

# EG2 - Guidelines for Research Degree Examiners

## About this document

This document provides guidelines on the conduct of doctoral examinations at Goldsmiths for Research Degree Examiners (hereafter 'Examiners'). It is recommended that all prospective Examiners and Independent Chairs consult this guidance prior to conducting an MPhil or a PhD examination.

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# 1. Appointment of Research Degree Examiners

1.1 While Supervisors are responsible for nominating appointing Examiners, these are subject to approval via the Research Degrees unit within the Graduate School (hereafter 'Research Degrees'). Once the Examiners have been approved by the Dean or Deputy Dean of the Graduate School, Research Degrees issues Examiners with a formal email invitation outlining the terms of the appointment.

1.2 Prior to accepting an invitation to act in the capacity of Examiner, it is necessary that those nominated consider whether they have any connection with the Candidate or Supervisor(s) which may affect the appropriateness of their appointment. These connections could be either personal or professional. An academic who has played a significant part in advising, or otherwise worked in collaboration with the Candidate will not be appropriate as an Examiner, particularly where the connection has led to the publishing of papers jointly by the Examiners and Candidate. The prior acquaintance of the Examiner with the Supervisor, and sometimes the Candidate, is not per se a bar to examining the thesis. Research Degrees will consider any connections that the Examiners bring to their attention.

1.3 If Examiners decide to accept the invitation to examine issued by Research Degrees they will need to complete the [EF1 - Response to Research Degree Invitation](#) online form. This form is designed to ensure an efficient examination process by:

- confirming the postal address for dispatch of the thesis;
- informing Research Degrees of any connections with the candidate or supervisor which may affect the appropriateness of your appointment;
- informing Research Degrees of any accessibility requirements;
- informing Research Degrees of any requirements relating to travel arrangements for the viva voce examination (hereafter 'viva'); and
- determining whether Examiners have the Right to Work (RTW) in the UK that will enable payment, and whether they will require assistance from the Immigration Advisory Service (IAS) team to enter the UK for the examination.

## 2. Appointment of Independent Chairs

2.1 Where there are sufficient grounds to suggest it will be necessary or helpful to the process, Research Degrees has the discretion to request the additional appointment of an Independent Chair for an examination.

2.2 Typically, Research Degrees requests an Independent Chair where:

- neither Examiners appointed have University of London examination experience;
- two external examiners have been appointed, neither of whom have University of London examination experience;
- the examination is for a research degree validated by Goldsmiths but delivered as part of a partnership arrangement;
- a Candidate is being re-examined following a 'Not Pass' outcome at their original viva;
- it is otherwise thought that it will be helpful to the examination process.

2.3 The Independent Chair will usually be a senior member of academic staff, with experience of Goldsmiths research degree examinations.

2.4 The Independent Chair should have had no close personal or professional connections with the Candidate, Supervisor, or Examiners which might compromise their role as an independent observer of the examination.

2.5 The overall role of an Independent Chair is to ensure that the viva is conducted in a fair and transparent manner, in line with the Guidelines outlined in this document. Where the present guidelines are not being followed by the Examiners, Supervisor, or Candidate, the Independent Chair is entitled to intervene, and, if appropriate, terminate the examination. The grounds upon which a viva may be terminated are outlined [below](#)..

2.6 Areas considered beyond the responsibility of an Independent Chair include:

- receiving and reading a copy of the thesis
- questioning the Candidate about their work
- acting as a 'casting vote' in the event of substantive disagreement; in such circumstances, the role of the Chair should be facilitative in terms of advising the Examiners on available options.

### **3. Timetable for Examination**

3.1 It is the responsibility of the Supervisor (or another person designated by Goldsmiths to undertake the task) to contact the Examiners and the Candidate to arrange a mutually convenient time and place to hold the viva.

3.2 The Supervisor is then required to notify Research Degrees via email of the date agreed.

3.3 In the interests of the candidate, Research Degrees expects in normal circumstances that:

- The thesis will be dispatched to the Examiners a minimum of **6 weeks before** the viva.
- The examination will take place **within 3 months** of the Candidate's thesis submission.
- The Examiners will return the examination paperwork to Research Degrees **within 2 weeks** of the examination.

