UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH

Guidance Note for the Examination of Higher Degrees by Research

(including Research Stage for Professional Doctorate Students)

Updated March 2026

Summary
What is this guidance document about?
This document provides information and guidance about the Examination of Higher Degrees by Research. It provides details and support for Examiners who have been approved to examine a Candidate who has submitted for Examination for a Higher Degree by Research.

Who is this handbook for?
This guidance is for all Examiners, both Internal and External, and Independent Chairs, where appointed. It is also useful for staff such as supervisors, Faculty and Department Directors of Postgraduate Research, Research Administrators and Postgraduate Research Students (PGRS).

How does the University check this guidance is current?
This guidance document is reviewed towards the end of each academic year to ensure that any approved amendments to the academic regulations and institution policy and procedure documents are reflected within the guidance notes. The Guidance Notes are produced and maintained by Research Degrees, Department of Academic Services (DAS).

Who can you contact if you have any queries about this handbook?
Please contact Research Degrees if you have any queries regarding this guidance document at researchdegrees@port.ac.uk

Contents

Summary of Key Points for Examiners **4**

Higher Degrees by Research **6**
- Professional Doctorate Programmes **7**

Pre-viva **8**
- Dispatching of the thesis to Examiners **8**
- Covid-19 Impact Statement **8**
- Examiner Preliminary Examination Report (UP7A) **8**
- Recommendation not to proceed to viva **9**
- Recommendation not to proceed to viva – Referral **9**
- Suspected Plagiarism/Unacknowledged use of AI **9**
- Arrangements for the viva voce (Oral examination) **9**
- Independent Chair **10**
- Confidential Thesis **10**

Conduct of the viva voce **10**
- Examiners Recommendations at viva **11**

Following the viva voce examination **11**
- Award – Pass **11**
- Award – subject to minor amendments **11**
- Award – subject to major amendments **12**
- No Award - Re-Examination without viva **13**
- No Award - Re-Examination with viva **13**
- No Award - Fail **14**
- Fail - Lower Award Recommended **14**

Award of a Higher Degree by Research or Professional Doctorate **15**

Eligibility for Graduation **15**

Administrative Contacts **15**

Appendix One - extract from QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education - The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies **16**

Summary of Key Points for Examiners

Before the *viva voce* Examination

- You have been sent the thesis, a Preliminary report form (UP7A), the Academic Regulations and a *Guidance Note for the Examination of Higher Degrees by Research* (this document).

- Please complete and return the Preliminary Report form to researchdegrees@port.ac.uk as soon as possible, or at least 10 working days before the date of the *viva voce* examination.

- Please let us know immediately if you are recommending that the *viva voce* should not proceed.

- Prior to the *viva* you will have been sent the form Examiners' Recommendation (UP7B) to record your decision after the examination, along with copies of all examiners' Preliminary Reports.

The Role of the Candidate's First Supervisor

- It is the responsibility of the First Supervisor to arrange the date, time and venue of the *viva voce* and to inform the Candidate, Examiners and Independent Chair, where appointed.

- The First Supervisor (or any member of the Supervisory Team) may attend the *viva voce* if the Candidate agrees.

- If attending, the Supervisor will enter and leave the room at the same time as the Candidate and should only participate in the discussion if asked by the Examiners to provide clarification on a specific matter.

- The Supervisor is not permitted to be present during discussion regarding the recommendation made by the Examiners on the outcome of the examination.

- The First Supervisor may attend the feedback session if the Candidate agrees.

The Role of the Independent Chair (if appointed)

- An Independent Chair may be appointed for any of the following reasons:
  - At the request of the Candidate
  - The External Examiner does not have experience of examining research degree Candidates at the appropriate level (if this is the case, the Internal Examiner must have experience of examining at the appropriate level)
  - The supervisory team or Faculty Research Degree Committee identify concerns that require the presence of an independent authority to oversee the examination process, such as the Candidate submitted against the advice of the First Supervisor or following referral or resubmission
  - The Internal or External Examiner has examined another thesis put forward by the Candidate's First Supervisor during the previous two years
  - The Internal Examiner has published with, sought external finance with, or delivered a joint conference paper with the Candidate during the period of the Candidate's registration
  - If no Examiner has experience of examining a research degree in the UK
  - The External Examiner has published with a member of the supervisory team in the past 5 years
  - If the Examiners fail to reach a unanimous verdict and a further examiner is appointed with a new formal examination.
  - If the student has been subject to a pre-viva referral or post-viva resubmission
  - In cases where the student requires reasonable adjustments
- An Independent Chair has a non-examining procedural role and will advise accordingly.

