

NOTES OF GUIDANCE FOR EXAMINERS OF THE DEGREES

RESEARCH MASTERS, MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY, MASTER OF SURGERY, DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, DOCTOR OF MEDICINE, AND PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES

1. Appointment of Examiners

- 1.1. Candidates are usually examined by one internal and one external examiner. If the candidate is a member of academic or research staff of the University, then two external examiners and one non-examining Chair are required.
- 1.2. Examiners are approached in the first instance by the candidate's Director of Studies (DoS), at least four months before the intended submission of the thesis (or any part thereof if it includes practice). The School in which the candidate is located then formally nominates all examiners and examination teams to the University's Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee, which is responsible for approving all nominations.
- 1.3. Requirements of examiners:
 - a. no examiner will have acted as supervisor or advisor to the candidate during this research degree (other than, for internal examiners, in the course of annual monitoring processes, or as expert commentator for project approval [RDC.1] or Confirmation of Route [RDC.2] milestones¹),
 - b. an external examiner will not normally have held any appointment with the University during the period in which the candidate has been registered for the degree, nor had any formal supervisory or advisory relationship with the candidate,
 - c. at least one examiner must have experience of examining U.K. Research Degree candidates. In an examination for PhD, at least one examiner must have experience of PhD examining,
 - d. no person who is registered for a research degree may act as an examiner,
 - e. the selection of external examiners is subject to the University's general requirements. Details of any past or current association with the University, its staff or students must be declared at the time the examination arrangements are considered, and

¹ Subject to local guidelines; in some Faculties, internal examiners are not permitted to have acted as expert commentator for the RDC2 process.

- f. internal examiners must fulfil the current training requirements set by the Doctoral College, at least 4 weeks prior to the *viva voce* examination.

- 1.4. For full details about the appointment of examiners and the requirements of the examination team (including the appointment of Chairs and their roles), please see the [Research Degrees Handbook](#).

2. The Role of the Examiners Prior to Oral Examination

- 2.1. Examiners must agree to attend the *viva voce* (oral) examination in person, as well as any elements of the thesis which must be examined *in situ* (e.g. in the case of creative or professional practice).
- 2.2. Prior to the *viva voce* examination, the Examiners must:
 - a. read the thesis carefully and engage with any non-written elements if relevant;
 - b. identify shortcomings in the thesis/research and notify the Doctoral College immediately should they suspect academic dishonesty or plagiarism;
 - c. submit an individual pre-viva report form (RDC.4P) at least 10 working days prior to the *viva voce* oral examination (see 7.4 below);
 - d. prepare appropriate questions with which to challenge the candidate and enable them to demonstrate the fulfilment of the assessment criteria; and
 - e. identify any editorial/presentational corrections needed to improve the final version of the thesis. The marked up version of the thesis may be given to the candidate at the close of the examination and noted in the formal notification of the examination outcome (i.e. list of corrections).
- 2.3. Examiners may not discuss any element of the thesis with either the candidate or supervisor(s) prior to the oral examination. They also must not discuss any elements of the thesis with the other examiner until after both pre-viva reports are submitted. It is permissible to raise issues in advance with the Chair of the *viva voce* where one has been appointed, who should consult with the Doctoral College if required.

3. Submission of the Thesis

- 3.1. The written element of the thesis must be presented in English. Its presentation is expected to be of a high standard in line with the University of Plymouth's [Research Degrees Handbook](#). Any amendments required to the presentation of the thesis will be detailed to the candidate by the Doctoral College for inclusion in the final electronic version of the thesis, following the *viva voce* examination. In some cases in which presentation requirements are not met or material is missing, the Doctoral College may require amendments prior to the thesis being sent to the examination team.

