



RESEARCH DEGREE EXAMINATION GUIDELINES

Research degrees examinations are administered by the [Assessments](#) office in the [Registry](#). If you require any advice or clarifications at any stage of the examination process, please do not hesitate to contact the Assessments office at rdexaminations@lshtm.ac.uk.

1. EXAMINER FEES AND EXPENSES PROCEDURE

- 1.1 A fee of £150 is paid to each Examiner once the examination has taken place and they have fulfilled all of their examining duties as described in this document.
- 1.2 UK Home Office policy dictates that the School is required by law to collect proof of eligibility to work in the UK for all members of staff, whether they are on a permanent or casual contract. Examiners are required to bring their current passport and valid visa (if applicable) to the viva examination and present this before commencing work.
- 1.3 For remote vivas, HR will contact examiners and liaise with them to complete the necessary right to work checks. (Note that for overseas examiners conducting the viva from overseas, no right to work checks are required, unless they are a UK taxpayer who wants to receive payment. ID checks will be required from all in order to receive payment.)
- 1.4 For vivas in London, on the day of the viva (or before if logistically possible) examiners must visit the Human Resources Office on the third floor of Dilke House in Malet Street where a member of HR staff will make a copy of the original passport and working visas if applicable. The Registry will not be able to pay external examiner fees if Human Resources do not hold a copy of the examiners right to work document. Copies of right to work documents made by other (non-HR) members of staff will not be accepted.
- 1.5 Once the School's HR Office are satisfied of an Examiner's legal right to work in the UK the examination fee and any expenses will be paid upon receipt of the Examiners' final joint report by the [Registry](#).
- 1.6 External Examiners, meaning those outside of the University of London and Colleges, may claim travel and other expenses. Claims should be submitted to the [Registry](#) at the conclusion of the examination process, but may be submitted earlier where advance travel booking is necessary.
- 1.7 The [forms](#) can be found on the School's website.

2. INDEPENDENT CHAIR

- 2.1 In some circumstances, an Independent Chair may be appointed for the oral examination of research degree students in addition to the Examiners. An Independent Chair may be appointed if it is beneficial to the student and the School; for example if the nominated Examiners are relatively inexperienced at examining. Chairs are always used for virtual vivas, DrPH vivas, and any re-takes. The decision on whether an Independent Chair should be appointed will be made by the Faculty Research Degree Director and will form part of the appointment of examiners process.
- 2.2 Further [guidelines](#) about the process and requirements are available on the School's website.

3. THE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT

- 3.1 The Disability Discrimination Act requires institutions to make reasonable adjustments for students with physical and special learning difficulties during their assessment. Examiners must be advised of any special arrangements for a candidate with their appointment letter. However, if Examiners are informed directly by the Supervisor or the student of any disability, even in confidence, they should seek the advice of the [Student Adviser](#) so they can be appropriately briefed.

3.2 All examinations at the School are subject to the School's [Equality and Diversity Policy](#). All candidates are subject to the same academic criteria and requirements.

THESIS GUIDANCE

4. THESIS CONSIDERATIONS

In accordance with School [regulations](#):

MPhil

The scope of the thesis shall be what might reasonably be expected after two, or at most three years of full-time study (max 60,000 words).

The thesis shall meet the following criteria:

- (a) Consist of a student's own account of their investigations.
- (b) Be a record of original work or an ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge in any field. There should be evidence that the field has been surveyed thoroughly.
- (c) Be an integrated whole and present a coherent argument.
- (d) Give a critical assessment of the relevant literature, describe the method of research and its findings and include a discussion on those findings.
- (e) Be written in English with satisfactory literary presentation.
- (f) Include a full reference list.
- (g) Demonstrate the student meets the threshold standards for the award of a **master's** degree in the UK (See [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-awarding Bodies \(FHEQ\)](#), level 7).

PhD

The scope of the thesis shall be what might reasonably be expected after three years of full-time study (max 100,000 words).

The thesis shall meet the following criteria:

- (a) Consist of the student's own account of their investigations and indicate how they advance the study/knowledge of the subject.
- (b) Form a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject and afford evidence of originality shown by the discovery of new facts and/or the exercise of independent critical power.
- (c) Be an integrated whole and present a coherent argument.
- (d) Give a critical assessment of the relevant literature, describe the method of research and its findings, and include a discussion on those findings, and indicate in what respects they appear to the student to advance the study/knowledge of the subject.
- (e) Be written in English with satisfactory literary presentation.
- (f) Include a full reference list.
- (g) Demonstrate the student meets the threshold standards for the award of a **doctoral** degree in the UK (See [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-awarding Bodies \(FHEQ\)](#), Level 8).