The *viva voce* Examination

- The *viva voce* may not proceed unless all the Examiners, Independent Chair (if appointed) and the Candidate are present.

- The examination will normally be chaired by the External Examiner. If two External Examiners are appointed, the decision of who chairs will be by mutual agreement. If Independent Chair has been appointed they will chair the examination.

- The tone of the questioning during the oral examination should be such that it provides the Candidate with the opportunity to show their full potential in their understanding of the research, appropriate research methods, and to defend their views and interpretation without being confrontational.

- During the *viva voce*, the Examiners should:
  - test the Candidate's knowledge of matters relevant to the subject of the thesis;
  - clarify any ambiguities in the thesis,
  - confirm they are satisfied that the thesis is the Candidate's own work,
  - discuss any issues raised by their preliminary examination of the thesis,
  - ensure the Candidate is familiar with the relation of his/her work to the field of study from the literature review, and
  - ensure that the Candidate's knowledge of understanding of the subject is of the standard required for the award of the degree.

After the *viva voce* Examination

- On completion of the *viva voce* examination the Candidate will leave the room while the Examiners discuss their recommendation. If the Supervisor has attended then they will also leave the room.

- The Candidate will be asked to return (with the Supervisor if the Candidate requests it) and will be advised of the intended recommendation.

- The recommendations available to the Examiners are listed on the Examiner Decision Form (UP7B).

- Following the *viva voce*, the Internal Examiner should immediately return the completed form (UP7B) to Research Degrees via email to researchdegrees@port.ac.uk.

- If the student is required to complete corrections to their thesis, the examiners should return the Examiners Amendment and Feedback form to researchdegrees@port.ac.uk within 10 working days of the viva taking place.

Higher Degrees by Research

The University awards the following Higher Degrees by Research, governed by the Regulations for Research Degrees[1]:

- Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- Doctor of Medicine (MD)
- Doctor of Philosophy by Publication

The University awards the following Professional Doctorates, governed by the Regulations for Research Degrees (for further information on the Professional Doctorate programmes please see the next section):

- Doctor of Criminal Justice (DCrimJ)
- Doctor of Security Risk Management (DSyRM)
- Doctor of Education (EdD)
- Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
- Doctor of Biomedical Science (DBMS)
- Doctor of Forensic Psychology (DForenPsy)
- Doctor of Health Science (DHealthSci)
- Doctor of Medical Imaging (DMedIm)
- Doctor of Nursing (DNursing)
- Doctor of Pharmacy (DPharm)
- Doctor of Social Work (DSW)
- Doctor of Sport and Exercise Psychology (DSEP)
- Doctor of Sport, Exercise and Health Science (DSEHS)

The awards are given in recognition of:

- the completion of an approved programme of supervised research;
- the submission of a thesis, being a written document and/or other approved submission, embodying the results of the research programme and the conclusions drawn from the results;
- the successful defence of the thesis at a *viva voce* examination.

Additionally:

- Professional Doctorate Candidates are required to give a presentation before the *viva voce* examination. The option of an informal presentation, prior to the *viva voce* examination, only to the Examiners, is available to all Research Students but is not a compulsory element of the examination.

The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies[2] (see extract from FHEQ in Appendix 1) should also be referred to with regards to the qualification descriptors for Doctoral (level 8) and Master (level 7).

Please note that the word limit for a thesis, as listed in the Regulations for Research Degrees are maximum word limits. There is no minimum word limit set, unless specified in the Regulations.

[1] https://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-115.
[2] https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code

Professional Doctorate Programmes

Professional Doctorates are an alternative approach to Doctoral level learning in the UK. They have been designed to enable practitioners in related fields to combine higher learning with research in the workplace. Most programmes combine a substantial 'taught element' (Research Training) during the early part of the course. This is separately examined and credit awarded upon completion. We refer to this as the Taught Stage of the course.

The Taught Stage of the *Professional Doctorate* programmes at the University consists of formal learning delivered by the University of Portsmouth that covers topics such as: research methods, professionalism, reflective practice and writing for publication and dissemination. These topics prepare students for the final part of the taught phase which includes submission of a research proposal, and Professional Doctorate students are supported through this part of the programme by scheduled workshops, tutorials and group activities. A variety of assessment methods are employed so as to develop a range of individual and collaborative skills and knowledge.

