



Title: Examination of Research Awards
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2R: Examination of Research Awards

Submission of thesis

1. The student must ensure that the thesis is submitted electronically to the online submission tool Turnitin via my Course and then to the Research and Innovation Office before the expiry of the registration period. The submission of the thesis for examination is at the sole discretion of the student, subject to satisfying any conditions of eligibility required by Southampton Solent University's Research Degrees Committee (RDC).

NB. While a student would be unwise to submit the thesis for examination against the advice of their supervisors, it is his/her right to do so. Equally, students should not assume that a supervisor's agreement to the submission of a thesis guarantees the award of the degree.

2. The student must confirm, through the submission of a declaration form, that the thesis has not been submitted for a comparable academic award. The student should not be precluded from incorporating in a thesis covering a wider field, work which has already been submitted for a degree or comparable award, or which has already been published, provided this is acknowledged on the declaration form and also in the thesis. Where published work has been jointly authored with others, it should be clearly indicated which part(s) of the work(s) are the student's responsibility.
3. The student must ensure that the thesis format is in accordance with the University requirements and guidance. Thesis should be submitted for examination in a temporarily bound form which is sufficiently secure to ensure that pages cannot be added or removed. A thesis submitted in a temporarily bound form should be in its final form in all respects save the binding. Following successful examination the final thesis must be presented in a permanent binding of the approved type and in electronic format before the degree may be awarded. In such cases, the student must confirm that the contents of the permanently bound/electronic thesis are identical with the version submitted for examination, except where amendments have been made to meet the requirements of the examiners.
4. A student may undertake a programme of research in which the student's own creative work forms, as a point of origin or reference, a significant part of the intellectual enquiry. Such creative work may be in any field (for instance, fine art, design, engineering and technology, architecture, creative writing, musical composition, film, dance and performance), but must have been undertaken as part of the research

programme that the student is registered for. In such cases, the presentation and submission may be partly in other than written form.

- i. The creative work must be clearly presented in relation to the argument of a written thesis and set in its relevant theoretical, historical, critical or design context. The thesis itself should conform to the usual scholarly requirements and be of an appropriate length.
 - ii. The final submission should be accompanied by some permanent record (for instance, video, photographic record, musical score, and diagrammatic representation) of the creative work and, where practicable, bound with the thesis.
5. The final submission should include a copy of the edited text(s) or collection of artefact(s), appropriate textual and explanatory annotations, and a substantial introduction and critical commentary which set the text in the relevant historical, theoretical or critical context. The thesis itself must conform to the usual scholarly requirements and be of an appropriate length.
6. Where a student, collaborative establishment or the University wishes the thesis to remain confidential for a period of time after completion of the work, application for approval should normally be made to the Hub Scrutiny Panel at the time of admission. In cases where the need for confidentiality emerges at a subsequent stage, a special application for the thesis to remain confidential after submission should be made immediately to the Hub Scrutiny Panel. The period approved will normally not exceed two years from the date of the oral examination.

Approval of examiners

7. A student will be examined by at least two and normally not more than three examiners of whom at least one will be an external examiner and one an internal examiner. Internal examiners should have experience in the general area of the student's work. External examiners should have experience in the specialist area of the student's thesis and demonstrate a consistent and extensive record of relevant publication. The examining team as a whole should have substantial experience of successful supervision and examination of research degree students. Normally, the examining team should have completed a minimum of three examinations.
8. An internal examiner will be a member of staff of the University who is not a member of the student's supervisory team. An internal examiner should not previously have acted as an independent assessor for the transfer of registration in respect of the candidate being examined.
9. An external examiner must be independent both of the University and Nottingham Trent University, must not have acted previously as the student's supervisor or adviser, and must have no other conflict of interest involving the research student.
10. An external examiner must normally not be either a supervisor of another student or an external examiner on a taught programme at the University. Former members of staff of the University must not normally be approved as external examiners until three years after the termination of their employment with the University. A nomination for an external examiner who has been in formal collaboration, or who has authored a research paper, with a member of the supervisory team within the three years prior to the examination, would not normally be regarded as independent.

11. The DoS should submit for RDC approval proposals for the student's examiners at least six months before the expected thesis submission date. The student's examination may not take place until the arrangements have been approved. In special circumstances, RDC may act directly to appoint examiners and arrange the examination of a student.
12. RDC should ensure that the same external examiner is not approved so frequently that his/her familiarity with the University might prejudice objective judgement.
13. Where the student and the internal examiner are both permanent staff of Southampton Solent University, a second external examiner should be appointed. A student who is on a fixed short-term employment contract (for instance, a research assistant) is exempt from the requirements of this regulation.
14. A research degree student cannot act as an examiner.

