

# NOTES OF GUIDANCE FOR RESEARCH EXAMINATIONS

(DPhil, MLitt, MPhil/MSt in Law, MSc by Research)

These notes provide guidance on the preparation and submission of theses for examination. Section A (below) describes the submission and examination process. Section B provides specific advice on the preparation of theses and abstracts for examination.

## A. THE SUBMISSION AND EXAMINATION PROCESS

The procedures for the submission and examination of theses are laid down in the *Examination Regulations*. The following notes are for guidance only, and they are intended to supplement, not to replace, the accompanying regulations. *The Examination Regulations* remain the final authority. [Please substitute divisional board for relevant board where appropriate.]

### 1. **Appointment of examiners (GSO.3)**

Please complete your part of form GSO.3 in the Student Self Service, under the 'My Student Record' tab. Once you have completed and submitted your section, the application will be sent to your supervisor who will propose examiner names to the relevant board, together with details of any special considerations which either yourself or the supervisor wishes to make known about potential examiners.

In relation to the form, please note in particular:

#### ***Application Questions – Thesis Title***

The title of your thesis must be approved by the faculty board. If you wish to change your title, you should indicate this clearly at this stage on your application form. It is important that the title on your submitted thesis exactly matches the title approved by the faculty board and the title on your approved GSO.3 form.

You will also be asked to indicate whether you have been given permission to submit an integrated thesis – if you have, please upload any documentary evidence you may have of this approval.

#### ***Statement of previous acceptance or concurrent submission of thesis for degree***

This section relates to any parts of a thesis which have been submitted previously for a degree of the University or elsewhere. This would apply in most cases to the development of an MPhil dissertation into a thesis for the DPhil or MLitt, but may refer also to the development of a dissertation submitted for the MSc by Research, or the MLitt, (where a candidate is submitting a thesis for the DPhil) and to the development of a dissertation originally submitted for the BCL.

#### ***Statement of authorship***

This section primarily relates to the submission of material which has been co-authored. Candidates are asked to submit, at the 'Document Upload' section of the form, a document with details of which parts of the thesis are not their own work. Candidates in the sciences and related disciplines should pay particular attention to any regulations of the faculty concerned dealing with the inclusion of articles, and especially those of joint authorship.

#### ***Sensitive content***

This section relates to content in the thesis that is of a sensitive nature, or where copyright is held by a third party. If this is the case, you must take the appropriate steps before depositing the thesis in the

Bodleian Library and ORA. For advice and guidance on third party/copyright issues, refer to the ORA website: [https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/digitaltheses/theses\\_copyright](https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/digitaltheses/theses_copyright)

### **Statement of length of thesis**

This section requires you to indicate the number of words or pages contained in your thesis, and to check the regulation of the relevant faculty board concerning word or page limits (please give an approximation if the exact number is not known when submitting your GSO.3 form).

You are advised that word or page limits should not be treated lightly. Unless you have applied to the relevant board for exemption from the word or page limit, a thesis which exceeds the stated limit may be refused by the examiners, or the faculty board, or may be returned by the examiners or the faculty board to you for reduction to the required word or page limit.

If you have been granted permission to exceed the word or page limit you must attach a copy of the approval in the 'Document Upload' section of GSO.3 form, which will then be communicated to your examiners

### **Transfer of Status**

This field will show the date on which your Transfer of Status was approved.

### **Confirmation of Status**

If applicable, this field will show the date on which your Confirmation of Status was approved.

### **Date of submission of thesis and abstract**

You should indicate here the actual or proposed date for the submission of your thesis to the Examination Schools' thesis portal (RTDS).

The practical requirements for the submission of the thesis are set out in detail in Section B of these notes. A thesis which fails to meet these requirements may not be accepted by the Research Degrees Team.

**It is strongly recommended that you submit the GSO.3 form four to six weeks prior to submitting your thesis, since the names of your examiners have to be approved and their *formal* acceptance received before your thesis can be provided to them.** If therefore you submit your form and thesis together, your thesis will not be provided to the examiners until these preliminaries have been completed.

The submission of the thesis may not be made later than the last day of the vacation immediately following the term in which the form is submitted. This works to your advantage in that a submission is regarded as taking place in the term concerned up to this final date. For example, a thesis submitted on the last Friday of the vacation preceding Michaelmas Term is counted as a Trinity Term submission. This is of course important in terms of the need for extensions.