## 4. Before the Viva

4.1 Prior to the examination, Research Degrees will provide Examiners digital and hard copies of the Candidate's thesis, along with the necessary paperwork for the examination, including:

- EG2 - Guidelines for Research Degree Examiners
- EG3 - Research Degrees Examination Outcomes
- EF2 - Independent Preliminary Report template
- EF3a/b - Examination Outcome form
- EF4 - Final Joint Report form
- Expenses and Fee payment claim forms

4.2 Prior to the examination, Research Degrees will provide Independent Chairs with the necessary paperwork for the examination, including:

- EG2 - Guidelines for Research Degree Examiners
- EG3 - Research Degrees Examination Outcomes
- EF3a/b - Examination Outcome form
- EF4 - Final Joint Report form

4.3 Each Examiner is asked to complete the Independent Preliminary Report Form (EF2):

- Each Examiner is asked to write their report after reading the thesis but before conferring with their Co-Examiner.
- The preliminary report identifies particular areas that the Examiner believes should be explored with the Candidate during the viva, and, if possible, a

tentative recommendation, based on an assessment of the thesis, for the outcome of the examination. Examiners may also wish to include potential viva questions in their reports.

- Examiners are required to return a copy of their Independent Preliminary Report after the examination. Examiners may opt to withhold the report from the candidate (see Section 4 of EF3a/b - Examination Outcome form), but candidates may request access to these documents.

4.4 The Examiners should exchange their preliminary reports with each other before conducting the viva.

4.5 Following the exchange of preliminary reports, the Examiners should discuss the strategy they propose to adopt during the viva.

4.6 If the Examiners have any queries about the requirements for the award of the MPhil or PhD degrees they should contact Research Degrees.

4.7 If the Examiners have any reason to suspect any [academic misconduct](#), they should contact Research Degrees in the first instance, who will seek advice, on the basis of the evidence, as to whether or not it is appropriate to cancel or postpone the viva.

4.8 If the examiners agree that the expertise of a third examiner will be essential to the examination process, they should contact Research Degrees in the first instance.

4.9 All matters relating to the examination, including the content of the thesis, are confidential and Examiners should not discuss them with a third party. Examiners are not permitted to divulge the content of previously unpublished material contained in a candidate's thesis until such time as it has been placed in the public domain and until any approved restrictions on access to the thesis have expired.

4.10 Higher Education Institutions are required to make reasonable adjustments for candidates with physical and special learning difficulties in their assessment. Research Degrees will inform the examiners of any reasonable adjustments agreed for a Candidate at least 2 weeks prior to the viva. If Examiners are informed directly by the Supervisor or Candidate of any disability, even in confidence, they should seek the advice of Research Degrees, in order that they might be briefed on how best to meet the needs of the Candidates.

4.11 In addition to examining the Candidate orally, the examiners have the discretion to examine the Candidate by means of written papers or practical examination. This

provision is rarely invoked and Examiners wishing to do so are asked to contact Research Degrees no less than 1 week in advance of the viva.

## 5. Viva Voce Examination

- 5.1 All Candidates are subject to at least one viva, even if the Examiners are minded to recommend a fail or an MPhil outcome.
- 5.2 The viva will normally be held in person in London, typically at Goldsmiths, and in a room offering an environment suitable for the conduct of an examination. Where a Candidate is registered on a Research Degree programme validated by Goldsmiths but delivered as part of a partnership arrangement, the viva may be required to take place at the partner institution.
- 5.3 Where an in person viva cannot be held, for example, due to temporary restrictions affecting travel or face-to-face contact, it is permissible for the viva to be held via videoconference. In such a case, all parties should have regard for GG1 - Good Practice Guidelines for Video-conference Viva Voce Examinations.
- 5.4 With the Candidate's consent, a Supervisor may attend the viva as an observer. If this is the case, the Supervisor will notify the Examiners in advance. In keeping with the role of an observer, any Supervisor present must not speak unless invited to do so by the Examiners. Supervisors who exceed their role as silent observer may be ejected from the viva.
- 5.5 No persons other than the Examiners, one Supervisor, an Independent Chair and the Candidate may be present at a viva. All persons present during the viva should be recorded in Section 1 of the EF3a/b - Examination Outcome Form.
- 5.6 During the viva the Examiners should seek to establish whether all the requirements for a thesis submitted for the degree MPhil or PhD as set out in Section 2 of the relevant EF3a/b - Examination Outcome Form have been met.
- 5.7 During the viva, the Candidate should have adequate opportunity, encouragement, and time to explain their research and to defend their thesis.
- 5.8 It is recommended that during a long viva, Examiners should propose short break(s) at appropriate point(s). Likewise, a Candidate may request breaks as required.
- 5.9 If the Candidate becomes unwell or distressed during the viva, the Examiners should, after such consultation with the Candidate as is possible at that time, decide whether or not to continue the viva. If they continue, they should note in their final report that the Candidate was unwell. If they decide not to continue, the Examiners should determine

