

This document has been produced by the Doctoral College to provide guidance to examiners of research degree programmes. It aims to clarify the examination process, ensure consistency in practice, and assist examiners to determine appropriate outcomes. Examiners will make their recommendations to the Board of Studies (Doctoral) which holds responsibility for deciding to make an award on behalf of the University. Examiners are asked to read this document **before** completing their preliminary reports.

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Advice for examiners on the assessment of doctoral work produced during the COVID-19 pandemic

Additional note for examiners of:

- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- Doctor of Medicine (MD)
- Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
- Doctor of Health (DHealth)
- Doctor of Engineering (EngD)
- Doctor of Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy)
- Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
- Doctor of Education (EdD)
- Doctor of Policy Research & Practice (DPRP)

This document aims to clarify the extent and nature of scope for consideration, and flexibility that may be exercised, by examiners when examining work affected by the pandemic's disruptions, and raises points to consider when prescribing revisions or corrections that may require the candidate to undertake additional data collection or travel.

The University's Regulations state that a Doctoral Degree can be awarded to a candidate who has: (i) presented a thesis on the candidate's advanced study and research which satisfies the Board of Examiners as: (a) making an original and significant contribution to knowledge; (b) giving evidence of originality of mind and critical judgement in a particular subject; (c) containing material worthy of peer-reviewed publication; (d) being satisfactory in its literary and/or technical presentation and structure with a full bibliography and references; (e) demonstrating an understanding of the context of the research: this must include, as appropriate for the subject of the thesis, the scientific, engineering, commercial and social contexts; and (ii) passed a viva voce examination conducted by the examiners on the broader aspects of the field of research in addition to the subject of the thesis.

The University recognises that the pandemic has had a profound effect on many doctoral research projects through its impact on, for example, the availability of laboratory and other research facilities, fieldwork, and access to human subjects. In line with UKRI advice issued in April 2020, the University advised its doctoral students to revise their research projects to reduce the impact of the pandemic's disruption as far as possible.

Examiners should be aware that the direction of some research projects carried out during the pandemic, and the content and scope of the resulting theses, may have been dramatically affected, such that the final body of work is very different to what had been planned before the onset of the pandemic. As a consequence, some flexibility can be applied by examiners when assessing the submitted work in terms of the scale of the data collection, the methods used or the logical progression of the work. Examiners may consider that rescoping projects, adopting alternative research questions and alternative methodologies demonstrates the resilience, resourcefulness, and creative problem-solving skills of these researchers.

Examiners are also requested to consider the practicalities of carrying out further data collection when setting corrections or revisions, as students may still be limited in their ability to access research facilities or resources or in their ability to travel.

Pandemic disruptions will have had a different impact on each doctoral student and each research project. Whilst the work presented for examination should stand on its own merits, examiners are advised to invite the students at the start of vivas to comment on how the pandemic may have caused them to adapt or modify their original research plans. However, the candidate's personal circumstances should not be taken into account during the assessment of the work presented for examination, as there are other mechanisms to mitigate for these.

The University has sought to provide mitigation to its doctoral students for some of the disruption they have experienced. This has included extensions to funding and to students' registration periods, increased leniency in approval of suspensions, mechanisms for recovering time lost to COVID-19, and access to an enhanced hardship fund. In addition, the University has offered greater flexibility in transferring to writing up status whilst campus facilities were unavailable and support in terms of more regular contact with supervisors, with increased backup from student services and welfare support services.

While examiners are asked to take into account possible effects of disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the University of Bath's expected academic standards for successful doctoral research remain unchanged with no diminution in the academic rigour and level of attainment required to fulfil stated Regulations for award of research degrees.

Accessing the thesis or portfolio document submitted for examination

Due to the current COVID-19 disruption, doctoral theses/ portfolios are routinely provided in electronic format only. The link to access the secure filestore at Bath will be sent to examiners by the Doctoral College. Examiners should not examine a copy of the work (in either electronic or printed form) sent to them directly from the candidate or their supervisor.

Confidentiality

Examiners should treat the work submitted for examination as confidential both during and after the assessment process. Occasionally a candidate's work may be subject to a particular restriction as a condition of funding, and where such a restriction is in place, examiners will receive a non-disclosure agreement to sign, before the thesis can be shared with them. Where particular arrangements for the examination need to be made in response to needs identified by the candidate, or in a Disability Action Plan, these should also be treated as confidential.