**If you are still paying fees, the exact date of your submission may be critical. For all circumstances connected to the date of submission it is your responsibility to check.** Students funded by Research Councils should check if there are any additional requirements linked to their funding, e.g. submission by 30 September instead of the end of term.

### **Resubmission**

You should indicate here whether this is a resubmitted thesis. The resubmission fee is payable on resubmission of your thesis and should be made via the [University's Online store](#). Please note that your thesis will not be sent to your examiners until the fee has been paid.

### **Funding**

You should indicate here the source of any funding you have received during the course of your studies.

### ***Additional Questions – Restriction of access at the viva***

In a number of faculties, candidates may apply for restriction of access to an oral examination to prevent any loss of patent rights on material contained in the thesis. Similar applications can be made by the supervisor, department or by the University. You should indicate here if you would like to apply for restricted access, giving your reason for the request.

### ***Application for Time Specific Examination***

This section allows you to ask for an early *viva*, where there are exceptional reasons for which you need to have completed your *viva* by a certain date. If the faculty board concerned accepts your request, your examiners will be invited on the basis that they can conduct the *viva* within a period you specify. **You should bear in mind when specifying this date that you should allow your examiners at least four weeks to examine your thesis before the date of the viva, and the submission dates of your application form and thesis should reflect this.** This facility cannot be used to request that a *viva* happens 'as soon as possible', but only where there is a specific date by which the *viva* must have taken place.

Examiners cannot be expected to meet a request for an early *viva* if a thesis is not submitted by the date promised by the candidate. If the examiners concerned cannot meet your request, then the faculty board will decide how to proceed, but it is your responsibility to be available for oral examination at the time arranged by the examiners, and not vice-versa.

### ***Upload Documents***

You should upload on this screen any documents in support of this application; this may include a statement of authorship detailing sections of the thesis that are co-authored, a statement of previous acceptance, or a letter indicating your permission to submit an integrated thesis. You should **not** upload your thesis to this screen, as this will not be accepted as a submission.

### ***General***

While your supervisor may contact your suggested examiners informally to see if they would be prepared to act if invited, the choice of examiners belongs to the faculty board and they must be invited formally on behalf of the faculty board.

Examiners must be formally invited by the Research Degrees Team. Examiners have to be approved and their formal acceptance received before your thesis can be sent out.

## **2. *Date of submission of examiners' copies***

Candidates are encouraged to apply for the appointment of examiners (using form GSO.3) prior to submitting the examiners' copies of their thesis. Candidates will be required to state, at the time of their application for appointment of examiners, the date by which they will submit. This should be within four to six weeks of the date of application and may in no case be later than the last working day of the vacation immediately following the term in which application for the appointment of examiners has been made. Candidates may also submit the examiners' copies of their thesis at the same time as applying for the appointment of examiners; there is no official requirement that the Appointment of Examiners form predate the submission, and the portal will still work for students with no approved GSO.3 form.

## **3. *The oral examination or viva***

It is the responsibility of the internal examiner to make all the arrangements for the *viva* examination. Your internal examiner should normally contact you to arrange a date for your *viva* within a month of receiving your thesis. If you have not heard from your examiner within a month of your thesis being sent, please contact the Research Degrees Team, who will contact your examiners. **On no account should you contact the examiners yourself except where you have to agree a date for the *viva*.**

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The average length of time between submission and a *viva* is approximately eight weeks. Please remember that you have probably asked to be examined by a national or international authority on your subject, and their timetable is likely to be a crowded one.

If you wish to ask for an early *viva*, please complete the 'request for time specific viva' section of the appointment of examiners form (GSO.3). If the faculty board concerned accepts your request, your examiners will be invited on the basis that they can conduct the *viva* within a period you specify. **You should bear in mind when specifying this date that you should allow your examiners at least four weeks to examine your thesis before the date of the viva, and the submission dates of your application form and thesis should reflect this.** Examiners cannot be expected to meet a request for an early *viva* if a thesis is not submitted by the date promised by the candidate. If the examiners concerned cannot meet your request, then the faculty board will decide how to proceed, but it is your responsibility to be available for oral examination at the time arranged by the examiners, and not vice-versa.

For the *viva* itself, which is a formal examination of the University, you will be expected to wear academic dress – *subfusc* and a gown. This includes the appropriate gown (your college can advise), a mortar board or soft-cap, and the preferred *subfusc* from the following list: one of dark suit with dark socks, or dark skirt with black tights or stockings, or dark trousers with dark socks; dark coat if required; black shoes; plain white collared shirt or blouse; white bow tie, black bow tie, black full-length tie, or black ribbon. This requirement is dispensed with where the student is attending the *viva* remotely.

