

EX11 (August 2012)

RESEARCH SCHOOL

Research Degree Examination Guidelines for Students

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1 Introduction

These guidelines provide details of the arrangements for research degree examinations from notice of submission to the award of the degree. If you have any queries or require advice, please contact the Research Degrees Office.

Subject Area	Contact Information		
Arts	01908 653806	research-degrees-arts@open.ac.uk	
CREET ¹	01908 659616	research-degrees-CREET@open.ac.uk	
Health and Social Care	01908 658889	research-degrees-hsc@open.ac.uk	
Knowledge Media Institute	01908 658878	research-degrees-kmi@open.ac.uk	
Maths, Computing and Technology	01908 654050	research-degrees-mct@open.ac.uk	
OUBS	01908 858805	research-degrees-oubs@open.ac.uk	
Sciences	01908 655483	research-degrees-science@open.ac.uk	
Social Sciences	01908 659614	research-degrees-socsci@open.ac.uk	

External address: Research Degrees Office The Open University Milton Keynes MK7 6AA Internal address: Research Degrees Office Ground Floor, Charles Pinfold Building

2 Notice of submission

You should give at least three months written notice to the Research Degrees Office of your intention to submit your thesis for examination. Your notice should include your intended submission date, confirmation of your thesis title, and if the thesis contains a non-book component, clarification of the extent and type of non-book material to be submitted.

Please tell us if you have a disability or additional requirements for which adjustments may need to be made when your examination is arranged.

2.1 Candidate declaration form

When your notice of submission has been received, the Research Degrees Office will email you confirmation and direct you to our website to download and complete a *Candidate declaration form*. You are required to state on this form:

- (a) the length of the thesis (including footnotes and appendices)
- (b) whether your thesis contains a non-book component
- (c) whether any of the material you are now submitting has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution

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¹ Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology.

- (d) the extent to which others have contributed to your research
- (e) which parts (if any) have been published.

You should then forward the *Candidate declaration form* to your supervisors. Each supervisor must confirm that s/he has read your thesis in its final form (and scrutinised any non-book component), and that it is worthy of consideration for the degree for which it has been submitted. They are also required to confirm the length of your thesis and confirm that any requirements for ethical review have been met. It the thesis contains a non-book component, supervisors are required to confirm that the volume of material (both book and non-book) represents a workload to the examiners that is no greater than that represented by a book thesis.

The supervisors are then asked to send the *Candidate declaration form* for approval to the Associate Dean (Research) or their delegate, before it is sent on the Research Degrees Office. Your thesis cannot be sent to the examiners until the completed *Candidate declaration form* has been received by the Research Degrees Office.

If your supervisors are unable to confirm that your thesis is of adequate standard for submission to the examiners, they are required to produce a written report, which may include copies of your recent progress report(s), making clear how your thesis falls short of an adequate standard. The report will be referred to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee, who may:

- (a) confirm that submission for examination will not be permitted until you have made the appropriate amendments
- (b) arrange for your thesis to be externally assessed and for the external assessor's report to include a judgement about whether your work is of an adequate standard for examination for the degree concerned
- (c) decide (with the agreement of your Head of Department) that your thesis should be accepted for submission, as it stands, without the approval of your supervisor.

In the case of (b) a decision on eligibility for submission would be made by the Research Degrees Committee, or the Chair acting on behalf of the Research Degrees Committee, on receipt of the report and the comments of your Head of Department.

2.2 Appointment of the examination panel

When you give notice of your intention to submit your thesis for examination, the Research Degrees Office will ask your Head of Department to nominate an examination panel. Your Head of Department is also asked to confirm that one of your supervisors will attend the examination as an observer.

The examination panel will normally consist of the examination panel chair, one internal examiner, who is a member of the University's academic staff, and one external examiner, who will normally be a member of academic staff at another university or research institution.

We require all examiners to be:

- (a) qualified and experienced in the subject area
- (b) experienced in research degree supervision and examination.

If a suitable internal examiner is not available, two external examiners may be nominated. The examination panel chair, who is a member of The Open University's academic staff, will chair the examination panel and is responsible for ensuring that the examination is conducted

in accordance with the University's regulations and procedures. However, s/he is not required to make a recommendation on the award of the degree.

