

VIII. Master of Philosophy Degree Progress Regulations

Postgraduate research students are responsible for familiarising themselves with the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes approved by Senate, which is reviewed annually and made available each academic year and included in the Handbook for Research Students and Supervisors.
(<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/Publications.htm>)

The basis for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy to staff candidates shall be the same as the basis for the award of the degree to students.

A. Introduction

1. Applicants for the degree of Master of Philosophy are required to show familiarity and understanding of the chosen subject and its principal sources and authorities. A student must demonstrate the ability to deal with the chosen subject in a competent and scholarly manner displaying critical discrimination and a sense of proportion in evaluating the evidence and opinions of others. (The University Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/Publications.htm> provides further details in the section, 'Criteria for the Master of Philosophy'.) The thesis submitted by the student should be clear, well-written and orderly in arrangement and include a bibliography in which the sources used are accurately and systematically presented.
2. Where the University has approved that research students may be registered and managed by a research institute, the director of the institute has the same authority and responsibility as a head of school. In these situations, references to school and head of school include *institute* and *director of institute*.

B. Admission as a Student for the Degree of Master of Philosophy

3. An applicant may be approved for admission as a student for the degree of Master of Philosophy by a minimum of two postgraduate admissions selectors in accordance with the University's *Postgraduate Admissions Policy* and faculty / programme criteria approved by respective deans of postgraduate studies where an applicant:
 - a) is a graduate of this or another approved university or other approved degree awarding body or holds other qualifications approved by the dean of postgraduate studies;
 - b) has completed an approved application, including:
 - i. evidence of the applicant's suitability to become a student in terms of academic ability and prior training and experience.
 - ii. evidence that the applicant's English language proficiency meets the published requirements for the programme of research;

- iii. a research proposal, if required;
 - c) has supplied details of two recent referees and evidence of qualifications and experience as the postgraduate admissions selectors and/or the dean of postgraduate studies may require.
4. Where an applicant has previously studied for a Master of Philosophy at another institution and wishes this to be taken into account at Newcastle University, the application must be approved by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee).
5. In considering an application for admission as a student for the degree of Master of Philosophy, the postgraduate admissions selectors must be satisfied not only as to the suitability of the applicant, but also as to the availability to the applicant of appropriate supervision and suitable facilities and resources once the applicant is admitted. It is the responsibility of the relevant head of school, directly or through the postgraduate admissions selectors, to ensure that appropriate supervision, suitable facilities and resources will be available to an applicant once admitted.

C. Admission as a Staff Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

6. In addition to the requirements set out in Regulation B, a member of staff seeking approval as a staff candidate for the degree of Master of Philosophy shall be required to complete and submit an application at the outset of studies in which is set out:
- a) a description of proposed research as specified by the relevant Faculty;
 - b) details of the nature of the appointment held by the member of staff and its duration;
 - c) approval from both the head of the school of employment and the head of school of study.

Notes:

- (i) *For the purpose of agreeing staff fee, the applicant must hold a substantive post, defined as being a contract of employment of at least 25% FTE over a full 12 months period, and covering the annual period of registration with the University. This does not include people who were initially Students and then employed part-time by the University, e.g. as demonstrators, General Duty Assistants, Laboratory Technicians, etc.*
- (ii) *Retrospective registration requests from staff candidates will continue to be considered on a case by case basis, but requests of more than one year of retrospective registration would not normally be supported.*

D. General Preconditions to the Award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy

7. Before being awarded the degree of Master of Philosophy, a student must:

- a) satisfy the entrance requirements for the degree;
- b) register for and make satisfactory progress throughout the relevant programme of study;
- c) satisfy the examiners in the assessments specified.

E. Supervision of Students

8. A student for the degree of Master of Philosophy must engage in advanced study and research under the direction of a supervisory team in the University. The supervisory team normally consists of at least two members of University staff and the academic supervisor is appointed by the head of school, or nominee, before a student is accepted onto the programme of study.

9. To be eligible to supervise students for the degree of Master of Philosophy, a member of staff must hold a research degree or have equivalent research expertise. The appropriateness of the research degree or equivalent expertise should be determined by the relevant head of school in consultation with the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee).

10. The academic supervisor will be a member of staff of Newcastle University and will normally have had previous experience of at least one successful supervision. The academic supervisor will have primary responsibility for supporting the student throughout the period of study. Any reference to the supervisor in these regulations or in the *Code of Practice for Research Degree programmes* or in other documents shall be deemed to be a reference to the supervisory team.

