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ST JOHN  
UNIVERSITY

# Instructions to examiners for research degree examinations

MA/MSc by Research

2025-26



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

- 1.1.1 These instructions cover the responsibilities and duties before, during and after the candidate's examination.
- 1.1.2 The guidance provided here is to ensure that research degree examinations are conducted fairly and professionally, and in accordance with University regulations.
- 1.1.3 Throughout this document the term **candidate** is used to indicate a **postgraduate researcher** who is under consideration for achievement of an award.

## 1.2 Scope

- 1.2.1 This document covers theses submitted for examination for the following research degrees:

Degree	Panel	Exam Format
<b>Master of Arts by Research/ Master of Science by Research</b>	External Examiner	External Examiner assessment of written thesis

- 1.2.2 The Code of Practice for Research Degrees should be referred to for specific information relating to the assessment of the following research degrees:
  - Practice-led Master's by Research (CoP Section 15)
- 1.2.3 If you have any queries about the examination process, please contact the PGR School on [pgr.school@yorksj.ac.uk](mailto:pgr.school@yorksj.ac.uk).

## 1.3 Update summary

- 1.3.1 V5 October 2025
- 1.3.2 A record of updates is stored in **Section 9**.

## 2. Thesis format

### 2.1 Format and structure of the thesis

- 2.1.1 The thesis must be written in English<sup>1</sup>. Details of the format and presentation requirements for theses are published in the separate 'Guide to the Examination Process for Research Degrees' (section 3).
- 2.1.2 Candidates are informed that submission of the thesis for examination must be made to the PGR School through the Research Degree Submission site on Moodle and **not be sent directly to the examiners**. Candidates are solely responsible for the decision to submit their work for examination and for the thesis which is submitted. Substitute versions of theses, additional pages or supplementary material will not be accepted after submission of the thesis and candidates are informed that these must not be sent directly to the examiners. This applies in all cases, irrespective of whether the thesis was submitted for examination on or before the maximum time limit for submission.
- 2.1.3 The thesis is provided to the external examiner on the basis that they will treat the contents, and any issues relating to the candidature, as strictly confidential in the periods before, during and following the examination, until such stage as the work may be published in accordance with normal academic custom. The PGR School will be advised by the School of any specific confidentiality undertakings that are required as a result of commercial agreements and will inform the external examiner accordingly. If for this, or any other reason, an external examiner should find that their appointment as examiner would create some conflict of interest they should contact the PGR School ([pgr.school@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:pgr.school@yorks.ac.uk)) immediately.
- 2.1.4 Examiners are specifically asked to bear in mind that the thesis submitted for examination represents research that may reasonably be expected of a capable and diligent PGR after completion of the standard period of study.
- 2.1.5 The thesis will be submitted as an eThesis and made available to examiners as a PDF document. Examiners may also request a soft-bound copy of the thesis for examination purposes.

### 2.2 Thesis length

- 2.2.1 During their examination of a submission, examiners are asked to bear in mind that all candidates have been given the following advice regarding thesis length:
- 'During the examination of the thesis the examiners will be considering both the quality and value of the work and the way in which the candidate has chosen to present their review, results, arguments and conclusions. The candidate's ability to express their findings in a clear and concise manner will be under examination and excessive length or too discursive a style will be judged a weakness. The supervisor is best placed to advise on the desirable length and form of the submission within the University's limits.' [Extract from section 3.22 of the 'Guide to the Examination Process for Research Degrees'].

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of research degrees in the modern languages where, in certain circumstances approved by the Research Degrees Examination Panel, a thesis may be submitted in a language other than English.

2.2.2 Theses should normally be within the following limits:

Degree	Minimum length	Maximum length
MA and MSc	N/A	30,000 words (100 pages)
MA Practice-led	5,000 words (15 pages)	10,000 words (30 pages)

**Please note that the above limits include all appendices and footnotes but not bibliographies/reference lists.**

2.2.3 Candidates are able to request an extension to the maximum limit if they consider that they cannot avoid exceeding the above limit and this request must be supported by the School. If the request is approved, details of the case for exceeding the limit will be made available to examiners.