The examiners and the examination panel chair must not have had any influence on the design and implementation of your research project. The Research Degrees Committee requires that the examiners are neither related to nor have a close professional or contractual relationship with you, your supervisors or other members of the examination panel. Examiners should be entirely independent and where there is any interest which might prejudice this, it should be declared at nomination stage.

Examiners are asked to declare an interest if they:

- (a) plan to employ you
- (b) have co-published with you, or plan to co-publish with you
- (c) are involved, or have been involved, with you or any of your supervisors in a close personal relationship of any kind
- (d) are a past student of any of your supervisors
- (e) are the 'regular' examiner for a particular supervisor or department
- (f) have a close professional, personal or contractual relationship with any other member of the examination panel
- (g) Are being nominated as an external examiner and have a relationship with the department for example through collaboration or as an external supervisor for another current or recent student in that department.

In exceptional circumstances, if your supervisors are unable to act as the observer, the Research Degrees Committee will expect an experienced member of your Department to act in this capacity.

You may elect not to have a supervisor present as an observer. The Research Degrees Committee is of the view that this would not be in your best interests. If you do elect not to have a supervisor present you should confirm this wish in writing to the Research Degrees Office.

When the examination panel nomination has been approved by the Research Degrees Committee and the examiners have been offered appointment, the Research Degrees Office will inform you of the details of your examination panel.

3 Preparation of the thesis for examination

3.1 Language

The thesis should be written in English unless you were given permission, when you registered, to submit your thesis in Welsh or Gaelic. Brief quotations may be made in foreign languages.

3.2 Length of thesis

Your thesis should not exceed a total of 100,000 words for a PhD or 60,000 for an MPhil (including footnotes, bibliography and appendices). Examiners usually expect a considerably shorter thesis for most subject areas.

Permission to submit an overlength thesis must be sought from the Research Degrees Committee in advance of submission. The examiners are also required to confirm that they are willing to examine an overlength thesis.

3.3 Thesis with a non-text component

The University's research degree regulations (RD 6.2.2, 6.2.9 and 6.2.14) provide for the submission of theses containing 'non-book' media in conjunction with the written ('book') part of a thesis

The term 'non-book' refers to material of a non-printed text form. This can include, but is not limited to, digital media, film, audio files, drawings and software.

In a combined book and non-book thesis it is advised that the 'book' part of the thesis should not be less than 10,000 words for an MPhil and 20,000 words for a PhD. The content and volume of material submitted in a combined book and non-book thesis should adhere to two key principles:

- a) The combined material in both book and non-book form should contain as much argument, analysis, deployment of evidence and referencing as would be provided in a written text thesis.
- b) The volume of material contained in a combined book and non-book thesis should represent a workload to its examiners that is no greater than that represented by a book thesis of 60,000 words for an MPhil or 100,000 words for a PhD.

3.4 Thesis abstract

You should prepare an abstract of your work for submission with the thesis. The abstract should not exceed 300 words. As the University may publish the abstract, it should be in a suitable form for publication. If you were given permission, when you registered, to submit your thesis in Welsh or Gaelic, you should also provide an English translation of your abstract.

A copy of the abstract should be placed at the front of each copy of the thesis and bound into the final version when submitted for accession to The Open University Library (see section 9).

3.5 Presentation of the thesis

Your thesis should be typed or produced on a word processor and printed on a printer which produces letter quality print. Dot matrix printing is not acceptable. The text must be double spaced. Your thesis should be presented on good quality international A4 paper (297mm x 210mm). You may use both sides of the paper. The pages should be numbered consecutively.

The margins must be wide enough to allow for subsequent binding. The minimum requirement is:

inside margin 40mm

top and outside margins 15mm

bottom margin 20mm.

The title page must provide the following information:

- your full name and degrees
- the thesis title
- the degree for which it has been submitted
- the appropriate discipline

• the date of submission for examination (or resubmission for examination, if applicable).

There should be a contents page and, where appropriate, a table of illustrations and/or a list of any items not bound with the thesis (e.g. supporting digital media, maps, plans, etc).