11. In any case where a student is studying outside the University at another institution, arrangements may also be made for local supervision and support to be provided to the candidate by staff at that institution (see Regulation 16). Such arrangements will supplement the role of the academic supervisor detailed in Regulation 10 above. Where External Advisors are added to the supervisory team, the Principles for the appointment of External Advisor should be consulted at:

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/FormsPolicies.htm>

Notes:

- (i) Where the members of the supervisory team are permanently changed a student should normally be consulted in advance. The outcome of the consultation informs decisions made regarding the supervisory team.*
- (ii) On rare occasions supervisory relations may break down. In such circumstances, in the first instance a student should consult with another member of the supervisory team. If it is not possible to resolve the problems in this manner, then the student and/or a member of the supervisory team should report difficulties, in writing, to the head of school (or nominee), who may refer the matter, if necessary, to the relevant graduate school administrator or dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) for advice.*

- (iii) *All supervisory changes must be notified to the relevant graduate school administrator and be agreed by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee).*
- (iv) *The Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes provides further details on changes to supervisory teams and on appropriate supervisory support for a research student.*

F. Period of Study and Registration Requirements

12. An applicant may be approved as a student for the degree of Master of Philosophy on the basis of either:

- a) a minimum period of 12 months in full-time study; *or*
- b) a minimum period of 24 months in part-time study.

13. Approved applicants shall be required to register as appropriate as full-time or part-time students of the University for the duration of the minimum period specified, and to abide by the requirements of the University's *General Regulations*. A student's period of study is reckoned from the date of first registration for the degree of Master of Philosophy.

Note:

Staff candidates shall be deemed to be registered as part-time students during their period of candidature and therefore, shall normally be two years in length as outlined in Regulation 12(b). However, if the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) is satisfied that the greater part of the candidate's time is devoted to supervised research the candidature can be deemed to be 1 year of full-time study as outlined in Regulation 12(a).

14. Any student who wishes to transfer from one of the categories of candidature specified in Regulation 12 to another such category may do so only with the approval of the appropriate dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) and subject to the recommendation of the relevant supervisory team and head of school.

15. In all cases of candidature approved under Regulation 12, approved students shall be required to register continuously from commencement of their candidature until completion. During this time a student must abide by the requirements of the University's *General Regulations*.

G. Study Undertaken Outside the University

16. Any student may be permitted by a dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee), on the recommendation of the relevant supervisory team and head of school, to study outside the University (or an approved campus) for more than one month. Approval should normally be sought three months in advance of the start of the period of outside study and the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) should be satisfied before the beginning of that period of study that:

- a) the student will have access to adequate facilities, resources and appropriate research training;
- b) sufficient time for study and research will be available to the student;

- c) appropriate arrangements have been made for the student's supervision and progress monitoring during the period of study outside the University, including arrangements for the supervisory team to maintain contact with and to meet with the student in accordance with requirements stated in the Code of Practice for Research Degree programmes and as often as is necessary;
- d) appropriate arrangements have been made in any case where the student is attached to or working at an institution outside the University and is offered local supervision and support by staff at that institution.
- e) any relevant health and safety issues have been considered and approved by the head of school/nominee in line with University guidelines and University Insurance policies.

All study visits, of any duration, by a student to a high-risk location must also be signed off by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee), or faculty PVC under certain circumstances. (More information is available in the 'Travel and Outside Study (off-campus and abroad) Guidance for Postgraduate Research Students':

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/changeCircs/StudyOutside.htm>

Notes:

- (i) *that periods of study outside the University of less than one month should be agreed within the student's school and the student should complete a Student Notice of Absence form.*
- (ii) *that any student who is permitted to undertake part of their study outside of the University is still required to pay the standard fees whilst within their candidature unless alternative arrangements were approved as part of the admission process.*
- (iii) *that any student who is permitted to undertake part of their study outside of the University is still required to have their attendance monitored on the programme, including time registered as a pending or extended submission student.*
- (iv) *that any student who is permitted to undertake part of their study outside of the University is still required to adhere to their deadline for submission, unless an extension or interruption of studies has been agreed as part of the outside study approval.*

Notes for Tier 4 Visa Holders

- (v) *that students are required to inform the University if they are away from Newcastle (or approved campus) as a condition of their visa sponsorship.*
- (vi) *that students under candidature who are undertaking primary research outside the UK will normally only be permitted to do this for 12 months without curtailment of the Tier 4 visa.*
- (vii) *that students who are leaving the UK to write-up in their home country or elsewhere will normally have their Tier 4 visa curtailed.*

H. Attendance and Progress

17. A student registered for the degree of Master of Philosophy shall comply with the University's requirements for progression, as follows:

- a) Within one month of registering for the research programme, the student and the University shall have signed an approved learning agreement to cover the period of candidature;
- b) A student should submit a project proposal within the guidelines identified by the relevant graduate school committee, up to a maximum of three months (up to six months for part-time students) of registering on the programme. The student's project proposal must be approved by an independent school panel and head of school/nominee, before being submitted for approval by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee). Where a student's project proposal has already been reviewed and approved by external peer review, a project plan and supervisory team list should still be submitted to the panel for approval before being submitted for approval by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee).