whether sufficient evidence has been provided to allow an examination outcome to be agreed upon or if it will be necessary to hold the viva on another occasion.

5.10 Examiners and Independent Chairs have the discretion to terminate a viva at any time on the following grounds:

- In the event that the Candidate becomes unwell;
- In the event of a viva involving video-conferencing, where significant and recurrent technical issues arise and it is considered likely that these issues will affect the outcome of the viva, and/or impair the ability of the Examiners to form a proper judgment regarding the outcome;
- In the event that the Candidate makes comments to the Examiners, which put them under moral pressure, or offers any kind of incentive, to award a pass;
- In the event of a Supervisor being in attendance, where the Supervisor exceeds their role as a silent observer of the viva and attempts to influence the outcome of the examination;
- In any other circumstances which they have reason to believe will hinder the conduct of a fair and transparent examination.

5.11 In the event that the Examiners or Independent Chair choose to terminate a viva, they are required to submit a written report to Research Degrees outlining the circumstances of the termination so that appropriate action may be taken.

5.12 In the rare occurrence that the Examiners have an irreconcilable difference of views in relation to the examination and are unable to arrive at an agreement, they should contact Research Degrees for further guidance in the first instance. In such cases, Research Degrees reserves the right to:

- Request a Joint Examiners Report summarising the viva itself, as well as the differing views held by each Examiner and the reason that agreement could not be reached.
- Appoint an Independent Adjudicator and hold a second viva if appropriate.

## 6. Viva Outcome

6.1 The options open to the examiners in determining the outcome of PhD and MPhil examinations are detailed in the EG3- Research Degree Examination Outcomes document.

6.2 At the conclusion of the viva, the Candidate and the Supervisor (if present) should withdraw and the Examiners should confer on the outcome in private. Typically, the Independent Chair will also withdraw during the deliberations, but should remain available and contactable by the Examiners.

6.3 Once the outcome has been agreed, the Examiners should complete the EF3a/b - Examination Outcome Form, ensuring it is signed by all relevant parties:

- In the event of a 'Pass subject to minor amendments', the Examiners are required to provide the name(s) of the Examiner(s) who will be responsible for reviewing and signing off the amendments. Either/both examiners can sign off amendments. A supervisor cannot sign off amendments.
- In the event of one of the 'Not Pass' outcomes, the Examiners should indicate whether a second viva examination will be required as part of the Second Examination. Alternatively, the Examiners can choose to reserve their decision until they have received the re-submitted thesis.
- In Section 4, Examiners are required to state whether or not they agree to their Independent Preliminary Reports being shared automatically with the candidate. Please note, while Examiners have the discretion to withhold their preliminary reports, Candidates have a right to apply for access subsequently.

6.4 The Examiners may wish to advise the candidate orally and informally of their decision at the conclusion of their deliberations following the viva. Examiners are advised to exercise particular care if they do this. They must inform the Candidate that the result is not formal and final until Research Degrees notifies the Candidate of the outcome (see [Notification to the Candidate](#)))

## 7. Reporting on the Examination

7.1 The examiners are required to return the following package of documents to Research Degrees via email to [research-degrees@gold.ac.uk](mailto:research-degrees@gold.ac.uk) within 2 weeks of the viva:

- 2x EF2- Independent Preliminary Reports
- EF3a/b - Examination Outcome form
- EF4 - Final Joint Report

7.2 If, for any reason, it is not possible for these documents to be returned within 2 weeks of the viva, the Examiners should contact Research Degrees.

