



PROCEDURE FOR THE NOMINATION AND APPOINTMENT OF RESEARCH DEGREE EXAMINERS

Guidance for supervisors and Departmental Graduate Tutors

Please read this document before you complete the [examiner nomination form](#). Please note that there may be some procedural variation between Faculties.

Part 1: The Approval Process

Stage One – Supervisor

You must complete the examiner nomination form and pass to your Departmental Graduate Tutor (DGT) over four months before your student is ready to submit their thesis. You must provide full details of any connection or collaboration between the proposed examiners and either supervisor or candidate on the nomination form. If you do not do this the nomination will be delayed while we seek this information.

You must check that both proposed examiners are willing and able to act at the time the thesis is expected to be submitted. You are responsible for arranging the viva examination or nominating another colleague to do this. You must ensure that your student completes the [exam entry process](#) using the online workflow in [Portico](#). This should be done before the examiners are appointed and the thesis submitted. You must also ensure the contact details for the examiners are correct, and update the [Research Degrees Team](#) straight away if you learn of a change to an examiner's details. **You must not arrange the viva until you have received the email from the Research Degrees Team to confirm that the examiners have been formally appointed by UCL.**

Stage Two - Departmental Level Approval (DGT)

As DGT, you must review the nomination form and sign it to confirm that the nominations are being made in line with the guidelines for the appointment of examiners. You should return the form to the supervisor for further clarification if you find any issues with the proposed examining team.

If you are a member of the supervisory or proposed examining team, the examiner nomination form should be signed by the Head of Department.

Once you have approved the form, you must pass it to the [Research Degrees Team](#) for review. This must be done at least four months before the candidate's expected submission date.

Stage Three – Checks by Research Degrees Team

The Research Degree Team carry out checks to ensure that the nominations meet UCL's regulations and guidelines. If we have any queries, we will email you and the DGT for further information. This may take up to four months.

Stage Four – Faculty Level Approval

Once checked the Research Degrees team pass all nominations to the relevant [Faculty Graduate Tutor](#) (FGT) for consideration.

If the Faculty Graduate Tutor is also a member of the supervisory or proposed examining team, we will send the nomination form to an alternative FGT.

The Faculty Graduate Tutor will consider the details provided on the form and by the Research Degrees team. They will approve the nomination once they are they are satisfied that the nomination meets UCL's regulations and guidelines.

If a nomination is not approved by the FGT, they will return it to the Research Degrees team. We will inform both the Principal Supervisor and DGT of this decision and the reason for this. You will then need to provide additional information or seek an alternative nomination. If an examiner needs to be replaced you will need to complete a new form and follow the steps given above.

Stage Five – UCL Approval on behalf of the Research Degrees Committee

Once approved by the Faculty Graduate Tutor a designated signatory in the Research Degrees team will review on behalf of the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee (RDC). Any nomination which raises concerns will be passed to the Chair for review.

Stage Six - Confirmation of Approval of Research Degree Examiner Appointments

Once the examiner nomination form has been approved the Research Degrees Team will email the confirmation to you and the examiners.

The emails to examiners contain links to the documentation and forms required to complete the examination.

If the candidate has formally submitted the thesis the Research Degrees Team will send it to the examiners using the contact details provided on the nomination form. This will either be by post or by emailing the Dropbox link under the coronavirus contingency arrangements.

Part 2: Guidance to follow when considering nomination of examination team

Please review these conditions carefully. They are in place to ensure UCL complies with national quality assurance standards for the appointment of research degree examiners. You must provide full details of any connection or collaboration between the proposed examiners and either supervisor or the candidate on the nomination form. If you do not do so the nomination will be delayed while we seek the information.

Experience of examiners:

- 1) You should usually appoint an internal and an external examiner.
- 2) The internal examiner must come from within the UCL community. This includes staff who hold an honorary UCL contract.
- 3) You must ensure your examiners have suitable experience. If you are nominating an inexperienced examiner they should be paired with a more experienced colleague. You must not nominate two examiners who have no UK research degree experience. Experience of examining at PGT level or taking part in a PhD upgrade panel is not relevant.