Progression on the programme will be dependent upon acceptance of the project proposal. If the school panel is unable to support the initial project proposal, a student will be permitted an opportunity for re-assessment, normally within three months (six months for part-time students). If, even after a re-assessment opportunity, the school panel does not approve the arrangements for the project it will be the annual progression panel that will be required to make a recommendation regarding the outcome for a student (see Regulation 20);

- c) A student should attend the University as frequently and at such intervals as the supervisory team shall require, bearing in mind whether the candidate is registered as full-time or part-time and allowing for any period of study undertaken outside the University. As a minimum, in accordance with the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes, full-time students, should have regular contact with their academic supervisor at least ten times a year, approximately once per month, and should have formal contact with their supervisory team at least three times a year, normally once per term, while they are in candidature and up to submission (structured interactions for part-time students should be pro-rata). The University requires that a student records and confirms the outcomes of supervisory meetings, via ePortfolio.
- d) In addition to c) above, any student who is a Tier 4 visa holder should continue to record and confirm the outcomes of their regular supervisory meetings via ePortfolio while under examination through to completion of their studies, as a condition of their visa sponsorship.
- e) A student should maintain a record of their personal development throughout their period of registration and submit this as evidence of development on an annual basis to their progress panel;
- f) A student should submit reports and evidence of achievement as specified by the school or faculty graduate school committee on an annual basis. A student may also be required to make a project presentation or submit a piece of work or to attend a viva as

prescribed by the school. This material, along with reports from the supervisory team, will be considered as part of an annual submission to the progress panel for each student.

18. The school will appoint a progress panel for each student. The progress of each student will be reviewed annually via ePortfolio, until submission of the thesis for examination although this requirement may be stayed at the discretion of the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) if the candidate is ready to submit a thesis within the 12 month registration period.

19. The supervisory team shall submit an annual report via ePortfolio concerning the progress of the candidate's research for review by the appointed progress panel.

20. The progress panel will make a report to the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) via ePortfolio and further progress on the programme of study is subject to approval by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee). In addition to detailed feedback that the progress panel may wish to provide to the student and the supervisory team, the progress panel will make one of the following recommendations:

- a) that the student's performance is satisfactory and that study for the Master of Philosophy may continue;
- b) that notwithstanding some concerns which the student and supervisory team should note, the student's overall performance is satisfactory and that the student may continue;
- c) that the student's performance is unsatisfactory and that a further assessment should be held normally within two months (four months for part-time students) to determine whether progress on the programme will be recommended;
- d) that the student's performance is unsatisfactory and that no submission for a Master of Philosophy examination is recommended, and that the candidate's candidature is terminated.

21. In exceptional cases where the progress panel is not satisfied that the supervisory arrangements are adequate and appropriate, but considers that the student would otherwise be able to achieve the standards of the award, the panel may seek the approval of the head of school, to make a recommendation to the dean of postgraduate studies for the replacement of all or part of the supervisory team.

22. The annual progression review procedure will be deemed equivalent to a board of examiners and therefore the University's Assessment Irregularities procedure shall apply to any reported or suspected cheating or plagiarism (<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/Procedures/assessment.htm>)

Notes:

- (i) *That the progress panel should not normally recommend that a student's registration is terminated (Regulation 20(d)), without having previously provided a further progress review/re-assessment opportunity to the student (Regulation 20(c)).*
- (ii) *That any further progress review/re-assessment opportunity should be recorded via ePortfolio.*

(iii) In each annual Progress Review, a student should normally only have one further progress review/re-assessment opportunity.

J. Progress of Students Intending to Transfer to Registration for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

23. Students who are accepted as candidates for the degree of Master of Philosophy intending subsequently to transfer to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, must normally have received the recommendation of the progress panel and approval of the relevant dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) to transfer not later than 12 months after commencing their studies (if studying full-time) and not later than 24 months (if studying part-time). Transfer from registration for the degree of Master of Philosophy to registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy shall not normally be permitted unless the student has been registered for the degree of Master of Philosophy for at least nine months. Any student shall, for all purposes under the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, be deemed to have registered for that degree at the date of initial registration as a candidate for the degree of Master of Philosophy.

K. Mid-Year Procedure for Dealing with Unsatisfactory Progress

24. A student whose progress is considered unsatisfactory by the supervisory team at times other than the normal annual assessment of progress shall be notified in writing of the reasons for this opinion and shall be given the opportunity of an interview with the supervisory team. Following this notice and any interview, and taking account of all known circumstances, the supervisory team may, either

- a) monitor the student's attendance, progress and performance for a specified period; this may require the undertaking of additional pieces of work. If the student's performance has not improved within the period specified in the written notice, the supervisory team shall notify the head of school or nominee and submit a report for review by the progress panel; *or*
- b) the supervisory team shall notify the head of school or nominee and submit a report for review by the progress panel without undertaking a period of monitoring.