7.3 Examiners have the right to make comments in confidence in a separate report to Research Degrees. Examiners should however have regard for the fact that Goldsmiths must comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) when handling the personal data of students.

## 8. The Final Joint Report

8.1 In their EF4 - Final Joint Report, the Examiners should give the grounds on which their decision is based.

8.2 Where Examiners choose not to allow the Candidate automatic access to their respective EF2 - Independent Preliminary Reports, the EF4 - Final Joint Report should not cross-reference the preliminary reports.

8.3 In the event of a 'Pass subject to minor amendments', Examiners are expected to include a full list of required amendments in the appropriate section of the EF4 - Final Joint Report.

8.4 In the event of a 'Not Pass' outcome, the Examiners should indicate in what ways the current thesis fails to satisfy the requirements for the MPhil or PhD degree, and should indicate clearly the revisions which the Candidate should make.

8.5 The MPhil is an award in its own right and may not be awarded unless the criteria for that degree are satisfied. In the event that the Examiners decide that the criteria for the MPhil has been, or may be satisfied, they should, in their EF4 - Final Joint Report

- Indicate the basis for their decision not to allow a re-submission for the PhD
- Indicate whether the requirements for the MPhil are satisfied **or**, if they are recommending that the thesis be revised and resubmitted for examination for the MPhil degree, how the criteria for the MPhil might be satisfied.

8.6 If the Examiners' decision is to fail the Candidate outright, they should indicate in the EF4 - Final Joint Report the basis for their decision to reject all the other options open to them.

## 9. Notification to the Candidate

9.1 No official notification of the outcome of the examination can be issued to the Candidate or to any other authority until the Examiners have returned the complete package of examination documents to Research Degrees (see [Reporting on the Examination](#))

9.2 When notifying the Candidate of their outcome, Research Degrees send the following documents to the Candidate, their supervisor, and their Academic Department:

- An Outcome email, specifying the examiners' recommendation and, if relevant, any deadlines for amendments submission or thesis re-submission
- A copy of the EF4 - Final Joint Report
- Copies of the EF2 - Independent Preliminary Reports, unless these have been withheld

## 10. Pass Subject to Minor Amendments

10.1 In the event of a 'Pass subject to minor amendments' outcome, the Candidate is required to submit their amended thesis in electronic form to Research Degrees

within 3 months of their outcome notification.

10.2 Once the candidate submits their amended thesis, Research Degrees will send the following materials in electronic form to the Examiner(s) chosen to assess the amendments:

- A digital copy of the amended thesis, supplied either with track changes or with amendments highlighted in colour
- A report on the amendments undertaken
- EF5a/b - Amendments Report Form

10.3 The nominated Examiner(s) will be asked to review the amended thesis and complete the EF5a/b - Amendments Report Form within 4-6 weeks of receipt of the amended thesis. The report requires confirmation of whether the minor amendments requested have been completed satisfactorily.

10.4 In the event that the Examiner(s) are not satisfied with the amendments, they will have the discretion to grant an additional 3 months for the amendments originally requested to be completed.

10.5 Following any additional time granted, Examiners who remain dissatisfied with the amendments made should contact Research Degrees to discuss next steps.

## 11. Not Pass Outcomes

11.1 In the event of one of the 'Not Pass' outcomes, the Candidate is subject to a 'Second Examination.' For the avoidance of doubt the electronic submission of an amended thesis following an outcome of 'Pass subject to minor amendments' is not considered to be a Second Examination, but rather the second stage of a First Examination.

11.2 Second Examinations are subject to the same rules and procedures as First Examinations with key exceptions outlined below.

11.3 Certain outcomes are **not available in the event of a Second Examination**. These are listed in EG3 - Research Degree Examination Outcomes. For the avoidance of doubt, no Candidate can be subject to a Third Examination.

11.4 In any Second Examination, the Examiners should have regard to the report they made on the First Examination, copies of which can be supplied to them by Research Degrees.

11.5 In certain cases, the Second Examination may proceed without a second viva. While this typically depends on the recommendation recorded in the original Examination Outcome Form, this decision may be superseded as outlined below.

