

Academic Protocol 3 Research Degree Examinations

Academic Year 2009-2010

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Introductory Notes

- (a) These Protocols follow the pattern of the University's Academic Regulations for higher degrees by research; it is intended that they should be read in conjunction with (i) the relevant Regulations and (ii) notes of guidance in the context of a user's guide since it elaborates upon them, particularly with reference to administrative procedures. In any conflict between the Regulations and this document, the former shall prevail.
- (b) All references to the 'University' in this Academic Protocol should be taken to refer to the University of Wales.

Method of Candidature

- 1 A candidate may qualify for a research degree by one of the methods permitted by the Regulations.
- 2 It is possible, in appropriate cases, to transfer from one section of the regulations to another, eg, from full-time to part-time and *vice-versa*. In such cases the University will determine a revised minimum period of study and will fix the earliest date for the submission of the thesis. The method used to calculate the revised period of study and the earliest date for the submission of the thesis is illustrated in Appendix I.

Entry Conditions

- 3 The University provides in a separate Academic Protocol a list of approved universities/institutions whose initial degrees are recognised by the Academic Board as being of a standing equivalent to its own initial degrees, together with a list of those non-graduate qualifications which will permit entry to candidature for a higher degree of the University.

A special recommendation for the admission of a candidate who does not possess a recognised entry qualification must be made by the partner institution concerned to the University before the candidate's proposed scheme of study is due to begin.

Candidatures for the degree of MPhil may be approved on behalf of candidates who possess relevant and responsible work experience. Such candidates must satisfy the University's protocols for the matriculation of non-graduates and the University must be satisfied that he/she is of the required academic standard to complete the scheme of study proposed.

- 4 Matriculation is the formal admission of a student to a scheme of study leading to a degree or other academic award of the University. The process is governed by formal University Regulations. Research degree candidates who have not previously matriculated must complete the appropriate form and provide evidence of their degree or equivalent qualification in the form of an original certificate or an official statement from the awarding institution or other body. Unless a candidate matriculates he/she is not eligible for examination.

- 5 Those Universities whose Master's degrees are approved for the purposes of exemption from the probationary period are those which are specified in the Academic Protocol referred to in paragraph 3, above.

Registration and Time Limits

- 6 The expectation is that the overwhelming majority of candidates will submit their thesis within the time-limit laid down by regulation. A candidature may be suspended or a time-limit extended by the University, but in exceptional cases only and in accordance with the following criteria:
- (a) normally, suspensions/extensions will be granted only on compassionate grounds, or in cases of illness, serious domestic difficulties or exceptional professional commitments which can be demonstrated to have adversely affected the candidate. A full and reasoned case, supported by appropriate medical or other independent evidence, must be made for consideration by the partner institution (in the first instance) and then by the University.
 - (b) in the case of candidates who cite exceptional professional commitments, the request must be accompanied by written confirmation and description by the employer of the exceptional workload borne by the candidate.
 - (c) in cases which arise as a result of illness:
 - (i) satisfactory medical evidence, including a medical certificate, must be supplied. (The extent and nature of the illness as described in the certificate are invaluable in assessing the case.)
 - (ii) a clear statement must be supplied, showing that the department concerned has evaluated the situation in which the candidate finds himself/herself as a result of the illness and that it considers the requested extension to be appropriate. Such a statement will, wherever possible, follow direct contact between candidate and department.
- 7 Applications for suspensions/extensions must be routed via the candidate's supervisor and Department to the institution's Registry. Should the Institution's Registry wish to proceed with the request, it is required to submit a full case to the University in respect of all extensions sought (together with supporting evidence/reasons) in order that it may be considered for approval by the University.

Supervision

- 8 The procedures for postgraduate supervision should be made available by the partner institution concerned to students and supervisors.

Submission of Thesis

- 9 For the purpose of the examination, candidates shall submit the following to their institution:

- .1 Two typed and bound* copies of the thesis, each of which shall contain:
 - a summary not exceeding three hundred words in length;
 - a statement, signed by the candidate, showing to what extent the work submitted is the result of the candidate's own investigation; acknowledgement of other sources shall be made by footnotes giving explicit references. A full bibliography must be appended to the work;
 - a declaration, signed by the candidate, to certify that the work has not already been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree;
 - a signed statement regarding availability of the thesis.
- .2 An additional, loose copy of the summary prepared by the candidate on a form obtainable from the University.
- .3 A completed form of notice of candidature, copies of which are obtainable from the University.
- .4 A certificate provided by the partner institution to show that the candidate has discharged all outstanding financial obligations and has satisfied the requirement that he/she has matriculated successfully.