- 3.2.** Sufficient copies, for distribution to each examiner (and Chair where appropriate), must be submitted to the Doctoral College office in a “perfect” temporary or permanently bound form.
- 3.3.** It is entirely the candidate’s decision to submit their thesis for examination; they do not require their Director of Studies’ approval to do so.
- 3.4.** Work submitted for another degree may not form part of the submission for the research degree (except in the case of a collaboratively produced co-authored thesis examined simultaneously or co-authored elements within a thesis which may potentially appear in another person’s degree submission).
- 3.5.** The thesis may include non-written forms of research presentation (e.g. creative or professional practice) or else research outputs, including articles, published or made public during the course of the degree registration.
 - a.** In such cases, the nature and form of the thesis must be approved by the examiners prior to submission. Please note that there is always an expectation that in addition to these outputs, the thesis will include an introduction (outlining research aims, enquiry, methodology and defining key terms as well as positioning within one or more fields of study) and conclusion (including a clear statement of the contribution to knowledge, in the case of a doctorate).
 - b.** It may be necessary for examiners to engage in some elements of the thesis (e.g. performance or exhibition) some time prior to the submission of the written element or the *viva voce* examination. If this is the case, the examiners may not discuss this work with the candidate – except in general and non-critical ways which do not represent formative feedback – prior to the *viva voce* examination meeting.
 - c.** In cases where individual elements of the thesis are co-authored and/or co-produced, the candidate’s specific role as a researcher within these elements must be clearly indicated within the thesis and it must be explained how this contributes to the overarching methodology of their research project as represented by the thesis as a whole. Normally it would be expected that the candidate is the named first author (or disciplinary equivalent) of any publication included as part of the thesis and that a statement is provided by each co-author confirming the candidate’s contribution.
 - d.** It is only possible to include Open Access publications or ‘green’ final manuscript versions of articles or papers within theses for copyright reasons.
 - e.** The thesis as a whole must be framed as a single coherent research project and meet the relevant [QAA Framework for Higher Education](#) criteria for qualifications at Masters (Level 7) or Doctoral (Level 8) level (as appropriate to the degree).

4. Preparation for the Oral (*Viva Voce*) Examination

- 4.1. The Director of Studies, with the support of the Doctoral College, normally organises the time, date, location and arrangements for the examination in conjunction with the examiners and the candidate.
- 4.2. The candidate should let their Director of Studies know whether they would like one of their supervisors to be present at the *viva voce* examination. The candidate's wishes should be passed on to the Internal Examiner prior to the *viva voce* examination.
- 4.3. The *viva voce* examination should normally be scheduled no sooner than 6 weeks from the date the thesis is posted to the examiners and no later than 3 months thereafter. DoSs should not confirm the date of the *viva voce* examination until after the Doctoral College has sent the thesis to the examiners.
- 4.4. The *viva voce* examination should be held at University of Plymouth whenever possible, but it is sometimes necessary to meet elsewhere. This must be approved by the Director of the Doctoral College (or delegate) as for any *viva voce* which needs to take place via video conferencing or Skype. These options should only be considered as the last resort when all other possibilities have been exhausted.
- 4.5. It is important that the *viva voce* examination:
 - a. be held in an accessible room that is quiet and not subject to telephone or other interruptions;
 - b. takes into account any requirements for students or examiners with special needs;
 - c. uses a table large enough to accommodate the required number of theses, papers, diagrams, etc.;
 - d. has drinking water available;
 - e. has sufficient time allowed (at least 2 hours), although candidates should not have to face an excessively long examination without good reason; and
 - f. has available a waiting area for the candidate and supervisor to use that is not within hearing range of the examination room.
- 4.6. When a non-examining Independent Chair has *not* been appointed, the Internal Examiner will act as Chair for the *viva voce* examination.
- 4.7. The University is committed to making **reasonable adjustments** to the oral examination for candidates who require them. These should be organised as far in advance as possible. In such cases, a non-examining Chair will be appointed to the examination team to support all participants.

5. The Oral Examination

- 5.1. *Viva voce* examinations are required for all candidates who submit theses. The only exception is in the case of resubmitted theses where both examiners agree, having read the resubmitted thesis, that a second *viva voce* may be waived. (Please see 10.3 below).