- 11.6 Where the Second Examination proceeds without a second viva (as per the recommendation in the original Examination Outcome Form), the Examiners are expected to each review the thesis independently, exchange preliminary reports, formulate their outcome, and write their Final Joint Report within 3 months of the dispatch of the thesis.
- 11.7 Where the Examiners have initially decided to proceed without a second viva (as per the recommendation in the original Examination Outcome Form), they are nonetheless permitted to request a second viva should the need for one have become apparent, effectively superseding their original decision. In such a case, the Examiners should notify Research Degrees for advice on next steps.
- 11.8 Where the Examiners have not initially decided whether a second viva should be held (as per the recommendation in the original Examination Outcome Form), they are expected to review the re-submitted thesis independently of one another, exchange preliminary reports, and confer to discuss whether or not a second viva will be required. Once the Examiners have reached a decision, they should notify Research Degrees for advice on next steps.
- 11.9 Where, on receipt of the re-submitted thesis, Examiners are minded to recommend that the Candidate **not** be awarded the degree for which they have submitted (for example, if the Examiners are minded to recommend a 'fail' outcome, or an MPhil outcome where the Candidate has entered for the examination of PhD), a second viva **must** be held. This requirement supersedes any prior decision recorded on the original Examination Outcome Form. In such a case, the Examiners should notify Research Degrees for advice on next steps.
- 11.10 Unless it is impossible for them to do so, it is expected that the original Examiners will conduct the re-examination. Where one or both of the original Examiners are unable to conduct the Second examination for any reason, a second viva **must** be held. This requirement supersedes any prior decision recorded on the original Examination Outcome Form. In such a case, the original Examiners' Final Joint Report will be made available to the new Examiners and the focus of the Second examination will be to assess how well the Candidate has addressed the concerns raised and/or changes requested in this report.

## 12. Extensions to Amendments or Re-Submission Deadlines

- 12.1 If a candidate finds themselves unable to submit their amended thesis or re-submit their thesis for examination within the timeframe specified in their outcome notification they should contact Research Degrees in the first instance to discuss their circumstances. Where a Candidate fails to submit their amended thesis or re-submit

their thesis for a second examination within the timeframe specified in their outcome notification, and no extension or hiatus has been agreed with Research Degrees, the Candidate will be withdrawn from their programme.

12.2 Where appropriate, the Candidate will be asked to submit a request to extend their amendments or re-submission period. Such extension requests are expected to comprise:

- A short case, typically 1-2 paragraphs outlining the Candidate's mitigating circumstances
- Any relevant supporting evidence

12.3 Where a Candidate is nearing the end of their amendments or re-submission period and makes a case for an extension of up to a third the original amendments or re-submission period, Research Degrees has the discretion to extend the deadline without consulting the Examiners. Where a Candidate is nearing the end of their amendments or re-submission period and makes a case for an extension of more than a third of the original amendments or re-submission period, Research Degrees will contact the Examiners with the extension case.

12.4 If a Candidate encounters a long period of illness or other exceptional circumstances preventing them from making progress on their amendments submission, Research Degrees has the discretion to propose an informal hiatus in the examination period. If a hiatus is agreed:

- The Candidate is not expected to work on their amendments or resubmission, nor expected to receive supervision during the agreed period.
- The Examiners will be notified of the hiatus.
- At the end of this period (or earlier if appropriate), the Candidate will contact Research Degrees with an update on their circumstances. In the event that they are able to resume work on their thesis, Research Degrees will contact the Examiners to agree a revised timeline for amendments submission or re-submission.

## **13. Examiners' fees**

13.1 Examiners are entitled to claim a fee of £200.00 for PhD examination and £150.00 for MPhil examination following the initial examination and following any re-examination.

13.2 To claim their fee, examiners are asked to complete the relevant claim form and return it to Research Degrees (P002 Claim for Payment for Goldsmiths staff, N002 Claim for Payment for non-Goldsmiths staff with UK bank accounts, or N003 Overseas Payment Claim for non-Goldsmiths staff with non-UK bank accounts).