Authorship and Originality

The preliminary pages of the thesis shall indicate where any part of the thesis has been produced by the candidate jointly with others and confirm that a substantial part is the original work of the candidate. In an alternative format thesis, each publication should also be preceded with a declaration of authorship to assist in determining the aspects of the published work that are attributed to the candidate. The preliminary pages of the thesis/portfolio will also include a declaration identifying whether any material that has already been submitted for another degree has been included, and the extent of that material, and the degree obtained.

Assessment criteria

A doctoral thesis/ portfolio submitted for examination at Bath should satisfy the Board of Examiners as:

- (a) making an original and significant contribution to knowledge
- (b) giving evidence of originality of mind and critical judgement in a particular subject
- (c) containing material worthy of peer-reviewed publication
- (d) being satisfactory in its literary and/or technical presentation and structure with a full bibliography and references
- (e) demonstrating an understanding of the context of the research: this must include, as appropriate for the subject of the thesis, the scientific, engineering, commercial and social contexts.

And the candidate must pass a viva voce examination conducted by the examiners on the broader aspects of the field of research in addition to the subject of the thesis/portfolio.

The Degree of Master of Philosophy may be awarded to candidates who present a thesis that satisfies the examiners as meeting criterion (b) above; and, if the Board of Examiners so require, by passing a viva voce examination.

Examination timeline

- Examiners will normally have 4-6 weeks to read a thesis/portfolio and prepare for the examination.
- An examination should normally take place within 3 months of submission, and the candidate must be given as much notice as possible (and at least one week's notice) of the date of an upcoming viva voce examination.
- The examiners recommended outcome will be communicated to the candidate on the day of the examination.
- The jointly written report which explains how the recommended outcome was reached, plus any corrections/ revisions list, should be returned to the Doctoral College as soon as possible and within 2 weeks of the exam date.
- Internal examiners are expected to check minor corrections and return an updated examiners report to the Doctoral College within 30 days of receipt of a corrected thesis.
- Examiners will normally have 4-6 weeks to read a revised thesis submitted for re-examination.

Candidates will be made aware of the time needed for examiners to carry out their role, and examiners should contact the Doctoral College if they are the recipient of undue pressure from candidates or supervisors to examine a thesis to a foreshortened deadline.

The role of the External Examiner:

- Examine the candidate's suitability for the award of the higher degree in question;
- Enable the University to ensure that its degrees are comparable in standard with those awarded by other universities in the United Kingdom in similar subjects;
- Verify that the standards expected of successful candidates are appropriate for the level of the award;
- monitor and report on the proceedings of the Board of Examiners and in particular on whether these ensure that candidates are treated fairly and consistently.

The External Examiner is expected to:

- Complete a preliminary report on the work presented for examination and return it to the Doctoral College a week before the viva examination date;
- Attend the viva voce examination and recommend an outcome;
- Contribute to the examiners jointly written report and the list of corrections/revisions (if needed);
- Examine a revised thesis at a later date (if needed);
- Provide feedback on the examination process.

The role of the Internal Examiner:

- Examine the candidate's suitability for the award of the higher degree in question;
- Ensure that the examination is conducted in accordance with the University's Regulations and Quality Assurance procedures;
- Verify that the standards expected of successful candidates are appropriate for the level of the award.

The Internal Examiner is expected to:

- Check the thesis for plagiarism, before clearing it for distribution outside of the University;
- Organise the viva voce examination: liaise with the external examiner, candidate, independent Chairperson, and supervisors to arrange a suitable date for the viva examination. Please also inform the appropriate Doctoral Programmes Administrator of the date;
- Make appropriate arrangements for the viva examination, considering any specific requirements identified by the candidate and supplied by the Doctoral College (e.g. in a Disability Action Plan). When campus is open, and social distancing rules permitting, a video viva with the candidate on campus and the examiners connecting remotely is also an option. Three rooms in 10W are reserved for doctoral students to use for video meetings (4.08, 4.10 and 4.13);
- Complete a preliminary report on the work presented for examination and return it to the Doctoral College a week before the viva examination date;
- Make appropriate arrangements for a pre-viva meeting between the examiners to discuss the preliminary reports and agree a line of questioning to use in the examination (please note that supervisors should not attend the pre-viva meeting, but will make themselves available on the day to consult with the examiners before the examination, if requested);
- Chair the examination, unless an independent Chairperson has been appointed;
- Ensure that the recommended outcome is clearly indicated on the examiners report form, and is supported by the jointly written statement, which also addresses any that comments raised in the preliminary reports;
- Where necessary, co-ordinate with the external examiner to produce a corrections/ revisions list, and ensure that any annotated versions of the thesis are returned to the candidate;
- Return the completed examiners forms to the Doctoral College as soon as possible and within 2 weeks of the exam;
- Where a candidate is recommended to pass with minor corrections, the internal examiner will be responsible for checking that the corrections are satisfactory;
- Examine a revised thesis at a later date (if needed).

