate informally their decision on the result of the examination to the candidate, but they must make it clear that the formal notification of the outcome will be communicated by Doctoral Student Administration following processing of the relevant forms RD9DEX / RD9PWE and RD10G if applicable.

The independent chair

76. The role of the independent chair is to ensure that the examination is conducted with due regard to fair play and in compliance with the University's regulations for postgraduate research students.
77. The independent chair will act;
 - a) as a source of experience and guidance to the examiners about the conduct of the examination,
 - b) to ensure the examiner reports relating to minor or major amendments and provisions relating to re-submission are completed and signed by all relevant parties, and
 - c) where appropriate, feedback is provided to the student

THE VIVA OUTCOMES

78. Where the examiners agree, the Independent Chair will submit a joint report on the appropriate form including the decision relating to the award of the degree. The preliminary reports and joint recommendation of the examiners should together provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of the work to enable the Chair of RDC to be satisfied that the outcome chosen is correct.
79. Where the examiners do not agree, separate reports and recommendations should be submitted.
80. Following completion of the examination the examiners may decide that:
 - a) The candidate be awarded the degree;
 - b) The candidate be awarded the degree subject to minor amendments being made to the thesis within 3 months to the satisfaction of the examiners;
 - c) The candidate be awarded the degree subject to major amendments being made to the thesis within 6 months to the satisfaction of the examiner;

- d) The candidate be awarded the degree subject to major amendments being made within 12 months to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners, without an oral examination;
 - e) The candidate be awarded the degree subject to major amendments being made within 12 months to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners, with an oral examination;
 - f) In the case of a PhD examination, the candidate be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis within 6 months amended to the satisfaction of the examiners; or
 - g) The candidate not be awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined.
81. Where the agreed recommendation of the examiners is b, c, d, e, or f above, they must in addition complete form RD10G which will be forwarded to the candidate and supervisory team by Doctoral Student Administration along with the formal confirmation of the outcome of the viva.
82. Where examiners' decision is not unanimous, a sub-committee of RDC may be convened to confirm the outcome in line with the options below:
- a) Accept a majority decision (if the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
 - b) Accept the recommendation of the external examiner; or
 - c) Require the appointment of an additional external examiner.
83. Further information relating to examination outcomes, further definition of the available outcomes, posthumous award and re-examination can be found in the regulations for postgraduate research students.

COMPLETION

84. Completion is the term used to describe a successful thesis following submission, examination and any amendments.
85. Conferment of the award is conditional on receipt by Doctoral Student Administration of all of the following.
- a) A PDF version of the thesis for deposit in the University Library's institutional repository.
 - b) A completed and signed British Library registration form, permitting full participation in the UK thesis service; and
 - c) A signed draft certificate, including the wording of the thesis title, agreed by the candidate and the Chair of the RDC

86. Following the award of the degree, the Library, on behalf of Doctoral Student Administration must:

- d) Send a copy of the title page, abstract and a list of contents to the British Library in accordance with the arrangements for participation in the UK thesis service; and
- e) Lodge the PDF version of the thesis in the electronic institutional repository.

87. Where a candidate has previously had an application approved for the thesis to remain confidential for a period after completion of the work (*see Guidance note #3*), the thesis will immediately on completion of the programme of research, be retained by the University on restricted access and for a time not exceeding the approved period, only be made available to those who were directly involved in the project.