Examination arrangements

15. The examination for the MPhil and PhD will have two stages: firstly preliminary assessment of the thesis and secondly its defence by oral or approved alternative examination.
16. The Research and Innovation Office will make known to the student the procedure to be followed for the submission of the thesis (including the number of copies to be submitted for examination) and any conditions to be satisfied before the student may be considered eligible for examination.
17. The Research and Innovation Office will arrange for the student, all supervisors and the examiners to be notified of the date of the oral examination.
18. The Research and Innovation Office will send a copy of the thesis and the University's regulations to each examiner, together with the examiner's preliminary report pro-forma and the University's research degree policies, and should ensure that the examiners are properly briefed as to their duties.
19. Each examiner must read and examine the thesis and submit an independent preliminary report before any oral or alternative form of examination is held. In completing the preliminary report, each examiner should consider whether the thesis provisionally satisfies the requirements of the degree and where possible make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of the oral examination.
20. The preliminary report forms are to be completed independently and without formal or informal consultation between examiners, whether external or internal. An examiner having received the thesis and wishing to contact another examiner, the student or any member of supervisory team should do so only through the Research and Innovation Office.
21. Once a thesis has been submitted, members of supervisory teams may not directly contact the examiners. Contact for any other reason should be made only through the Research and Innovation Office. Candidates may not directly contact their examiners between the appointment of the examination team and until the award is made.
22. The Research and Innovation Office must ensure that all the examiners have completed and returned the preliminary reports to the University, normally at least five working

days before the viva, and these have been circulated to the other examiners before the oral examination takes place.

Conduct of the oral examination

23. A student will normally be examined orally on the programme of work and on the field of study in which the programme lies. Where for reasons of sickness, disability or comparable valid cause RDC is satisfied that a student would be under serious disadvantage if required to undergo an oral examination, an alternative form of examination may be approved. Such approval must not be given because the student's knowledge of the language in which the thesis is presented is inadequate.
24. The oral examination will be conducted by the external and internal examiners and will be chaired by an independent, experienced, senior staff member of the University appointed by RDC.
25. The role of the Chair is to ensure that the examination is conducted with due regard to fair play and in compliance with these regulations. The Chair also acts as a source of experience and guidance to the examiners about the conduct of the examination and ensures that the reports are completed and, where appropriate, feedback is provided to the student. The Chair will also monitor the completion of reports relating to minor or major revisions and will liaise with the externals about the action to be taken in response to any resubmission required of the student.
26. The oral examination will normally be held in the UK. In special cases, RDC may give approval for the examination to take place abroad.
27. The supervisory team should make itself available to the student's examiners. One supervisor may, with the express written permission of the student, attend the oral examination. They may not contribute to the discussion.
28. Recording of the viva examination will not normally be permitted.
29. The student will take no part in the arrangement of the oral examination and must have no contact relating to the examination with the internal or external examiner(s) between the appointment of the examiners and the oral examination.

Examination outcomes

30. Following the oral examination the Chair should, where the examiners agree, submit a joint report on the appropriate form and recommendation relating to the award of the degree to RDC. The preliminary reports and joint recommendation of the examiners should together provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of the work to enable the RDC to satisfy itself that the recommendation chosen is correct. Where the examiners do not agree, separate reports and recommendations should be submitted.
31. Following the completion of the examination the examiners may recommend that:
 - i. the candidate be awarded the degree;
 - ii. the candidate be awarded the degree subject to minor amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners;
 - iii. the candidate be awarded the degree subject to substantive amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners;

- iv. the candidate be permitted to re-submit for the degree and be re-examined, with or without an oral examination;
 - v. the candidate be not awarded the degree and be not permitted to be re-examined or,
 - vi. in the case of a PhD examination, the candidate be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners.
32. Where the agreed recommendation of the examiners follows sub-sections ii, iii, iv, v or vi, above, they must together complete the Form of Guidance which the Research and Innovation Office will transmit to the candidate and the supervisory team. In cases where the candidate does not achieve the assessment criteria for the award of PhD, the normal expectation is that the examiners will make one of the recommendations set out in ii, iii or iv, each of which allows the candidate a further opportunity to satisfy the assessment criteria. Recommendation v or vi should only be made in exceptional circumstances. Should the extent of the candidate's failure to achieve the PhD assessment criteria be such that the candidate - in the academic judgement of the examiners - would be unable to satisfy the PhD assessment criteria with a submission for re-examination within one calendar year, recommendation iv can be considered with a recommendation for an exceptional extension of the period for submission for re-examination. Examiners may indicate informally their recommendation on the result of the examination to the candidate but they should make it clear that the decision rests with NTU RDC (NTRDC), acting on the advice of SSU RDC and under powers delegated by Academic Board, to which all decisions are reported.