After successful completion of the Taught Phase, students undertake a work-based research project, It is only this latter component which is examined by Internal and External Examiners. The assessment comprises three parts:

1. a submission of a portfolio (usually presented as a detailed research report or thesis) should not exceed the 50,000 word count, excluding ancillary data
2. a presentation (about 50 minutes duration), followed by a short question and answer session
3. a *viva voce*, with both External and Internal Examiners.

The main characteristics which differentiate a Professional Doctorate from a PhD project are:

1. The Professional Doctorate project comprises around two thirds of the total credit points of the course (the other third is course work from Part 1) as opposed to the PhD thesis being the only outcome undergoing assessment.
2. The duration of the research phase of the Professional Doctorate is usually between two- and four-years part time as opposed to six years for a PhD.
3. There is an expectation that the project is work or practice based for the Professional Doctorate project.
4. Maximum length for a Professional Doctorate thesis is 50,000 compared to 80,000 for a PhD.

Pre-viva

Dispatching of the thesis to Examiners

The Candidate will submit the thesis for examination to Research Degrees who will send the thesis to the Examiners with paperwork relating to the relevant examination, which will include the following:

- Thesis - as submitted by the Candidate
- Covid-19 Impact Statement (where applicable)
- Examiner Preliminary Examination Report (UP7A) for completion
- Guidance for the Examination of Higher Degrees by Research (this document)
- Link to the Regulations for Research Degrees[3]

The version of the thesis sent to the examiners by Research Degrees will be the version which the examiners consider when completing their preliminary reports and during the *viva voce* itself. No updated copies shall be sent to the examiners by the student or a member of their Supervisory team until either a referral decision has been indicated, or amendments have been requested after the *viva voce.*

Covid-19 Impact Statement

Where one has been submitted, Examiners should consider the Covid-19 Impact Statement in relation to the scope and volume of the research student's work but should always assess the thesis and the student at the oral examination using the criteria as set out as in the University of Portsmouth Regulations for Research Degrees. Examiners should consider whether the quality of the ideas and work meet academic standards while taking account of any potential limitations on the research conducted due to Covid-19 restrictions. The quality threshold for the award remains unchanged and there must be no compromise in the integrity of the examination or the award, but Examiners are invited to consider aspects of the research design and execution where effort was made or was intended, but which subsequently had to be discarded because of Covid-19, and the effect on the work of that mitigation.

Where the examiners ask the student to submit minor or major corrections, they should be guided by the Covid-19 Research Degrees Impact Statement as to what is achievable within the time provided.

For the full University of Portsmouth Covid-19 Research Degrees Impact Statement Policy, please see https://myport.port.ac.uk/guidance-and-support/research-degrees/examination.

Examiner Preliminary Examination Report (UP7A)

Each appointed Examiner will be asked to independently assess the thesis prior to *viva* and return the Examiner Preliminary Examination Report (UP7A) to Research Degrees at researchdegrees@port.ac.uk.

Each Examiner is required to prepare a detailed report for submission within Section C before the *viva voce*. The report is expected to include the reasons why the student should or should not proceed to viva, an indication of the quality of the thesis and any notes relating to the formatting of the document.

The UP7As will be shared with all examiners by Research Degrees before the *viva voce* for discussion at the pre-viva meeting.

We encourage Examiners to submit the full Examiner Preliminary Report form (UP7A) as soon as possible. Under the Regulations for Research Degrees it must be returned **no less than 10 working days prior to the date of the *viva voce*.**

[3] https://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-115.pdf?

Recommendation not to proceed to *viva*

If an Examiner's recommendation is that the *viva voce* should not proceed, they should notify Research Degrees immediately.

Should the Examiners' preliminary recommendations differ, Research Degrees will contact the FDPGR, who will liaise with the Examiners to attempt to reach an agreed decision on whether or not the *viva* should go ahead.

If all Examiners have separately recommended that the *viva* should not go ahead the First Supervisor will be notified as soon as possible. See Referral Section below.

Recommendation not to proceed to *viva* – Referral

If the Examiners agree that a thesis is not of the standard to proceed to a *viva voce* examination the Examiners will be asked to jointly provide a clear and explicit written summary of the shortcomings of the original thesis. The Candidate will be formally notified in writing.