(The required Certificate must be in the form specified to institutions by the University. A modified form of certificate is used by staff candidates and candidates who are not required to pay fees.)

- 10 Any candidate who is following a scheme of study of the University of Wales may choose – regardless of whether the main language of assessment of the scheme in question is Welsh or English – to submit examination scripts or assessed work in either Welsh or English. A candidate who wishes to be assessed in a language (ie. either Welsh or English) which is not the main language of tuition/assessment for the scheme concerned is required to notify the institution Registrar by the time-limit laid down by the Institution concerned.

The Superintendent (or nominee) shall liaise appropriately regarding:

- the provision of question papers through the medium of Welsh;
- the necessary arrangements, which must be by the external examiner(s), for the translation and/or marking of scripts in time for the inclusion of candidates' results on the official Notification of Results form;
- the engagement of a suitable person or persons to act as advisory examiners or (at an approved fee) as translators.

- 11 Candidates who are resubmitting a thesis which has failed previously to satisfy the Examiners are required to submit to their institution two copies of their modified thesis together with those documents specified in paragraph 9 above, with the

* Theses may be submitted for examination either in permanent, hardback binding or, where the Institution concerned either requires or permits, in temporary, secure binding. Candidates considering submitting work for examination in temporary binding must first check with the institution that such a form of submission is permitted.

exception of the certificate confirming that all financial obligations/matriculation have been fulfilled (unless the policy of the institution concerned requires that a further certificate be obtained by candidates prior to re-submission of their work.)

- 12 Details of current fees are available from the Registry of the Institution concerned.
- 13 The text of a doctoral thesis shall not normally exceed 100,000 words (excluding Appendices and genuine footnotes). The text of an MPhil thesis shall not normally exceed 60,000 words (excluding Appendices and genuine footnotes).
- 14 Detailed instructions on the presentation of theses are to be found in Notes of Guidance issued to candidates who are about to submit their thesis. Copies of these Notes are available from the University, or from the Registry of the Institution concerned.

Examination

- 15 The administrative tasks concerning the submission and examination of a thesis may be carried out by a nominated member of the institution's staff who may then act as Convenor & Secretary of an Examining Board.
- 16 If satisfied that a *prima facie* case exists for referring the thesis for detailed examination, the Convenor & Secretary of the Examining Board shall appoint at least one internal examiner and shall inform the Institution's Registry in writing of the name of the proposed external examiner.
- 17 The Convenor & Secretary shall retain one copy of the submitted work (for the use of the internal examiners); the other copy shall be sent to the external examiner, together with the completed documents specified above*.
- 18 A member of the senior academic staff at the institution, other than a candidate's supervisor, shall Chair an Examining Board. The Chair of the Board shall be independent in the examining process, and shall be responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for the conduct of the examination.
- 19 Prior to, or at the time of, submission of the thesis, the Institution's Registry must forward to the University in writing the name of the proposed external examiner, for appointment.
- 20 The appointment of the external examiner will be made by the University on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor. The external examiner should be sent one copy of the candidate's thesis, the forms necessary for the conduct of the examination and a form on which the external examiner may claim, following the examination, his/her fees and expenses.
- 21 The external examiner must be aware of the nature and purpose of the degree for which the candidate is being examined and must possess specialist knowledge and expertise in the subject of research. The external examiner may not be a member of staff of an accredited institution of the University unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as the unavailability elsewhere of the required specialised subject knowledge. Such cases must be referred to the Validation Unit for a decision.

* The despatch of these items to the internal and external examiner should be undertaken either by the Chair or Convenor of the Examining Board, or by a nominated member of staff in the Institution's Registry.

- 22 No external examiner may be appointed who has had direct or indirect communication with a candidate concerning his/her research.*
- 23 The external examiner will be asked to note that the University of Wales expects that, normally, the examination of the candidate should be completed within a period of twelve working weeks from the date of submission of the work by the candidate.

Bar on Access

- 24 Any recommendation for a bar on access must be made to the University by the Institution's Registry after consideration of an application initiated by a candidate's supervisor. It shall be the responsibility of the supervisor to make the application as soon as is reasonably practicable. Normally the institution will forward a recommendation to the University at the time of registration of the candidate's scheme of research. The recommendation must include a statement of the grounds on which the request is being made. Most requests of this nature are made on the grounds of the commercial sensitivity of the research, which may have been partially sponsored by a commercial or industrial organisation.
- 25 When a bar on access has been granted, the University will notify the institution Registrar. Following a successful examination, the University will notify the Convenor & Secretary of the Examining Board, the Librarian and the National Librarian that the work is to be withheld from access for a specified period.
- 26 Although the bar shall be regarded as operative as soon as the thesis is submitted, the period approved shall be calculated from the date on which the candidate is formally notified by the University that he/she has qualified for a degree.