The Preliminary Reports

The preliminary report form will be emailed to each examiner. The reports should be completed independently and returned to the Doctoral College at least one week prior to the examination date. Once all preliminary reports have been returned, the Doctoral College will facilitate the exchange of the reports between examiners.

The preliminary reports record each examiner's independent viewpoint on the work presented for examination. Therefore, examiners should avoid entering into any discussions about the work presented for examination until the reports have been returned to the Doctoral College. The preliminary reports will establish points for discussion with fellow examiners and inform the line of questioning to be used in the viva voce examination.

Examiners may wish to have a copy of their preliminary report accessible on the day of the exam to refer to, as preliminary comments should be addressed in the jointly written report when explaining how the recommended outcome was reached.

Preliminary reports will not be released to the candidate unless formally requested under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or as part of the Academic Appeals and Complaints processes.

Chairing the examination

On the day of the examination the Chair will introduce all persons present, ensuring that they understand the procedures which are to be followed. The Chair should seek to ensure that the candidate has the opportunity, and sufficient time, to respond to all the questions posed, and will be ready to intervene during the examination if there is a danger of misunderstanding, unfairness, bias or unprofessional behaviour.

The Chair will be informed of any reasonable adjustments that may be pertinent to the arrangement or conduct of the viva examination prior to the viva exam date, and will ensure that any formally recorded needs or requirements set out by the candidate before the exam are met (this may mean acting as timekeeper and facilitating regular breaks, or breaking down long or complex questions to ensure the candidate understands what is being asked of them).

At the end of the examination the Chair will ask the candidate whether they have anything more they would like to add or ask, before inviting them to leave the room to allow the examiners to deliberate.

Independent Chairperson

The role of Chair will ordinarily fall to the internal examiner, being familiar with the University of Bath's examination procedures and protocols. However, in some cases the Director of Studies may feel that it would be helpful to appoint an independent Chairperson to attend the viva examination and take on this role. The independent Chair is not expected to be a subject specialist, to read the work submitted for examination, or to be involved in the examiners' deliberations - other than to provide advice about the procedures to follow. Their role is to assist in ensuring that the examination is fair and conducted in accordance with the University's Regulations.

An independent Chairperson is expected to:

- Assume responsibility for managing or Chairing the viva examination from the internal examiner (duties listed above).
- Undertake responsibility for the administrative duties of the internal examiner in cases where no internal examiner can be appointed, and two externals are appointed instead.

To help fulfil their role, the independent Chairperson may wish to read the preliminary reports and attend the pre-viva meeting between the examiners.

The viva voce examination

The viva voce examination serves to establish that the candidate is the author of the work presented for examination and can demonstrate appropriate understanding of the broader aspects of the field of research and the context of its main findings or argument. A viva voce is mandatory once a doctoral thesis/portfolio has been submitted to be examined; there is no option to unofficially return the thesis/ portfolio to the candidate for any sort of amendment until the viva has been completed. The assessment criteria state that the candidate must both present a satisfactory thesis *and* pass the viva examination in order to be awarded a doctorate (Note: MPhil candidates do not have to undergo a viva unless the examiners request that one is held).

Conducting a viva voce examination

- The viva voce examination should be held in a suitable room without interruptions from others;
- each examiner should contribute;
- there may be intense questioning, but it should be non-aggressive;
- examiners should address the candidate courteously, and they should be treated fairly and appropriately;
- examiners should not refer to the background or personal characteristics of the candidate (in particular to aspects related to age, disability, gender, race, religious belief and sexual orientation);
- there are no rules governing how long the viva should take, and short breaks are permitted if necessary/requested;
- the examiners will inform the candidate verbally of their recommended outcome at the end of the viva examination. A member of the supervisory team should be in attendance at the time the candidate is informed of the examiners recommended outcome;
- the examiners will record their recommendation in the jointly written examiners report which ideally will be completed before the external examiner leaves the exam.