Explanation of results categories

33. 31 ii should be used where the requirements of the degree have been met, except that minor typographical and/or minor editorial amendments are needed and a re-examination is not required. Following the oral examination, these amendments will be stipulated by the examiner(s), on the guidance form, which will be sent to the candidate after the viva-voce examination. These amendments must be completed by the candidate within three months from the day the list of amendments is sent. The amended thesis should be verified by the examiner(s) as stipulated on the recommendation form.
34. 31 iii should be used where the requirements of the degree have been met except that the thesis contains limited deficiencies which the examiners consider can be corrected by the candidate without the need for re-examination of the thesis. Following the oral examination, the candidate will receive a written statement of the amendments required, signed by each examiner. The candidate must complete the amendments within six months from the date the written statement was sent. The amended thesis should be verified by the examiner(s) as stipulated on the recommendation form.
35. 31 iv see section on re-examination.
36. 31 v should be used where the examiners believe that the deficiencies of the thesis are such that an award cannot be made. Where NTRDC confirms that the degree be not awarded and that no re-examination be permitted, the examiners should prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their recommendation, which should be forwarded to the candidate by the Research and Innovation Office.

37. Where the examiners are satisfied that the candidate has in general reached the standard required for the degree, but consider that the candidate's thesis requires some minor amendments and corrections not so substantial as to call for the submission of a revised thesis, and recommend that the degree be awarded subject to the candidate amending the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal and/or the external examiner(s), they should indicate to the candidate in writing what amendments and corrections are required.
38. RDC should consider the reports and recommendation(s) of the examiners in respect of the candidate and make a recommendation to the NTRDC. The power to confer the degree rests with the Academic Board of the Nottingham Trent University but is delegated to the NTRDC.
39. Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, the NTRDC may, after advice from RDC:
 - i. accept a majority recommendation (if the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
 - ii. accept the recommendation of the external examiner; or
 - iii. require the appointment of an additional external examiner.
40. Where an additional external examiner is appointed, he/she should prepare an independent preliminary report on the basis of the thesis and, if considered necessary, may conduct a further oral examination. That examiner should not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional examiner, the NTRDC should complete the examination.
41. A further examination in addition to the oral examination may be requested by the examiners. In such cases, the approval of the Chair of the RDC should be sought without delay. Where such an examination is arranged following an oral examination, it should normally be held within two calendar months of the oral examination unless the RDC permits otherwise. Any such examination will be deemed to be part of the candidate's first examination.
42. The degree of MPhil or PhD may be awarded posthumously on the basis of a thesis completed by a candidate that is ready for submission for examination. In such cases the NTRDC will seek evidence that the candidate would have been likely to have been successful had the oral examination taken place.
43. Where evidence of academic misconduct in the preparation of the thesis or other irregularities in the conduct of the examination come to light subsequent to the recommendation of the examiners, RDC will consider the matter, if necessary in consultation with the examiners, and take appropriate action.
44. The RDC must ensure that all examinations are conducted and the recommendations of the examiners are presented wholly in accordance with the University's and Nottingham Trent regulations. In any instance where the NTRDC is made aware of a failure to comply with all the procedures of the examination process, it may declare the examination null and void and appoint new examiners.