- 5.2.** Immediately prior to the *viva voce*, the examiners and Chair (if one has been appointed) will meet to develop an agenda or plan of questioning that takes into account their pre-*viva* reports (RDC.4Ps or RDC.4PRs in the case of a resubmitted thesis). This meeting is usually scheduled to take place in the hour prior to the scheduled *viva voce*. No members of the candidate's supervisory team may be present at this meeting.
- 5.3.** All examiners and the Chair (if appointed) shall be present at the *viva voce* examination.
- a.** Supervisors may, if requested by the candidate, attend the oral examination. They may only contribute to or participate in the discussion if explicitly requested by one of the examiners, and must withdraw prior to the deliberations of the examiners on the outcome of the examination.
 - b.** Notes should be taken throughout by one or both examiners (or the Chair, if one has been appointed) to record the progress and key moments of the examination. Chairs must submit their notes to the Doctoral College following the *viva voce* (with form identified in 5.3c below). Please note that students have the right to request to see notes made by chairs and examiners during the *viva voce*; examiners are therefore requested to send these to the Doctoral College.
 - c.** Following the *viva voce*, the external examiner and Chair are asked to complete a brief form for the Doctoral College, reflecting on the conduct of the examination and offering any feedback on the process.
- 5.4.** Either the Director of Studies or Chair will inform the examiners, before the recommended outcome of the examination is determined, of any exceptional circumstances which might have affected the candidate's performance adversely (should these be known).
- 5.5.** After the *viva voce* examination, the examiners will, where they are in agreement, jointly report on the thesis and examination using a RDC.4 (or RDC.4R in the case of a resubmission) form. This must be signed by all parties and returned to the Doctoral College office as soon as possible and always within 14 days. Where the examiners are not in agreement, separate reports and recommendations must be submitted to the Doctoral College (See 6.5 and 7.14 below).
- 5.6.** In the case of collaboratively produced co-authored theses, the candidates will be examined together by the same internal and external examiner with a non-examining Chair (except if one or both candidates are staff – in which case two externals will be appointed and supported by a Chair), normally at the same *viva voce* examination.
- a.** A single RDC.4/4R form is to be completed and the same outcome must be recommended for both candidates.

- b. The examining team must also use the form to record whether the oral examination has demonstrated that the candidates, separately *and* together, have met the criteria of the relevant degree qualification (providing evidence as necessary).

6. Examination Outcomes

- 6.1. Recipients of ResM or MPhil degrees must meet the [QAA Framework for Higher Education](#) criteria for qualifications at Level 7 at (at least) threshold level. Level 7 research degrees should include the results of an appropriate research programme or a critical analysis of existing knowledge in a defined field.
- 6.2. Recipients of PhD, MD or Professional Doctorate degrees must meet the [QAA Framework for Higher Education](#) criteria for qualifications at Level 8 at (at least) threshold level. The thesis should include a distinct contribution to the current knowledge of the subject(s) identified, demonstrate systematic study and independent, critical and original powers and should be suitable for publication in whole or in part.
- 6.3. Following the *viva voce* examination, the examiners must recommend one of the following outcomes, based on the [QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications \(FHEQ\)](#) at the relevant level:
 - a. Pass: the degree be awarded. The examining team may provide advisory guidance on editorial corrections to the thesis, such as minor typographical or grammatical errors; or
 - b. Corrections: the thesis is satisfactory in substance, but the examiners have identified shortcomings in the shaping or articulation of the research. Corrections to be made to the satisfaction of one or all of the examiners by six months from the date of the formal notification of the outcome of the examination; or
 - c. Defer – resubmission allowed. The thesis is unsatisfactory in substance, with shortcomings in the presentation and/or content, and may require further research. The candidate is permitted to resubmit for the degree (with detailed advice) and be re-examined on one further occasion by twelve months from the date of the formal notification of the outcome of the examination; or
 - d. Compensatory award: the degree for which the research student is examined is not to be awarded but a lower level degree (MPhil, ResM, PgCert or PgDip) or, in the case of Professional Doctorates, and where the individual regulations for each Professional Doctorate allow, an appropriate master level degree be awarded subject to the presentation of the thesis being amended to the satisfaction of the examiners by one month from the date of the formal notification of the outcome of the examination; or
 - e. Fail: the degree not to be awarded and the candidate not be permitted to be re-examined.