In either case, where a report is made to the progress panel for review of the student's progress, the student shall also be given the opportunity to submit a report to the progress panel. The progress panel will make a report to the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) in accordance with Regulation 20. The review should be recorded in ePortfolio.

L. Procedure for Review of Penalties for Unsatisfactory Progress

25. A student applying for review of the decision of the progress panel may only do so in writing, using the University Academic Queries and Appeals

Procedure specifying one or more of the following grounds (<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/Procedures/appeals.htm>)

- a) that the progress panel were not aware of circumstances affecting the student's performance. (That is: the student was adversely affected by illness or other factors of which s/he was previously unaware, or which for a good cause, s/he was unable to disclose to the progress panel);
- b) procedural irregularity on the part of the progress panel;
- c) bias or prejudice on the part of the progress panel;
- d) that the decision reached was perverse in that it was one which no reasonable person could have reached on the available evidence.

M. Change of Circumstances

26. The University normally expects a student to complete candidature in a single continuous period (i.e. to be continuously registered until completion) and to submit within the maximum candidature for the programme. However, it recognises that this may not always be possible.

27. The Dean of Postgraduate Studies will give sympathetic consideration to requests for periods of interruptions, subject to the student providing a strong justification and evidence, supported by the supervisory team. However, candidature should not normally be held in abeyance for more than twelve months. .

28. Absences of more than one month will normally be classed as an interruption of study.

29. A request for a period of interruption should be submitted by the student, via ePortfolio, prior to the time of the occurrence, where possible, or as soon as possible thereafter.

30. Retrospective (backdated) interruptions will not be considered, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

31. Retrospective (backdated) interruptions are not permitted for students who are Tier 4 visa holders.

32. In exceptional cases, the Dean of Postgraduate Studies will consider an extension of time for submission, subject to the student providing a strong justification and evidence, supported by the supervisory team.

33. A request for an extension of time for submission must be submitted by the student, via ePortfolio, before the current deadline for submission.

34. A student granted an extension of time for submission will be required to register as an 'extended submission' student and pay tuitions as stipulated in the University's fee schedule.

Notes:

- (i) A formal interruption of study will adjust a student's latest submission deadline in line with the period of interruption.*
- (ii) Absences of less than one month should be recorded via the Student Notice of Absence form, but do not constitute a formal*

interruption of study and as such the latest submission deadline is not adjusted.

- (iii) *A student who is still actively researching during an 'extended submission' period must continue full registration and will pay the full tuition fee for the period of their continued candidature.*
- (iv) *It is expected that a student who is registered as 'extended submission' will continue to receive regular structured interactions with members of the supervisory team and full access to Library and Computing facilities will be available.*
- (v) *A student should not assume that an interruption or extension request will be approved and should continue with their studies, where possible, until the formal decision is received.*

N. Teaching Duties

35. A Master of Philosophy student may undertake paid duties in the University during term in any period of full-time study, provided that they consult their academic supervisor about the time that may be devoted to such duties and provided that they do not contravene the terms of any studentship that they might hold. Ordinarily, this will mean that teaching duties are additional to the normal commitments of a sponsored full-time student. All teaching *must be conducted in accordance with the University's Postgraduates Who Teach Policy* available at: <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/FormsPolicies.htm>

P. Submission

36. The results of a student's advanced study and research must be embodied in a thesis in the approved form in accordance with the *Rules for the Submission of Work for Higher Degrees* and the *Rules for the Form of Theses* (see sections XIV and XV). The length of a thesis shall be determined bearing in mind the requirements laid down, or guidance issued, if any, by the candidate's graduate school committee. The thesis must be submitted electronically, together with the necessary submission form and other material, to the relevant graduate school administrator.

All submitted theses will be scrutinised by the University using plagiarism identification software. If any incidences of plagiarism are detected then the University's Procedure for Assessment Irregularities will apply. <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/Procedures/assessment.htm>

37. The exact title of a student's thesis should be submitted on ePortfolio for approval by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) normally three months before the thesis is submitted. Any change to the approved title of thesis following the initial approval must be notified to the relevant graduate school administrator and be agreed by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee).

38. The thesis for all students must be submitted for examination within the period specified below from the date appointed as the beginning of the period of study:

- a) within two years in the case of students registered full time;

- b) within three years in the case of students registered part time.