3.6 Footnotes

The regulations do not make any recommendations about the positioning of footnotes. Whether you position your footnotes at the bottom of the page, at the end of each chapter, or at the end of the thesis you should be consistent in your method of referencing.

3.7 Binding the examination copies of the thesis

It is advisable to leave full binding of your thesis until after the examination. This will avoid the additional cost of rebinding if the examiners require corrections to be made.

The covers of the examination copies of your thesis should be made of cardboard or a stronger material.

The pages may be:

- glued
- stapled together or in sections
- held in a ring binder
- comb bound

Ring binders are not suitable for very heavy or bulky theses as they are easily damaged in the post. If the rings become distorted, the pages may become loose.

You should take care that the holes punched do not prevent the final binding after the examination.

Loose pages in a wallet folder are not acceptable.

You are advised to consult your supervisors about suitable binding.

3.8 Outsize documents

Any maps, plans, diagrams etc that are too large to bind with the thesis may be submitted in a separate portfolio.

The documents should be produced on good quality material and cross-referenced to the thesis. A list of contents should be included in both the thesis and the portfolio.

3.9 Non-book media

You should ensure that any non-book media (i.e. material in non-text form such as digital media, film, software, audiotape etc) are recorded by a suitable process on a good quality stock. The system used should produce a durable item suited to preservation over a long period without excessive deterioration of the message. The item should be suited to digital media, such as images, audio files, drawings, software, etc. and be provided in a suitable format for viewing or playback on technology in use at the University. Where possible, digital non-book contributions should comply with existing standards appropriate for the type of media (e.g. 3D, hypertext, image audio). Advice on media standards can be sought from The Open University Library.

An itemised list of the non-book media should be included in the text component of the thesis.

4 Submission

To be eligible to submit a thesis for examination, you must:

- (a) be registered for the degree for which submission is intended
- (b) have completed the minimum period of study specified for the degree
- (c) have satisfied your supervisors that your thesis is of an adequate standard and worthy of examination for the degree for which it is to be submitted
- (d) not be in debt to the University.

You should submit the following for examination:

- (a) three copies of your thesis, see section 3
- (b) four copies of the thesis abstract, see section 3.3. A copy of the abstract should be placed in the front of each copy of the thesis. The fourth copy should be enclosed with your submission
- (c) your completed Candidate declaration form, see section 2.1.

4.1 Posting or delivering the thesis

Your thesis should be sent registered by mail in at least two parcels to:

Research Degrees Office The Open University Milton Keynes MK7 6AA.

If you want to deliver your thesis to the Research Degrees Office, please telephone in advance.

The Research Degrees Office will forward the copies of your thesis to the examiners.

5 Arrangements for Your Examination

Arrangements for your oral examination will be made by the examination panel chair as soon as possible after you have submitted your thesis.

The Research Degrees Office will confirm the following details to all concerned:

(a) Date

This should be within six weeks of the receipt of the thesis by the examiners. Variations between intended and actual submission dates prevent a date being set in advance of submission.

(b) Time

Examinations are generally held in the afternoon, particularly if external examiners have far to travel.

(c) Venue

Examinations are normally held at Walton Hall. Alternatively, they may be held at the external examiner's place of work or at one of the University's Regional Centres if this is more convenient.

6 The Oral Examination

Examinations usually last between two to three hours depending on the nature of the thesis. The examiners must satisfy themselves that the thesis is your own original work and that it meets the criteria for the award of the relevant degree.

You will be given the opportunity to comment on any adverse points and on any revisions which the examiners intend to recommend.

The examination may include the inspection of experimental apparatus, demonstration of software, viewing of data or other reasonable requests from the examiners. The examiners should make any such requests in advance to give you time to prepare.

Equally you or your supervisors may offer some form of practical instruction. Again such an offer should be made in advance.

You can bring to the examination an annotated copy of your work and any other source materials you may find useful.

The panel may inform you of their intended recommendation following the examination, after the examiners have adjourned for a brief discussion. Exceptionally, examiners may wish to indicate their initial opinion of the thesis at the start of the examination so that you can defend your thesis against an adverse recommendation. Otherwise one of your supervisors should inform you of the recommendation by the following day.

