

**UCL STUDENT AND REGISTRY SERVICES**  
**Research Degrees**  
**Assessment and Student Records**

**PROCEDURE FOR THE NOMINATION AND APPOINTMENT OF RESEARCH DEGREE EXAMINERS**

Not less than 4 months before the expected date of submission of the thesis, the nomination form for the appointment of the examiners should be submitted to Research Degrees, Student and Registry Services, by the Principal Supervisor. The Research Degree Examination Form, which indicates whether the candidate is entering for the award of a UCL or University of London degree, should be submitted to Research Degrees, Student and Registry Services, by the student in advance of submission of the nomination of examiners form. The following procedure will apply to all students being examined for a UCL or University of London research degree, but supervisors should ensure that they complete the correct examiners nomination form in accordance with the award indicated on the Research Degree Examination Form. Both the UCL and University of London nomination of examiners forms are available at: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/registry/examiners/>.

**Please note that the formal nomination process for the appointment of research degree examiners should begin only after the nominees have confirmed that they are willing and able to act at the time when the thesis is expected to be submitted. It is the responsibility of the Principal Supervisor to make arrangements for the viva examination.**

**Criteria for the Appointment of Research Degree Examiners**

1. An Internal Examiner and an External Examiner should be appointed to examine the candidate's thesis.
  - For a UCL award, the Internal Examiner should normally be a member of the academic staff of UCL and the External Examiner should be external to UCL.
  - For a University of London award, the Internal Examiner should be internal to the University of London, preferably from a different College to that of the candidate and supervisors, and the External Examiner should be external to the University of London.
  - In the case of a candidate who is a member of the academic staff of UCL, all examiners must be external to UCL.
2. In situations where it is difficult to find a suitable Internal Examiner for reasons which may include a close connection with the candidate and/or supervisor(s) or the lack of sufficient academic expertise, two External Examiners (who must not come from the same University or other Institute) may be nominated for special consideration. A statement in support of the nomination of two External Examiners, giving the reasons why an Internal Examiner could not be found, should be included on the nomination form.
3. In exceptional circumstances, a third examiner may be appointed with the approval of the UCL Research Degrees Committee (RDC) in cases such as where two examiners

consider that there is insufficient expertise between them to examine the thesis or there is a dispute between them concerning the result which they cannot resolve. The third examiner must be external to UCL for a UCL award and external to the University of London for a University of London award.

4. The nominees should not have **any** professional, academic or personal connections with the candidate and/or supervisor(s) that might compromise the examination. In instances where the candidate has worked as a Teaching Assistant (PGTA) to the examiner, this is acceptable provided the working relationship has ceased prior to the academic session in which the examination is to take place. In particular, the nominees should not have been involved in the research reported in the thesis or with the candidate's transfer from MPhil to PhD. The candidate's Principal or Subsidiary Supervisor should **not** be nominated as an examiner.
5. Reciprocal arrangements for the examination of research degree level candidates between individual members of staff, departments or institutions should be avoided. It is desirable that no examiner, either Internal or External, should be appointed on more than three consecutive occasions for the same supervisor. Generally, supervisors and departments are asked to avoid repeatedly nominating the same person as an examiner, or nominating each other to act for the other's student within a short time frame. The rules governing the frequency of nominating the same examiner are as follows:

**UCL award** – Normally, an individual Internal Examiner should not be nominated more than five times during a given three year period by members of the same department and they should not nominate an individual External Examiner more than once during a given year.

**University of London award** – Normally, an individual Internal Examiner or External Examiner should not be nominated more than once by members of the same department during a given year.

Where a nominated examiner exceeds the recommended number of appointments, the supervisor should attach a supporting statement to the nomination form explaining why the examiner has been re-nominated within this time limit.