Constitution of Examining Board

- 27 All Examining Boards for student candidates shall consist of each of the following individuals:
- .1 A Chair, who will be the Head of Department concerned unless the latter delegates this responsibility to a senior member of his/her staff. Where the Head of Department is also the supervisor of the candidate concerned, a senior member of the academic staff of the Department must act as the Chair of the Board instead.

The Chair of the Examining Board is required to chair the oral examination and any meeting of the examiners.
 - .2 An external examiner or examiner(s) appointed by the Vice-Chancellor, as above.
 - .3 An internal examiner or examiners, appointed by the Chair of the Examining Board.
- 28 The Chair of the Examining Board will be responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for the conduct of the examination.

* Please see the separate 'Code of Practice for External Examiners : Research Degrees' for further information.

- 29 A candidate's supervisor shall not be appointed internal examiner, although he/she may be invited by the Chair of the Examining Board to attend the oral examination in an advisory capacity.
- 30 In the case of members of staff* submitting for the degree of PhD, each Examining Board shall consist of the following members:
- .1 A Chair, whose duties and responsibilities shall be the same as for non-staff candidates (see paragraph 27-28 above).
 - .2 Two external examiners appointed by the Vice-Chancellor in accordance with paragraphs 20-23 above.
- In addition, an internal examiner from within the University may be appointed by the Chair of the Examining Board concerned, provided that the person so appointed is not also the candidate's supervisor.
- 31 If an internal examiner is appointed the candidate is required to supply an additional copy of the thesis for the Head of Department. This additional copy need not be bound. Where an additional person (or persons) are also appointed in an advisory capacity, the institution shall arrange for the requisite number of unbound copies of the thesis to be taken and distributed.
- 32 The Chair of the Examining Board may appoint, in addition to internal examiners, other appropriate persons to act in an advisory capacity. Persons so appointed shall not have the right to vote as members of the Board, but may be invited to attend the oral examination.

The Oral Examination

- 33 The following individuals must each be present at the oral examination:
- .1 The Chair;
 - .2 The External Examiner(s);
 - .3 The Internal Examiner(s).
- 34 An oral examination is compulsory (but see paragraph 40). The Convenor & Secretary of the Examining Board shall advise the candidate of the arrangements which have been made for the oral.
- 35 The requirement for an oral examination may be waived, at the discretion of the Examining Board, when an examination of a re-submitted thesis is being conducted.
- 36 Any oral examination must normally be held in the candidate's Institution. However, the University may, in exceptional circumstances, permit an oral examination to be held elsewhere, provided that suitable accommodation and other arrangements for its conduct have been made. Such a practice, should not, however be more costly than holding an oral at the institution.

* The Examining Boards of Research Assistants/Associates, Demonstrators and Fixed-Term Lecturers are also constituted according to the provisions of this paragraph.

Special Examination Arrangements

- 37 A candidate who has submitted a medical certificate to the Superintendent of Examinations to show that he or she is unable through illness or accident to attend at the examination room but is fit to undergo examination may be examined in a special room if the Superintendent is able to make satisfactory arrangements for the examination.
- 38 Each candidate shall be examined at the institution at which he or she has pursued the scheme or schemes; save that, in exceptional circumstances, a candidate may with the approval of the University sit for a written examination at another institution or approved comparable place. Approval may be given provided that satisfactory arrangements can be made for the examination by the Superintendent of Examinations concerned that where the same paper is to be sat by other candidates the examination is taken at the same time as the paper in the Institution and that any expense incurred will be borne by the candidate.
- 39 A student requiring special provision for his/her examination shall submit a written application, in the first instance, to the Head of Department, who shall consult the Superintendent of Examinations by a time-limit to be specified by the institution. The application shall be supported by documentary evidence. The Head of Department or Chair of the Examining Board, in consultation with the Superintendent of Examinations, is permitted to disregard requests for special provision if not supported by appropriate supporting documentary evidence.
- 40 If the Head of Department recommends that a student should receive special provision, he/she shall forward the application, supported by copies of documentary evidence, to the Superintendent by a time-limit to be specified by the Institution. In the case of candidates with dyslexia, a report which is dated within three years of the date of entry of the candidate to the scheme of study must be received from a qualified psychologist experienced in working with dyslexic adults or from someone with a qualification from a professional training course involving assessing adults with dyslexia.
- 41 On receipt of a recommendation for special provision the Superintendent of Examinations will decide whether or not to approve the application for special provision and the provision which will be made available to the student. The decision of the Superintendent will be final.