Connection of examiner to candidate or supervisor:

- 4) You must not nominate any of the candidate's current or former supervisors, or line managers as an examiner. You must not nominate a partner/spouse, family member, or close family friend of the supervisor or candidate. The examiner must not have a personal or professional relationship with the candidate and must not have worked with the candidate on the subject of the thesis.
- 5) If an examiner taught the candidate as part of their previous undergraduate or PGT studies, you must provide full details on the nomination form.
- 6) You should not nominate an examiner who has undertaken extensive, or recent, collaboration with you or any other of the candidate's supervisors. If you or the other supervisor(s) have any joint publications with the examiner, you must give full details in the relevant section of the nomination form. You must indicate:
 - how recent these are
 - the extent of your collaboration
 - whether these are part of a large, multi-author venture
 - whether this is relevant to the candidate's work.
- 7) You must not nominate an examiner who took part in the candidate's upgrade panel.
- 8) If you nominate two external examiners, you must include the reason for this in the relevant section on the nomination form. This may be because staff have too close a connection to the candidate or lack of suitable academic expertise.

- 9) You must not make reciprocal arrangements between individual members of staff, departments or institutions. You must not nominate an examiner, either Internal or External, on more than three consecutive occasions.

Frequency of appointment:

- 10) You should not nominate an internal examiner who has been appointed five times for the candidate's academic department during the previous three years
- 11) You should not nominate an external examiner who has been appointed once for the candidate's academic department within the previous twelve months.
- 12) If you nominate an examiner who exceeds the recommended number of appointments, you should include a supporting statement to the nomination form explaining why you are nominating the examiner within this time limit.

Eligibility of examiner:

- 13) You should not nominate an examiner whose own work is the focus of the thesis.
- 14) If you nominate a former member of UCL academic staff as an external examiner you must allow three years after they have left their post before they can act as an external. If they have left within the three-year limit you may nominate them as an internal examiner.
- 15) You may nominate an academic who has retired, providing they have been retired for less than three years. If not, you must indicate on the nomination form that they have remained active within the relevant field of research.
- 16) The external examiner must come from outside UCL (i.e. must not hold a UCL contract of employment or an honorary contract). You should not nominate an external examiner until three years after they left their post at UCL.
- 17) You must not nominate two external examiners from the same academic institution.
- 18) In the case of a candidate who is a member of staff of UCL, you cannot appoint an internal examiner if they are from the same department as the candidate or supervisor(s). However, where nobody else is available with sufficient expertise an examiner from the same department may be appointed if a Viva chair is used.
- 19) If the candidate has worked as a Teaching Assistant (PGTA) for a member of staff, you may only nominate them as internal examiner if the working relationship ended before the academic session in which the examination is to take place.
- 20) You may nominate an examiner based overseas. You will need to provide a supporting statement on the nomination form explaining why you cannot nominate

an alternative examiner from the UK. You must also indicate that the academic department will cover any costs relating to the examiners' expenses if these exceed the limits set by Student and Registry Services. You should consider a remote viva if the examiner's travel will be lengthy, their expenses very high or they will require a visa to work in the UK. From January 2021, all examiners who do not hold a UK or Irish passport will need a permission to enter the UK to act as an examiner. The rules depend on the nationality of the examiner. There are details on how to check this on the [Home Office website](#).

Visa nationals - Will need a Permitted Paid Engagement visa. To obtain this you must provide them with a formal letter outlining the work to be undertaken and the date this will take place. They will then need to apply online, prove their identity and provide the relevant documents. The UKVI advise that it usually takes three weeks to get a decision on the visa. The cost of the visa is £95 as of October 2021.

Non-visa nationals - Do not need a visa but must have a formal letter outlining the work to be undertaken and the date this will take place. They must obtain a stamp from the Border Force Officer when they enter the UK and must not enter via an ePassport gate.

Your department will need to check and retain evidence of the examiner's passport and visa or entry clearance stamp as confirmation of their right to work in the UK

External examiner expense payments:

21) If either examiner incurs expenses that exceed the limit agreed by Student and Registry Services, we will reimburse them but IDT your academic department to reclaim the excess amount.

Third examiner:

22) In exceptional circumstances, you may nominate a third examiner. This will require the approval of the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee (RDC). You may need to consider this if two examiners state that there is insufficient expertise between them to examine the thesis or there is a dispute between them. The third examiner must be external to UCL.

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