6. A period of three years should have elapsed between a proposed External Examiner holding a post within UCL and their nomination as an External Examiner.
7. Examiners from overseas are appointed only in exceptional circumstances where it is considered that such an appointment is necessary and with the approval of the Chair of the RDC or their nominee. Supervisors are required to provide a supporting statement explaining why an alternative examiner from the UK cannot be found and confirmation that the Department will cover any costs in excess of £400.00. Under UKBA regulations, examiners from outside the EEA will now need to obtain a Tier 5 visa to enter the UK and will need to be sponsored by UCL for this. Departments will therefore need to liaise with potential examiners and Human Resources to support the visa application; full details at [http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/cos.php#Tier\\_5](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/cos.php#Tier_5)
8. The nominated examiners should be experts in the field of the thesis and a brief statement on the subject expertise of each nominee should be provided on the form.
9. The nominated examiners should have sufficient research degree examining experience between them. If an inexperienced examiner is nominated, they should

be paired with an experienced examiner. In order to be able to ascertain whether the nominees have sufficient examining experience, it is essential that an approximate number of previous research degree examinations conducted by the proposed examiners for UCL, University of London and other HE institutions is indicated on the form, together with the names of the institutions. Please note that the nomination form cannot be processed without this information.

10. In the case of an NHS consultant nominated for the examination of an MD or MD(Res) degree, the Principal Supervisor is required to indicate on the form whether the nominated examiner has a contract with an academic institution and give the name of the institution if appropriate.

## **The Approval Process**

### **Stage One – Departmental Level Approval**

- The Principal Supervisor should send the completed nomination form directly to the Departmental Graduate Tutor (DGT) for approval of the nominated examiners. The DGT will assess the nominations for any contravention of UCL standards. In problematic cases, the DGT will be expected to contact the Principal Supervisor for more information or recommend that an alternative nomination is sought.<sup>1</sup>
- Once the nomination form has been approved and signed by the DGT, it should be forwarded to Research Degrees, Student and Registry Services. Research Degrees will then scrutinise the nomination form for any issues of UCL standards which have not been picked up by the DGT.
- If no issues are raised by Research Degrees, the nomination form will be forwarded to the Faculty Graduate Tutor (FGT) for further approval.
- If any issues are detected by Research Degrees, the Principal Supervisor will be contacted by an email message, copied to the DGT, for further information or a supporting statement. Once this additional information has been received by Research Degrees, the nominations will be forwarded to the FGT for their consideration.

### **Stage Two – Faculty Level Approval**

- All nominations, together with any issues raised by Research Degrees, are forwarded to the FGT for approval.
- If a nomination is rejected at faculty level, the FGT will annotate the nomination form with the reason and return it to the appropriate administrator in the Registry, who will inform both the Principal Supervisor and DGT of this decision. The Principal Supervisor should then respond with additional information or seek an alternative nomination.
- Issues on nominations that reach faculty level, must be given consideration by the FGT. If the FGT is willing to approve such a nomination, justification must be given to explain why the issues are not considered to be a barrier to appointment.
- All nominations approved by the FGT will be forwarded, via Research Degrees, to the Chair of the RDC or the Chair's nominee for final approval.

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<sup>1</sup> Where the supervisor is also the DGT or FGT, the nomination form should be approved by another senior member of staff (e.g. Head of Department or Dean).

### **Stage Three – UCL (RDC) Level Approval**

- All nominations will be finally approved by RDC Chair's action.
- Supervisors who have put their nominations through the process but have had them rejected at departmental level and/or faculty level may be requested to make a case, via Research Degrees, directly to the Chair of the RDC for a final decision.

### **Confirmation of Approval of Research Degree Examiner Appointments**

Once the examiner nominations have been approved, the Principal Supervisor is notified by email and requested to inform Research Degrees of the viva examination date as soon as it has been agreed. Appointment letters, together with relevant documentation, are sent by email to the examiners and as soon as the thesis has been submitted by the candidate, copies are despatched by Research Degrees to the examiners at the addresses indicated on the nomination form. **It is important to note that the viva examination must not be arranged until the appointment of examiners has been confirmed in writing.**