After the Examination

- 42 After completion of the examination, the Convenor & Secretary must return the completed Combined Notice of Candidature/Report and Result form to the University. The form will contain:
- Section 1, the student's notice of candidature
 - Section 2, which will comprise the external examiner's report (including a report on the oral examination), the internal examiner's report, a joint examiners' report (if desired) and the Examining Board's formal recommendation of result. The formal recommendation of result sheet must record the exact decision of the Examining Board and must be signed by the Chair, the external examiner and the internal examiner(s), but not by any person attending in an advisory capacity.

- 43 The Convenor & Secretary must arrange for the deposit of one copy of a successful thesis in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, and for the deposit of a second copy in the institution's Library.
- 44 All copies of a failed thesis submitted by the candidate must be returned to the candidate, once the process of examination and the hearing of any subsequent appeal has been completed.
- 45 On receipt of the completed Combined Notice of Candidature/Report and Result form, the University will inform candidates of the result, and will send a copy of the letter to the Convenor & Secretary and to the Registrar of the institution concerned.

Arbitrating External Examiners

- 46 When a dispute arises between the external examiner and internal examiner(s) the usual Report and Result Form should be marked by the Examiners and Chair so as to indicate that the Board had been unable to agree upon a recommendation.

In such a case it is within the power of the Vice-Chancellor to resort to another external examiner who shall be asked to arbitrate.

When selecting an Arbitrating External Examiner the Vice-Chancellor may take into account any written reports submitted by the members of the Examining Board and may also take into account – but need not be bound by – any nomination made by the original Board.

Upon appointment by the Vice-Chancellor, an Arbitrating External Examiner shall be given by the Convenor & Secretary a copy of the candidate's work together with the reports of the original examiners and the 'Report and Result Form' and 'Notes for Arbitrating External Examiners' which the University shall provide.

When considering the candidate's work, an Arbitrating External Examiner may choose whether or not to refer to the reports of the original examiners (and if so, when he/she might do so). He/she may also choose to conduct a further oral examination and, if so, whether or not the original examiners may be invited to attend.

When the Arbitrating External Examiner has concluded the consideration of the work, the outcome should be communicated to the Chair of the Examining Board, in the first instance. The Chair shall arrange for the 'Report and Result Form' to be completed, signed and returned to the University.

Right to Appeal

- 47 Candidates who are not recommended by the Examining Board for the award of the degree in respect of which they submitted their thesis may appeal against the decision reached. Copies of the appeals procedure are available from the University or from the partner institution.

Admission to Degrees

- 48 Candidates who have qualified for higher degrees may be admitted to their degrees *in absentia*, by decree of the Vice-Chancellor. This is an internal administrative procedure carried out at frequent intervals throughout the year.

For the purpose of the above, the examination must have been completed and the Examining Board's recommendation for the award of the degree - on the Combined Notice of Candidature/Report and Result form - must have been received by the University.

APPENDIX 1

Transfer of Candidature

The principle is firstly to establish what proportion of full-time or part-time study a candidate has already completed. Next, convert the remaining period of study into its part-time or full-time equivalent. The earliest date of submission is the new period of study less six months. For example:

A : Full-Time to Part Time

<i>Original period of full -time study:</i>	Two years (six terms) from October 1999
<i>Equivalent period of part-time study:</i>	Three years (nine terms) from October 1999
<i>Full-time study completed:</i>	Three terms to 30 September 2000
<i>Proportion of study completed:</i>	One half - therefore the remaining period of part-time study will be one half of nine terms, ie five terms (rounded up)
<i>New period of study:</i>	Five terms from 1 October 2000, ie 15 April 2002
<i>Earliest submission date:</i>	15 October 2001 (new period of study less six months)

B : Part-Time to Full-Time

<i>Original period of part-time study</i>	Three years (nine terms) from October 1999
<i>Equivalent period of full-time study:</i>	Two years (six terms) from October 1999
<i>Part-time study completed:</i>	Four terms to 31 December 2000
<i>Proportion of study completed:</i>	Four-ninths - therefore the remaining period of full-time study will be five-ninths of six terms, ie, four terms (rounded up)
<i>New period of study:</i>	Four terms from 1 January 2001, ie, 15 April 2002
<i>Earliest submission date:</i>	15 October 2001 (ie, new period of study less six months)

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