39. Except with the permission of the appropriate dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee), a student may not submit a thesis earlier than the beginning of the last term of the prescribed period of study. Any student who submits a thesis earlier than the minimum period of advanced study and research with the appropriate permission, shall nevertheless still be required to pay tuition fees (full-time or part-time as appropriate, depending on the type of candidature) for the whole of the minimum prescribed period of study.

40. Where a student has an outstanding tuition fee debt, a thesis can be submitted by the submission deadline, however, examination of the thesis will be on-hold until receipt of the outstanding tuition fees.

R. Pending Submission for Candidates Completing their Minimum Period of Candidature

41. A student who has completed their minimum candidature and has not submitted their thesis may be permitted on the recommendation of their progress panel to proceed to 'pending submission' student status for one further year. All 'pending submission' students are required to register with the University.

Notes

- (i) *A student who has completed their minimum candidature and who still requires more time to work on their research and thesis must continue full registration with the University.*
- (ii) *The fact that a student has completed their minimum candidature does not of itself constitute grounds for transferring to 'pending submission' registration. A student who is still actively researching must continue full registration and will pay the full tuition fee for the period of their continued candidature. A student registering under the 'pending submission' category will not be permitted to work in laboratories or studios or to take part in field trips (unless they have the authority of the appropriate head of school to do so for teaching or demonstrating purposes).*
- (iii) *It is expected that a student who is registered as 'pending submission' will continue to receive regular structured interactions with members of the supervisory team and full access to Library and computing facilities will be available.*

S. Language of Submission

42. A student's thesis must be written in English. In exceptional cases, subject to the student justifying such a concession, the appropriate dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) may allow the student to submit a thesis written in a modern language other than English. Such a concession shall be granted only where a student can demonstrate that the language of submission is integral to the research project, for example where the object of study is an aspect of the literary or linguistic culture of the language of submission and/or a significant proportion of the secondary literature on the object of study is

written in the language of submission. Approval for submission in a language other than English must be sought at the time of application to study for the degree. Where approval is granted, the abstract of the thesis must be written in English.

T. Examination

43. Details of the required arrangements for the examination are provided in the IX *Master of Philosophy Examination Conventions*.

Note:

The University cannot undertake to arrange the examination of a thesis immediately after its submission. Students are warned that several weeks may elapse between the submission of a thesis and the completion of the examination. The normal period between submission of a thesis and an examination is ten weeks, although circumstances may necessitate a longer time frame. Students shall be kept informed of the progress of the examination at monthly intervals by the Graduate School Administrator, should the examination process extend beyond the normal ten week period.

IX. Master of Philosophy Examination Conventions

A. Scope

1. These *Examination Conventions* apply to all candidates of Newcastle University who, having met the requirements of the University's *General Regulations* and of the *VIII Master of Philosophy Degree Regulations*, are eligible to submit a thesis for examination for the degree of Master of Philosophy.

B. The Examiners

2. A candidate's thesis shall be examined by examiners appointed by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) on behalf of Senate. The examination shall consist of a review and assessment of the candidate's thesis (and where appropriate, other artefacts). A candidate will normally be required to take an oral examination in addition to submitting a thesis.

3. There shall ordinarily be one external examiner and one internal examiner appointed for each candidate. For staff candidates, the examination shall normally be conducted by two external examiners, although for junior members of staff, at the discretion of the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee), one external and one internal may be appointed.

4. All examiners will be nominated by the relevant head of school in consultation with the candidate's academic supervisor. Such nominations shall be submitted on ePortfolio at the same time as the candidate submits an application for approval of thesis title. This should normally be three months before the thesis is submitted. (*The Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes provides further detail in the section 'Criteria for Appointment of Examiners':* <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/Publications.htm>)

5. Where the University is unable to appoint, or chooses not to appoint, an internal examiner for a student candidate, a second external examiner will be appointed.

6. In all cases where two external examiners are appointed, the dean of postgraduate studies will also appoint an independent member of University staff who will chair the oral examination. The Independent Chair will normally be from outside the candidate's school/institute. The Independent Chair is not an examiner of the thesis but provides guidance on University regulations and procedures to ensure that the oral examination is conducted in accordance with normal University practice. The Independent Chair is required to be present for the duration of the oral examination. (*The Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes provides further detail in the section 'Criteria for Appointment of Examiners':* <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/Publications.htm>)

7. The supervisory team will provide a candidate with the opportunity to comment on the nominated examiners. If the candidate has a concern about the nominated examiners this should be drawn to the attention of the supervisory team and the head of school in writing, as soon as possible.

Examiner appointments will, however, only be reviewed if it is clear there may be bias or prejudice by an examiner.

8. A member of the supervisory team will not be appointed as an internal examiner. Where the University is unable to appoint an internal examiner a second external examiner will be appointed.