Re-examination

45. One re-examination may be permitted by the NTRDC, subject to the following requirements:

- i. a candidate who fails to satisfy the examiners at the first examination, including where appropriate the oral or approved alternative examination or any further examination required may, on the recommendation of the examiners and with the approval of RDC, be permitted to revise the thesis and be re-examined;
 - ii. the examiners should provide the candidate, through RDC, with written guidance on the deficiencies of the first submission; and
 - iii. the candidate must submit for re-examination within the period of one calendar year from the date of the latest part of the first examination. RDC may, where there are good reasons, approve an extension of this period.
46. RDC may require that an additional external examiner be appointed for the re-examination.
47. There are four forms of re-examination:
 - i. where the candidate's performance in the first oral or approved alternative examination or further examination was satisfactory but the thesis was unsatisfactory and the examiners on re-examination certify that the thesis as revised is satisfactory, the RDC may exempt the candidate from further examination, oral or otherwise;
 - ii. where the candidate's performance in the first oral or approved alternative examination or further examination was unsatisfactory and the thesis was also unsatisfactory, any re-examination should include a re-examination of the thesis and an oral or approved alternative examination;
 - iii. where on the first examination the candidate's thesis was satisfactory but the performance in the oral and/or other examination(s) was not satisfactory the candidate should be re-examined in the oral and/or other examination(s), subject to the time limits prescribed without being requested to revise and re-submit the thesis;
 - iv. where on the first examination the thesis was satisfactory but the candidate's performance in relation to the other requirements for the award of the degree was not satisfactory, the examiners may propose instead a different form of re-examination to test the candidate's abilities; such examination may take place only with the approval of the RDC.
48. In the case of a re-examination under sub-paragraphs 45 i or ii, each examiner should read and examine the thesis and submit, on the appropriate form, an independent preliminary report on it to the Research and Innovation Office before any oral or alternative form of examination is held. In completing the preliminary report, each examiner should consider whether the thesis provisionally satisfies the requirements of the degree and where possible make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of any oral examination.
49. Following the re-examination of the thesis, either including or excluding an oral or other examination as indicated at the time of the original examination in accordance with paragraph 47 above, the examiners should, where they agree, submit a joint report and recommendation on the appropriate form relating to the award of the degree to the RDC. The preliminary reports and joint recommendation of the examiners should together provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of the work to enable the RDC to satisfy itself that the recommendation chosen is correct.
50. Where the examiners do not agree, separate reports and recommendations should be submitted.

51. Following the completion of the re-examination the examiners may recommend that:
- i. the candidate is awarded the degree;
 - ii. the candidate is awarded the degree subject to minor amendments being made to the thesis;
 - iii. the candidate is not awarded the degree and is not permitted to be re-examined; or
 - iv. in the case of a PhD examination, the candidate is awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners.

Note: The candidate cannot be awarded the degree subject to substantive amendment after re-examination.

52. Where the agreed recommendation of the examiners follows 51 (ii) or 51 (iv), above, they must together provide details of the amendments required for forward transmission to the candidate and the supervisory team.
53. Where the examiners are satisfied that the candidate has in general reached the standard required for the degree, but consider that the candidate's thesis requires some minor amendments and corrections they may recommend that the degree be awarded subject to the candidate amending the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal and/or the external examiner(s). In this case they should indicate to the candidate in writing what amendments and corrections are required.
54. Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, the NTRDC may after advice from RDC:
- i. accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
 - ii. accept the recommendation of the external examiner; or
 - iii. require the appointment of an additional external examiner.
55. Where an additional external examiner is appointed he/she should prepare an independent preliminary report on the basis of the thesis and, if considered necessary, may conduct a further oral examination. That examiner should not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional examiner, the NTRDC will complete the examination
56. A further examination in addition to the oral examination may be requested by the examiners. In such cases, the approval of the Nottingham Trent Academic Board should be sought without delay. Where such an examination is arranged following an oral examination, it should normally be held within two calendar months of the oral examination unless the Academic Board permits otherwise.
57. Where the Academic Board decides that the degree is not awarded, the examiners should prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their recommendation, which should be forwarded to the candidate by RDC.

Academic misconduct

58. The University's rules on student academic misconduct are set out in section 2L (Student Academic Misconduct) and section 4L (Procedures Relating to Student Academic

Misconduct in PGR Degrees). The University regards any form of academic misconduct as an extremely serious matter.