At this stage the decision of the examination panel is only a recommendation to the Research Degrees Examination Result Approval Committee.

The decision of the Committee, based on the examiners' recommendation, will be the formal result of the examination.

7 Criteria for the Award of the Degree

To be awarded the relevant degree, your thesis must fulfil the following criteria:

7.1 Master of Philosophy

The thesis must be of good presentation and style, and show evidence of the student's proficiency in the methods and techniques of research, demonstrating an adequate knowledge and discussion of the literature in a specific field of study. It must show initiative, independence of thought and must be a distinct contribution to scholarship.

7.2 Doctor of Philosophy

The thesis must be of good presentation and style and show evidence of being a significant contribution to knowledge and of your capacity to pursue further research without supervision. The thesis should contain a significant amount of material worthy of publication.

8 Recommendations Available to Examiners

The examiners may make the following recommendations:

8.1 Award of the degree

This recommendation is made where the requirements of the relevant degree have been met in full and no amendments are required.

8.2 Minor corrections and modifications

This recommendation is made where the requirements of the relevant degree have been met in full subject to typographical corrections and/or editorial modifications.

You will be allowed two months, from the date of the examination result letter, to complete any corrections and modifications specified by the examiners. Your revised thesis will be checked by the examination panel to ensure that the changes have been completed satisfactorily. Reexamination is not required.

Examples of minor corrections include:

- Typographical and grammatical errors
- Corrections to references (citations and bibliography)
- Improvements to figures (e.g. image resolution, legends, scale bars)
- Minor corrections of fact
- Minor revisions of interpretation of data, results, conclusions
- Minor re-organisation of material.

8.3 Substantial amendment

This recommendation is made where the requirements of the relevant degree have been met in full subject to limited deficiencies which the panel is confident can be corrected satisfactorily.

You will be allowed six months to complete the substantial amendment specified by the examiners. Please consult your supervisors about whether the substantial amendments have been completed satisfactorily before you send your amended thesis to the Research Degrees Office. Your revised thesis will then be referred to the examination panel to check that the amendments are satisfactory. Re-examination is not required.

Examples of substantial amendment include;

- Reinterpretation of the data (including additional review of background literature)
- Substantial rewriting of large portions of the text (e.g. re-drafting chapters)
- Substantial additional material to be incorporated within the text
- Substantial revisions to results and conclusions
- Thorough revisions of presentational matters which require a complete edit.

8.4 Major revision and resubmission for re-examination

This recommendation is made where the requirements of the relevant degree have not been met in full but the panel is confident that the degree can be awarded subject to major revisions and resubmission.

Examiners are asked to recommend resubmission rather than a fail result whenever they see the prospect of the thesis being brought up to the required standard.

You will be allowed twelve months to complete the major revision specified by the examiners and resubmit your thesis for examination. Supervision should continue throughout this period.

This recommendation cannot be made if your thesis is being examined following a resubmission result at an earlier examination.

Examples of major revision include;

- Additional data collection (including additional background literature)
- Major revisions of large portions of the text (e.g. drafting new chapters)
- Major revisions to results and conclusions.

8.5 Alternative recommendation for PhD candidates

In exceptional cases, examiners of a PhD thesis may recommend the award of an MPhil degree. The award of the MPhil may be subject to corrections and modifications, substantial amendment, or major revision and resubmission as detailed above.

8.6 Fail

This recommendation is made where the requirements of the relevant degree have not been met and the examiners cannot see any prospect of the thesis being brought up to the required standard.

9 Approval of the examination result

After the examination, the examiners make their recommendations as to the award of the degree to the Research Degree Examination Result Approval Committee. The examiners' report will specify any corrections and modifications, substantial amendment, or major revisions which are required.

If the examiners recommend the award of the degree subject to correction and modifications, substantial amendment or major revisions and resubmission, an examination copy of your thesis will be retained by the Research Degrees Office until the academic requirements of the degree have been met in full. This measure has been implemented to avoid any confusion concerning the material submitted for examination in the event of an appeal.

The decision as to the award of the degree is taken by Research Degree Examination Result Approval Committee on the basis of the *Examination panel report*.