- 6.4. No outcome may be suggested to the student or their supervisors prior to the *viva voce* examination or until the questioning and discussion with the candidate is completed.
- 6.5. Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, individual report forms (RDC.4 or RDC.4R) will be issued for the decisions to be reported separately. The Doctoral College:
 - a. will normally appoint an additional external examiner to arbitrate and shall consider the reports of all examiners before reaching a decision; or
 - b. may exceptionally accept the recommendation of the external examiner(s).

7. Examination of Thesis: Procedure & Outcome Recommendations

- 7.1. The Doctoral College will distribute copies of the thesis to each examiner (and Chair, if appointed) as soon as possible on receipt, together with these Notes of Guidance for Examiners, Pre-viva Report Form (RDC.4P/4PR), Recommendation of Examiners Form (RDC.4/4R) and expenses claim and honorarium forms, as appropriate.
- 7.2. The Director of Studies will make arrangements for the *viva voce* examination and keep the internal and external examiners, the Chair (if relevant), the candidate and the Doctoral College informed of the date and schedule for the examination.
- 7.3. It is the responsibility of the Doctoral College to determine and pay fees and expenses to external examiners, following receipt of all required paperwork. It is a requirement that external examiners present their passports and other relevant documentation so that the University is able to confirm that they have the right to work in the United Kingdom.
- 7.4. At least 10 working days in advance of the *viva voce* examination, each examiner must submit a pre-*viva* report (RDC.4P or RDC.4PR in the case of resubmitted theses) to the Doctoral College. These reports will be exchanged between examiners and a copy given to the Chair if appointed.
 - a. At this stage, examiners may also request that the candidate make a brief presentation at the *viva voce* examination, to be prepared in advance. [Students can also request to make a presentation at the *viva voce* examination, but this must be requested via the Director of Studies and approved by both examiners at least 10 working days in advance of the *viva voce* examination.]
 - b. Copies of the pre-*viva* reports are held by the Doctoral College. Under the Data Protection Act, students have the right to request to see examiners' comments. If examiners wish their comments to remain confidential, they should advise the University when they submit them and explain the issues which give rise to their concern.

- 7.5.** It is the responsibility of the Internal Examiner – and the principal duty of the Chair if one is appointed – to ensure that the examination is conducted fairly and professionally, and in accordance with University regulations.
- 7.6.** After the completion of the oral examination, either:
- a.** the examiners may inform the candidate of the outcome and that they require a few minutes to complete the paperwork (at which point the candidate and, if relevant, supervisor must withdraw); or
 - b.** the examiners ask that the candidate and, if relevant, supervisor withdraw while they reach a decision and complete the paperwork. In exceptional circumstances, the supervisor may be asked to withdraw and the candidate asked further questions (where it is thought that student/supervisor relationships may have affected the thesis/research). There may also be a situation where the candidate is asked to withdraw and the supervisor is asked further questions. This may be the case, for instance, if it appears that the student has failed to heed advice given or else has encountered difficulties along their research journey (e.g. changes to the supervisory team, etc.).
- 7.7.** Once the decision is agreed, the candidate and supervisor should be invited back into the examination room for a statement of the outcome. If this is not 'good news' then it should be offered with as much tact, clarity and sensitivity as possible.
- 7.8.** The Recommendation of Examiners Form (RDC.4 or RDC.4R in the case of a resubmission), which is sent to the Internal Examiner or the Chair when one has been appointed, should be completed as soon as possible after the *viva voce* examination, in consultation with the external examiner(s).
- a.** It is the Internal Examiner's (or Chair's, if one has been appointed) responsibility to arrange for the post-*viva* report to be filled in and sent to the Doctoral College.
 - b.** The form must be completed, signed by all members of the examination team, and returned to the Doctoral College office as soon as possible after the examination and within 14 days at the latest. Lists of specific corrections for the candidate may follow within 2 weeks of the *viva voce* and should not hold up the completion and submission of the RDC.4/4R.
- 7.9.** The RDC.4/4R form indicates the nature of the response required for many of the questions but the examiners must pay particular attention to the appropriateness of their recommended outcome. Note that a Pass (6.3a above) should be awarded when the examiners are happy to approve the thesis with no further amendments. Any minor editorial corrections listed and supplied to the candidate with this outcome are purely advisory; the candidate is not required to respond to them prior to supplying the final version of their thesis for the award of their degree.