9. A former member of staff of the University shall not normally be appointed as an external examiner until at least five years have elapsed since that person left the employment of the University. A retired member of staff of the University shall not normally be appointed as an external examiner. A retired member of staff of another institution may be appointed as an external examiner only if he or she is still active in the field of research and study concerned.

Note: The University cannot undertake to arrange the examination of a thesis immediately after its submission. Candidates are warned that several weeks may elapse between the submission of a thesis and the completion of the examination, and they should consult their academic supervisor at least three months in advance of submission. The normal period between submission of a thesis and an examination is ten weeks, although circumstances may necessitate a longer time frame. Candidates shall be kept informed of the progress of the examination at monthly intervals by the graduate school administrator, should the examination process extend beyond the normal ten week period.

C. Nature of the Examination

10. The examination shall consist of a review and assessment of the candidate's thesis by the examiners appointed and normally of an oral examination on the contents of the thesis and subjects related thereto, chaired by the external examiner, where an independent chair has not been appointed.

11.

- a) The normal practice will be that an oral examination is convened, unless the external examiner contacts the graduate school administrator to stay the oral examination.
- b) In the event of a disagreement between examiners about the need for an oral examination, then the oral examination will be held.
- c) It should be noted that the examiners cannot make the recommendation of a fail without giving the candidate an opportunity of an oral examination. The examiners should independently write a preliminary report indicating their provisional assessment of the thesis and of the issues to be explored in the oral examination, if required. It is expected that, if the criteria for the award of the degree have clearly been met, the preliminary reports will be brief. If, on the other hand, the examiners have serious concerns about whether the criteria have been met, fuller reports will be expected. Each examiner's preliminary report should be sent to the relevant graduate school administrator in advance of an oral examination taking place. Examiners should not consult with each other before both independent reports have been submitted to the graduate school administrator. The reports will be forwarded to the relevant dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee).

- d) Exceptionally, and two weeks or more in advance of a scheduled viva, if the external examiner upon initial independent review of the thesis is unequivocally of the view that the thesis is not worthy of defence without significant re-work by the candidate, s/he shall contact the graduate school administrator. The dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) shall determine whether it is appropriate to permit the examiners to prepare a joint report. The decision reached under these arrangements shall be limited to Convention 27 (b)iii only – i.e. permitting resubmission, where an oral examination will be required after resubmission.

12. The oral examination shall be conducted in accordance with the guidelines in the University's *Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees*: <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/Publications.htm>

The purpose of the oral examination will be to enable the examiners to:

- a) establish that the research has been undertaken by the candidate;
- b) test the ability of the candidate to defend his or her thesis;
- c) establish whether the candidate has a satisfactory knowledge of the wider field surrounding the research topic.

13. In examining a candidate's thesis, the examiners should take into consideration both the extent and merit of the work submitted and the quality of the exposition. With regard to the extent of the work, the examiners should satisfy themselves that the candidate's work shows evidence of adequate industry and application. With regard to the merit of the work, the candidate is expected to show distinct ability in conducting original investigations and in testing ideas, whether the candidate's own or others'. The exposition of the work in the thesis must be clear and must show that the candidate understands the relationship of the work embodied in the thesis and the theme of that work to a wider field of knowledge.

14. In the case of any work done jointly, or in wider collaborations, or under direction, it is important that the extent of the candidate's own contribution is made clear both in any introductory element of the thesis and at relevant points within the thesis.

D. Role of the Supervisory Team during the Examination

15. The academic supervisor may, at the request of the candidate, be present at (but will make no contribution to) the oral examination. S/he should in all cases be available to be consulted by the examiners during the oral examination. The supervisor will have the right to confer with the examiners following the oral examination, and to be given an oral report on its outcome. 16. The academic supervisor will co-ordinate the arrangements for the oral examination and inform the graduate school of the details in advance of the oral examination taking place.

E. Role of the Candidate during the Examination

17. Under no circumstances should the arrangements for the oral examination be delegated to the candidate.

18. There should normally be no discussion about the oral examination between the candidate and the examiners in advance of the oral examination and throughout the entire examination process.

19. Following the oral examination there should normally be no direct contact between the candidate and the examiners. If the candidate requires clarification on points raised by the examiners, this clarification should be sought via the Supervisory Team.

20. Under no circumstances should a candidate send their thesis (in hard or electronic copy) direct to the examiners. All formal submissions (first submission and any further submission as determined by the examination outcome) should be sent direct to the graduate school administrator, who will send the submission to the examiners.

F. Personal Extenuating Circumstances

21. Following submission of thesis, if a candidate is aware of any circumstances that may prevent them from attending the oral examination (where one is required), these should be brought to the attention of their supervisor and the graduate school administrator immediately, to determine if it necessary to delay the oral examination.