## **2.3 Use of jointly or solely authored publications in the thesis**

- 2.3.1 Guidance is given to candidates on the use of their published work within a thesis, including identifying the contribution of others to the work contained within the thesis. This is especially important when chapters might have been based on jointly authored publications as the examiners will need to be able to clearly identify the work directly attributable to the candidate. This will allow them to determine whether there is an original contribution by the candidate and whether this contribution is at the appropriate level to merit the award of the degree. Examiners can view the full guidance given to candidates in the [‘Guidance on the use of solely or jointly authored publications within a thesis submission’](#).
- 2.3.2 When completing the ‘Application for Assessment’ candidates are required to indicate where they have included material in their thesis that is taken from solely or jointly authored publications. In the case of jointly authored publications candidates are required to indicate their contribution to the work and that of the other authors at the point of entry for examination, and include this information clearly on the title pages of the thesis.
- 2.3.3 Copies of all publications listed in the ‘Application for Assessment’ will be made available to examiners.

### 3. Examination of the thesis

#### 3.1 Arrangements and timescales for the examination of the thesis

- 3.1.1 The PGR School is responsible for liaising with the external examiner and candidate as appropriate on the details. The supervisory team and School Postgraduate Research Lead (SPGRL) will also be informed of the arrangements.
- 3.1.2 Every effort should be made for the examination to be conducted **within six weeks** of receiving the thesis if possible, or by three months at the latest.
- 3.1.3 If it is not possible to meet the timescale outlined above, external examiners should liaise with the PGR School who will keep the candidate, supervisor and the SPGRL informed on the situation.

#### 3.2 Process for assessment of the thesis

- 3.2.1 The examiner assessment of the Master's by Research thesis will be conducted by one external examiner appointed by RDEP.
- 3.2.2 The thesis will be dispatched to the external examiner and they will complete the external examiner's report and recommendation to be returned to the PGR School within six weeks.
- 3.2.3 The report should be fully completed as soon as possible after the external examiner has read the thesis. The report must be typed using the template provided and returned to the PGR School along with the recommended outcome.
- 3.2.4 Where the recommendation is that the degree is not awarded but the candidate is permitted to resubmit for re-examination, the external examiner must also provide 'Recommendations for Resubmission' and return these with the report. The 'Recommendations for Resubmission' must be typed, headed 'Recommendations for Resubmission' and attached to the external examiner's report.
- 3.2.5 An oral examination will not normally be held but the external examiner may request that one takes place if deemed necessary to ensure that the criteria for the award of the degree have been met.
- 3.2.6 Examiners should not contact the candidate directly to inform them of the outcome as this will be done by the PGR School on receipt of the report and recommendation.
- 3.2.7 The Examiner's Report and Recommendation will be subject to approval by RDEP and the PGR School will send the approved report to the candidate.

#### 3.3 Oral examination (by exception)

- 3.3.1 An oral examination will be held if the external examiner considers that it is necessary to ensure that the criteria for award of the degree have been met. The arrangements for an oral examination will be as set out in this section.
- 3.3.2 The oral examination will normally be conducted as an online examination meeting for all involved parties using Microsoft Teams. However, there may be circumstances where an on-campus examination is held and those involved will be notified of this intention as soon as practicable. A hybrid arrangement split between participants being on campus and joining the examination remotely may be more appropriate in some instances. A test call can be arranged for the external examiner before the examination if they would like one.
- 3.3.3 An independent chair will be appointed and must be present for the duration of the oral examination. A supervisor may attend as an observer if the candidate wishes them to be present.
- 3.3.4 The external examiner should not discuss their provisional findings with the candidate or their supervisory team at any point before the oral examination takes place or give an indication of the likely recommendation until the oral examination has been completed.

- 3.3.5 The oral examination must be conducted in English.<sup>2</sup>
- 3.3.6 There are no specific regulations regarding the length of the oral examination or what should be discussed except that the thesis should be discussed with the candidate. The oral examination gives the candidate the opportunity to answer questions in areas where the external examiner is not satisfied.
- 3.3.7 The oral examination should run continuously and be completed **within a day**, but the external examiner should respect any request a candidate may make for a short break. In the case of longer examinations (over two hours) or in the event that a candidate is becoming distressed a short break should be offered. If a candidate is unable to continue, the independent chair must contact the PGR School.
- 3.3.8 The structure of the examination itself may vary depending on circumstances. This could include a short presentation to the external examiner at the start of the examination. The candidate should be given **at least two weeks'** notice if this is required and the arrangements must be made through the PGR School.
- 3.3.9 In the event that any participant has technology difficulties during an online examination they should attempt to re-join the meeting, but where it becomes impossible to continue the meeting will need to be re-scheduled.
- 3.3.10 The process of notifying the candidate and supervisor of the recommended outcome of the examination should normally take place after the oral examination but, in any event, must take place **within 24 hours** of the completion of the oral examination. Please see [section 6: 'After the assessment of the thesis'](#) for further advice.