Please do not forget to take a copy of your thesis with you to the examination.

### 4. *Minor corrections*

The recommendations open to examiners are set out in detail in the *Examination Regulations*. If your examiners are satisfied that they can recommend that the degree should be awarded, but minor corrections need to be made before the thesis can be deposited in the Bodleian, then these minor corrections must be completed and approved, usually by the internal examiner, before the examiners make their report to the faculty board. In that case, your examiners will provide you with a list of the required corrections. If you have not received the list of corrections within two weeks of the *viva*, then you should contact the Research Degrees Team ([researchdegrees@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:researchdegrees@admin.ox.ac.uk)) or the relevant Graduate Studies Assistant (see [www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/graduate/contacts](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/graduate/contacts) for contact details).

The University expects that these minor corrections will be completed to the satisfaction of your internal examiner within one month of being issued. If, for exceptional reasons, additional time is needed you may apply for an additional one month by submitting a copy of form GSO.18 '(Extension of Time for Minor Corrections)'. If you fail to complete your corrections within the time allowed your name will be removed from the Graduate Register and a reinstatement application will be required.

### 5. *Major corrections*

If your examiners are satisfied that they can recommend that the degree should be awarded subject to the completion and review of major corrections, and the Examining Board endorses this recommendation, then these major corrections must be completed and reviewed by both examiners, who will produce a second report for the faculty board. Your examiners may wish to hold a second *viva* examination before producing that report. A copy of the Examiners' Report with the required corrections will be sent to you by the Research Degrees Examinations Team, following approval by the relevant Board.

The University expects that these major corrections will be completed to the satisfaction of your examiners within six months of being issued. If you fail to complete your corrections within the time allowed your name will be removed from the Graduate Register and a reinstatement application will be required.

### 6. *Re-submitting a thesis*

If you are re-submitting a thesis you should follow the same procedures detailed in Section B, except that you will need to pay the required re-submission fee (see <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/research>) when you apply for the appointment of examiners. Your resubmission fee should be paid via the Research Degrees section of the University's [online shop](#).

Candidates resubmitting a thesis must also include a separate report indicating the specific changes made to the thesis for resubmission. For students in the Humanities, Medical Sciences and Social Sciences Divisions and the Department for Continuing Education, the word limit for the accompanying report is 1000 words; for students in the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division, the word limit is 2000 words.

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It is possible for you and your supervisor to propose new examiners at the time of re-submission, but it is usual for the previous examiners to be proposed since of course it is according to their guidelines that you have been revising your thesis.

Technically, a re-submission is a fresh examination, and you should remember that the oral examination is not necessarily restricted to points noted in the original examination. Examiners are still required to satisfy themselves that the revised thesis as a *whole* is of sufficient merit to qualify for the degree, and that you possess a good general knowledge of the particular field of learning within which the subject of your thesis lies.

The report on the first examination will automatically be sent to the examiners of the re-submitted thesis. This is to ensure that the examiners are aware of the background to the revision which you have made. If you wish to make a case for this not happening, permission must be sought from the Proctors. You will need to apply in writing via the relevant Graduate Studies Assistant (see [www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/graduate/contacts](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/graduate/contacts) for contact details), stating the reasons for so doing, before or at the same time as re-applying for the appointment of examiners.

In the case of a re-submission a faculty board can exempt a candidate from a *viva only* where the examiners certify that they can recommend the degree without examining the candidate orally.

## **7. Deposit and consultation of thesis**

In order to have your degree conferred at a graduation ceremony, either in person or in absence, you must submit a digital copy of your thesis to the Oxford University Research Archive (ORA) at <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/>. Information regarding this process can be found at <https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/digitaltheses> and will be sent with your result letter. This rule is adhered to rigorously since the availability of your thesis for consultation is an indispensable element in the University's contribution to scholarship.

Deposit of a copy with the Archive is optional for candidates for the degrees of DCLinPsych, MPhil, Master of Studies in Legal Research (MSt) or Bachelor of Philosophy (BPhil) in Philosophy.

Form GSO.3c allows a candidate to apply for a dispensation from the usual requirements to make the thesis (lodged with the Bodleian or ORA) or any part of it available for consultation or to be photocopied. To apply for such a dispensation, use form GSO.3c to apply to the relevant Graduate Studies Assistant (see [www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/graduate/contacts](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/graduate/contacts) for contact details). You will need to set out the reasons for your application, and the length of time for which you are seeking a dispensation. This application should be made as early as possible, and at the latest, by the time you put in your form for the appointment of examiners.