Conducting a viva exam by video link or video conferencing

Currently, the Board of Studies have granted blanket permission for viva examinations to take place via video conferencing, due to the COVID disruption to normal campus operations and ongoing limitations on travel. A new procedure for organising a video viva is described in [QA7 Appendix 3](#) This includes detailed advice on what needs to happen before the examination, on the day itself, and in the event of a technical failure.

Video viva additional considerations

Before making the arrangements for the video viva the Internal Examiner must obtain (and retain) email confirmation from all participants that they agree to the video viva format and are able to take part in the examination under those conditions.

When campus is open and social distancing rules permitting, a video viva setup where the candidate is on campus and one or both examiners connect remotely is also an option.

A video-viva will not be quite the exam experience that the candidate was expecting to have, which may add to their nerves. Test calls can reduce anxiety before the examination. Candidates may request for reasonable adjustments to be made to the video viva setup just as they would if the exam were taking place face-to-face. Certain parameters can be adjusted, if the conditions specified in QA7 Appendix 3 are met. For example; all participants must remain visible throughout the examination and the video viva itself cannot be recorded, but auto subtitles may be used to visualise what is being said, or the chat function could be used to discretely ask for additional breaks. Supervisors of candidates who have a Disability Action Plan that requires specific adjustments to the exam setup are responsible for contacting the internal examiner to alert them of this.

Once the video viva arrangements are completed, **the internal examiner must inform the lead supervisor of the examination date and time** so they can join the video call when the candidate is informed of the outcome, or will at least know that they need to contact their supervisee once the exam concludes. This is particularly important due to the current increase in student isolation.

At the conclusion of a video viva examination, all participants are asked to confirm that holding the examination by video conference has had no substantive bearing on the examination process. **Examiners must ensure that they specifically comment on the conduct of the viva voce examination and refer explicitly to the use of video conferencing in their examiners report.**

Supervisor attendance at the viva

In common with practice in the UK, the viva voce is a closed examination and does not take place in the presence of friends or colleagues. Supervisors do not routinely attend the viva voce examination; however, candidates may request that the Doctoral College arranges for a member of their supervisory team to attend the viva if they feel that it would be reassuring for them. In such cases the Doctoral College will inform the examiners prior to the viva voce examination about who will be present. A member of the supervisory team who has been permitted to attend a viva voce examination must not take any part in the viva voce examination.

Possible outcomes of the examination

Some programmes permit the award of a lesser degree if the standard for a doctorate has not been met. These exit awards may be an MPhil, or a PGDip/ PGCert in recognition of CATS/credits accrued during the taught phase of the programme. [Regulation 16](#) sections 3-15 outline the potential examination outcomes for each of the different higher degree programmes, and these will be shown on the specific forms provided to examiners. The potential outcomes of an examination for a higher degree fall into the general categories listed below:

Award degree: Where the approval of the award is recommended with no corrections required. The examiners report must be comprehensive and support the recommended outcome. For example, it should state how each of the assessment criteria a-e were addressed in the work.

Award degree subject to minor corrections being executed to the satisfaction of the internal examiner: As before, the examiners report must be comprehensive, and must also provide the candidate with details of the corrections they are required to do. Further, the required corrections should constitute an amount of work that is appropriate (and may be completed within the time allowed). For expediency reasons the examiners are requested to follow the instructions on the form when composing their report, as inadequate reports will be returned to the internal examiner for completion. The examiners report should also specify whether the candidate should also provide a summary sheet listing each of the corrections they have made.

Where the **minor corrections are to amend trivial or typographical errors**, candidates are permitted up to 30 calendar days after receiving the corrections list to make the amendments and submit the corrected thesis to Moodle. The internal examiner will then decide whether the corrections have been completed satisfactorily, and whether an award can now be made and will accordingly update the original examiners report to reflect their decision. The examiners final recommendation will then be considered by the Board of Studies (Doctoral).

Where the **minor corrections are of a more significant or substantial nature, but which do not alter the substance of the thesis in any significant or fundamental manner and therefore do not require major reworking or reinterpretation of the intellectual content of the thesis**, candidates are permitted up to 12 weeks to complete the work. Reflecting the more significant timeline and amount of additional work required from the candidate, the Board of Studies (Doctoral) will first scrutinise the examiners report and corrections list before confirming the examiners recommendations to the candidate, and setting the date for submission of the corrected thesis. The candidate will submit the corrected thesis to Moodle, and the internal examiner will then indicate (on a new examiners report) whether the more significant or substantial corrections have been satisfactorily addressed, and whether an award can now be made. The examiners final recommendation will then be considered by the Board of Studies (Doctoral).