The Candidate will be given **one year** to submit a revised thesis prior to further examination. This option may be exercised when, in the opinion of the Examiners, a thesis exhibits gross deficiencies in presentation or a failure to meet the key precepts for a Masters or Doctoral award (as appropriate) as set out in the 'Framework for HE Qualifications (Appendix 1).

If, due to extenuating circumstances, an extension to the period of re-submission is required by the Candidate, the Candidate will write to Research Degrees requesting an extension. A request for this to be granted will be sent to the Examiners, and the Candidate notified of their decision.

Following examination of the Referral Thesis the Examiners will each submit an independent UP7A (Referral) Form to recommend whether the *viva* may now proceed.

If the Examiners agree the thesis is still not acceptable the Candidate is failed. Failed Professional Doctorate Candidates will be eligible for an exit award, subject to approval by the Board of Examiners.

Suspected Plagiarism or Unacknowledged use of AI

If plagiarism is suspected the Examiner should contact Research Degrees. The allegation will be forwarded to the Director of Corporate Governance for investigation, as per the Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct in Research[4].

Arrangements for the *viva voce* (Oral examination)

It is the responsibility of the First Supervisor to arrange the date, time and venue of the *viva voce* with the Candidate, Examiners and Independent Chair (where applicable). If the *viva voce* is held by video conference, both the pre-*viva* meeting and the *viva voce* itself must be set-up and hosted (in electronic terms) by the Internal Examiner, unless an Independent Chair has been appointed, in which case they will be responsible for this. In case of technical issues on the day, the First Supervisor may be asked to set up and host the meetings. Research Degrees must be notified of the arrangement by the First Supervisor on the UPR5(A) form Confirmation of Arrangements for a *viva voce* Examination.

When arranging the examination, the First Supervisor should try to ensure that at least a month has elapsed between dispatch of the thesis to the Examiners and the *viva voce* date. Please note Research Degrees will advise on this process but are unable to make arrangements for a *viva voce.*

Viva voce examinations (and the presentation required for Professional Doctorates) are held at the University, by video conference or a hybrid of the two. In exceptional circumstances approval may be given to hold it at another venue.

---

[4] https://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-023.pdf?

The Candidate's First Supervisor (or any other member of the Supervisory Team) may attend the *viva voce*, as an observer, if the Candidate has agreed. If a Supervisor does not attend it is expected that they are available prior to and following the examination to offer advice and support to the Candidate.

If attending, the Supervisor should enter and leave the room at the same time as the Candidate and should only participate in the discussion if asked to provide clarification on a specific matter. The supervisor is not permitted to take part in the discussion regarding the recommendation made by the Examiners on the outcome of the examination.

Independent Chair

There are a number of circumstances when an Independent Chair will be appointed by the FDPGR. These circumstances can be found within the Regulations and in the Summary of Key Points for Examiners section which can be found earlier in this guidance document.

In the event that a *viva* is taking place with an Independent Chair then the Candidate, Examiners and First Supervisor will be informed.

Confidential Thesis

The Candidate may apply for their thesis to be confidential to enable a patent to be lodged or to protect commercially or politically sensitive material. An Application for a Thesis to be Confidential Form (UPR15) should be completed following discussion between the Candidate and First Supervisor and ideally prior to the thesis being submitted for examination.

Where confidentiality is approved by the FDPGR, the Examiners will be asked to acknowledge a 'Confidentiality Agreement' and return it to Research Degrees. Following submission of the final thesis from the Candidate, it will be retained by Research Degrees throughout the approved period of restriction. Normally the approved period of restriction is a maximum period of two years from the date of submission of the final thesis, unless approval have been given by University Research Degrees Committee for a period over the two years. At the end of the approved period of restriction the thesis will be lodged with the University Library and British Library.

Conduct of the *viva voce*

The *viva voce* for any award may not proceed unless all the Examiners, Independent Chair (where appointed) and the Candidate are present. If there is a problem, e.g. due to unexpected personal reasons or transport delays on the day, please contact Research Degrees and the First Supervisor as soon as possible.

The examination will normally be chaired by the External Examiner, unless an Independent Chair is appointed. If two External Examiners are appointed then it will usually be the most senior who chairs but may be either, by mutual agreement. The tone of the questioning during the oral examination should be such that it provides the Candidate with the opportunity to show their full potential in their understanding of the research, and to defend their views and interpretation, without being confrontational.