For those students granted a dispensation from consultation for the full thesis, and on a permanent basis, a hard copy of the thesis should be deposited with the Bodleian library once Leave to Supplicate has been granted. Information on arrangements for submitting a hardbound copy, for the small minority of students who have been granted dispensation from consultation of their entire thesis on a permanent basis, or whose thesis (or part of the thesis) is in a non-standard format which cannot be submitted electronically will be available at <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/research> from Michaelmas term 2022.

**IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT THESE PROCEDURES OR THERE APPEARS TO BE AN EXCESSIVE DELAY IN THE PROCESSES INVOLVED PLEASE CONTACT THE RESEARCH DEGREES TEAM AT THE EXAMINATION SCHOOLS TO ENQUIRE ([researchdegrees@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:researchdegrees@admin.ox.ac.uk)).**

## B. THE PREPARATION OF THESES AND ABSTRACTS

Please be aware that some of the sections below are excerpts from the University's *Examination Regulations*: candidates for examination are advised to pay careful attention to the detailed requirements set out in full in the *Examination Regulations* themselves.

Information on special regulations for specific subject areas and divisional and faculty boards can be found in the relevant [Examination Regulations](#).

### 1. **Miscellaneous points relating to the presentation of your thesis**

Please ensure that you read the formal regulations relating to presentation in this section. Their purpose is to ensure that the examiners may examine your thesis on its merits, and not be distracted by poor presentation or spacing. It is wholly in your interest to ensure that your text is readily understood by the examiners. A thesis may not be accepted which fails to meet these requirements. If you are in any doubt, please send a sample to the Research Degrees Team and seek advice.

### 2. **Proof Reading** (taken from the 'General Regulations Governing Research Degrees' in the Examination Regulations)

Work submitted for examination must be solely the work of the candidate, except where otherwise clearly indicated. It is not permitted for a student to ask or allow someone else to make material changes to their work, for example, by rewriting passages of text or rewriting formulae or code. Failure to adhere to these regulations could constitute a breach of academic integrity and contravene the Proctors' Disciplinary Regulations for Candidates in Examination.

Candidates are responsible for the proof-reading of their work. Proof-reading by a third party is acceptable provided it constitutes no more than advice on the following: spelling and punctuation, formatting, grammar and syntax. A third party may not be used to change the text of the thesis so as to clarify, develop or change the ideas and arguments, reduce the length of the thesis, provide help with referencing, correct information within the thesis, or translate the thesis into English. The University's Policy on the Use of Third Party Proof-readers may be found here: <https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/policies/third-party-proof-readers>.

### 3. **Text and footnotes** (taken from the 'General Regulations Governing Research Degrees' in the Examination Regulations)

Candidates should note that the purpose of these regulations is not only to ease the task of the examiners (which is obviously in the candidates' interests), but also to ensure that the copy finally deposited in the Bodleian or other university library is of a standard of legibility which will allow it (subject to applicable copyright rules) to be photocopied or microfilmed if required in future years.

The thesis must be word-processed with a margin of 3 to 3.5 cm on the left-hand edge of each page. The main text should be double-spaced with quotations and footnotes in single spacing. Double spacing should be taken to mean a distance of about 0.33 inch or 8 mm between successive lines of text. Text should be typed using an easily readable font, with a minimum font size of 11 pt. Footnotes should be font size 10 pt.

Footnotes should normally be placed at the bottom of each page. Where they are given at the end of each chapter or at the end of the thesis, a separate pdf of footnotes should be uploaded to the Research Digital Thesis Submissions (RTDS) application under "Additional Materials", for the convenience of the examiners.

Candidates should carefully note the regulations concerning word limits which individual boards have made. In such cases, candidates should state the approximate number of words in their thesis.

Theses must be submitted in English unless for exceptional reasons a board otherwise determines in the term in which the candidate is first admitted as a research student.

The thesis must have an abstract included (see 4 below), and the pages of the thesis must be numbered.

Information on special regulations for specific subject areas and divisional and faculty boards can be found in the relevant [Examination Regulations](#).

### 4. **Abstracts** (taken from the 'General Regulations Governing Research Degrees' in the Examination Regulations)

The abstract of the thesis should concisely summarise its scope and principal arguments, in about 300 words. It should be placed within the thesis, generally immediately following the Table of Contents. When the examination is completed, the abstract should be included in the library copy of their thesis.