- 7.10.** In the case of recommendation 6.3b above ('Corrections'), it must be agreed and noted on the RDC.4/4R who will check the final version of the thesis (Internal Examiner or External Examiner or both) to ensure that all required corrections are made. The candidate should be told the general nature of the corrections before leaving the *viva* room. This must be followed up with a clear list in writing (to the Doctoral College within 2 weeks). It is also possible to give the student an annotated copy of the thesis that indicates some or all of the corrections required (this should be noted both on the RDC.4/4R form and on any supplementary correction lists or documents).

Please note that examiners cannot request additional corrections after submitting these requirements to the Doctoral College and the candidate's fulfilment of these requirements will be judged solely on their response to the original corrections identified by the examiners in writing.

- 7.11.** In the case of recommendation 6.3c above (Deferral - Resubmission), the examiners must be explicit about the nature of the work to be done for the candidate to meet the threshold criteria of the degree. In addition to the full completion of the RDC.4 form, the examiners must provide a separate document (no briefer than 1 side of A4) describing this work to the Doctoral College. This document will be forwarded to the candidate. Please note that candidates must have clear and unambiguous instructions, as they will be judged solely on their response to those instructions at the time of resubmission. This is to ensure that examiners do not ask for further modifications at that time, except for those that arise from the revision itself.
- 7.12.** In the case of recommendation 6.3d above (Compensatory lower degree awarded), the examiners must clearly indicate in Section 3 of the RDC.4/4R why the candidate did not meet the threshold criteria for the degree. They may also supply a list of required corrections for the award of the lower degree. These corrections, to be submitted within one month of the formal notification of the outcome of the *viva voce*, must be checked by the Internal Examiner (or Chair if there is no Internal Examiner). Additionally, all references to the higher degree must be amended to that of the lower degree to be awarded. Examiners must indicate which degree they recommend be awarded; advice is available from the Doctoral College if required.
- 7.13.** In the case of recommendation 6.3e above (Fail – no degree awarded), Section 3 of the RDC.4/4R form and any supporting documents must be very clear about the grounds for rejection of the thesis, which should align with the [QAA Framework for Higher Education](#) criteria for qualifications at the relevant level. Please note that a candidate may request to see any documentation related to their examination in the case of an appeal.

- 7.14. In the event of an outcome not being agreed by the examiners, each must present a separate report and RDC.4/4R form to the Doctoral College as soon as possible. In the event of a disagreement, the candidate should be told and it should be explained to them that individual reports are being lodged with the Doctoral College which will write to them as soon as possible. If there is a disagreement, it is always possible to telephone the Doctoral College and, if available, either the Director or relevant Deputy Director of the Doctoral College may be able to come to the examination room or give advice to the examination team by telephone.
- 7.15. If there are any doubts about the completion of the RDC.4 (or RDC.4R in the case of resubmissions), please contact the Doctoral College.
- 7.16. It must be remembered that the main grounds for appeal against a result are related to either the conduct of the examination and/or lack of clarity about the requirements of corrections or a resubmitted thesis in the formal notification document provided to the candidate.
- 7.17. Please note that the University's regulations related to PGR Examination Outcomes were updated for all theses submitted on or after 1 September 2018. If you are examining a thesis that was submitted prior to this date – or else a resubmitted thesis that was *first* submitted prior to this date – then 2017-18 regulations must be followed (please refer to the Notes of Guidance for PGR Examiners document produced in October 2017 instead).