At the *viva voce* the Examiners will test the Candidate's knowledge of matters relevant to the subject of the thesis. The purpose is to enable the Examiners to clarify any ambiguities in the thesis and to confirm they are satisfied that the thesis presented is the Candidate's own work. They will ensure the Candidate is familiar with the relation of his/her work to the field of study from the literature review and that his/her knowledge of understanding of the subject is of the standard required for the award of the degree. The relevant qualification descriptors from the QAA HE Qualifications Framework must be met (Appendix 1). See above for details of the University of Portsmouth Professional Doctorate programme structure.

On completion of the *viva voce* examination the Candidate will leave the room while the Examiners discuss their recommendation. After which, the Candidate will be asked to return and will be advised of the intended recommendation to the Academic Registrar on behalf of Academic Council.

Examiners Recommendations at v*iva*

The recommendations available to the Examiners at *viva* are listed on the relevant Examiners' Decision Form (UP7B) and below:

- That the degree is awarded;
- That the degree is awarded subject to minor amendments;
- That the degree is awarded subject to major amendments;
- That the degree is not awarded now but the Candidate will be allowed to submit a revised thesis and be re-examined with or without a further *viva voce*;
- That the degree is not awarded;
- In the case of a Candidate who submitted for a PhD they may be awarded an MPhil subject to appropriate amendments to the thesis.

As part of the consideration in reaching a recommendation for an award, Examiners are confirming that in their view the standards of the work are appropriately at the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications applicable to the award submitted for (level 8: Doctoral degree qualification - PhD, MD, Prof Doc; or level 7: Master's degree qualification - MPhil)

The recommendation made by the Examiners at the *viva* must be based on academic grounds and whether or not the thesis satisfies the criteria for award and whether the required learning outcomes have been met. Amendments must be determined by nature rather than what can be done within a time frame.

Following the *viva voce* examination

The Internal Examiner should inform Research Degrees of the recommendation within 24 hours by returning the completed form (UP7B) via email to researchdegrees@port.ac.uk.

Research Degrees will write to the Candidate confirming the Examiners' recommendation and provide information regarding the Candidate's responsibilities with regards to the time limits available for the revisions and re-submission, as appropriate.

Award – Pass

Where the Examiners have recommended Pass at the *viva voce* examination then the date of the award will be the date when the *viva* was held.

Research Degrees will write to the Candidate confirming the Examiners' recommendation. They will also provide information regarding the Candidate's responsibilities and the final requirements to be eligible to receive the Award Certificate and attend Graduation.

Award – subject to minor amendments

In many cases the Examiners require minor amendments to the thesis. Award subject to Minor Amendments is recommended when the Examiners can confirm the standard of the work is at the appropriate level for the award, in line with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies.

Minor amendments refer to cases where changes suggested are for moderate omissions of substance, moderate typographical errors, limited further analysis (but such that it does not affect the originality of the central thesis) and/or limited revision of material. Candidates would not be expected to carry out any further empirical research.

Minor Amendments should not constitute changes to more than 10% of the work.

If more extensive amendments are required then the Examiners should recommend Award subject to major amendments, or Re-Examination at the *viva voce* examination and allow the Candidate to re-submit (see below).

Details of the required minor amendments will be provided by the Examiners when the Candidate is

told of their recommendation at the end of the *viva voce* examination and also in writing following the *viva voce*. If the Examiners recommendation (UP7B form) is to award the degree subject to minor amendments the Examiners are asked to confirm who will be checking the minor amendments. This can be the internal, external or both/all.

The Candidate will be given **three months** to complete the minor amendments, however they can submit earlier, if they wish to do so. The Candidate will submit the amendments alongside a separate document outlining where the changes in the thesis are to Research Degrees (researchdegrees@port.ac.uk) via email. The Examiner(s) checking the minor amendments can discuss and agree with the Candidate and First Supervisor the format of submission of the revised thesis for the Examiner(s) to check.

The Examiner(s) checking the minor amendments will be asked to complete the relevant Examiner Final Recommendation Report form (UP7C) Research Degrees, confirming the amendments have been satisfactorily completed.

Where the Examiners have recommended Pass with Minor Amendments at the *viva voce* examination then the date of the award will be the date when the completed minor amendments are approved.

Research Degrees will write to the Candidate confirming the Examiners' recommendation and provide information regarding the Candidate's responsibilities and the time limits available for the revisions.

Once the Candidate has submitted their amended thesis to Research Degrees, it will be forwarded to the Examiner(s) checking the amendments. Should they not be satisfied that the corrections have been satisfactorily completed, the Candidate will be give 20 working days to address these issues.

