



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 initiates process

1. As Supervisor: Complete the examiner nomination form **at least four months** before the thesis is submitted. The nomination form undergoes a series of checks from the Research Degree Team, prior to review by the Faculty Graduate Tutor. In some cases more information is required from the supervisors, before further reviews can take place. If an examiner is not approved, the supervisor will need to nominate a replacement. Submitting the form four months before the expected thesis submission allows for any delays to the nomination process. The examiner appointments remain valid for three years, so it is best to submit as soon as the candidate has entered for the exam via Portico.
2. Provide full details of any connection or collaboration between the proposed examiners and the supervisory team and candidate on the nomination form. If you do not do this, the nomination will be delayed while we seek this information. It is better that you disclose and rationalise any connection in advance.
3. Check that both proposed examiners are willing and able to act at the time the thesis is expected to be [submitted](#) (i.e. within approximately three months).
4. Email the completed form to the candidate's [Departmental Graduate Tutor](#) (DGT) for approval.
5. Ensure the candidate has completed the [exam entry process](#) using the online workflow in [Portico](#). This must be done before the examiners are appointed and the thesis submitted.
6. Once the examiners are appointed, you are responsible for arranging the viva examination or nominating another colleague to do this. It is not appropriate for the candidate to contact their examiners and therefore they should not arrange the viva date. You must not formally arrange the viva until you have confirmation by email from the Research Degrees Team confirming that the examiners have been formally appointed by UCL.

7. If you learn of a change to an examiner's contact details at any stage of the examination process, you must update the [Research Degrees Team](#) immediately.

Stage Two - Departmental Level Approval (DGT)

1. As DGT, review the completed nomination form, checking for potential issues such as conflicts of interest and whether an examiner has been used too frequently (full guidance below).
2. Add your approval by completing Section D of the nomination form, ensuring that the nominations are being made in line with the guidelines for the appointment of examiners. If this is not the case, add a supporting statement.
3. If approved, promptly email the signed form to the Research Degrees Team for review, as further approval steps are still required by multiple teams after you, and delays during this period can be particularly stressful to candidates.
4. If you do not approve the form, return it to the supervisor for further clarification or new nomination(s).
5. Members of the supervisory or examining teams cannot approve their own nomination form. If you are a member of the supervisory or proposed examining team, the form must be signed by the Head of Department or a Deputy DGT.

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 there are any queries, they will email the supervisor and the DGT for further information. This can take time, which is why it is important for the form to be submitted at least four months before the thesis submission. Please note that the candidate may submit their thesis before the examiners have been appointed but this may delay the viva date.

Stage Four – Faculty Level Approval

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

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

The FGT will consider the details provided by the Department and the Research Degrees team. If they are satisfied that the nomination meets UCL's regulations and guidelines, they will approve it.

If a nomination is not approved by the FGT, they will return it to the Research Degrees team with their reasoning and the Research Degrees will then inform both the Supervisor and DGT of this. The Department will need to provide additional information or provide an alternative nomination. For the latter, a new form needs to be completed and the steps above followed again.

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 confirmation to the supervisor and the examiners.

The email to examiners contains links to the documentation and forms required to complete the examination.

When the candidate has formally [submitted the thesis](#), the Research Degrees Team will confirm receipt to the candidate and will send it to the examiners via a secure online link.

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

Normally one internal and one external examiner are appointed.

The following points cover the full eligibility criteria for nominating research degree examiners. Please ensure these are considered carefully.

Experience of examiners:

- 1) You must ensure your examiners have suitable experience. If you are nominating an inexperienced examiner, they must be paired with a more experienced colleague. Between the examiners, they must have previously examined at least one UK research degree final viva examination (not PGT/upgrade) and ideally a minimum of three.
- 2) If neither examiner has examined a research degree at UCL previously, the supervisor must ensure the DGT or Independent Chair (IoE only) meets with the examiners to discuss any procedural queries they may have.