DrPH

DrPH students are expected to spend 18-21 months conducting and writing up the research thesis element. The scope of the thesis shall be what might reasonably be expected after eighteen months of full-time study (max 50,000 words old regulations, 60,000 words new regulations).

The thesis shall meet the following criteria:

- (a) Consist of the student's own account of their investigations and must indicate in what respects they appear to them to advance the study of the subject.
- (b) Be written in English with satisfactory literary presentation.

(c) Demonstrate the student meets the threshold standards for the award of a **doctoral** degree in the UK (See [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-awarding Bodies \(FHEQ\)](#), level 8).

For all:

Relevant work by the student prepared for publication or already published may be included together with linking material. Linking material must be solely the work of the student and should include elements undertaken as part of the thesis research but which are not normally published (for example, description of lab-assay work-up, formative work to design data collection instruments). A general literature review and a concluding summary would normally be expected. Each element of work prepared for publication or already published which is included in the thesis must be accompanied by a statement, certified by the Supervisor, to indicate the role of the student in the work and the contributions of others. Work for which there are multiple authors, including that for which the student is not first author, is permitted in specific circumstances but the student must state the aspects of the work for which they had lead responsibility.

Work published prior to registration may be included provided that a substantial majority of the work is done after registration for the research degree.

5. THESIS STYLES

- 5.1 Some years ago, LSHTM expanded the traditional “book style” to allow the inclusion of published papers (sometimes called “research paper style”). Importantly, a thesis can be a combination of the two styles, and there is a continuum between them. The option to include research papers means that sections that might otherwise be chapters can now be written as stand-alone research papers (including draft papers) and incorporated in that way. This saves unnecessary rewriting of material that has already been published, and encourages timely publication of findings.
- 5.2 Each ‘research paper’ must be accompanied by a [cover sheet](#) signed by the Supervisor, either prefacing the paper or as a separate section (not as an appendix).
- 5.3 The form will include the details of the student’s contribution, where and when it was or will be published and whether it was subject to academic peer review.

6. COVID-19 IMPACT STATEMENT

Students whose work has been affected by COVID-19 are encouraged to include an impact statement with their thesis. This may include details of how COVID-19 has impacted the research (directly or indirectly); how the planned work would have fitted in the thesis/portfolio; and actions taken to mitigate the disruption. As a result of COVID-19 some students may have shifted their work and have a thesis/portfolio that is less coherent than usual.

Examiners should use their academic judgment when deciding whether, as set out in the regulations, the criteria for the degree have been met, whilst bearing in mind that they should judge the thesis in relation to what can be reasonably expected within a period of study (3 years FTE for a PhD or 18 months for a DrPH) **that has been conducted in the context of disruption caused by COVID-19**. (Note that for the DrPH the period for the combined portfolio of Research Study I (OPA) and Research Study II (thesis) would be 2.5 years FTE.)

THE ORAL EXAMINATION

7. INFORMATION FOR EXAMINERS AND SUPERVISORS

- 7.1 An oral examination will be held, other than in extenuating circumstances for which provision can be found in the [regulations](#).

- 7.2 Once the thesis/DrPH portfolio has been dispatched to the Examiners by the [Registry](#), the student's Supervisor is asked to contact the Examiners, the Independent Chair if applicable and the student to arrange and confirm the time and place for the oral examination. This may be held in London or by [video-conferencing](#).
- 7.3 One Supervisor may attend the oral examination as an observer, at the discretion of the student, in which case the Examiners will be informed. The Supervisor must not participate in the examination but can contribute if asked to do so by the Examiners as appropriate.
- 7.4 The Examiner's Report Form has a section to indicate the date of the oral examination and whether the Supervisor was present. No persons other than the Examiners, Independent Chair if applicable, one Supervisor and the student should be present at the oral examination.

8. INFORMATION FOR EXAMINERS

- 8.1 Examiners will receive a documentation pack sent by the [Registry](#), including the Examiner's Report Form..

