Appointment of Chairs for viva-voce examination

Scope
All full and part-time research students, including those registered on a validated research degree programme, academic staff with a responsibility for the supervision and examination of research students and administrative staff who have a role in supporting academic staff in their role. Additionally, all internal and external examiners with a responsibility for examining research students.

Senate Regulations:
Regulation 24 – Doctoral Programmes
Regulation 23 – Masters Degree by Research

Date approved/re-approved
APPSC 17 June 2009, minor updates Education Committee 15 June 2012

Date for review
To be reviewed on a periodic basis, with allowance for minor annual updates of roles and responsibilities by Graduate School Committee, as required.

To be read in conjunction with Section 9 of the University’s Quality Manual, in particular the following:
Policy on the Appointment of Examiners
Policy on the Submission and Resubmission of Thesis
Policy on the Viva voce or oral examination
Guidance on Examiners’ Duties
Notes for Students on the Viva voce examination.
Appointment of Chairs for viva voce examinations

The purpose of the appointment of a Chair of viva voce examinations is to ensure that the operation of the assessment process of research students is rigorous, fair, reliable and consistent.

The following statements should be read alongside the University’s Regulations for Doctoral Programmes and Masters Degrees by Research. The statements are intended to provide further clarity on the policies and processes that assure the quality and enhancement of research degree provision across the University and which are outlined in the Framework for Research Degrees Provision.

The University’s Research Degree Framework and Regulations apply equally to partnership provision unless different arrangements have been agreed between the University and the partner institution and have received University approval. Details will be set out in the Memorandum of Agreement for the partnership and in information provided to students.

Principles

- The Chair is expected to possess good knowledge of the regulations, procedures, policies and practices of research degree provision;
- The Chair is not expected to possess specialist knowledge of the discipline;
- It is normally the Senior Tutor for Research, or nominated deputies, who fulfils the role of Chair for all viva voce examinations within their area of responsibility;
- Where the Senior Tutor for Research, or nominated deputy, is a member of the supervisory team, or is acting as an examiner, or in other exceptional circumstances is unable to fulfil the role of the Chair, the Senior Tutor of Research will nominate a member of academic staff to otherwise assume the role;
- The Senior Tutor for Research, or nominated deputy, is responsible for ensuring that any nominee is fully briefed on the role of the Chair and what is expected of them;
- A nominee may only act as Chair when they have been briefed on the role by the Senior Tutor for Research or nominated deputy;
- The Chair is required to complete the Chair’s checklist for all viva voce examinations and reflect on any good and bad practice. Comments on the checklist will be collated and considered by Student and Academic Services and disseminated where appropriate. A copy of the checklist may be given to the student, the examiners and the supervisory team and will be available for use in any cases of appeal.