Viva Voce or Oral 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 22 April 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
Note for Students on the viva voce examination.

Equality and Diversity statement
City, University of London is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all its activities, processes, and culture, under its Public Sector Equality Duties and the Equality Act 2010. This includes promoting equality and diversity for all, irrespective of any protected characteristic, working pattern, family circumstance, socio-economic background, political belief or other irrelevant distinction.

Where relevant to the policy, decision-making panels will ensure a reasonable gender balance (with at least one man and one woman) and will actively consider representation of other protected groups.
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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 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

- Students are required to present themselves for a viva voce examination on the subject of their thesis unless, by permission of the City Graduate School through delegated powers of Senate on the recommendation of the examiners, they are deemed to be exempt from the oral examination.

- Students are required to attend a viva in order to defend their thesis and to demonstrate that the work is their own.

- The supervisor is not permitted to act as an examiner but may attend the examination as an observer at the discretion of the examiners and the student. Students have the right to ask that their supervisor(s) not be present at the viva.

- Two examiners, a chairperson and usually the first supervisor are present at the viva. The examination can be of varying lengths but an examination will normally last between one and three hours.

- A Chair is appointed to ensure that the examination is conducted in a fair and academically rigorous manner. The Chair will advise the examiners and the student on any regulatory matters that may arise.

- The examination process should normally be completed within a period of three months from the date of submission wherever possible and only when the student has given sufficient notice of intention to submit for appropriate examiners to be appointed and arrangements for the viva to be made. Where it is not possible for the examination process to be completed within the proposed three month period, every endeavour will be made to ensure that the process is completed as close to within three months as practicable.

The examiners may decide on any one of the following outcomes:

a) that the candidate be awarded an appropriate doctoral level degree drawn from clause 1 of the regulations for doctoral programmes.

b) that a doctoral level award be made subject to amendments being carried out to the satisfaction of the examiners within 6 months.
c) that a doctoral level of award be made subject to amendments being carried out to the satisfaction of the examiners within 12 months and presentation for a further oral examination

d) that a doctoral level award be made subject to amendments being carried out to the satisfaction of the examiners within 12 months without the need for presentation for a further oral examination

e) that the candidate not be awarded a doctoral level degree

f) that the candidate be awarded a Masters Level qualification (see regulation 23)

g) that the candidate be awarded a Masters Level qualification subject to the satisfaction of the examiners or internal examiner

h) that the candidate be not awarded a degree.

- It is normally expected that minor amendments will be completed within six months and major amendments will be completed within twelve months. Examiners are also permitted to recommend a different period in which amendments should be completed and should specify the proposed length of time in the joint report along with reasons for the recommendation

- In the rare case that the examiners are not be able to reach a recommendation on the day of the viva further advice will be sought. This may involve the appointment of a third examiner who will be asked to read the thesis and make a final judgement;

- The first supervisor is provided with a copy of the examiners' reports in order that the student and the supervisor(s) can discuss any amendments required. Copies of the examiners' reports may also be provided to the student.

In the event of a resubmission, examiners may agree to recommend

- a) that the candidate be awarded an appropriate doctoral level degree drawn from clause 1 of the regulations for doctoral programmes

- b) that the candidate be awarded an appropriate doctoral level degree drawn from clause 1 of the regulations for doctoral programmes subject to minor amendments being carried out to the satisfaction of the internal examiner. Such amendments are required to be completed in no more than 4 weeks of the reexamination and include the following:
  - Typographical errors
  - Minor amendments to text
  - References or other diagrams or
  - More extensive corrections that do not require significant reworking of the intellectual content of the thesis

- c) That the candidate be awarded a Masters Level qualification (see regulation 23)

- d) That the candidate be awarded an appropriate Masters level degree drawn from clause 1 of the University's regulations for Masters degree
by Research subject to minor amendments being carried out to the satisfaction of the internal examiner. Such amendments are required to be completed in no more than 4 weeks of the re-examination and may include the following:

- Typographical errors
- Minor amendments to text
- References or other diagrams or
- More extensive corrections that do not require significant reworking of the intellectual content of the thesis

e) That the candidate be not awarded a degree.

- Students may apply for an extension to the period in which they are required to re-submit their thesis for further examination through an application to the Senior Tutor for Research and in agreement with the examiners

- Should the examiners reach the decision that the candidate be not awarded a degree or that a degree of MPhil (or equivalent) be awarded where the degree of PhD (or equivalent) was sought the student should be advised of their right to appeal the decision.