9. PRELIMINARY INDEPENDENT REPORTS

- 9.1 Each Examiner is asked to write an independent preliminary report on the thesis/DrPH portfolio. It is expected that the Examiner will have read the thesis/DrPH portfolio but not conferred with their fellow Examiner. This provides each Examiner with an opportunity to identify the areas that should be explored with the student during the oral examination, and if applicable, a tentative recommendation, based on a thorough assessment of the thesis/DrPH portfolio, for the final result of the examination. Any recommendation should remain confidential from the candidate and be tempered by the fact the oral examination is an integral part of the examination process and may change the final result.
- 9.2 If any queries arise during the reading of the thesis, Examiners should discuss these with the student's Supervisor in advance of the oral examination. If an Examiner has any queries about the School's processes and regulations for awarding a research degree please contact the [Assessments Office](#).
- 9.3 Please note that all matters relating to the examination are confidential and Examiners should not contact any third party, other than the Supervisors or the [Assessments](#) team in the [Registry](#).
- 9.4 The Examiners should exchange their independent preliminary reports before conducting the oral examination. These reports must be submitted to the [Registry](#) at the conclusion of the examination process.

10. THE ORAL EXAMINATION PROCESS

- 10.1 The purpose of the oral examination is to examine the student on the subject of their thesis and any other relevant subjects. Prior to the oral examination, Examiners should discuss the strategy that will be used and outline it to the student at the outset. During the oral examination the Examiners will seek to establish that the thesis is genuinely the work of the candidate and that it meets all the requirements for a thesis submitted as an MPhil/PhD/DrPH as set out in the [Research Degree Regulations](#) and above). If there are any doubts that the thesis is genuinely the work of the candidate the Examiners should contact the [Registry](#).
- 10.2 There are no set requirements about the conduct or duration of the oral examinations, but the student should be given adequate opportunity and encouragement to explain their research and defend their thesis. During a long oral examination, it is recommended that short breaks are offered at suitable points.
- 10.3 If the student becomes unwell or distressed during the oral examination to the extent that they are unable to continue, the Examiners should consult with the Supervisor and student to decide whether to continue. If they decide to continue a note should be made in the Examiners' final report, stating that the student was unwell. If they agree not to continue the Examiners should decide if sufficient evidence has been provided to allow them to reach a final result and, if not, agree to hold the oral examination on another occasion.
- 10.4 If the student offers the Examiners any incentives to award them with a pass or makes comments that put the Examiners under moral pressure (such as alluding to the consequences of failure for them) the examination should be terminated and a report made to the [Head of Registry - Student Records & Assessments](#).

10.5 At the conclusion of the oral examination the student and Supervisor, if in attendance, should leave the room and allow the Examiners to confer on their initial assessment and decision in private. The Examiners have the discretion to consult the Supervisor, irrespective of whether they were present, in particular if there are doubts over the appropriate decision to be made.

10.6 Examiners have seven results available to them as listed below:

- Pass;
- Pass, subject to minor amendments to be completed and checked by one or both of the Examiners within **three months**. The necessary amendments should be set out clearly, preferably in writing, and be provided within **two weeks** of the oral examination. The Examiners, or their nominee, may provide the student with these amendments directly or this can be arranged through the [Assessments](#) team in the [Registry](#). In either case Examiners should complete the [Examiner's Report Form](#) and return it, with any relevant documents, to the [Registry](#) within **two weeks** of the oral examination;
- Not pass, but the student is allowed to rewrite the thesis and resubmit within **6 months** for examination by the same Examiners. An oral examination may not be required on re-entry – this will be at the discretion of the Examiners;
- Not pass, but the student is allowed to rewrite the thesis and resubmit within **18 months** for examination by the same Examiners. An oral examination may not be required on re-entry – this will be at the discretion of the Examiners;
- Not pass, but be allowed to submit to a further oral examination within **18 months** on the same thesis and by the same Examiners;
- Fail PhD, but has met the requirements for the MPhil, or may meet the requirements for the MPhil after revision of the thesis over a **12 month** period. This option is not applicable to DrPH examinations;
- Outright fail. No further entry to the PhD, DrPH or MPhil degree will be permitted.

10.7 It is recognised that if the student has passed, or will pass with minor amendments, the Examiners may wish to inform the student informally after the oral examination. Examiners should take particular care when doing so, and always make clear to the student that the result is not formal and final until they receive confirmation of the result from the [Registry](#).

10.8 Where present, an Independent Chair will be able to advise and facilitate the above procedures.

10.9 Once the oral examination has concluded and a decision has been reached the Examiners are required to complete and sign the [Examiner's Report Form](#) to confirm the outcome.

11. THE JOINT REPORT

11.1 Examiners are required to write a joint report giving the grounds for their decision. The joint report should be on a separate sheet and include the following information at the beginning:

- Student's name and Faculty;
- Thesis Title;
- Signatures of both Examiners;
- Date.

11.2 The report should indicate how the thesis has met the requirements of a MPhil, PhD or DrPH (please see the [Research Degree Regulations above and as set out on the Examiners Report Form](#)), but should not cross reference the Examiner's preliminary reports, unless the Examiners want the student to receive a copy of the preliminary reports.