When the Committee has made its decision, the Research Degrees Office will send you written notification of the examination result. If you are required to make changes to your thesis or resubmit it for examination after major revisions, you will be informed of the deadline for completion of the changes or the resubmission of your thesis, see section 8.

The date of the award will be the date the Research Degree Examination Result Ratification Committee ratifies the examination result or, where the award is subject to correction and modifications or substantial amendment, the date the examiners confirm that the required changes have been completed satisfactorily.

10 Award of the Degree

Before a research degree may be awarded, you are required to submit three copies of your thesis to the Research Degrees Office. Details of how each copy should be presented are given in section 10.1.

Two of these copies will be for deposition in the University library, the third will be held by your academic unit.

You should include a completed *Thesis deposition form* when you submit the three copies of your thesis. This form permits the University library to make your thesis available to readers and, at the Library's discretion, to photocopy your work.

If you are a PhD student and would like a copy of your thesis to be available on loan to the British Library Thesis Service as and when it is requested, you should also indicate this on the *Thesis deposition form*. The British Library will publicise the details of your thesis and may request a copy on loan from the University library. The British Library has recommendations for the presentation of theses to be included in the scheme, see section 10.2. One copy of your thesis should be produced to this standard if you wish it to be included.

10.1 Binding the approved copies of your thesis

All three copies should be complete and in good condition. They should be unmutilated by manuscript comments, underlining etc.

The spine should include, in gold lettering running from top to bottom:

- (a) the full or abbreviated title of the thesis
- (b) your name

- (c) the name of the degree
- (d) the year you submitted the thesis for examination or, resubmitted the thesis for reexamination.

One of the two copies to be deposited in the University library must be sewn with thread and bound in a fixed binding of black boards with cloth (i.e. like a hardback book).

The second copy must also be bound but to a lesser specification, i.e. like a paperback book. It should be bound in stout card covers and secured so that the leaves remain in place when the volume is used. You may staple the leaves together. A stapled volume should not be more than 20mm thick. If your submission is thicker than this, it should be divided into consecutively marked volumes (volume 1 of 3, volume 2 of 3 etc).

Comb bindings, spring binders, or plastic slide clips on unstapled sheets are not acceptable.

The third copy to be held by your academic unit should be securely bound to the lesser specification as outlined above.

Work submitted in other forms (e.g. non-book media such as film, slide, audio tape, etc.) should be recorded by a suitable process on good quality stock. The system used should produce a durable item suited to preservation over a long period without excessive deterioration of the message. The item should be suited to digital media, such as images, audio files, drawings, software, etc. and be provided in a suitable format for viewing or playback on technology in use at the University. Where possible, digital non-book contributions should comply with existing standards appropriate for the type of media (e.g. 3D, hypertext, image audio). The item should be provided with an appropriate container approved by the Director of Library Services and bear on its exterior the particulars listed on the cover of the library bound copy of your thesis. (You should consult the Director of Library Services about the specifications for any such items that you intend to submit as part of your thesis.)

10.2 British Library Thesis Service requirements

The British Library Thesis Service requirements for PhD theses are outlined below.

- (a) Copy must be legible, characters in the main text including displayed matter and notes, should not be less than 2.0mm for capitals and 1.5 mm for x-height (height of lower case x). (A point size of at least 10 should meet this requirement).
- (b) Paper should be size A4, white and within the range 70g/m² to 100g/m².
- (c) The margin at the binding edge of the page should not be less than 15mm. Margins should not include the page number.

Theses not produced to these standards may not be included in the scheme.

10.3 Congregation

When the library copies of your thesis have been accepted for deposition and you have met the University's other non-academic requirements, the Awards and Ceremonies Centre will arrange for your degree to be conferred in absentia by Congregation. You do not attend the Congregation meeting however it is at this point that you are formally awarded your degree.

The Awards and Ceremonies Centre will send you your degree certificate and invite you to attend one of the University's degree ceremonies.

11 Thesis Binders

The following is a list of binders who have indicated that they can bind research degree theses.

If you wish to have work bound by someone on the list, please contact them direct. The contractual arrangements, including rates of payment, are private arrangements between yourself and the other party. The role of the University is limited to circulating this document.