#### 3.4 Recording of the oral examination

- 3.4.1 All oral examinations will be subject to audio (or video, if more appropriate) recording as specified in the '[Policy and Guidance on the Recording of Oral Examinations](#)'. The recording will cover the duration that the candidate is being examined and the independent chair will be responsible for transferring the recording to the PGR School for storage at the end of the examination. The PGR School will be responsible for the arranging the recording method and for secure storage of the recording after the examination.

#### 3.5 External examiner

- 3.5.1 The role of the external examiner is to conduct the academic examination of the candidate and to be aware of the requirements for a research degree award under the University's regulations. The external examiner will be a recognised authority in the subject field of the candidate's thesis.
- 3.5.2 The external examiner will also ensure that the examiner's report and recommendation is completed and sent to the PGR School following the examination. Where a candidate is required to carry out amendments to the thesis, the external examiner will be responsible for providing a list of amendments to the PGR School for forwarding to the candidate, **within one full working day** of the examination. If the outcome of the examination was that the degree not be awarded but the candidate is permitted to resubmit the thesis following further work the external examiner should also provide the 'Recommendations for Resubmission' to the PGR School for onward transmission to the candidate once approved by RDEP.
- 3.5.3 Once a candidate has completed amendments to their thesis they will submit the amended version to the PGR School who will forward it to the external examiner. Once they have checked that all amendments have been carried out satisfactorily the external examiner should notify the PGR School.

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<sup>2</sup> In certain circumstances approved by the Research Degrees Examination Panel, the examination might, with the agreement of the external examiner and independent chair, be conducted in a language other than English, e.g. research degrees in the modern languages or British Sign Language.



### **3.6 Independent chair**

- 3.6.1 An independent chair will only be appointed where the external examiner has identified a need for an oral examination to be held following their consideration of the written thesis.
- 3.6.2 The role of the independent chair is to ensure the examination process is rigorously adhered to and that the examination is conducted fairly and professionally, in accordance with University regulations. The independent chair is not expected to be an expert in the subject area, but must have good knowledge of research degree policies and procedures. The independent chair is not expected to read the thesis or play a role in academic examination of the candidate or question the candidate on the work being examined at the oral examination, but is responsible for ensuring that the recording equipment is in operation for the duration of the examination.
- 3.6.3 After the examination the independent chair is responsible for transferring the oral recording to the PGR School, and for completing the independent chair report.

### **3.7 The role of the supervisor**

- 3.7.1 Where an oral examination is to be held a candidate may invite one of their supervisors to be 'in attendance' as an observer. A supervisor may only attend with the prior permission of the candidate and must remain silent during the examination. They may not participate in the examination and take no part in the academic judgement and the decision making process. They must leave the examination with the candidate after the oral examination.
- 3.7.2 In cases where a candidate has more than one supervisor, only one supervisor is permitted to attend the oral examination. The independent chair is responsible for ensuring that the supervisor remains silent and that their presence at the oral examination is unobtrusive. The independent chair may ask the supervisor to leave if it is felt that their presence may jeopardise the smooth running of the oral examination.
- 3.7.3 Where the examination is held via Microsoft Teams the supervisor will be expected to mute their microphone and switch their camera off during the examination.
- 3.7.4 If not present as an observer, a supervisor is required to be available for consultation whilst the examination is in process, if necessary.

### **3.8 Research misconduct**

- 3.8.1 The University has procedures for the investigation of allegations of research misconduct, including plagiarism identified by examiners in a thesis submission. Where an examiner of a research degree thesis identifies evidence of plagiarism within a thesis submission the process contained in the Research Misconduct Policy should be followed.

### **3.9 External examiner fees**

- 3.9.1 External examiners will receive the appropriate fee for the examination. Current fees payable are £105 for a first submission and £70 for a resubmission.
- 3.9.2 The fee will be paid on completion of the appropriate form after the examination.
- 3.9.3 If the external examiner attends an oral examination on campus, travel (and accommodation where necessary) will be booked by the University and subsistence will be reimbursed in line with the University's [Travel and Expenses policy](#)

## 4. Criteria for award

### 4.1 Regulations for award

- 4.1.1 The [Regulations for Research Degrees](#) detail the formal requirements for all of the University's research degrees. The eligibility for award of the particular research degree under examination is contained within the 'Regulations for Research Degrees'.