8. Award of a 'Pass' Degree: Procedure

- 8.1. On agreement by the examiners that the candidate has passed and the degree be awarded (recommendation 6.3a above), the candidate will be asked to submit an electronic copy of the thesis to the University's repository. The expectation is for the candidate to submit this electronic copy of the thesis within 60 days of the formal notification of the outcome by the Doctoral College.
- 8.2. Examiners may provide a list of editorial corrections comprising minor typographical or grammatical errors to the candidate, either at the close of the *viva voce* or else within two weeks via the Doctoral College (to be sent with the formal examination outcome letter). Please note that it is the candidate's decision whether to make these recommended amendments to their thesis and this will not be checked or monitored.
- 8.3. The award will not be given until the electronic copy of the thesis has been submitted to the University repository (PEARL) and the submission been approved by the Doctoral College and any outstanding academic debts to the University have been paid. Please note that students are entitled to request an embargo period for their thesis.
- 8.4. The Doctoral College will arrange for the certificate to be produced and will notify the Exams and Awards Office that the candidate is eligible to attend the next Graduation Ceremony.

9. Corrections to the Thesis: Procedure

- 9.1.** On agreement of the examiners that the thesis is satisfactory in substance, but that there are shortcomings in the shaping or articulation of the research (recommendation 6.3b above), the student must be informed of the corrections required to the thesis and the date by which these should be made at the end of the oral examination. If not submitted with the RDC.4/4R form, the list of corrections must be sent to the Doctoral College, to be forwarded to the candidate, within 2 weeks of the *viva voce*. Corrections are to be approved by the internal and/or the external examiner(s) and not the Chair. The candidate should be told by the examiners the form in which to submit the corrections; normally an electronic copy with the changes/corrections tracked, highlighted or tagged is preferred, with a cover sheet indicating where each correction can be found.
- 9.2.** The corrections must be made and submitted to the Doctoral College to send to the Internal Examiner and/or the External Examiner (as indicated on the RDC.4/4R) within six months of the formal notification of the outcome. If a candidate is unable to meet this deadline, they may request an extension; all extensions must be approved by the examiners.
- 9.3.** Corrections are not an iterative process between the candidate and examiners and examiners are not expected to act as mentors or advisors during this process. If a candidate has any queries, they should ask their Director of Studies or other supervisor to liaise with the examiners on their behalf.
- 9.4.** In the case of corrections arising from a first *viva voce* examination, the examiner(s) must complete Corrections Report Form COR.1 and return it to the Doctoral College within 20 working days of receiving the corrections. If for any reason they are unable to consider these corrections and respond within 20 working days, the Doctoral College should be notified so the candidate may be informed of the delay. Please see 9.5.

If the corrections are submitted either for the second time or else to a thesis that had been resubmitted as the result of a deferral, the examiners must complete Corrections Report Form COR.2 and return it to the Doctoral College within 20 days of receiving the corrections. Please see 9.6.

- 9.5.** Please remember that examiners may not expect or require the candidate to make any corrections that were not on the List of Corrections sent to them by the Doctoral College with the formal notification of their examination outcome.

If the corrections are not approved, and these have been submitted for the first time for a thesis that had not been resubmitted as the result of a deferral, then the candidate is entitled to a '2nd attempt'. Please see the attached 'Flowchart of PGR Examination Outcomes'. Examiners must use form COR.1 to identify the ways in which the corrections were deficient and also list the corrections that are still required; in this case, the protocol described in 9.2 – 9.4 above must be followed.