Award – subject to major amendments

Award subject to Major Amendments is recommended when the Examiners can confirm the standard of the work is at the appropriate level for the award, in line with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies.

The nature of amendments is more substantial than minor corrections and typographical errors, but are not of the extent that the learning outcomes have not been met, and the thesis would not require a significant rework. Such revisions might include, for example, amendments to more than 10% of the thesis, typographical/grammatical errors so numerous as to suggest carelessness, or so intrusive as to distract the reader's attention from the argument.

If more extensive amendments are required then the Examiners should recommend Re-Examination at the *viva voce* examination and allow the Candidate to re-submit (see below).

Details of the required major amendments will be provided by the Examiners when the Candidate is told of their recommendation at the end of the *viva voce* examination and also in writing following the *viva voce*. If the Examiners recommendation (UP7B form) is to award the degree subject to major amendments then **all** Examiners will consider the revised thesis and sign off amendments.

The Candidate will be given **six months** to complete the major amendments, however they can submit earlier, if they wish. The Candidate will submit the amendments alongside a separate document outlining where the changes in the thesis are to Research Degrees (researchdegrees@port.ac.uk) via email.. The Examiners can discuss and agree with the Candidate and First Supervisor the format of submission of the revised thesis for the Examiners to check.

The Examiners checking the major amendments will be asked to complete the relevant Examiner Final Recommendation Report form (UP7C) Research Degrees, confirming the amendments have been satisfactorily completed.

Where the Examiners have recommended Pass with Major Amendments at the *viva voce* examination then the date of the award will be the date when the completed major amendments are approved.

Research Degrees will write to the Candidate confirming the Examiners' recommendation and provide information regarding the Candidate's responsibilities and the time limits available for the revisions.

Once the Candidate has submitted their amended thesis to Research Degrees, it will be forwarded to the Examiner(s) checking the amendments. Should they not be satisfied that the corrections have been satisfactorily completed, the Candidate will be give 20 working days to address these issues.

No Award - Re-Examination without *viva*

Re-examination should be used where the standard of the award has not yet been met and the candidate is to be given the opportunity to make good the deficiencies of the first submission. Re-examination should be used when substantial additional work or research is required for the candidate to bring the thesis up to the required standard. This may consist of cases where whole chapters have to be significantly rewritten, the methodology requires extensive revision, or where limited further empirical research is required.

A Re-examination may include the restructuring of the thesis and should be capable of being completed within 12 months from the date of the *viva voce*. This recommendation by the examiners can be with (see below) or without a further viva.

Where a Candidate is required to re-submit the thesis for Re-Examination they are allowed up to **twelve months** from the date of the v*iva* in which to do so. The Examiners are required to submit a joint written report within 10 working days following the *viva voce,* to Research Degrees via email to researchdegrees@port.ac.uk. This is a clear and explicit written summary of both the amendments suggested and the shortcomings of the original thesis which the Examiners consider necessary for the thesis to be of the standard required for the award to be made. The report will be forwarded by Research Degrees to the Candidate, copied to their First Supervisor, with a letter formally notifying the Candidate of the result with details of the time limit and procedures for the re-submission.

The Candidate, if they wish to do so, can submit earlier (within the twelve months) if they have completed the amendments recommended by the Examiners. It is recommended that this is only done if supported by their First Supervisor, but First Supervisor approval is not compulsory.

If, due to extenuating circumstances, an extension to the period of Re-Examination is required by the Candidate, the Candidate will write to Research Degrees requesting an extension. A request for this to be granted will be sent to the Examiners and the Candidate notified of their decision.

The revised thesis must be submitted to Research Degrees. The thesis will be sent to the Examiners following the same procedures as for the first submission. The title page and front cover should show the date of the resubmission.

The recommendations open to the Examiners following the Re-Examination without *viva* are:

- That the degree is awarded;
- That the degree is awarded subject to minor amendments;
- That the degree is awarded subject to major amendments;
- That the degree is not awarded;
- In the case of a Candidate who submitted for a PhD they may be awarded an MPhil subject to appropriate amendments to the thesis.

As part of the consideration in reaching a recommendation for an award, Examiners are confirming that in their view the standards of the work are appropriately at the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications applicable to the award submitted for (level 8: Doctoral degree qualification - PhD, MD, Prof Doc; or level 7: Master's degree qualification - MPhil)

The date of the award will be the date when the Examiners notify Research Degrees that the thesis is satisfactory via a UP7C form.

