Checklist for PhD Examiners

External examiners play a crucial role in helping assure the quality and standards of doctoral student awards at City. We are very grateful to you for undertaking this role.

This checklist has been produced to help you complete your tasks as an external examiner. It has been split into four sections:

1. Pre-viva
2. The viva voce examination
3. Post-viva
4. Review of thesis amendments

If you require support, your primary point of contact is the Course Officer, who will triage your inquiry when appropriate to the Senior Tutor for Research (STR) or City Doctoral College (doctoralcollege@city.ac.uk).

City uses a student management system to handle all aspects of a doctoral research student's progress, including the examination. You will need to access the system to complete your tasks. The Course Officer in the School will create an account for you and will be able to provide advice and support if needed.

Please note that you can claim expenses by using the form available here. City, University of London reimburses expenses to its External Examiners on the basis that reasonable steps to achieve best value for money have been taken. All expenses must be supported by valid receipts and have been incurred exclusively on City business.

Pre-Viva

You will normally be allocated 4 to 8 weeks to consider a thesis before the viva voce examination occurs although the amount of time may vary because the date of the viva is normally mutually agreed between all parties involved.

Your tasks at this stage are to:

- □ complete the External Examiner agreement form on the student management system;
- □ review the thesis together with performance recordings (if relevant). (If you have any particular concerns or queries about the material submitted before the viva voce examination, please contact the Chair of the Viva examination panel in the first instance);
- □ complete an independent Preliminary Report on the thesis at least one week before the examination. This report must be submitted on the student management system. The pre-viva report should only be shared with the other examiner once both examiners have completed their reports and submitted them.

During the viva voce examination

On the day of examination, you are required to:

- attend the viva voce examination in person or online;
- review, with the fellow examiner(s), whether the thesis, together with the performance of the candidate at viva, provide sufficient evidence that the work meets the requirements for the award of a doctorate stated in the Office for Students Sector-recognised standards, paragraph 36 (Sector-recognised standards (officeforstudents.org.uk));
- To make a recommendation, in agreement with your fellow examiner(s), in accordance with the University's regulations for Doctoral Programmes and Masters Degrees by Research.

  The options available to you are:

  - Award a doctorate (with or without editorial amendments)
    The candidate is awarded a research degree and no further amendments are required by you to the thesis. There may be minor typographical/grammatical changes that you recommend to improve the final published thesis. These can be written into your joint report.
  - Minor amendments
    The thesis broadly meets the criteria for the specified award, and the candidate fulfils all examination elements. However, you have determined that minor amendments to the thesis should be made so that it fully meets the criteria for award. In this situation, you can recommend awarding the degree subject to the completion of minor amendments. Examiners make explicit in their final report, or additional documentation, what amendments are required as these are the ones that the examiners would need to assess after the candidate makes the amendments.
  - Major amendments (with or without a further Viva)
    The thesis meets some criteria but needs additional work to meet all criteria. In this situation, you can recommend awarding the degree subject to the completion of major amendments. You will need to make explicit in the joint report, or additional documentation, what amendments are required as these are the ones that the examiners would need to concentrate on and assess after the candidate makes the amendments. You should also decide whether a further oral examination is needed. For this, and the preceding decision, you need to decide the timeframe for the amendments, which can be 3-6 months or 6-12 months, with the latter normally reserved for major amendments.
  - Award a MPhil/MSc
    In a situation where the thesis does not meet the requirements for the award of a PhD or professional doctorate, you are able to award a lower degree, such as an MPhil/MSc. This is conditional upon the thesis meeting the requirements of the proposed degree or the student having completed the taught components and other programme requirements. More information can be found in Senate Regulation 23, Masters Degrees by Research.
  - No Award
    Where the thesis does not meet the criteria for the specified award nor for a lower award (e.g. MPhil or MSc) then no award is made.

In exceptional circumstances, if you are unable to reach a consensus on the award recommendation, and following arbitration by the viva panel chair, it is possible to forward a

joint examination report to the Doctoral College Board of Studies for consideration of next steps. This may include, but is not limited to, a re-run of the examination or appointing a third examiner. The candidate should be informed of this outcome and the process that will be followed. Every effort should be made to avoid this situation; it should be considered an option of last resort.

Post viva voce examination

- You will need to access the student management system and complete a final (joint) report, a brief oral examination report, confirm the provisional recommendation (outcome), and confirm amendments (if any). It might be possible to do this on the day of examination immediately after the student has been informed of the outcome.

Review of Thesis Amendments

- After submission of an amended thesis, the examiners are required to submit their final decision. The examiners should normally consider a revised thesis within *four weeks* of resubmission. You are asked to consider the revised thesis against your requested amendments. This task may involve both examiners or be delegated to one examiner.

- Complete the award process by choosing from the following options:
  - Award PhD/professional doctorate
  - Award MPhil/MSc
  - Further Revisions (maximum period of 4 weeks)
  - No Award