- 9.6.** If the corrections are not approved, and these have been submitted either for the second time or to a thesis that had been resubmitted as the result of a deferral, then the examiners must use form COR.2 to recommend either:
- a.** that the candidate receives a compensatory lower award: that is, the degree for which the student has been examined is not to be awarded but a lower level degree (MPhil, ResM, PgCert or PgDip) or in the case of Professional Doctorates and where the individual regulations for each Professional Doctorate allow, an appropriate master level degree be awarded. Please note that corrections that require approval by examiners are not permitted with this outcome (although the candidate must make amendments to references to the level of the degree and examiners may provide a list of recommended typographical corrections which the candidate may choose not to attend to), or
 - b.** that the candidate fails: the degree not to be awarded and the candidate not be permitted to be re-examined.

Please see the attached 'Flowchart of PGR Examination Outcomes'.

- 9.7.** If the corrections are approved, or a compensatory lower award is recommended, the degree will be awarded when the electronic copy of the final corrected thesis has been submitted to the University repository (PEARL), the submission been approved by the Doctoral College and any outstanding academic debts to the University have been paid. In the case of a lower degree being awarded, the candidate must amend the title of the degree on the cover page as well as any references to the level of the degree throughout the thesis.
- 9.8.** The Doctoral College will arrange for the certificate to be produced and will notify the Exams and Awards Office that the candidate is eligible to attend the next Graduation Ceremony.

10. Resubmission following Deferral: Procedure

- 10.1. A thesis may be re-submitted (i.e. 're-examined') on one occasion, normally with a further *viva voce* examination. Details of any further research requirements must be submitted by the examination team to the Doctoral College who will then forward them to the research student (see 7.11 above) following the first *viva voce* examination. Sufficient copies of the revised thesis must be resubmitted to the Doctoral College office by the deadline. Failure to resubmit by this date will normally be regarded as failure of the examination. However, if a candidate is unable to meet this deadline, they may request an extension, which must be approved by the examiners.
- 10.2. A resubmitted thesis is normally examined by the same examination team. Should either examiner be unavailable, or a (different) Chair required, the Director of Studies must nominate the entire examination team (via the RDC.3 form on Gradbook), preferably four months prior to submission of the revised thesis, which must be approved by the Doctoral College Quality Sub-committee. It is strongly recommended that a Chair is appointed for the examination of a resubmitted thesis, even if one had not been appointed to the original examination team; please contact the Doctoral College to add a new RDC.3 to the GradBook record if this is the case.
- 10.3. If, having read the resubmitted thesis, the examiners agree that the outcome of the examination will be either 'pass' or 'corrections', they have the discretion to waive the requirement to hold a second *viva voce* examination. The examiners should tell the Doctoral College if this is the case no later than 10 working days prior to the scheduled *viva* (although preferably at least a month in advance so that the student may be told not to arrange travel, etc.).

Before the examiners agree the outcome of 'award of lower degree', or 'fail, no award' for a resubmitted thesis, a second *viva voce* examination is mandatory. [Please note that this is *not* the case for outcome decisions following the submission of Corrections to a thesis].
- 10.4. The examination for a resubmitted thesis should be run as per Items 1-9 above, with the following exception: the examination outcome 6.3c (deferral – resubmission) is *not* available for resubmitted theses.

Please see the attached 'Flowchart of PGR Examination Outcomes'.
- 10.5. If the *viva voce* examination is waived for the resubmitted thesis, the examination team must return the RDC.4R form and any List of Corrections within either 3 months of the thesis having been sent to them by the Doctoral College or else within 2 weeks of the scheduled *viva* that had been waived (whichever comes first).

The examination team (without the student or supervisor present) must hold a meeting (by Skype or videoconferencing if necessary) to discuss and agree the thesis and examination outcome. Normally the Chair, if one has been appointed, is responsible for completing the RDC.4R form and, if required, the examiners agree and complete the List of Corrections. The form needs to be printed and signed by all members of the examination team. It is possible for the form to be scanned and emailed to the Doctoral College, copied to all members of the examination team; those members with outstanding signatures can indicate their approval in a 'reply all' email in lieu of a signature.