- 13.3 Non-Goldsmiths staff are also required to supply a copy of their Right to Work document (usually a passport or equivalent document) along with their fee payment claim form.
- 13.4 Payment is authorised on receipt of all viva outcome paperwork, a completed fee claim form and a copy of the Examiner's 'Right to Work'.
- 13.5 All fee payments are taxed at source.
- 13.6 The only instances in which Non-Goldsmiths staff are not required to provide a copy of their Right to Work document, and their fees will not be taxed at source:
- If the viva has been held over video-conference, with the Examiner joining remotely from outside the UK and being paid their fee into a non-UK bank account;
  - In the event of a re-examination without a second viva, where the Examiner has undertaken the re-examination outside the UK and being paid their fee into a non-UK bank account;.

## 14. Examiners' expenses

- 14.1 Where notified in advance, Research Degrees are able to arrange travel and accommodation on Examiners' behalf. When Examiners opt to arrange their own travel, subsistence claims should be made via the relevant claim form.
- 14.2 Typically, Research Degrees can reimburse the cost of European travel (up to a maximum of £250.00) and 1 night's accommodation in London (see maximum subsistence rates below). If an Examiner is travelling from outside Europe, the maximum amount of £250.00 nonetheless applies. Therefore, if travel costs are likely to exceed this amount the Supervisor, Academic Department, and Examiner should agree how the excess amount should be paid.
- 14.3 Should Examiners choose to arrange their own travel, they are advised to refer to the guidelines set out below:
- For travel within Europe, economy class tickets should be obtained
  - Rail travel should be in standard class and pre-booked
  - Local bus, tram and underground train fares can be claimed
  - Private motor vehicles should only be used under the following conditions: where the traveler is disabled or is assisting a disabled person; where the destination is not accessible or requires an excessively long or arduous journey by public transport; where it can be shown to be cost effective

(claimants must include evidence of the cost of public transport with any such claim).

14.4 When claiming for subsistence, Examiners should have regard for the guidelines below:

- “Overnight” subsistence is for a period (or successive periods) of 24 hours and is intended to cover accommodation and breakfast for that period.
- No subsistence is payable for any periods when meals and/or accommodation are included in the fare (e.g. for air travel or rail sleeper).
- All claims for subsistence must be for actual expenditure incurred and must be supported with receipts. The maximum subsistence rates include taxes (e.g. VAT) and gratuities. Gratuities must not be excessive: the claimant must write the amount on the receipt if it does not already appear there.

14.5 Any claims must be within the maximum subsistence rates provided by the HMRC; the table below shows rates current as of May 2016.

<b>Period</b>	<b>Place (away from normal workplace or home)</b>	<b>Maximum Rate per Day</b>
Breakfast (if it is not included in accommodation rate)	All places	£5.00
Lunch	All places	£10.00
Dinner	All places	£30.00
Overnight (B&B up to 24 hours)	Accommodated by friends/relatives	£25.00
Overnight (B&B up to 24 hours)	Within London	£140.00
Overnight (B&B up to 24 hours)	Outside London	£100.00

14.6 To claim back any expenses, examiners are asked to complete the N004 Claim for Payment form and return this along with relevant receipts to Research Degrees.

14.7 Examiners should be aware that details of expenses may, in common with all University expenditure, be subject to the Freedom of Information Act, should such a request be made.

14.8 Where a Candidate is registered on a Research Degree validated by Goldsmiths, local arrangements with the partner institutions may apply around responsibility for making and reimbursing Examiners' international travel arrangements.

## 15. Equality and Diversity

- 15.1 All Research Degree examinations are subject to the [University's Equality and Diversity Policy, copies of which are available by following this](#).
- 15.2 All candidates are subject to the same academic criteria and requirements.

## 16. Appeals Procedure

- 16.1 The University has a procedure for the consideration of appeals by candidates for Research Degrees, which is available on request from [research-degrees@gold.ac.uk](mailto:research-degrees@gold.ac.uk).

## 17. Research Degrees Contact

- 17.1 If Examiners have any concerns or wish to seek advice at any stage in the examination process, they should contact Research Degrees at their earliest convenience.

### Research Degrees

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London, SE14 6NW

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Email: [research-degrees@gold.ac.uk](mailto:research-degrees@gold.ac.uk)

Opening hours: 9.00 am – 5.00 pm Monday – Friday.

## Document history

Version	Date	Details	Author	Approved
1.0	02/10/2020		Marie-Alix Thouaille	Approved