22. A candidate should also contact their supervisor and the graduate school administrator if there are personal circumstances they believe could impact on their performance at the oral examination. This information will be provided to the examiners in advance of the oral examination, to determine if any reasonable adjustments are required.

23. Irrespective of personal circumstances, examiners will be expected to assess the candidate against the doctoral assessment criteria.

24. By attending an oral examination, a candidate is declaring that they are fit to attend the examination and, as such, it is unlikely that a candidate would be able to submit a later claim that their performance was affected by personal circumstances.

G. Examiners' Final Reports

25. Having considered all the evidence presented to them, the examiners shall submit, a joint report form on the examination. The report shall include a written statement concerning the candidate's performance together with a recommendation as to the outcome of the examination.

26. Where two external examiners have examined the thesis and it is agreed that revisions are required (in the recommendations 27 a.ii or a.iii) they should agree between them which examiner shall receive the revised thesis and ensure that the required revisions have been made

H. Recommendations Open to the Examiners

27. Following the first submission and examination of a candidate, the examiners may make the following recommendations:

- a)
 - i. that the candidate be admitted to the degree of Master of Philosophy; *or*
 - ii. that the candidate be admitted to the degree of Master of Philosophy subject to minor corrections e.g. of detail or presentation but not involving changes to the substance of the text made to the satisfaction of the internal examiner, normally within a period of one month of receiving formal notification of the corrections to be made; *or*
 - iii. that the candidate be admitted to the degree of Master of Philosophy subject to minor revisions of a more substantial nature than in ii above, but not involving a major revision of the thesis being made to the satisfaction of the internal examiner, normally within a period of up to six months of receiving formal notification of the revisions to be made;
- b)
 - i. that the candidate's thesis be deemed to be of a satisfactory standard, but that the candidate be adjudged to have failed to satisfy the examiners in the oral examination and that the candidate therefore be required to submit within six months either for a second oral examination or for a written examination, as the examiners shall determine; *or*
 - ii. that the candidate be adjudged to have failed to satisfy the examiners in the thesis and the candidate be permitted to revise and re-submit the thesis within twelve months for re-examination by both examiners without a further oral examination; *or*
 - iii. that the candidate be adjudged to have failed to satisfy the examiners and the candidate be permitted to revise and re-submit the thesis within twelve months and be re-examined orally, by both examiners;
- c) that no degree be awarded and that the candidate be adjudged to have failed.

Minor Revisions or Corrections

28. Recommendation 27(a) may be made subject to a requirement that the candidate correct minor textual errors or make minor revisions to the thesis before the deposit of a copy of the thesis in the University Library in accordance with the *Section XIV Rules for the Submission of Work for Higher Degrees*.

29. Where minor textual corrections are required, candidates will be advised that the corrections must be made within one month of receiving formal notification of the corrections to be made. It shall be the responsibility of the internal examiner (or nominated external examiner) to certify that the necessary corrections have been made before a pass list can be issued.

30. Where minor revisions to the thesis are required, the candidate shall normally be required to make the revisions within six months of receiving formal notification of the revisions to be made. It shall be the responsibility of the internal examiner (or nominated external examiner) to certify that the necessary corrections have been made before the 'Award MPhil' outcome can be processed.

31. In exceptional cases, an extension of time for making the corrections may be granted by the appropriate dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee), subject to the candidate justifying such an extension, supported by the candidate's academic supervisor.

32. It shall be the expectation that the thesis will not require referral back to the external examiner and that the candidate will not be expected to undergo a further oral examination. However, if the internal examiner (or nominated external examiner) feels that any recommendation other than recommendation 27(a) i is appropriate following reconsideration of the thesis after the minor revisions have been made, the thesis shall also be referred to the external examiner. Where a thesis is thus referred to the external examiner, the examiners may determine that a further oral examination is required and may subsequently make any of the recommendations normally open following full revision and resubmission as set out in Convention 33 below.

Resubmission for Re-examination by Internal and External Examiners

33. Where a candidate has been permitted to revise and resubmit a thesis in accordance with Convention 27(b) the options open to the examiners when re-examining the thesis shall be those set out in Conventions 27(a) i or ii or (c) only. Where the candidate's oral performance on the first occasion of examination was satisfactory and the examiners are agreed, after considering the resubmitted thesis, that a further oral examination is not required, they may submit their recommendations without re-examining the candidate orally.

34. At resubmission, candidates must provide a commentary indicating the changes they have made to the thesis in response to the requirements of the Examiners.

Further Oral or Written Examination

35. In the case of a candidate subject to recommendation 27(b) above, the options open to the examiners following the further oral or written examination shall be those set out in Conventions 27(a) or (c) only, except that, in the case of Convention 27(a), no further revisions to the thesis other than minor textual corrections may be recommended.