Appeals procedure

59. A candidate may make a formal appeal to the Head of Student Achievement, Academic Services, to request reconsideration of an examination decision or a registration issue, excluding termination of registration due to non-payment of fees.
60. Any such appeal may only be made on the grounds indicated below:
- i. The candidate's level of achievement was adversely affected by illness or other factors which s/he was unable to divulge to the supervisory team or the examiners at the appropriate point within the earlier procedures.
 - ii. There is new and relevant information that was not available to be considered at the time of the original decision.
 - iii. There has been a material irregularity in the conduct of progress reviews of the candidate undertaken by RDC.
 - iv. There has been a material administration error in the arrangements and/or conduct of the examination, such as to cause doubt on the validity of the examiners' decision.
 - v. The candidate can prove that unfair discrimination has occurred.
61. Disagreement with the academic judgement of the examiners or RDC cannot in itself constitute grounds for appeal. Academic judgement is considered to include:
- approval of a project against the criteria set out in para. 41 of the Policy '2Q: Admission, supervision and monitoring of research students'
 - a decision to place a student on a three month period of probation and/or terminate their studies on the basis of concerns about performance (para. 65-68 of the Policy '2Q: Admission, supervision and monitoring of research students')
 - consideration of transfer or registration from MPhil to PhD against the criteria set out in para. 70 of the Policy '2Q: Admission, supervision and monitoring of research students'
 - a recommendation of the examiners at the completion of the examination stage as set out in para. 33-37 of this Policy
 - a recommendation of the examiners at the completion of the re-examination stage as set out in para. 51-53 of this Policy
62. A candidate should contact the Finance Office where the decision to terminate their registration is on the basis of non-payment of fees and may make a formal complaint if they continue to be dissatisfied.
63. Given the existence of procedures for complaint and grievance during the study period, together with the monitoring arrangements for research candidates, alleged inadequacy of supervisory or other arrangements during the period of study will not constitute grounds for requesting a review of the examination decision or a decision of termination of study/re-registration for MPhil.
64. A student may not make an appeal to the NTRDC until they have exhausted the SSU procedures.
65. The time limit for lodging the appeal with Academic Services is 20 (twenty) working days from the date of the communication indicating termination/ re-registration from RDC or

notification of an examination decision. Appeals outside this time will be considered only at the discretion of the Chair of the RDC and the Head of Student Achievement (or nominee). The Head of Student Achievement (or nominee) will decide, in consultation with the Chair of the RDC, whether or not the appeal is made on permitted grounds and whether or not a prima facie case exists for consideration by RDC.

66. The Head of Student Achievement (or nominee) must inform the candidate, the Director of Studies and the chair of the Hub Scrutiny Panel within 10 working days of the receipt of the appeal application, of one of the following actions:
 - i. The appeal is made on permitted grounds and a prima facie case is accepted. The matter will be referred to a SSU Appeal Panel.
 - ii. Case Rejected - The application is not made on the permitted grounds and/or there is insufficient evidence contained within the appeal to cause the original decision of the RDC to be reviewed.
 - iii. Case Referred - In cases where there appears to be new evidence not previously considered by RDC, the case may be referred back to it for reconsideration. A reply must be made by the Chair of RDC within 10 working days. If the decision is not acceptable to the candidate, he or she may reapply within 20 (twenty) working days of being informed of that decision for reconsideration by the University Appeal Panel.
67. Where a prima facie case is not felt to exist, the student will be notified. At this stage the student can appeal to the NTRDC, using the Nottingham Trent procedures. An appeal may be made to the NTRDC via the Nottingham Trent University Graduate School on 01158 488 112 or gradschool@ntu.ac.uk.
68. Where a prima facie case is found to exist an SSU Appeals Panel will be appointed and a hearing set up. Any such hearing will take place within 15 working days of the decision that a prima facie case exists.
69. The process will include the opportunity for the candidate to submit documentary evidence and be present at any hearing to present their case, accompanied by a friend to help them do this.
70. Similarly the Chair of RDC will be invited to submit relevant documentation and to be represented by up to two people to respond to the applicant's appeal.
71. The Head of Student Achievement (or nominee) will ensure that the relevant parties and the SSU Appeal Panel are provided with all appropriate information at least 10 working days prior to the hearing. Final evidence will be circulated at least 5 working days before the hearing. Late evidence may be circulated only with the consent of both parties.
72. Should the candidate not attend the hearing, it will proceed with the candidate 'in absentia' and on the information already supplied unless a documented genuine reason for absence is received. In the latter case the hearing date may be re-arranged.
73. The Panel will decide that:
 - i. The appeal is rejected;
 - ii. The appeal is upheld against the termination/re-registration for MPhil decision. The case will be referred back to RDC for reconsideration alongside any additional recommendations which the Panel may make;

- iii. Re-examination is appropriate and either (a) the examiners are invited to reconsider their decision; or (b) new examiners are to be appointed.
 - iv. There is evidence which raises doubts about the competence of the examiners and / or SSU procedures such that the matter should be referred as a matter of urgency to the NTRDC for proper investigation.
74. The Panel will communicate its decision to the candidate in writing within 10 working days of the date of any hearing. At this stage the SSU procedures are exhausted and if the student is dissatisfied they must appeal to NTRDC using the Nottingham Trent Procedures.