Appointment of Examiners for MPhil, PhD and DVetMed Degrees by the Research Degrees Committee

Guidelines for nomination of research degree examiners

1. The aim of the appointment mechanism is to ensure that those appointed to examine research degrees are able ~ and are seen to be able ~ to make a fair and independent assessment of the candidate and their thesis, as well as to ensure that the standards are consistent with those of the rest of the University. *Reliable and robust University and RVC quality assurance mechanisms help to ensure that the standing of the University of London Degree is maintained*.

2. The Committee must have sufficient time to consider nominations {*with sufficient information provided by supervisors to enable an informed decision to be made*} and, if necessary, to discuss alternatives with the supervisor before the candidate submits their thesis.

3. Therefore, unless there is good reason not to do so, the process of nomination should take place between 3 and 6 months before the likely submission. *This will ensure that examiners have been formally approved by Academic Board, appointed and agreed to act before the candidate submits their thesis, and that the examination process can start immediately on submission of the thesis to the Research Degrees Officer*.

4. The supervisor is asked to nominate examiners of whom:

    - one must be external to the University of London and

    - one must be from a College of the University of London. The appointment of an examiner from the Royal Veterinary College is strongly discouraged. It is acknowledged, however, that in exceptional circumstances the necessary expertise to examine may not be available outside the RVC. In such cases a clear case must be made and the nomination must be accompanied by demonstration that the examiner has had no involvement in the student's course of study[1*].

    - Academics from Imperial College London can no longer be considered as internal examiners because Imperial is wholly independent of the University of London.

    - A visiting Professor to the RVC, but in a different research group to the candidate, may be nominated as an internal examiner provided there is no connection between them and the candidate.

    - The internal examiner should normally have examined at least one University of London PhD. If they have not done so, either the external examiner should have experience of examining University of London PhDs or an independent chair should be appointed who has the necessary experience.

5. Both examiners will be experts in the field of the thesis but not necessarily in all parts of the precise topic. Many theses are interdisciplinary and the aim should be to appoint a team of examiners who between them cover all aspects of the work presented by the candidate. It

[1*] If a suitable internal examiner cannot be identified from within either the University of London or the RVC, two external examiners may be nominated to act. If between them they have experience examining for the University of London, an Independent Chairman will not normally need to be appointed.

may sometimes be necessary to appoint 3 examiners to achieve this, and in that case the supervisor should nominate three examiners to act jointly. Supervisors are asked to state briefly why each examiner is appropriate for their role and why the pairing of the examiners is particularly suitable.

6. The examiners should have had no direct involvement in the candidate's research or close connections with either the candidate or the supervisor which might inhibit objective examination. It is accepted that examiners will normally be acquainted with the supervisor and occasionally the candidate; this in itself is not a bar to acting as an examiner.

7. Supervisors must be mindful of all current and previous connections between candidate, supervisors and proposed examiners. Such connections may be kinship, professional, academic or personal and may include, for example, co-publication, joint submission/holding of grants, etc. They must be clearly stated on the nomination form. Supervisors are asked to ensure that at least 5 years has passed since they published, supervised or held a joint grant with a proposed examiner.

8. Supervisors are requested to avoid repeatedly nominating the same person as an examiner, either as an internal or an external. The same examiner should not be nominated for two consecutive students examined within a 3 year period, without good reason for so doing

9. Normally, no examiner should be appointed to examine an RVC research degree more than once during any given academic year.

10. Academic staff who have played a role in considering a candidate's transfer from MPhil to PhD degree are ineligible to serve as internal examiners.

11. Former members of academic staff of the University of London who resigned or retired are not normally eligible to serve as external examiners until the expiry of 3 years from their departure from the University.

12. Retired University teachers who are still active in their fields, and who retain close links with their department, may be appointed as examiners.

13. NHS Consultants or the equivalent in the NHS who are not College or University employees may be appointed as internal or external examiners but they should hold an Honorary Senior Lecturer or above contract with a College or University.

14. Before nominating an external examiner from the EU or overseas, supervisors must first ensure that the nominee is familiar with the format of the University of London research degree and associated examination. Assurance will be sought on the nomination form. Copies of the RVC guidelines for research degrees examiners that can be sent to nominees are available from the Research Degrees Officer.

15. It may be appropriate for a visiting lecturer to another College to be an external examiner to the candidate.

16. If an independent chair is appointed, they will neither be required to read nor to examine the candidate's thesis. Their role will be to oversee the examination process and ensure that it complies with University of London and RVC regulations and procedures.

Completion of the Nomination Form

1. The following information is needed for <u>each</u> examiner:
    - Title;
    - Expertise in relation to the thesis;
    - A short CV (maximum 2 pages);
    - Experience of PhD examination in the University of London and elsewhere in the United Kingdom. If none, then their experience of PhD supervision must be cited (*it is accepted that an academic has to examine a PhD thesis for the first time; such a person <u>must</u> be paired with an examiner who has experience of examining PhD theses, at least one of which must be for the University of London*);
    - Any past or current connections with the candidate/supervisor (professional, academic or personal) (see 7);
    - If appropriate, why two *external* examiners have been appointed and confirmation that at least one of these has experience of examining University of London research degrees;
    - If appropriate, a statement indicating the reasons for the nomination of an examiner from outside the UK, assurance that they are familiar with the format of the University of London research degree and its associated examination, and confirmation that the Department will pay travel and other expenses.
2. The supervisor(s) will normally approach those they are nominating as examiners ahead of submission of the nomination form to the Research Degrees Committee. However, it should be made it clear in doing so that approval is dependent on the Research Degrees Committee and Academic Board.

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