- 10.6.** Please note that candidates who begin their programme of study after 1 September 2018 will be required to pay a resubmission fee to be re-examined, whether or not the *viva voce* examination is waived.

11. Compensatory/lower award: Procedure

- 11.1.** In the case of a compensatory or lower award (recommendation 6.3d), when the thesis does not require any corrections, the candidate will be asked to submit an electronic copy of the thesis to the University's repository within 60 days of the formal notification of the outcome. The candidate must amend the title of the degree on the cover page as well as any references to the level of the degree throughout the thesis. These are not considered 'corrections' and do not need to be approved by a member of the examination team.

Please note that this also applies to compensatory awards recommended when corrections are not approved (see 9.6a above).

- 11.2.** On agreement of the examiners that the thesis requires further corrections in order to meet the criteria for a lower award, the student must be informed of the corrections required to the thesis and the date by which these should be made at the end of the oral examination. If not submitted with the RDC.4/4R form, the list of corrections must be sent to the Doctoral College, to be forwarded to the candidate, within 2 weeks of the *viva voce*. Corrections are to be approved by the Internal Examiner (or Chair if there is no internal examiner, who may liaise with one or both external examiners in making their decision). The candidate should be told by the examiners the form in which to submit the corrections; normally an electronic copy with the changes/corrections tracked, highlighted or tagged is preferred, with a cover sheet indicating where each correction can be found.
- 11.3.** The corrections must be made and submitted to the Doctoral College to send to the Internal Examiner or Chair within one month of the formal notification of the outcome. If a candidate is unable to meet this deadline, they may request an extension; all extensions must be approved by the examiners.

- 11.4. Corrections are not an iterative process between the candidate and examiners and examiners are not expected to act as mentors or advisors during this process. If a candidate has any queries, they should ask their Director of Studies or other supervisor to liaise with the examiners on their behalf.
 - 11.5. The Internal Examiner (or Chair) must complete a Corrections Report Form COR.3 and return it to the Doctoral College within 20 working days of receiving the corrections. If for any reason they are unable to consider these corrections and respond within 20 working days, the Doctoral College should be notified so the candidate may be informed of the delay.
 - 11.6. If the corrections are approved, the degree will be awarded when the electronic copy of the final corrected thesis has been submitted to the University repository (PEARL), the submission been approved by the Doctoral College and any outstanding academic debts to the University have been paid.
 - 11.7. If the corrections are not approved, then the outcome of the examination is a fail; the candidate will not receive an award and no re-examination is permitted. Please see the attached 'Flowchart of PGR Examination Outcomes'. The Internal Examiner (or Chair) must use form COR.3 to identify the ways in which the corrections were deficient. Please remember that examiners may not expect or require the candidate to make any corrections that were not on the List of Corrections sent to them by the Doctoral College with the formal notification of their examination outcome.
12. **PhDs on the basis of Prior Published Works**
 - 12.1. The *viva voce* examination for a thesis submitted for the award of PhD on the basis of Prior Published Works should be run as per Items 1-9 and 11 above, with the following exception: the examination outcome 6.3c (deferral – resubmission) is *not* available.
 - 12.2. As the published works are already in the public domain, and cannot be revised following examination, examiners may only recommend Corrections that can be made to the Integrative Summary. Please see [the Regulations and Guidance Notes](#) for this award.
 13. **Appeals Against Academic Decisions**
 - 13.1. Details of the regulations on Appeals against academic decisions can be found at <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/essential-information/complaints-appeals-and-conduct>.
 14. **Questions and Concerns**
 - 14.1. Please email any questions about regulatory matters, operational or administrative processes to doctoralcollege@plymouth.ac.uk or telephone (+44) 01752 587640
 - 14.2. If you wish to discuss any matter related to the conduct of the examination or wish to ask for advice or guidance about your role as an examiner in confidence, please contact the [Director of the Doctoral College](#).

