

UCL STUDENT AND REGISTRY SERVICES

Research Degrees
Assessment and Student Records

NOMINATION AND APPOINTMENT OF RESEARCH DEGREE EXAMINERS - FAQs

Q: How long does the nomination process take?

A: Supervisors are advised to submit the nomination form at least four months prior to the expected date of submission of the thesis. However, in practice the procedure normally takes approximately four weeks, provided there are no issues relating to the suitability of the nominees and the signatories are available to consider the nominations.

Q: Who approves the nominations?

A: It is necessary to obtain the signatures of the following members of staff in order to complete the nomination form:

- The Principal Supervisor
- The Departmental Graduate Tutor
- The Faculty Graduate Tutor
- The Chair of the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) (or the Chair's nominee)

Where the supervisor is also the Departmental or Faculty Graduate Tutor, the nomination form should be approved by another senior member of staff (e.g. Head of Department or Dean).

Q: How many examiners should be nominated?

A: Two examiners are appointed to examine a research degree thesis; one should be an External Examiner and the other should normally be an Internal Examiner.

Q: Where should the Internal Examiner come from?

A: For students registered for a UCL award, the Internal Examiner must come from a Department within UCL or a medical institution affiliated to UCL. If the proposed examiner comes from any other institution outside UCL, including other Colleges of the University of London, they are automatically classed as an External Examiner.

For students registered for a University of London award, the Internal Examiner must come from an institution within the University of London, preferably from a different College to that of the candidate and supervisors. Whilst it is possible to nominate an academic from UCL, a brief statement is required to demonstrate the independence of the nominee.

Q: Where should the External Examiner come from?

A: For students registered for a UCL award, the External Examiner must come from an institution outside UCL, but does not have to be external to the University of London. The External Examiner can therefore come from another College of the University of London.

For students registered for a University of London award, the External Examiner must come from an institution outside the University of London. The External Examiner cannot, therefore, come from another College of the University of London.

Q: Is it possible to have two External Examiners?

A: In exceptional circumstances, two External Examiners (who must not come from the same University or other Institute) may be nominated for special consideration by the Chair of the RDC. A statement in support of the nomination of two External Examiners should be provided on the nomination form, giving the reasons why an Internal Examiner could not be found.

Q: Can an examiner who is now retired be appointed?

A: This should not be a problem if the proposed examiner has been retired for less than three years. However, in the case of a nominee who has been retired for longer than three years, they should still be active within the field of research.

Q: Can an examiner from outside the UK be appointed?

A: Examiners from overseas are appointed only in exceptional circumstances where it is considered that such an appointment is necessary and has received special approval by 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.

Q: How are the nominations processed?

A: Once the form has been completed by the Principal Supervisor and approved by the Departmental Graduate Tutor, it is submitted to the Research Degrees, Student Administration, Student and Registry Services, for processing. The form is then checked by Registry staff to ensure that all the required information has been provided and that the nominations conform to the regulations. If any further information is required, the Principal Supervisor will be contacted.

After the nomination form has been checked by Research Degrees, it is forwarded to the Faculty Graduate Tutor for approval. Any issues that have been picked up by Research Degrees will be highlighted for special consideration. Once the nominations have been approved at faculty level, they are returned to the Research Degrees for forwarding on to the Chair of the RDC, or the Chair's nominee, for final approval. Upon final approval of the nominations, appointment letters are sent to the examiners by email and a confirmation email message is sent to the Principal Supervisor.

If issues are raised at any stage of the process, the Principal Supervisor is normally contacted by an email message, copied to the Departmental Graduate Tutor. Once the issue has been clarified or resolved, the form can be forwarded to the next level.

Q: What happens if a nomination is rejected?

A: If a nomination is rejected, an email message is sent to the Principal Supervisor, copied to the DGT and/or FGT, as appropriate. The Principal Supervisor will then need to find a replacement nominee and submit a new nomination form.

Q: What issues are likely to delay the approval of nominated examiners?

A: The following are areas which may cause delays in the nomination process:

- The Research Degree Examination Form has not been submitted to Research Degrees.
- An obsolete nomination form has been used.
- The examining experience has not been fully listed on the form.
- Signatures are missing or the form has not been signed by the correct member of staff.
- The rationale for two External Examiners is missing.
- The rationale for nominating an examiner from outside the UK is missing, or approval has not been obtained from the Department to pay the excess expenses.
- A connection has been found between a nominated examiner and the candidate and/or supervisor(s).
- A nomination has been rejected and a replacement examiner needs to be found (in such cases, the nomination process starts afresh).

Q: What would cause a nomination to be rejected?

A: The following are issues that may cause a nomination to be rejected:

- A close connection between an examiner and the candidate and/or either of the supervisors.
- An examiner being nominated too frequently, in particular by members of the same Department.
- A nominated examiner's involvement in the candidate's upgrade from MPhil to PhD.
- The work of a nominated examiner is the subject of the research of the thesis.
- Insufficient subject expertise in the field of the thesis.
- Lack of examining experience, especially in cases where neither examiner has previously examined for UCL or the University of London.
- Insufficient justification for nominating two External Examiners.
- Insufficient justification for nominating an overseas examiner.

Q: How do you find out whether the nominations have been approved?

A: When the appointment letters are sent to the examiners, an email message is sent to the Principal Supervisor confirming that the appointments have been approved. The Principal Supervisor with then inform the Subsidiary Supervisor and the candidate that the examiners have been appointed.

Q: When can the Principal Supervisor arrange the viva examination?

A: The viva examination should not be arranged until the examiners have been approved and the confirmation emails have been sent.

Q: Who should chase the examiners for their reports?

A: In the first instance, we would expect this to be done by the Principal Supervisor.

Q: What are the common outcomes of the viva?

A: The most common results are Pass, Minor Corrections and 18-month Resubmission. Information regarding these results can be found here:

http://www.ucl.ac.uk/current-students/research_degrees/viva_exams

Q: What additional work is required before an EngD or MPhilStud can be awarded?

A: Before the award can be made, Research Degrees must receive confirmation from the Examinations Department that the Taught Programme elements have been satisfactorily completed, therefore the modules must be entered on to Portico by the Department.

Q: What happens if an examiner withdraws for any reason?

A: The supervisor should inform Research Degrees as soon as they know. If the thesis has been dispatched the supervisor should take steps for it to be returned, or supply a replacement.

The examiner nomination process will recommence from the beginning. A new nomination form with details of both examiners should be submitted to Research Degrees.