Award the degree subject to satisfactory performance at a second viva examination and subject also to any minor corrections to the thesis required by the examiners: Examiner availability will dictate the timeline until the viva voce examination can be repeated. Failure to satisfy the examiners at the second viva shall constitute failure of the submission. The process for specifying and checking the minor corrections is as outlined above.

Degree not awarded but the candidate is permitted to submit a revised thesis/portfolio for the degree: Where the submission is deemed to be unsuccessful and the candidate is permitted a reasonable timeframe to submit a revised thesis and present for examination a second time. Candidates may be required to undergo a viva voce examination of the revised submission, but do not have to if examiners were satisfied with their defence in the first exam. Please note that all members of the Board of Examiners are required to examine a revised thesis submission. Examiners may wish to consult with the candidate and their supervisor about setting a suitable timeline for the resubmission, but it should be noted that candidates are not normally permitted more than 12 months to revise their work. An alternative outcome may be more appropriate if the revisions are so extensive that completion within the normal 12-month timeframe would not be feasible.

Where examiners feel that a substandard doctoral thesis has managed to reach the level required for an MPhil, they should offer this as an optional rapid exit route to the candidate. The offer of an MPhil award can be made subject to any minor corrections which must be completed to the satisfaction of the examiners. The candidate may choose not to accept this offer, preferring instead to continue to work on towards a revised doctoral thesis submission.

Degree not awarded, but the candidate may be awarded a lesser degree/diploma/certificate subject to any minor corrections being completed to the satisfaction of the examiners: Where the work presented for examination does not have the potential, despite revision, to reach the required standard for a doctorate within a reasonable timeframe. Most doctorates have the option to exit with an MPhil, and some of the professional doctorates, where the candidate will have completed taught units for CATS/ credit, may offer other exit awards.

Fail, no award to be made: There will be no opportunity for (further) correction/ resubmission.

Informing the candidate of the outcome

At the end of the viva examination the candidate should be informed verbally of the examiners recommended outcome. It should be made clear to the candidate that the examiners recommendation has no authoritative significance until it has been confirmed by the Board of Studies (Doctoral). The candidate will be formally notified in writing once the Board of Studies (Doctoral) confirm the outcome of their examination. If there are more significant corrections or revisions required, then the time allowed for completion of this work will start from the date the Board of Studies confirm the examiners recommendations.

If the candidate requires clarification about the corrections or revisions after the viva date, they should consult in the first instance with their supervisory team. Examiners are not permitted to provide feedback on draft corrections/ revisions prior to formal submission of the corrected or revised thesis.

Completing the examiners report

The examiners recommended outcome should be indicated by ticking the appropriate numbered box on the examiners report form. Where appropriate, a timeline for the completion of any minor corrections or thesis revisions should also be indicated. The examiners recommended outcome must be supported by their jointly written report which should summarise the examiners deliberations, highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis and its defence, revisit the issues highlighted in the preliminary reports, **and provide evidence for meeting each of the examination criteria**. The report should also provide detailed feedback to the candidate about any minor corrections or thesis revisions that are required. Where minor corrections are indicated as annotations in the examiners copy of the thesis, this can be provided to the candidate at the conclusion of the exam, but please indicate in the examiners report that this has been done (and if possible, include a summary of those corrections).

Immediately after the conclusion of the exam, the examiners report should be completed, signed by all, and directly returned to the Doctoral College. If the examiners are unable to write a full report or provide a full corrections/revision list at the conclusion of the examination, these details may be forwarded to the Doctoral College (for appending to the report) within 2 weeks of the examination date. In such cases examiners are asked to specifically indicate when further details are to follow.

The recommended outcome supported by the examiners jointly written report, along with each of the preliminary reports will then be scrutinised by the Board of Studies (Doctoral). Taken together, these documents must enable the Board of Studies (Doctoral) to determine whether the candidate has satisfied the University's criteria for the award of a research degree as set out in Regulation 16, and that any significant corrections or thesis revisions specified by the examiners may reasonably be expected to be completed within the time allowed. Once the Board of Studies (Doctoral) has made its decision, the official outcome will be communicated formally to the candidate.

What to do when...