11.3 The Examiners are asked to agree the arrangements for drafting and finalising their joint report. This should be sent with their preliminary reports and the examiners report form to the [Assessments](#) team in the [Registry](#) by email. Their final decision should be decided by the end of the oral examination at the very latest.

11.4 If the Examiners decide to refer the student to re-write and resubmit their thesis/DrPH portfolio within 18 months they should clearly indicate in what ways the current thesis/DrPH portfolio fails to satisfy the requirements of a MPhil, PhD or DrPH degree and direct the student to the revisions needed to ensure a pass. Examiners may also indicate in their joint report if the student will be required to attend a further oral

examination once the revisions have been completed. Examiners may also choose to reserve this decision until the revised thesis/DrPH portfolio has been received.

- 11.5 If the Examiners determine that the student has failed the PhD requirements, but met the requirements for the MPhil they should indicate in their joint report the basis for their decision not to allow resubmission for the PhD and indicate how the requirements for the MPhil have been met or might be satisfied if the student needs to make revisions to resubmit.
- 11.6 Please note that the MPhil Degree is an award in its own right and may not be awarded as compensation for a failed PhD.
- 11.7 If the Examiners decide to fail the student with no option to resubmit for a PhD or MPhil they must indicate the basis for their decision to reject the other options.
- 11.8 Examiners have the right to make comments in confidence in a separate report to the School. These will normally be forwarded to the relevant Faculty. For further guidance please see section 12.1.5 of the [Research Degree Regulations](#).
- 11.9 The Examiners' joint reports are kept by the [Registry](#).

12. REPORTING TIMELINE

- 12.1 It is important that the Examiners complete the [Examiner's Report Form](#), their preliminary reports and joint report, and send these to [Assessments](#) team in the [Registry](#) as soon as possible after the oral examination has taken place. **These reports should normally be submitted within two weeks of the oral examination.**
- 12.2 If it is not possible to return these reports within the two week period one of the Examiners should contact [Registry](#) to discuss the delay and provide an estimated submission date.
- 12.3 MPhil, PhD and DrPH degrees are formally awarded on the day when both the Examiner's reports and the corrected thesis are received in the [Registry](#). A delay in submission of these will mean that the award will be delayed. It is therefore essential that all Examiner's reports are submitted in a timely fashion.
- 12.4 Where corrections are required the student will send the corrected thesis direct to the examiners for review. We ask that examiners review the corrected thesis **within one month for minor corrections, or within two months for major corrections.**

13. RE-EXAMINATION OF STUDENTS

- 13.1 It is expected that the original Examiners will examine the student on re-entry for their research degree. When re-examining the Examiners should have access to the report they made on the first examination, copies of which can be provided by the [Assessments](#) team in the [Registry](#). Examiners have discretion on whether to hold an oral examination on a revised and resubmitted thesis/DrPH portfolio, but this decision should be based on what was previously agreed in their joint report.
- 13.2 If the original examiner(s) is not available for the re-examination the matter will be assessed by the Head of Doctoral College and the relevant Faculty Research Degree Director in order to appoint new examiners.
- 13.3 Once the revised thesis/DrPH portfolio is received by the Examiners the Supervisor is required to contact them and if necessary arrange an oral examination in accordance with normal School procedures.
- 13.4 Apart from the possibility of not holding an oral examination, the re-entry examination is subject to the same rules and procedures as the original examination. All decisions as listed above are available to Examiners. Examiners are advised to be cautious when recommending a further 18 month correction period.

AWARD NOTIFICATION

14. AWARD NOTIFICATION PROCESS

- 14.1 If the Examiners reach a unanimous decision and there are no unresolved anomalies the decision will normally be conveyed to the student without prior reference to a committee. No official notification of the result will be issued to the student until the Examiners' reports have been received and processed.
- 14.2A copy of the [Examiner's Report Form](#) and the Examiners' joint report is routinely sent to the student when they are informed of their official result by the Head of Registry – Student Records & Assessments. The student does not normally see the Examiners' preliminary reports, but may do so if the Examiners wish them to be shared. Additionally these reports will be provided to the student in the event of an appeal against the decision of the Examiners.
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STUDENT APPEALS

15. APPEALS AGAINST DECISIONS OF BOARDS OF EXAMINERS

- 15.1 Appeals against decisions of Boards of Examiners must be made in the format and within the timeframe prescribed in the [Academic Appeals Procedure](#).
- 15.2 Any problems arising during their programme in terms of supervision or should be dealt with through the [Student Complaints Procedure](#).

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