

Criteria for the appointment of examiners

and independent chairs

# Criteria for the appointment of both the internal and external examiner

* 1. Examiners should hold a degree in a cognate or relevant discipline that is at least equivalent to the degree that they are examining.
  2. The University does not wish to exclude recently appointed lecturers, individuals early in their career or individuals with appropriate professional backgrounds from industry from examining, but, where such individuals are appointed the other examiner must be a senior and experienced examiner. In addition, in all cases an independent chair will be appointed to ensure that the examination is conducted fairly and in accordance with YSJU regulations.
  3. Recently retired members of staff may be appointed as examiner provided that they have a continuing link with their University (for example teaching or an honorary title) and are still active in research.
  4. When a team of examiners have examined a student for a research degree and the student subsequently undertakes and submits for examination for a second research degree, a different team of examiners should be appointed.
  5. No recommendation for the appointment of an examiner should be sent forward unless they have informally agreed to act.
  6. Members of staff who are themselves students for a research degree of either this or another university may not act as examiners.
  7. Internal or external examiners must not have been substantially involved in the research of the student under examination.
  8. Internal and external examiners must not have had a close personal or professional relationship with the student under examination[[1]](#footnote-1).
  9. Internal and external examiners must not have co-authored work or have had substantial collaborative involvement with the student under examination, nor can an examiner be appointed if their work is the focus of the research project of the student under examination.

# Criteria for the appointment of internal examiners

* 1. Must be a member of the academic staff of York St John University (YSJU).
  2. Must hold a permanent appointment of YSJU of at least 0.2 FTE.
  3. Must appear on the Register of PGR supervisors.
  4. Must have completed a formal training course on the role of the internal examiner within the last three years **OR** have acted as an internal examiner for YSJU within the last three years before being recommended for appointment as an internal examiner.
  5. For those who have not yet supported a doctoral candidate through to successful completion, or who hold no previous experience of internal or external doctoral examination, prior to being nominated as an internal examiner they must observe a doctoral examination in its entirety.
  6. The same individual may act as the independent assessor at the ‘transfer’ stage and as the Internal Examiner for PhD candidates. However, if an assessor is to act subsequently as an Internal Examiner it is considered that involvement in the assessment and monitoring of the work subsequent to the transfer review (for example annual reviews or pastoral meetings) and prior to the oral examination is not appropriate.
  7. An individual who has provided an independent academic assessment of a student’s work as part of the Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Procedure may not normally then proceed to also act as the Internal Examiner for that student in the final thesis examination.
  8. Must not have been involved in the supervision of the student.

# Criteria for the appointment of external examiners

* 1. Must normally be a senior member[[2]](#footnote-2) of staff of a university or higher education establishment.
  2. Have prior knowledge and experience of UK research degree examinations and standards through previous UK examination experience.
  3. Be demonstrably independent (e.g. not an employer of the student, or be conducting joint research).
  4. Individuals appointed as external examiners must be independent of the University and of the School concerned and therefore should not undertake any form of employment within the University.
  5. Where individuals who do not meet these criteria are recommended for appointment as external examiner (e.g. appropriate individuals who have not previously examined a research degree in the UK; individuals who do not hold a senior position at a University or HEI), Schools are required to make a special case for their appointment. In such cases: either
     1. the internal examiner must be a senior member of staff with previous examination experience at this University or elsewhere in the UK; and
     2. the nominated individual will be required to undergo a briefing to ensure they are familiarised with the requirements of the UK system and the expectations of the University. This briefing must be provided by a senior, experienced internal examiner who is not involved in the candidature or the examination (usually a School Postgraduate Research Lead) in advance of the oral examination. A record of the briefing must be supplied to the PGR School;

**OR**

* + 1. a second (joint) external examiner who is experienced in UK research degree examinations should be appointed to act as co-external examiner on this occasion;
  1. To assist the Research Degrees Examination Panel (RDEP) in considering the examination experience across the team, details of the external examiner’s previous UK PGR examination experience must be provided on the Application for Assessment with a web link to their CV.
  2. A period of at least 5 years must have elapsed before a former member of the University’s staff may be appointed as an external examiner.
  3. An external examiner is not normally permitted to act in connection with the examination of a second research degree student at this University within a period of 12 months. The University discourages the frequent use of external examiners except in exceptional cases.
  4. Individuals holding honorary appointments within the University may not act as external examiners.
  5. Where a student is either sponsored by, receiving supervision from, or undertaking work in an industrial establishment, academic institution or company, RDEP will not approve an individual employed by that organisation for appointment as an external examiner.
  6. It is not possible for the same individual to act as an External Assessor at transfer stage and as the external examiner for the final examination of the student.

# Appointment of examiners

* 1. Students may be asked by supervisors for their views on individuals who might act as Examiners, but the recommendations for appointment of examiners on the **Application for Assessment** are the responsibility of the supervisors and the School Postgraduate Research Lead. The final decision about the appointment of examiners is made by the RDEP. On receipt of the completed Application for Assessment, the PGR School submits the names of the recommended examiners to the RDEP for consideration.
  2. The RDEP is responsible for the final decision on the appointment of examiners.

# Examinations of current or former members of staff

* 1. Two external examiners must be appointed in those cases where the student is a current or former member of staff of the University, employed on a fixed term or permanent contract at grade 7 or above for a combined total of twelve months or more during the candidature.

# Re-submission

* 1. In the event of a re-submission by a student, the normal practice is for the same team of examiners to act for the resubmission.

# Use of an Independent Chair for research degree examinations

* 1. An Independent Chair will be appointed by the RDEP from the Register of Approved Independent Chairs for all PGR examinations under YSJU regulations.
  2. Criteria for the appointment of Independent Chairs (i.e. eligibility to be on the Register of Approved Independent Chairs). The Independent Chair must:
     1. appear on the Register of PGR supervisors
     2. have either internal or external examination experience at doctoral level and have completed the mandatory training for independent chairs.
     3. have sufficient experience to command respect and, if necessary, intervene in the oral examination to ensure good practice.
  3. For details on the role of the Independent Chair and expectations of them see the [*Guide to the examination process for research degrees*](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/research/research-degrees/#thesis-submission-and-examination).

# Record of updates

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| Section | Changes made | Date approved by RDC or QSC | Notes |
| 2 | Internal examiner criteria amended to:   * state that they must be a PGR supervisor * remove the requirement to have supervised a doctoral candidate to successful completion or have previous doctoral experience, instead they could observe a doctoral examination in its entirety. | 13.3.24 QSC |  |
| 7 | Independent chair criteria amended to:   * state that they must be a PGR supervisor * specify they must have doctoral examination experience. | 13.3.24 QSC |  |
| 2.4 | Amended to state training must have been within three years | 15.5.24 RDC |  |

1. For guidance this would include line managers, employers, co-authors on publications, partners, spouses and close family relationships such as brothers, sisters or children. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For the purposes of the criteria for external examiner ‘senior’ is defined as Senior Lecturer (or equivalent) or above. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)