### 4.2 Learning outcomes

- 4.2.1 The [learning outcomes for research degrees](#) contain demonstrations of ability, transferrable skills, learning context and assessment details. Examiners will not be expected to monitor/assess all the learning outcomes during the assessment. The main emphasis of the thesis assessment will be upon the research achievement and it may be difficult at that stage to assess expertise in transferable subject and professional skills.
- 4.2.2 The ongoing process of PGR monitoring and evaluation should therefore record progress in relation to learning outcomes. The examiners may ask that the University make available these reports and records at the examination to enable them to audit the arrangements that have been made.

### 4.3 Publication requirements at Masters level

- 4.3.1 The following guidance is given on the publication requirements at Masters level:

Level	Publication requirement
<b>Master's by Research</b>	<p><b>Publication requirement: Material at a level suitable for publication</b></p> <p>The breadth and depth of critical analysis shown at Masters by Research level may be more limited than that at doctoral level due to the narrower focus of the research, less extensive range of sources and shorter thesis. However, it is expected that the quality of the research demonstrated would still be at a level suitable for publication (in reputable journals or publications as appropriate to the field of research). It is expected that the work could constitute a part of a broader published work even if it does not constitute the volume of work needed for publication by itself.</p> <p>When commenting on the extent to which the thesis contains material at a level suitable for publication, examiners are invited to comment on: work which has already been published by the candidate; parts of the thesis which could be suitable for publication following some reworking; parts of the thesis which could constitute a part of a broader published work even if it is unlikely to be published by itself.</p>

## 5. Examination Outcome

### 5.1 Types of recommendation

5.1.1 Examiners are asked to submit **one** of the following recommendations:

- a) That the degree be awarded (without amendment).
- b) That the degree be awarded subject to amendments.
- c) That the degree is not awarded but resubmission permitted for the original award (following further work and on one occasion only).
- d) That no research degree be awarded (only possible on resubmission other than where specified under the 'Research Misconduct Policy'.

### 5.2 Award (without amendment)

5.2.1 If the candidate has met the learning outcomes, the thesis satisfies the requirements for award and the thesis does not require any alterations, the external examiner may recommend the award of the degree without amendments. Where this outcome is given the candidate may correct typographical errors in the thesis prior to submission of the final version in Moodle.

### 5.3 Award subject to amendments

- 5.3.1 If the candidate has met the learning outcomes for the programme, and the thesis satisfies the requirements for the award of the degree but is found to contain errors, the external examiner may recommend the award of the degree subject to amendments being made to the thesis.
- 5.3.2 The external examiner should provide a list of the amendments to the PGR School in writing as soon as possible after the assessment of the thesis has been completed (normally within one day).
- 5.3.3 The PGR School will send the list of amendments to the candidate and the amendments must be completed and returned to the PGR School by **no later than six months** from the date that they are sent to the candidate (unless an extension to the amendment period has been approved by RDEP).
- 5.3.4 The PGR School will send the amended thesis to the external examiner for confirmation that all the required amendments have been completed satisfactorily.

### 5.4 Degree not awarded (resubmission permitted)

- 5.4.1 If the external examiner considers that the thesis has the potential to reach the standard to merit the intended award but is concerned that it does not, at that stage, satisfy the requirements for award, they may recommend that the degree is not awarded but that the candidate is permitted to resubmit for re-examination, following further work. This recommendation may be made on one occasion only.
- 5.4.2 The external examiner is required to prepare 'Recommendations for Resubmission' (see section 5.5 below) which outline the changes required. These 'Recommendations for Resubmission' will be made available to the candidate, along with the external examiner's report, following approval by RDEP.

### 5.5 Recommendations for resubmission

- 5.5.1 In the event that the degree is not awarded but the candidate is permitted to resubmit the thesis the external examiner must prepare 'Recommendations for Resubmission', which must be typed and submitted at the same time as the external examiner's report for consideration by RDEP within **10 working days** of assessment of the thesis.
- 5.5.2 The 'Recommendations for Resubmission' must be sufficiently detailed to give the candidate suitable guidance to achieve the required standard but the content should not stifle the initiative of

the candidate. The external examiner may choose not to include specific editorial comment in the recommendations.

