Thesis Submission and Examination Guidance for Postgraduate Research Students and Supervisors

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This guidance is intended to provide all the relevant information Students and Supervisors will require for the Examination period. There are a number of steps outlined below which must be completed during this process. These are all regulatory and informed by the Regulations for Research Degrees.

All the forms mentioned in this document are available from the Research Degrees webpages and specifically within the dedicated Examinations pages for Students and Supervisors.

Examiner Nominations (Supervisors and Students)

3 months prior to thesis submission

Discussions around the preferred examiners should take place when the student is nearing the end of their registration period and is on target to submit. It is advisable that students are involved in this conversation.

A nomination form (UPR5) must be completed by the Supervisor and sent to Research Degrees (researchdegrees@port.ac.uk) in good time before thesis submission.

There are 2 versions of the UPR5 form. A standard one for when 2 examiners are appointed, and an extended version for those instances where 3 examiners are required (2 external and 1 internal).

The extended form is required when the student is a member of staff, or is studying a PhD by Publication.

Once the Supervisor has submitted the UPR5 to Research Degrees the examiners are contacted for relevant information and checks are completed to ensure the appointments are in line with regulations. At this stage we may recommend the appointment of an Independent Chair.

All examiner nominations are subsequently approved by the relevant Faculty Director for Postgraduate Research (FDPGR). On approval Research Degrees contact the Supervisor to confirm the appointment.

Thesis Submission (Students)

On or before the final day of the student's registration

All thesis must be submitted by the student to researchdegrees@port.ac.uk.

The Operational Handbook for Research Degrees provides the definitive guidance for thesis submission which can be found in Part Two, 13.3. We advise all students and supervisors to familiarise themselves with this section of the Operational Handbook.

The advice in the Handbook includes the following information:

- A strong recommendation to use Turnitin. More details on the Graduate School Moodle site
- The inclusion of the confirmation letter from the Ethics Committee and the UPR16 form at the end of the thesis
- The presentation of the thesis
- The inclusion of an abstract
- Contents list
- The inclusion of the Student declaration
- Word counts for each type of award

Pre-Viva Process (Supervisors and Students)

Once the student has submitted their thesis Research Degrees will send this to the examiners along with the forms they require (UP7A) to write their preliminary reports. Any viva date which has been arranged at this point should be considered as provisional until the examiners have returned their preliminary reports and indicated they are happy to proceed to viva.

These reports are compiled independently and should be sent back to Research Degrees at least 10 working days before the date of the viva.

There are 3 possible outcomes at this stage

1. Proceed to viva
2. Refer the student (they are given 1 year to work on the thesis and resubmit)
3. Disagreement between the examiners

Should option 3 occur a meeting will be arranged with the examiners which is chaired by the FDPGR. The outcome of this meeting will determine whether option 1 or 2 are agreed.

Viva Arrangement (Supervisor)

All viva arrangements should be made on the condition that the examiners' preliminary reports indicate they are happy for the student to proceed to viva. Should the examiners indicate a referral the viva will need to be cancelled and rearranged once the student has submitted their resubmission.

The Supervisor is responsible for contacting the examiners, student and, if appointed, the Independent Chair to arrange the date, time and venue. A viva can be held online, face to face or hybrid.

If the viva is hybrid or online, the Internal Examiner is responsible for providing links to the meeting for anyone joining online.

The Supervisor must consider the length of time it will take for the examiners to read the thesis and the fact they need to submit their UP7A reports to Research Degrees 10 working days before the viva.

Once the arrangements have been made the Supervisor must confirm these to the Research Degrees team by submission of a UPR5A form.

The Viva Voce (Students and Supervisor)

All examiners, the student and, if appointed, the Independent Chair must be present for the viva to take place.

The guidance within the Operational Handbook for the viva is in Part Two, 13.13.

This guidance contains the following information:

- Members of the Supervisory team may be present if agreed by the student
- If attending the supervisor should enter and leave the room with the student and should only participate in the discussion if asked to provide clarity on a specific matter
- Supervisors must not take part in the discussion regarding the recommendation made by the examiners on the outcome

- The Examiners will test the candidate's knowledge of matters relevant to the subject of the thesis
- The candidate will be verbally advised of the intended recommendation

Post-Viva Process (Students and Supervisors)

Timeframe dependent on outcome

Once the viva has concluded the examiners must notify Research Degrees of the result on the next working day by completion of a UP7B form.

The outcomes of the viva will be one of the following:

- Pass
- Pass subject to minor amendments (3 months)
- Pass subject to major amendments (6 months)
- Resubmission (1 year – with or without a second viva)
- Downgrade to MPhil (3 months)
- Fail

With any outcome other than pass or fail, the examiners will provide a written report outlining the work which the student is required to complete.

On receipt of the UP7B Research Degrees will write to the student to formally convey the outcome and, where applicable, outline the deadline for any work to be completed.

Corrections or Resubmission to the Thesis (Students and Supervisor)

Timeframe dependent on viva outcome

With either of these outcomes the examiners must provide a written report to Research Degrees for further dispatch to the student.

During this period the Supervisor continues their work and must support the student through the process.

Submission of Corrections or Resubmission (Student and Supervisor)

Timeframe dependent on viva outcome

Where corrections or a resubmission are required the student must send the updated thesis and an accompanying document outlining the changes to Research Degrees within the time limit specified on the viva outcome letter.

If the outcome is resubmission with a second viva the supervisor should arrange the second viva in relation to the timeframes outlined for the first viva and confirm these to Research Degrees by submission of a UPR5A form.