It should be noted that some boards have made regulations requiring the submission of more detailed abstracts in addition to the general requirement of an abstract not normally exceeding 300 words.

5. **Examiners' copies** (taken from the 'General Regulations Governing Research Degrees' in the Examination Regulations)

At the time of their examination, candidates must submit a digital pdf copy of their thesis via RTDS. Additional materials (footnotes, appendices, image files, etc.) should be saved within a single zip file and uploaded at the same time. The thesis may be subject to scanning by text-matching software.

Fine Art candidates offering studio practice as part of their submission must submit, together with the written portion of their thesis, documentation in appropriate form of the exhibition or portfolio of works to be examined. Wherever possible, this documentation should be contained within the written portion of the thesis but can be uploaded as a separate file under "Additional Materials" if necessary. Where this is not possible, two copies of additional items should be submitted to the Research Degrees Team, Examination Schools, High Street, Oxford OX1 4BG.

Candidates are responsible for ensuring that their examiners have no difficulty in communicating with them. Any change in address or contact details since application for the appointment of examiners must be notified immediately to the Research Degrees Team (researchdegrees@admin.ox.ac.uk).

Examiners may request a soft-bound copy of the thesis from the Research Degrees Team.

6. **Library Copies: Binding and Presentation** (taken from the 'General Regulations Governing Research Degrees' in the Examination Regulations)

Once the board has granted a candidate leave to supplicate, they must submit an electronic version of their finalised thesis, as approved by the examiners, to the Oxford Research Archive. This should incorporate any corrections or amendments which the examiners may have requested of the candidate. The examiners must confirm in writing in their report to the board that any corrections required have been made. No corrections, changes or additions of any kind shall be made to the thesis after the board has granted a candidate leave to supplicate.

Fine Art candidates offering studio practice as part of their submission must submit the written portion of their thesis electronically using the Oxford Research Archive together with documentation in appropriate form of their exhibition or portfolio of works.

Candidates should note that leave to supplicate is conditional upon receipt by the Oxford Research Archive of the electronic copy of this finalised thesis no later than by the end of the fifth day before the date of the degree ceremony booked by the candidate for conferral of their degree. Candidates may not proceed to take their degree until they have fulfilled this requirement.

Students who have been granted dispensation from consultation of their entire thesis (see below) should, in addition to the finalised copy of the thesis submitted to the Oxford Research Archive, submit a finalised hard copy of their thesis to the university by the means advertised on the University website for deposit in the relevant University library.

7. **Dispensation from Consultation of Thesis (DPhil, MLitt, MSc by Research)** (taken from the 'General Regulations Governing Research Degrees' in the Examination Regulations)

A candidate may apply to the relevant board for dispensation from consultation of thesis for all or part(s) of the hard copy and/or digital version of their thesis if a good reason is presented. Applications should be submitted to the relevant board and should be supported by the student's supervisor. If dispensation from consultation is granted, access to the hard copy and/or digital thesis will be restricted from the date of deposit, and will not be made available for consultation until the approved end date.

In exceptional circumstances, a candidate's supervisor may apply to the relevant board for dispensation from consultation of thesis, or an extension to an existing dispensation from consultation. Every effort should first be made to consult the

candidate on the proposed application. The board has the power to grant the supervisor's request provided it is satisfied that the request is appropriate and relevant.

#### **8. *Examiners' copies of the thesis***

After your **viva** any soft bound copies of your thesis that Examiners requested may be returned to you, either directly or via the Research Degrees Team at the Examination Schools. Research Degrees will contact you, using the most recent email address that you provided, to enquire whether you would like to collect your returned copies. If the Research Degrees Team has not heard from you within six months of contacting you, the examiners' copies will be destroyed.

#### **9. *Graduation***

Formal ceremonies for the conferring of degrees are held in the Sheldonian Theatre (or should the Sheldonian Theatre not be available then at the Examination Schools). You can graduate in person by attending a ceremony, or in absence.

Academic dress must be worn for the ceremony. If it is inconvenient for you to attend in person to receive your degree, you may request that it be conferred in your absence.

Once you have been granted leave to supplicate, you will receive an email invitation with information about booking a degree ceremony. The days available will depend on when your [college is presenting](#).

If you have any debts or dues outstanding to your college or the University you will not be permitted to graduate.

Further information about Degree Ceremonies can be found at <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/graduation/ceremonies/>

**Please note that you will not be able to book onto a ceremony until you have been granted leave to supplicate.**