- 5.5.3 The 'Recommendations for Resubmission' will be issued to the candidate by the PGR School after RDEP has scrutinised them together with the external examiner's report. The approved external examiner's report and Recommendations for Resubmission will be issued as quickly as possible by the PGR School after approval by RDEP. The external examiner must not issue informal 'Recommendations for Resubmission' to the candidate.
- 5.5.4 Except in exceptional circumstances, it will usually be the original external examiner that will examine the resubmitted thesis.
- 5.5.5 Examiners may find the following good practice guidance helpful for producing the 'Recommendations for Resubmission':
- The reasons for the outcome should be explained solely in terms of why the criteria for award has not been met and should not be quantified in terms of the time the external examiner feels the candidate will need to carry out changes (e.g. they will need longer than **six months**).
  - The Recommendations for Resubmission must be clear and unambiguous – for example avoid including phrases like 'would benefit from', 'might like to consider' etc. Instead use language like 'the candidate must', 'the revised thesis must'.
  - The use of emotive language or personal comments should be avoided.
  - The Recommendations for Resubmission must be free from typographical errors.

## **5.6 No research degree awarded**

- 5.6.1 The external examiner may not recommend that the thesis be failed on a first examination, other than where specified under the 'Research Misconduct Policy'. Otherwise, this recommendation is only possible on resubmission and there is no further opportunity to revise and submit the work. In their report the external examiner must clearly explain their reasons for not recommending the award of a degree.
- 5.6.2 The decision to fail a resubmission should be reached solely on academic grounds as it implies that the thesis is irredeemable or that the candidate does not possess the necessary academic abilities. It should accordingly not take any account of personal circumstances which may have a bearing on the candidate's opportunity to amend the resubmission.
- 5.6.3 In the event of a recommendation that a degree not be awarded the external examiner is asked to ensure that a thorough and detailed account of the reasons for failure is provided. The PGR School will send the external examiner's report to the candidate after it has been approved by RDEP.

## 6. After the examination of the thesis

### 6.1 Outcome of the examination

- 6.1.1 The external examiner should notify the PGR School of the outcome of the examination by completing the external examiner's report and recommendation. The PGR School will advise the candidate once the report and recommendation have been approved by RDEP.

### 6.2 Completing the external examiner's report and recommendation

- 6.2.1 The external examiner's report and recommendation should be completed in full as soon as possible and returned to the PGR School. Where the recommendation is that the degree is awarded subject to amendments, the list of amendments should also be provided with the report. If the recommendation is that the degree is not awarded but resubmission is permitted, the Recommendations for Resubmission must also be prepared and sent to the PGR School with the report.
- 6.2.2 All sections of the report must be completed using the template provided. The questions must be answered clearly and fully, with specific examples from the thesis included in the responses. The report must stand alone from the thesis and it must be clearly evident from reading the report itself that the thesis demonstrated the criteria necessary for the decision that was made.
- 6.2.3 The external examiner's report for a resubmission must 'stand alone' from that completed after the first assessment of the thesis and the examiner is asked to complete all sections in full, with reference to the resubmitted thesis. The use of the phrase 'as first report', for example, should be avoided.

### 6.3 Research Degrees Examination Panel

- 6.3.1 The Research Degrees Examination Panel (RDEP) is able to recommend the award of research degrees from the University. RDEP will consider the content of each external examiner's report to establish that the criteria for the award of the degree has been met and that the recommendation sent forward covers the basic points required by the University, as well as being clear and unambiguous.
- 6.3.2 The award of a research degree will normally be approved via RDEP Chair's Action.
- 6.3.3 The membership of RDEP consists of the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research & International), three senior academics and a member of Quality and Standards Committee.
- 6.3.4 RDEP will ask for further information if it is not satisfied that the recommendation has been clearly and sufficiently justified or if specific examples are lacking. The external examiner's report and recommendation cannot be approved until RDEP is satisfied that the additional information supplied by the examiners addresses the concerns raised with the report.

### 6.4 Release of the External Examiner's Report to the candidate

- 6.4.1 The external examiner's report and recommendation will be sent to the candidate and their supervisor(s) by the PGR School after approval by RDEP. Examiners should bear this in mind when completing the report and ensure that the content only relates to the criteria for the award and that any criticism is fair and measured.
- 6.4.2 Examiners should note that the University does not impose any restrictions on candidates as to who can see the report. The candidate may subsequently share the report with anyone, including sponsors, publishers or other interested parties.