No Award - Re-Examination with *viva*

Where a Candidate is required to re-submit the thesis for Re-Examination, they are allowed up to twelve months from the date of the v*iva* in which to do so. The Examiners are required to submit a joint written report within 10 working days following the *viva voce,* to Research Degrees via email to researchdegrees@port.ac.uk. This is a clear and explicit written summary of both the amendments suggested and the shortcomings of the original thesis which the Examiners consider necessary for

the thesis to be of the standard required for the award to be made. The report will be forwarded by Research Degrees to the Candidate, copied to their First Supervisor, with a letter formally notifying the Candidate of the result with details of the time limit and procedures for the re-submission.

The Candidate, if they wish to do so, can submit earlier (within the twelve months) if they have completed the amendments recommended by the Examiners. It is recommended that this is only done if supported by their First Supervisor, but First Supervisor approval is not compulsory.

If, due to extenuating circumstances, an extension to the period of Re-Examination is required by the Candidate, the Candidate will write to Research Degrees requesting an extension. A request for this to be granted will be sent to the Examiners and the Candidate notified of their decision.

The revised thesis must be submitted to Research Degrees. The thesis will be sent to the Examiners following the same procedures as for the first submission. The title page and front cover should show the date of the resubmission.

As with the first *viva,* it is the responsibility of the First Supervisor to arrange the date, time and venue of the *viva voce* with the Candidate, Examiners and Independent Chair (where applicable). See sections above on the Arrangements for *viva voce* and Conduct of v*iva voce* for further details.

The recommendations available to the Examiners at the Re-Examination v*iva voce* are listed on the relevant Examiners' Decision Form (UP7B Re-Examination). The recommendations open to the Examiners following the Re-Examination *viva voce* are:

- That the degree is awarded;
- That the degree is awarded subject to minor amendments;
- That the degree is awarded subject to major amendments;
- That the degree is not awarded;
- In the case of a Candidate who submitted for a PhD they may be awarded an MPhil subject to appropriate amendments to the thesis.

As part of the consideration in reaching a recommendation for an award, Examiners are confirming that in their view the standards of the work are appropriately at the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications applicable to the award submitted for (level 8: Doctoral degree qualification - PhD, MD, Prof Doc; or level 7: Master's degree qualification - MPhil).

No Award - Fail

If a Candidate is failed, the Examiners will be required to submit a joint report detailing their reasons for this decision.

Professional Doctorate Candidates who are failed will be eligible for an exit award, subject to approval by the Board of Examiners.

Fail - Lower Award Recommended

Only available for those Candidates who submitted for PhD. If a Candidate has failed to meet the required standard for the award at level 8: Doctoral degree qualification but has met the standard of level 7: Master's degree qualification then the Examiners can recommend a lower award of MPhil subject to any minor amendments or corrections to the thesis.

The Examiners will be required to submit a joint report detailing their reason for this decision, including any minor amendments that would need to be made. Also see Award – subject to Minor Amendments section above with regards to process for approval of minor amendments.

Award of a Higher Degree by Research or Professional Doctorate

The award of the research degree will be confirmed when:

- The approved final thesis as a PDF copy (including a completed Thesis Deposit Agreement form) has been submitted to Research Degrees by the Candidate.

- The examination reports have been signed by the Academic Registrar on behalf of Academic Council;

Additionally:

- The relevant Board of Examiners for the Professional Doctorate have agreed the award.

Research Degrees will send the successful Candidate an electronic link to access their Certificate and letter of congratulations from the Vice Chancellor. Unless there is a confidential embargo on the thesis, this will be lodged with The University Library and details sent to the British Library.

Eligibility for Graduation

In order for the Candidate to attend the July Graduation ceremonies, the required amendments must have been approved by the relevant Examiner(s), the final UP7C signed and received by Research Degrees Services AND the Candidate must submit the Final Thesis by **5th July** of that year.

Administrative Contacts

Email: researchdegrees@port.ac.uk

Telephone: (023 92) 847707

Appendix One - extract from QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education - The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies

Descriptor for a qualification at level 7 (Masters' degree):

Masters degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice;
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;
- originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
    - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline;
    - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level;

and holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
    - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;
    - decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations;
    - the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

Descriptor for qualifications at level 8 (Doctoral degree):

Doctorates are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;
- a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
- the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;
- a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches;

And will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.