Imperial College London

Procedure for Appointment of Examiners for Research Degrees (MPhil, PhD, MD(Res), EngD)

1. To ensure the good standing of an Imperial College London research degree and the robustness of its quality assurance procedures in academic terms, the aim of this procedure is to appoint the examiners who will be able, and be seen to be able, to make a fair and independent assessment of the candidates and their thesis.

2. The role of the examiners is, further, to ensure that appropriate and consistent standards for an Imperial College research degree prevail across all Faculties such that the standing of an Imperial degree is commensurate at least with the standing of corresponding degrees awarded by other members of the Russell Group of universities.

3. Each research degree candidate should be examined orally on their thesis by no less than and normally no more than two examiners, one internal and one external to the College. At least one of the examiners shall have had experience of examining a research degree at a research intensive UK university. The examiners should be experts in the field of the thesis, so that the content of the thesis is covered by a combination of the expertise of the examiners.

4. The role of the internal examiner is essentially that of custodian of the College regulations and standards. Staff appointed as internal examiners for MPhil, PhD, EngD or MD(Res) examinations should fulfil the following criteria:

    All staff:

    *   must have supervised at least one PhD or EngD or MD (Res) student to successful completion and

    *   must have acted as an assessor for either/or a successful MPhil/PhD transfer, an Early Stage Assessment or a Late Stage Review, normally on at least 3 occasions and

    *   ideally they must have experience of examining research degrees at Imperial College London.

    In addition, lecturers and senior research fellows must have successfully completed:

    *   their probation period (including completion of the mandatory training course *Fundamentals of Supervising PhD Students* and/or their prescribed Faculty courses)

Senior lecturers, readers, professors and principal research fellows joining the College must have attended an induction course covering: teaching practice; research student supervision; the conduct of College examinations and the adherent regulations; pastoral care.

5. The external examiner should be a recognised international expert normally with experience of examining a research student at a leading university. The external examiner ought normally to be a Reader or Professor (or equivalent in an overseas university or if nominated from outside the higher education sector) and their role is essentially that of the subject expert. If the internal examiner does not have experience of examining at Imperial College, it would normally be expected that the external examiner would have this experience.

6. The candidate's principal supervisor is normally responsible for submitting the nominations for examiners to the Director of Postgraduate Studies in their department[1], or other person specifically nominated for this role by the Head of Department. Supervisors are encouraged to complete and submit the nomination form electronically.

7. The following persons may **not** be appointed to examine a research candidate: the candidate's supervisor(s); the candidate's mentor; anyone who has played a significant advisory role in the candidate's research.

8. A person who has been involved in the assessment of a candidate's MPhil/PhD transfer examination, Early Stage Assessment or Late Stage Review, is not debarred from serving as one of the examiners of the final thesis [but see 1.10 above]: this connection must be stated on the nomination form.

9. In proposing examiners, supervisors must be mindful of all connections between candidate, supervisors, mentors and proposed examiners. Such connections may be kinship, professional, academic or personal and may include, for example, co-publication, joint holding of grants, etc. Supervisors are asked to declare any such connections in the examiner nomination form. Supervisors are also asked to state briefly why each examiner is appropriate for their role and why the pairing of the examiners is particularly suitable.

10. The department's Postgraduate Education Committee shall be responsible for agreeing the supervisor's proposed examiners on behalf of the department and forwarding this to Registry. The Committee may also consult colleagues at other universities over the choice of examiners.

11. Upon receipt of the examiner nomination form duly endorsed by the Director of Postgraduate Studies after consideration by the Postgraduate Education Committee, the Registry shall normally proceed to confirm the appointment of the examiners. The letter of appointment to the examiners will invite them to

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[1] Any reference to "department" or departmental" may include Imperial College schools, institutes or centres, as appropriate.

confirm that there are no connections between them and the candidate that would render an examining role inappropriate.

12. Where the Registry has concerns or doubts about one or more of the proposed examiners, the proposals may be referred to the Graduate School Director or Deputy Director(s) for confirmation or advice.

13. All cases where a department wishes to appoint more than two examiners for a particular candidate shall be referred by the Registry to the Graduate School Director or Deputy Director(s) for approval.

14. Where a candidate is referred, the same examiners are normally expected to examine the re-entry. Any request to change one or more of the examiners upon re-entry shall be referred by the Registry to the Graduate School Director or Deputy Director(s) for approval.

15. An individual should not normally be appointed as an External Examiner if they:

    a) Have previously been involved in the supervision or assessment of the student in question.

    b) Were previously a member of the same research group as the student in question.

    c) Are a former member of College staff, except where a period of five years has passed, and subject to 15 (a) and (b) above.

    d) Are a former student of the College, except where a period of five years has passed, and subject to 15 (a) and (b) above.

    e) Have previously held an honorary or visiting appointment with the College, except where a period of five years has passed, and subject to 15 (a) and (b) above.

16. Where a department wishes to propose an examiner from outside the UK, it is expected that the viva will be arranged to minimise the potential cost to the College of the overseas examiner's travel expenses. In proposing an examiner from outside the UK, the department is agreeing to cover any expenses costs that exceed the maximum amount that the Registry will meet.

17. External examiners may be drawn from academia, industry or other professions. It is the responsibility of departments to ensure that the examiners being proposed fulfil the criteria set out in this document.

18. Departments should avoid overuse of individual examiners (see 9 above).

19. The Postgraduate Research Quality Committee receives lists of those examiners whose appointment has been referred to the Graduate School Director/Deputy Director.

Document title:		Procedure for Appointment of Examiners for Research Degrees (MPhil, PhD, MD(Res) & EngD)_Oct2014
Version:	5	**Date:** December 2022
Location and filename:		R:\7.Quality Assurance\3. Policy Framework\5. External Examiners\Procedure for Appointment of Examiners for Research Degrees
Approved:		QAEC 5 June 2014/Senate 18 June 2014
Effective from:		2014/2015
Originator:		Registry Quality Assurance & Enhancement Team
Contact for queries:		Assistant Registrar (Senate & Academic Review)
Cross References:		http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/policiesandprocedures/examinationassessment http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/exams/examentryforms
Notes and latest changes:		Formatting changes made on 10 March 2016 Dec 2022: mandatory training course name updated