Approval of Corrections (Student and Supervisor)

Once the corrections have been submitted the examiners must approve these by completion of a UP7C form and send this to Research Degrees. There is no timeframe prescribed to this section of the examination process, however our suggestion is the examiners are given 1 month to complete this work.

If the corrections have not been carried out to the satisfaction of the examiners, they have the option to request the student makes one further attempt to make the required amendments. The time limit allowed for this under our regulations is 20 working days.

Should this attempt not result in the corrections being mad correctly, the only option for the examiners is to indicate a fail.

On receipt of the UP7C form Research Degrees will formally write to the student to confirm the outcome.

If the student has completed the work as requested Research Degrees will request the student sends a final version of their thesis along with an Theses Deposit Agreement. This is the version of the thesis which is deposited in the Library.

On receipt of the final thesis Research Degrees will confirm the award on our system and create a certificate and covering letter which is passed to the Parchments team for action.

Graduation (Students)

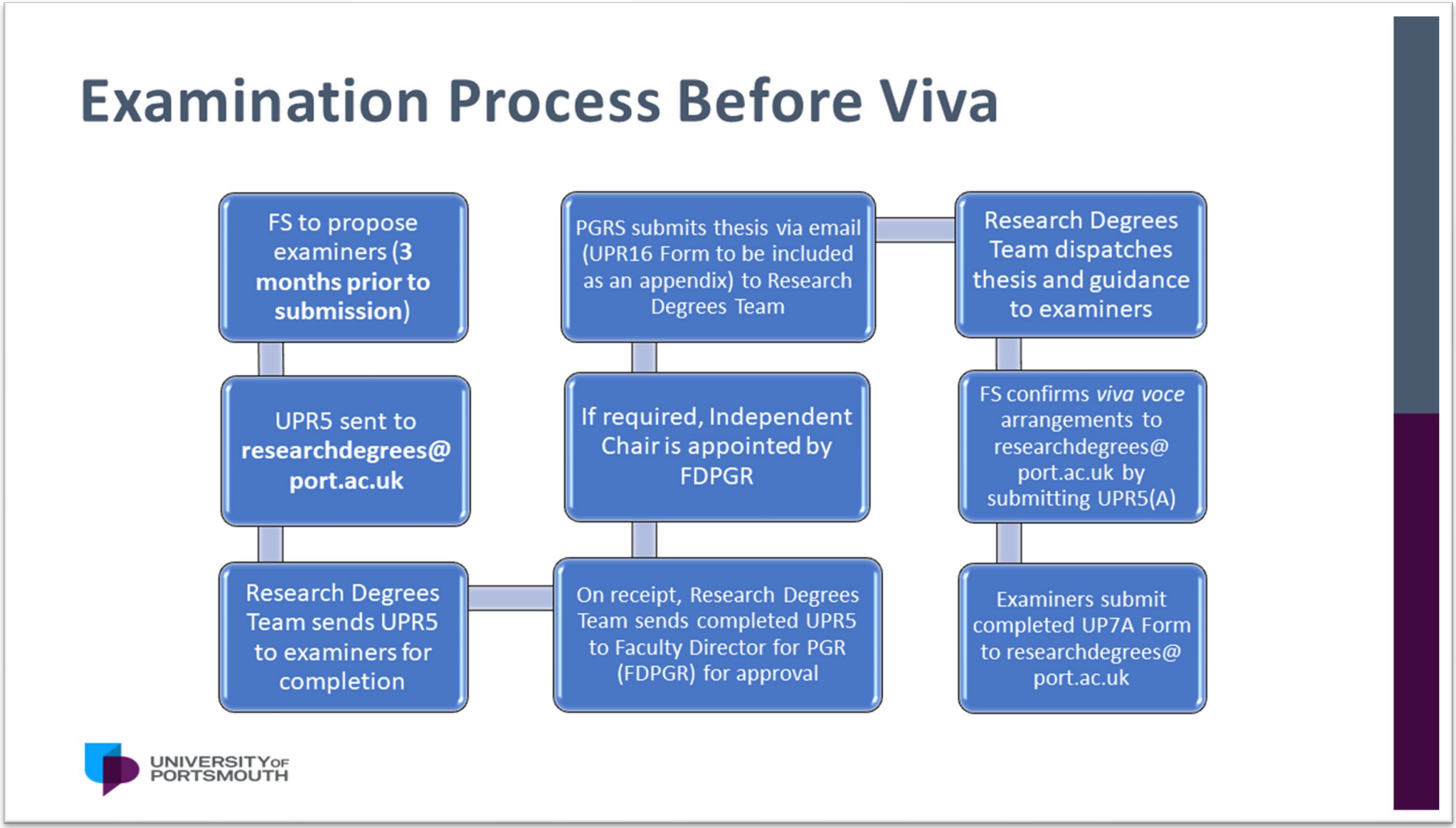
To ensure attendance at Graduation a student must have sent the final version of their thesis to Research Degree on or before 5th July. The final version of the thesis is the one which the examiners have approved after the corrections have been completed.

Any students submitting their final thesis after that date will be eligible to graduate the following year.

Further Information (Students and Supervisors)

We recommend reading this document in conjunction with the Operational Handbook which includes more detailed information on all of these processes.

Our webpages also contain useful information and links to all the forms required for the examination.

For further advice or questions on anything related to the examination please contact researchdegrees@port.ac.uk for assistance.

Examination process before viva (flowchart)