

1 Policy

- 1.1 In accordance with York St John University Regulations for Research Degrees, oral examinations will be subject to recording, or, in the exceptional cases detailed below, permission from the Progress and Award Examination Panel must be obtained for exemption from recording.
- 1.2 The recording provides an objective record of the oral examination. Oral Examinations are audio recorded and in cases where the examination is conducted in British Sign Language, video recorded.
- 1.3 The recording will be only be replayed in the following circumstances:
 - i. **In the event of an appeal/complaint.**
The recording will only be played back by staff who are involved in the investigation into the appeal/complaint.
 - ii. **In the event that the examiners have failed to agree between themselves.**
If the examiners fail to agree on whether or not the candidate has satisfied the requirements for a particular degree, and the Research Degrees Committee has been unable to resolve the disagreement, the Progress and Award Examination Panel will appoint an adjudicator who will play the recording back as part of the process to resolve the disagreement.
 - iii. **In the event that prior written consent has been received from all participants for the recording to be ethically studied within an approved research project.**
The recording will only be played back by members of an approved research team where written consent has been received from all participants after the final result of the examination has been confirmed by the Progress and Award Examination Panel. Recordings will be studied in accordance with a methodology that has been subject to ethical approval, will be securely stored by the research team, and will be erased in accordance with paragraph 12 below.
- 1.4 The recording will not be replayed except in situations (i), (ii), and (iii) above, which are the sole purposes for which the recording is made. The recording will not be copied without the prior written consent of all participants, and only in situation (iii) above. The University's understanding of the position in relation to statutory disclosure is set out below.

2 Guidelines

- 2.1 The PGR School shall ensure that all research degree oral examinations are recorded, or, in the exceptional cases detailed below, that permission from the Progress and Award Examination Panel is obtained for exemption from recording. Audio and video equipment will be maintained by Media Services. Only the official recording is permitted; participants in the oral examination are not permitted to make their own recordings.
- 2.2 Supervisors are asked to inform external examiners prior to nomination that the oral examination will be recorded and to confirm their assent on the Application for Assessment. Prospective external examiners should be notified that the recordings will be held and treated in confidence.
- 2.3 Supervisors are asked to remind their research students that oral examinations will be recorded and the reasons for this. Students will be reminded by the PGR School when they submit their thesis that the oral examination will be recorded and that recordings will be held and treated in confidence.
- 2.4 The recording is made using equipment authorised for this purpose by the Progress and Award Examination Panel. Media Services maintain the approved equipment. Memory cards, which

are required for the recording and have the status of an examination script, are sent to the independent chair when a thesis is sent out for examination. If the recording fails at any time during the examination, the oral examination should continue unrecorded and the PGR School should be informed as soon as possible.

- 2.5 The PGR School is responsible for ensuring that a designated person is available before the start of the examination to assist examiners with recording equipment. Before the examination, the designated person should enter the student's name and student number and the date of the examination on the memory card envelope. The designated person will also provide a short script to be read at the beginning of the recording, in order to associate the recording to the candidate.
- 2.6 The independent chair will inform those present at the start of the examination that the recording equipment is being switched on, and at the end of the examination that it is being switched off. The recording should end when the oral examination is complete, and the candidate leaves the examination room prior to the private discussion of the examiners. Neither the private discussion of the examiners, nor any subsequent discussion between the candidate and the examiners, should be recorded.
- 2.7 After the oral examination, the memory card should be removed from the equipment by the designated person, sealed in the envelope and retained in the PGR School for secure storage. No copy of the recording should be made, nor should it be played back (other than in the circumstances described in 1.3 and 1.4 above).
- 2.8 The recording will be stored securely by the PGR School. It will be erased one year after the final result of the examination has been confirmed by the Progress and Award Examination Panel, or, if an appeal is received, after consideration of the appeal within the University or subsequently by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education has been concluded. Receipt and erasure of recordings will be documented.
- 2.9 The recording has the status of an examination script and is therefore exempt from subject access requests under the Data Protection Act (the Act does not restrict the media that can constitute an exam script). However, this exemption does not extend to the examiners' comments on the candidate's performance, or any other form of feedback or conversation beyond the requirements of the examination. Provided these are not recorded, the recordings are exempt from data requests by the student. The recording cannot be released to a third party under the Freedom of Information Act because it holds the candidate's personal data, the wider disclosure of which is likely to be unfair and contrary to the purposes for which the data were obtained (see above).

2.10 For the grounds for appeal and the procedure for consideration of appeals, please see: [Appeals and Complaints](#).

Associated links:	Guide to the Examination Process for Research Degrees Instructions to Examiners (MA by R / PhD, MPhil, Prof Doc)
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