Examiners cannot reach an agreement

If the Board of Examiners cannot agree on a recommended outcome, they should submit separate reports. The disagreement will then be reported to the Board of Studies (Doctoral), who may recommend that another Board of Examiners be appointed, without prejudice to the candidate.

The candidate requests more time to complete corrections/revisions

Where the examiners are made aware that there are exceptional reasons why a candidate may not be able to accomplish minor corrections within the usual time limit, a case may be put forward in the examiners joint report for an extended timeline for completion of the work. This will then be considered by the Board of Studies (Doctoral).

Examining a doctoral thesis submitted in the 'alternative' format

It is acknowledged that publishing journal articles is increasingly important for doctoral students, particularly for career development. Since 2016 the University of Bath has allowed candidates to submit a doctoral thesis written in an alternative format, which incorporates academic papers. The aim being to preserve the fundamentals of the doctorate being a coherent supervised training in research, whilst making its outputs closer to postdoctoral career expectations, i.e. publication in peer review journals.

Papers may be published, accepted, submitted, or drafted up for future submission, in reputable refereed journals. If more than one academic paper is included, they must be closely related in terms of subject matter and each must form part of the cohesive research narrative of the thesis. Commentary text before and after each academic paper will fully contextualise and integrate the paper into the thesis, in effect forming a thesis chapter. As each academic paper will have self-contained components (introduction, methodologies) that may overlap with other sections of the thesis, there may be some duplication of material in these sections.

Co-authored papers may be included in the alternative format thesis. Guidance to candidates explains that they can be examined on any co-authored material they decide to include in their thesis. Regulations require that 'the thesis shall indicate, where it, or any part of it such as a published paper, has been produced by a candidate jointly with others, that a substantial part is the original work of the candidate'. Therefore, a statement of authorship form, describing the candidate's contribution (in terms of the formulation of ideas, design of the methodology, experimental work, and presentation of the data in journal format), must preface each co-authored paper.

Wherever possible examiners will be notified before the examination that the thesis they will be examining has been submitted in the alternative format. Although this format may not be familiar, there are formal guidelines for candidates who wish to present their work in this manner to ensure parity between a thesis that is written in the traditional chapters-based format and one that incorporates one, or more, academic papers. A thesis written in the alternative format must still meet the same award criteria that are applied to a traditional chapter-based thesis.

Examiners are entitled to specify corrections to any part of the thesis presented for examination, including parts submitted for publication, or already published. Under these circumstances, the necessary corrections will be incorporated into the commentary text associated with that paper. Candidates are instructed not to amend or alter the text of published articles that have been replicated in the thesis, and these must be accompanied with a citation to the original publication. If the examiners require extensive revisions that cannot be addressed by minor correction to the commentary text, then the candidate should be instructed to rewrite that chapter in the traditional format (which would require a suitable timeframe for completion).

Examining a Professional Doctorate thesis

The maximum word count for a Professional Doctorate thesis is substantially less than for a PhD in the same subject. In order to reach the research phase of the programme, the professional doctorate student will have completed a taught phase, which includes substantial D level course work assignments. Therefore, the professional doctorate programme structure allocates fewer CATS/ credits for completion of the research phase than are allocated for the PhD programme. Despite this, the professional doctorate thesis must still meet the same five assessment criteria outlined above (on pg2) that are applied to all Bath doctorates.

The work presented in a professional doctorate thesis may lead directly to professional, organisational, or policy-related change, and students are encouraged to choose a research question that relates to their professional interests or experience. The assessment criterion 'making an original and significant contribution to knowledge' may apply equally to the field of professional practice, as to contributions to a specified academic field.

Examining an MPhil thesis submission/ examining when no viva is to be held

When a candidate has submitted a thesis to be examined for the award of MPhil, the Board of Examiners have discretion to determine whether a viva voce examination is necessary. This should be indicated on the preliminary report forms, returned to the Doctoral College as normal. After the preliminary reports are shared, and if no viva examination is required, the examiners will confer, and then jointly complete an examiners report to indicate their recommended outcome.

Examining a revised thesis

Where a candidate is permitted to present a revised thesis for re-examination, this is treated as a new examination attempt in its own right. Therefore, a new set of preliminary reports are needed to gather each examiner's independent views on the work presented for examination. These should be lodged with the Doctoral College before the examiners discuss the work submitted for examination. The examiners may have originally chosen to delay their decision on whether a second viva voce examination would be required, until having a chance to read the revised thesis submission. In such cases, the examiners should indicate on their preliminary report whether they now believe that a viva voce examination will be necessary.