Provision to the Candidate of Information about Corrections/Revisions Required or Resubmission

36. In all cases where a candidate is required to make corrections/revisions to a thesis or to resubmit a thesis, it shall be the responsibility of the examiners to provide full details of the corrections and/or revisions required of the thesis, but not extending to proof-reading or editing of the thesis. The examiners should provide a detailed written statement of the nature of the changes they wish to see made to the thesis, along with their completed joint report form. These should be sent to the relevant graduate school administrator who shall formally forward these documents on to the candidate and the supervisory team. When forwarding the final report to the candidate, the graduate school administrator will make it clear to the candidate that resubmission in itself will not guarantee the award of a qualification.

I. Communication of the Result to the Candidate

37. The dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) acts as the Chair of the Research Degree Board of Examiners and any recommendations are considered by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) who will then confirm or otherwise the recommendations of the examiners, following receipt of examiner reports by the graduate school administrator. The results of the examination or re-examination shall be communicated formally to the candidate by the relevant graduate school administrator, once they have been considered by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee). Neither an examiner nor any other person is empowered to communicate the result formally to a candidate before the official notification of the result to the candidate by a graduate school administrator on behalf of the Academic Registrar. In any case where an examiner chooses to give the candidate an informal indication as to the recommendation that will be put forward, the examiner concerned must stress that the recommendation is subject to ratification and that only the graduate school administrator (on behalf of the Academic Registrar) is empowered to issue official results.

J. Disagreement between the Examiners

38. If there is a disagreement between the examiners or doubt about their intentions, they shall be consulted with a view to resolving the matter. Where there is irreconcilable disagreement between the examiners an additional external examiner shall be appointed.

39. The additional external examiner shall be asked to read the candidate's thesis and to conduct an oral examination. The additional examiner shall be told that the previous examiners had failed to reach agreement but will not have sight of their reports. On the occasion of this oral examination the candidate's supervisory team (and where appropriate the internal examiner) shall be available to be consulted by the additional external examiner. The dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) shall appoint a member of University staff as an independent observer, who will report on the conduct of the oral examination.

40. The academic supervisor shall co-ordinate the arrangements for the examination. After the conclusion of the examination, the additional examiner shall make a recommendation which shall be final. He/she shall submit a final report to the relevant graduate school administrator which will, subject to the approval of the relevant dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee), be forwarded to the candidate and the supervisory team in the normal way.

41. In the event that the recommendation of *admission to the degree subject to minor revisions within six months* is made, the revisions shall be subject to the satisfaction of the additional external examiner. In the event that the recommendation that *the candidate be permitted to revise and resubmit the thesis within 12 months* is made, the resubmitted thesis shall be examined by the additional external examiner who shall decide whether to conduct a further oral examination.

42. A candidate who is subject to the procedure set out in Conventions 38 and 39 shall be informed that the examiners originally appointed have disagreed

and that an additional examiner will be appointed. The candidate shall not be informed as to the nature of the disagreement between the original examiners and shall not be given a copy of their reports. If, however, the candidate subsequently appeals against the final decision in respect of the award of the degree, the report of the original examiners will form part of the formal record of appeal. The candidate shall be informed that an oral examination will be required. After the oral examination, and once a final decision as to the award of the degree has been made in accordance with Convention 401, the final report of the additional examiner shall be made available to the candidate and the supervisory team, provided that the additional examiner's recommendation has been approved.

K. Provision for an Oral Examination to be Conducted Outside the University

43. It is expected that all oral examinations will take place within the University unless specifically requested otherwise and that all expected attendees are present at the University. With the approval of the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee), an oral examination for a candidate may be held elsewhere than at Newcastle. Both examiners should be present at any oral examination and only in very exceptional circumstances may the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) permit other arrangements to be made. (Further guidance is available in the Handbook for Research Degree Examiners <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/Publications.htm>.) A member of the supervisory team is not normally expected to be present unless at the specific request of the candidate to attend the venue for an examination held outside Newcastle, but is expected to be available to be contacted by the examiners if required, for example by telephone. In all cases written consent for the examination to be conducted outside the university must be obtained from the candidate.

L. Posthumous Awards

44. A posthumous degree can be awarded where a deceased candidate's body of work is sufficient to meet the criteria for the award. To initiate a request for a posthumous award, the academic supervisor should provide a statement to the relevant dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) outlining why the deceased candidate should be considered for the posthumous degree. Requests should be endorsed by the head of school (or nominee) in which the candidate was registered and should normally have the support of the student's family. (See the Policy on Posthumous Awards for Postgraduate Research Students <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/assets/documents/PolicyonPosthumousDegreesforPostgraduateResearchStudentsAugust2015Final.pdf>)