Conflicts of interest / Connection of examiner to candidate or supervisor:

- 3) 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.
- 4) The examiners must not have a personal or professional relationship with the candidate and must not have worked with them on the subject of the thesis. 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 supervisors or candidate.
- 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 and explain why this is not a conflict of interest. If either examiner has taught on a course or has any professional links with the candidate this should be declared and full details provided, outlining the activities, and explaining why this is not a conflict of interest.
- 6) You must not nominate an examiner who took part in the candidate's upgrade panel.
- 7) You must not nominate an examiner who is a co-supervisor for another of your current students.
- 8) If either examiner line manages either supervisor, this must be declared, and information provided.
- 9) You must not nominate an examiner who was your, or one of the other supervisor's, prior doctoral researchers from the past five years.

10) You must not nominate an examiner who has undertaken meaningful, direct, and 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 the collaboration

Frequency of appointment:

11) As primary supervisor, you should not nominate an internal examiner who has been appointed for one of your supervisees in the previous twelve-month period.

12) You should not nominate an external examiner who has been appointed for the candidate's academic department within the previous twelve months. Your PGR Administrator can find information on examiner appointment frequency using the Research Degree Examiner view in Portico.

13) If you nominate an examiner who exceeds the recommended number of appointments, you must include a supporting statement on the nomination form explaining why you are nominating the examiner within this time limit. This will be considered by the Faculty Graduate Tutor and RDC signatory.

Eligibility of any examiner:

14) You should not nominate an examiner whose own work is the main focus of the thesis.

15) You may nominate an Emeritus academic, providing they have been retired for less than three years, or remain active in the relevant field of research. This must be indicated on the nomination form.

16) You must not make reciprocal arrangements between individual members of staff, departments or institutions.

Eligibility of internal examiner:

17) The internal examiner must have a UCL staff appointment. This includes staff who hold an honorary UCL contract.

18) Former members of UCL academic staff can act as an internal examiner if they left UCL within the last three years. After which point, they can act as an external examiner.

19) Academics who have an honorary UCL contract can only act as an internal examiner. An honorary contract must have expired for three years, before the academic can be nominated as an external examiner.

- 20) If a candidate is a member of staff of UCL, you should not nominate an internal examiner from the same department as the candidate or supervisor(s). However, where no one else is available with sufficient expertise, an examiner from the same department may be appointed if a Viva Chair is used. You should nominate a Viva Chair on the separate [Nomination Form for Viva Chair](#). The Chair must be from another department in UCL, they must have experience of UCL's examination processes and must be independent of the supervising team and candidate. The supervisor will be responsible for liaising with the Chair when making arrangements for the viva examination.

Eligibility of external examiner:

- 21) The external examiner must come from outside UCL (i.e. must not hold a UCL contract of employment or an honorary UCL contract).
- 22) Former members of UCL academic staff can act as an external examiner after three years have elapsed since UCL employment. Prior to this, they can act as internal only.
- 23) 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 internal staff have too close a connection to the candidate or lack suitable academic expertise.
- 24) You must not nominate two external examiners from the same academic institution (this includes honorary contracts).
- 25) 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 if coming to the UK. 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 £115 as of December 2023.

***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.

Third examiner:

- 26)** 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.

External examiner expense payments:

- 27)** If examiners incur 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.

Reasonable adjustments:

- 28)** If the examiner(s) or the candidate has a disability, reasonable arrangements can be made for the viva. Required adjustments from any party should be made clear at the initial stages of the nomination process as it may be necessary to align the candidate's needs with those of the examiner(s).
- 29)** If the candidate has a Statement of Reasonable Adjustment (SoRA), the supervisor will notify the examiner of this and share the relevant aspects of the SoRA. The SoRA must be taken into account when preparing for the viva.
- 30)** If the examiner requires special arrangements for the viva, please make it clear to the candidate's supervisor at the time of nomination.
- 31)** Examples of reasonable adjustments for an examination may include: requiring an in-person format; requiring an online format where certain technological support is more available; requiring a written copy of the thesis, potentially in a particular format, e.g. large font, single-sided; requiring certain exam conditions or more frequent breaks. For any particular condition, the adjustments can vary considerably so these examples are by no means exhaustive.

Updated January 2024