Once the revised thesis has been examined, the Board of Examiners recommended outcome should be indicated by ticking the appropriate numbered box on the Examiners Report for a Revised Thesis. A revised thesis may be awarded, subject to minor corrections of 30 days or up to 12 weeks duration – however further thesis revisions and another resubmission are not permitted.

As before, the examiners recommended outcome must be supported by a jointly written report which should summarise their deliberations, highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the revised thesis (and where a second viva has been held – the candidate's performance in the examination), revisit the issues highlighted in the preliminary reports, confirm whether or not the revisions specified at the first examination have been carried out satisfactorily, and clearly state whether the revised thesis now meets the assessment criteria for the award. The report should be provided to the Doctoral College and the candidate as soon as possible after the examination has been completed.

Plagiarism is detected in the thesis

A similarity report will be generated for every thesis / portfolio, so it can be checked for plagiarism before being sent to the external examiner. The University takes academic malpractice very seriously and if there is a suspected assessment offence there will be a delay to the viva examination until an investigation has been carried out.

It may be anticipated that a thesis written in the alternative format will return a high similarity score – as it will replicate text published elsewhere. Additionally, the prior submission of draft chapters during the year 1 Confirmation examination may also lead to high similarity scores in some parts of the final thesis text. Internal examiners are asked to use their academic judgement on what is acceptable, and should be aware of the procedures for dealing with suspected plagiarism (and other assessment offences), which are set out in the code of practice statement QA53 (Examination and Assessment Offences). Available at <http://www.bath.ac.uk/quality/documents/QA53.pdf>

If the discovery of a suspected offence is made during the actual viva examination, the examiners should continue with the examination and recommend an outcome as if no offence was suspected. Following the examination, investigations will be undertaken following the procedure set out in QA53. The examiners recommended outcome will be forwarded to the Board of Studies (Doctoral) for approval if no offence is subsequently proven.

There is an unexpected interruption to the examination

The Chair should take the lead in instigating appropriate action. Where it is not possible for the viva voce to continue, the examiners should determine whether sufficient discussion has taken place for a final recommendation to be made or whether a new date needs to be arranged to continue the examination.

Notes for external examiners

Feedback on the examination process

External examiners are invited to provide feedback on the examination process. Your comments will be shared with the relevant Director of Studies, and Faculty/School Doctoral Studies Committee and will be used for annual monitoring and review purposes with the aim of enhancing the examination process at the University.

Expenses

You can request funds to cover travel and subsistence expenses incurred in the execution of your role. Return the expenses form provided by your doctoral programme administrator in the Doctoral College after the examination. Claims must be accompanied with receipts.

Regulations and QA requirements

Regulation 16 provides specific assessment information for each of the following research degree programmes.

Master of Philosophy (MPhil) Regulation 16.3

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Regulations 16.5 and 16.13

Doctor of Education (EdD) Regulation 16.4

Master of Surgery (MS) Regulation 16.6

Doctor of Medicine (MD) Regulation 16.6

Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) Regulation 16.12

Doctor of Health (DHealth) Regulation 16.14

Doctor of Engineering (EngD) Regulation 16.15

Doctor of Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy) Regulation 16.16

Doctor of Policy Research & Practice (DPRP) Regulation 16.17

For the award criteria, and details of potential examination outcomes and exit awards, please refer to the specific section of this Regulation. <https://www.bath.ac.uk/publications/regulations-for-students-2020-21/attachments/regulations-for-students-2020-21-16-admissions-regulations-and-conditions-for-the-award-of-higher-degrees.pdf>

The University's *Quality Assurance Code of Practice statement QA7 Research Degrees* sections 13-17 covers examiner appointments and examination practice <https://www.bath.ac.uk/publications/qa7-research-degrees/attachments/qa7-research-degrees.pdf>

When assessing criterion (d) being satisfactory in its literary and/or technical presentation and structure with a full bibliography and references, examiners may wish to refer to the specific guidance provided to candidates on how to construct and bind their doctoral thesis or portfolio submission: *QA7 appendix 6: Specifications for Higher Degree Theses and Portfolios* <https://www.bath.ac.uk/publications/qa7-research-degrees/attachments/qa7-appendix-6-specifications-for-higher-degree-theses-and-portfolios.pdf>