### 6.5 Confirming the completion of amendments to the thesis

- 6.5.1 In the case of a recommendation that the degree be awarded subject to amendments being made, the candidate must carry out the amendments to the satisfaction of the external examiner **within six months** of the date that they are notified of the outcome of the examination. The candidate will

be asked to return the amendments to the PGR School who will liaise with the external examiner to confirm that all amendments have been carried out satisfactorily.

- 6.5.2 The external examiner should aim to check the amendments in a reasonable timescale, preferably within a maximum of four weeks, and should contact the PGR School as soon as possible if circumstances arise which may mean a delay in checking the amendments.
- 6.5.3 To assist the external examiner in the process of checking and approving the amendments the candidate is advised to provide information outlining what amendments they have made. This could be in the form of tracked changes or supplied as a separate list but candidates are informed that they must fully correct individual pages of the thesis as it is not acceptable simply to provide an errata page.
- 6.5.4 Candidates are advised to consult with their supervisor(s) throughout this process and in the event that clarification of an amendment is required the supervisor/candidate should contact the PGR School in the first instance rather than contacting the external examiner directly.
- 6.5.5 The external examiner must confirm to the PGR School that the candidate has completed the amendments to their satisfaction. The PGR School will then advise the candidate that they may now go ahead and submit the final thesis.

## **6.6 Extensions to the normal amendment period**

- 6.6.1 A candidate should contact the PGR School if any problems are experienced in completing and returning the amendments by the normal **six-month** deadline. In exceptional circumstances RDEP may consider an extension to the amendment deadline. Further advice can be found in the 'Code of Practice for Research Degrees'.

## **6.7 Final thesis**

- 6.7.1 Once any required amendments have been confirmed by the external examiner, the PGR School will advise the candidate to submit the final electronic version of their thesis and thesis deposit form to Moodle. Once the candidate's award has been confirmed by the Chair of RDEP the thesis will be made available in the [institutional repository \(RaY\)](#) as soon as possible thereafter, subject to any embargo period.

## 7. Examination of a resubmitted thesis

### 7.1 Resubmission

- 7.1.1 Candidates are normally required to resubmit their thesis within the following period from the date of issue of the 'Recommendations for Resubmission'. The maximum time limit for resubmission is given below, however, candidates may resubmit at any point once the amendments have been done and the thesis is ready to be re-examined.

Master's by Research resubmission	within 9 months
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- 7.1.2 If circumstances arise which prevent the candidate from resubmitting their thesis within the normal period, a case for an extension to the amendment period can be submitted for consideration by RDEP. Further advice is given in 'Code of Practice for Research Degrees'.

### 7.2 Examination of a resubmitted thesis

- 7.2.1 It is usually the original external examiner that will examine the resubmitted thesis, except in exceptional circumstances.
- 7.2.2 External examiners are asked to make every effort to complete the re-examination within six weeks of receiving the resubmitted thesis but examiners are asked to accept a maximum time scale of **three months** in which to complete the process (including an oral examination if one is required).
- 7.2.3 A copy of the original external examiner's report and 'Recommendations for Resubmission' will be provided to the external examiner with the resubmitted thesis. Candidates are also required to supply a summary of how the revised thesis has responded to changes detailed by the external examiner in the 'Recommendations for Resubmission'. There is no set format for this and the candidate is asked to present this in a format which best reflects the changes they have made. This will also assist the external examiner when considering the resubmitted thesis as particular attention will be given to the extent to which the candidate has addressed the issues raised in the 'Recommendations for Resubmission'.
- 7.2.4 Examiners are advised that the 'Recommendations for Resubmission' must clearly indicate the necessary and sufficient conditions which, if complied with by the candidate, and provided that the thesis as a whole is satisfactory, would lead to a recommendation for the award of the degree (albeit possibly with amendments). If, on resubmission, the alterations and improvements required in the 'Recommendations for Resubmission' have been carried out to the satisfaction of the external examiner, the thesis as a whole remains satisfactory, a recommendation should then be made for the award of the degree.
- 7.2.5 It is possible that some candidates may not (for various reasons and sometimes for defensible academic reasons) have followed all the advice and guidance given in the 'Recommendations for Resubmission'. In these cases the external examiner should consider the thesis as a whole and reach a decision whether or not the thesis now meets the appropriate minimum standard for the award of the degree, or whether one of the other options set out below is appropriate.

