

**CARDIFF**  
UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL  
**CAERDYDD**

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR  
THE APPOINTMENT OF RESEARCH  
DEGREE EXAMINING BOARDS  
(VIVA EXAMINATION)**

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### **Alignment with the Expectations and Core practices of the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education**

This policy and procedure aligns with the following relevant Expectations and Core practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education:

<b>Expectations for standards</b>	<b>Expectations for quality</b>
The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.	Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.
<b>Core practices for standards</b>	<b>Core practices for quality</b>
The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.	The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
	The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.
<b>Common practices for standards</b>	<b>Common practices for quality</b>

<p>The provider reviews its core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p>	<p>The provider reviews its core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p>
	<p>The provider's approach to managing quality takes account of external expertise.</p>
	<p>The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.</p>

## **Policy and Procedure for the Appointment of Research Degree Examining Boards (Viva Examination)**

This policy and procedure applies to the examination of PhD (including PhD by Published Works), MD, MPhil and Professional Doctorates (the thesis or equivalent component), excepting the specific variations noted for the DClinPsy and the DEdPsy.

### **Policy**

- 1.1 A research degree Examining Board for the viva (oral) examination will comprise three members:
  - .1 an External Examiner;
  - .2 an Internal Examiner (or a second External Examiner);
  - .3 the Chair.
- 1.2 No individual may assume more than one of these roles.
- 1.3 A candidate's supervisor may not act in any of these roles, but may be invited to attend at the request of the candidate. Typically, only one of the candidate's supervisors may attend; more than one may attend only with the agreement of all members of the Examining Board.
- 1.4 In some cases, a second External Examiner will be appointed in place of the Internal Examiner. This will be the case where, for example:
  - .1 at the time of thesis submission, the candidate is, or has been within the past three years, a member of University staff at Grade 6 or above;
  - .2 the candidate holds or has held an honorary title at Cardiff University;
  - .3 the candidate has a close personal relationship with a member of staff in the School.
- 1.5 The Convenor of the Examining Board has overall responsibility for the arrangement and management of research degree examinations in the School. The Head of School will act as Convenor or will appoint another suitably authoritative academic member of staff to the role.
- 1.6 An individual cannot act as the Convenor for the examination of a supervisee. Where the Head of School (or nominee) is also the supervisor of the candidate, another member of academic staff will be appointed to the role of Convenor.

- 1.7 The Convenor may act as the Chair for the examination but may not act as the Internal Examiner.
- 1.8 The Convenor of the Examining Board will appoint the Internal Examiner and the Chair, and will ensure that they have received adequate training for their role.
- 1.9 The Convenor of the Examining Board will nominate the External Examiner(s).
- 1.10 The Chair of ASQC's nominee will appoint the External Examiner(s) on behalf of ASQC.
- 1.11 In the case of resubmissions, the original Examining Board should be reconvened. Where one or more members are unable to continue in their role, a replacement must be appointed by the Chair of ASQC's nominee or the Convenor, as required for the role.

## **Procedure**

### **2. Nominating the External Examiner**

- 2.1 With the exception of the DClinPsy and the DEdPsy, the supervisor(s) will discuss potential External Examiners with the candidate and propose an appointment to the Convenor of the Examining Board.
- 2.2 The External Examiner should have current, specialist knowledge and expertise in the subject area of the research project to be assessed. They are also expected to be:
  - .1 an experienced and published researcher;
  - .2 a holder of a research degree;
  - .3 experienced in examining UK research degrees, particularly the type of research degree that is being assessed;
  - .4 a current or former member of staff within the higher education sector at senior lecturer grade or above, or a leading industrialist, researcher or practitioner (if relevant for the research thesis).
- 2.3 Where the above criteria cannot be met, the Convenor may submit a special case to the Chair of ASQC's nominee, who may refer the case to a College Postgraduate Dean. An External Examiner with no or limited relevant examining experience, or with a junior academic position, may be appointed where specialist knowledge and expertise is an overriding consideration, and where an experienced Internal Examiner and Chair have been identified.
- 2.4 External Examiners must not:

- .1 be a former member of University staff unless a period of five years has elapsed;
  - .2 be a former higher degree student of the School concerned unless a period of five years has elapsed;
  - .3 be approved to be an Examiner in the same School more than twice in a rolling three-year period;
  - .4 be the holder of a Cardiff University honorary contract;
  - .5 have direct personal or professional knowledge of the candidate: they may have met in their research community but should not have provided direct advice or input into the candidate's research project.
- 2.5 In addition, where an External Examiner has a current or former association with one or more of the candidate's supervisors, including research collaborations and previous supervision/line-management relationships, the Convenor will consider whether there is sufficient impartiality in nominating them for appointment.
- 2.6 The Convenor will nominate the proposed External Examiner to the Chair of ASQC's nominee.
- 2.7 The Convenor may appoint an additional expert advisor to the Examining Board, where this is justified by the topic or scope of the project (e.g. in industrially-based doctorates). They may attend the viva examination to advise the Examiners but are unable to take a decision on the final outcome.
- 3. Choosing the Internal Examiner**
- 3.1 The Internal Examiner should be competent in the subject area of the research project to be assessed and should:
- .1 be employed as a member of the University's academic staff (where the appointment is commensurate with their grade and role, typically at Grade 7 or above ), or an Emeritus Professor/Reader;
  - .2 be experienced in research degree examining, or trained in the role.
- 3.2 Where a School nominates an External Examiner with no or limited experience of relevant examining, the Internal Examiner must be experienced in examining UK research degrees, particularly the degree that is being assessed.
- 3.3 The Internal Examiner is likely to know the candidate, but should not:
- .1 be connected to the research project to be assessed;

- .2 have acted as an independent reviewer in the **last 12 months** of a candidate's fee-paying registration, or have reviewed the full/substantive thesis.
- 3.4 Where the above criteria cannot be met, the Convenor may submit a special case to the Chair of ASQC's nominee, who may refer the case to a College Postgraduate Dean.
- 3.5 Where it is not possible to appoint a suitable Internal Examiner from within the University, the Convenor may nominate a second External Examiner instead.
4. **Choosing the Chair**
  - 4.1 The Convenor will act as the Chair of the Examining Board or will appoint a suitably experienced and authoritative member of the School's academic staff to this role.
  - 4.2 In some circumstances, it will be appropriate to appoint a Chair from a different School. This should be done in consultation with Education Governance (PGR Quality and Operations).
  - 4.3 The Chair will be an employee of the University or an Emeritus Professor/Reader, and not the holder of an honorary title.
5. **Approval and Appointment of the Examining Board**
  - 5.1 The Convenor should complete the Nomination of Examiners Form and return it to Education Governance (PGR Quality and Operations), aiming for at least **10 weeks** in advance of the candidate's submission of their thesis.
  - 5.2 If approved, Education Governance (PGR Quality and Operations) will provide confirmation to the School and send the relevant appointment documentation to the External Examiner.
  - 5.3 An External Examiner should not be appointed more than **6 months** ahead of the viva.
  - 5.4 The Convenor should confirm the name of the Chair of the Examining Board and the date of the viva via the relevant form in advance of the viva.
6. **Variation in Respect of the DCLinPsy and DEdPsy**
  - 6.1 For each DCLinPsy candidate, the Convenor may appoint one of the External Examiners previously approved by the Chair of ASQC for the programme.
  - 6.2 For each DEdPsy candidate, the Convenor will nominate one of the pool of External Examiners recommended by the programme's professional body for the examination of the thesis element; the Chair of ASQC's nominee will appoint the External Examiner.

- 6.3 In the case of both DClinPsy and DEdPsy candidates, the External Examiner will be appointed in accordance with the criteria given in section 2, above, with the exception of the restriction on frequency of appointment, since each External Examiner will examine multiple candidates in a given cohort.
- 6.4 In the case of both DClinPsy and DEdPsy candidates, the Convenor will appoint an Internal Examiner from those staff designated by the Head of School of Psychology to deliver and assess the programme.
- 6.5 Where required, a second External Examiner may be appointed in place of the Internal Examiner.
- 6.6 For both DClinPsy and DEdPsy candidates, the Convenor may appoint a suitably qualified External Examiner in accordance with the standard provisions of this Policy and Procedure.