### 7.3 Recommendations following resubmission

- 7.3.1 Candidates are not permitted to present a thesis for re-examination on more than one occasion. The outcome of the resubmission for the candidate will be either:
- Recommendation that the degree be awarded (subject in some cases to amendments being made to the thesis).
  - Fail.



## 8. Other useful information

### 8.1 Support for disabled candidates – advice to examiners

- 8.1.1 Candidates are able to access Disability and Inclusion support through the University's [Student Hub](#) and this may lead to recommendations for reasonable adjustments to the examination being identified through a Learner Adjustment Plan (LAP). Requests for such reasonable adjustments can be submitted through the Application for Assessment form and details of any agreed reasonable adjustments will be made available to the external examiner.
- 8.1.2 If the external examiner has requested that an oral examination be arranged (see Section 3.5) the PGR School has responsibility for facilitating any agreed reasonable adjustments to the oral examination. This will ensure that reasonable adjustments to the oral examination are put in place so that disabled candidates are not disadvantaged by the examination process. However, the same academic standards for the award of the particular research degree must be upheld and the thesis must meet the criteria and standard expected for the qualification concerned.

### 8.2 'Exceptional circumstances' for candidates

- 8.2.1 For PGRs, the University accommodates 'exceptional circumstances' by considering a period of suspension or extension of study which will lengthen the overall candidature and delay the deadline for submission of the thesis for examination. Full details are contained in the 'Code of Practice for Research Degrees'.
- 8.2.2 There can be no 'exceptional circumstances' with the criteria for award. In order to be eligible for the award of the degree, the thesis submitted for examination must meet the stated criteria for award of the degree and the specified learning outcomes must be met. Any circumstances which may have affected the candidate during their period of study will not be taken into account as part of the examination of the thesis and should not lead the examiner to recommend the award of a research degree where the work is not considered to be of the appropriate standard. However such factors might be taken into account when determining whether any reasonable adjustments to the examination process should be considered, for example in the case of a disability, or in terms of what support the student may need in order to complete any amendments to the thesis after the assessment.

### 8.3 Ethical review of the research

- 8.3.1 All candidates are required to confirm that they are aware of, and comply with, the University's procedures for the review of ethical issues arising from research. Confirmation of the candidate's awareness of the ethical implications of their research, and that ethical approval has been sought and received where necessary, is monitored at progress reviews and at entry for examination.
- 8.3.2 At the point of entry for examination, the candidate is required to confirm that all ethical review requirements have been satisfactorily addressed. The University recognises that in some cases it may be beneficial for examiners to have access to the detailed ethics information so they can see how candidates have dealt with the ethical issues of their research. The documents which make up the ethics application typically include the application form, recruitment material, participant information sheet and consent form. These documents can be combined into one PDF and made available to examiners on request. If examiners require access to this information they should contact the PGR School in the first instance. Further information about the University's research ethics policy and requirements for researchers is available at: <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/research/research-ethics--integrity/>.

### 8.4 General feedback on the examination process

- 8.4.1 If examiners wish to submit separate comments or provide any general comment or feedback regarding the examination process which they wish to bring to the attention of RDEP they are invited to do so in writing to the PGR School ([pgr.school@yorksj.ac.uk](mailto:pgr.school@yorksj.ac.uk)).



## **8.5 Useful documents relating to research degree examinations**

8.5.1 The following documents relating to the submission and examination of theses for research degrees are available:

- [Regulations for Research Degrees](#)
- [Learning Outcomes](#)
- [Code of Practice for Research Degrees](#)
- [Guide to the examination process for research degrees](#)
- [Guidance on solely and jointly authored publications in a thesis submission](#)
- [Research Misconduct Policy](#)

Forms:

- [External Examiner's Report and Recommendation \(MA/MSc by Research\)](#)

## 9. Record of updates to the Instructions

Section	Changes made	Date approved by RDC or QSC	Notes
Various	Updated terminology/links	June 2023	
Various	Replace Registry with the PGR School	Sept 2024	
Various	Removal of reference to the process for MA/MSc by Research candidates starting pre October 2021	Sept 2024	
6.4	Removal of reference to Progress and Award Examination Panel, awards now made by RDEP.	Jan 2025	
Various	Updated links and terminology	Aug 2025	
8.1	Access to Disability and Inclusion, and Wellbeing, support through the Student Hub	Aug 2025	