11.2 Binders

A Cameron 73 Robertson Street Glasgow G2 8QD (Tel: 0141 221 3732)

Alfred Maltby and Son Ltd Fine Bookbinders and Restorers 28-30 St Michael's Street Oxford OX1

(Tel: 01865 243413)

Blissett Bookbinders Roslin Road London W3 8DH (Tel: 020 8992 3965)

Email: robert.bolton@blissetts.com Web Site: www.blissetts.com

Bookbinding and Conservation Department University of Birmingham

Edgbaston

Birmingham B15 2TT (Tel: 0121 414 5799)

Collis-Bird and Withey 1 Drayton Park London N5 1NU (Tel: 0207 607 1116)

Hollingworth and Moss **Enfield Terrace** Manor Street Industrial Estate Leeds LS7 1RG (Tel: 0113 243 8642) http://www.mythesis.co.uk/

Kew Bookbinding 61a North Street Thame Oxfordshire OX9 3BH

(Tel: 01844 212035)

Alfred Harris (Bristol) Ltd 5 Kingsdown Parade Bristol BS6 5UD (Tel: 0117 929 2375)

Bindwell Bookbinders Stanley Works Stanley Road Sidcup

Kent DA14 4DQ (Tel: 0208 309 6065)

(Website:

www.bindwellbookbinders.co.uk)

Bookbinders of Lewes Star Brewery Workshops

Castle Ditch Lane

Lewes

East Sussex BN7 1YJ (Tel: 01273 486718)

City Binders 39 Ludgate Hill London EC4M 7JN

(Tel: 020 7248 7990)

(Website: www.citybinders.co.uk)

J S Heron Ltd 5 Queens Crescent St Georges Cross Glasgow

(Tel: 0141 332 1883)

Hull Bindery

- Side of Avenues Library 76 Chanterlancs Avenue

Hull HU5 3TS

(Email: bindery@hullcc.gov.uk)

(Tel: 01482 331285)

Keypoint Bookbinders Unit 8 Balmoral Grove Off Brewery Road

Islington London

(Tel: 0207 263 6131/2/3)

(Mobile: 07859 880087)

(Email: malcolmkew@mac.com) (Web: www.kewbookbinding.co.uk)

J S Wilson and Son 17 Ronald Rolph Court Wadloes Road Cambridge CB5 8PX (Tel: 01223 212420)

(Website: http://www.jswilsonandson.co.uk)

(24 hour thesis binding)

J Lawrence 16 Gloucester Road Bedford MK42 9TJ (Tel: 01234 346692)

New Bradwell Reprographics Unit 8 New Bradwell Workspace Milton Keynes **MK13 0BW**

Tel: 01908-222419

Priory Bookbinders 37 Invincible Road Farnborough Hants GU14 7QU (Tel: 01252 515843) www.priorybindery.com

R G Scales (Bookbinder) The Document Centre (UK) Ltd 92, Southwark Bridge Road, Southwark, London, SE1 OEX (Email: richard@document-centre.co.uk)

Temple Bookbinders 10 Quarry Road Headington Oxford OX3 8NU (Tel: 01865 451940)

The Craftsmen Binders 20 St Michael's Road Northampton NN1 3JU (Tel: 01604 601010)

Richard Ince **Prontagrint Bristol Central** 70 Park Row Clifton Bristol BS1 5LE (Tel: 0117 925 3868)

New Leaf Bindery 272 Montgomery Street New Enterprise Workshops Sparkbrook Birmingham B11 1DS (Tel: 0121 773 1681)

R A and E J White 27 Preston Road North End Portsmouth PO2 7JT (Tel: 02392 668364)

Riley, Dun and Wilson Ltd Red Doles Lane Leeds Road Huddersfield Yorks HD2 1YE (Tel: 01484 534323)

The Print Quarter 251 Exchange Road West Bridgford Notts NG2 6DD (Tel: 0115 945 2070)

Walker and Co University House University of Salford Salford M5 4WT

(Tel: 0161 736 7811 / 0161 295 5216)

GB Bookbinding Ltd 23 Basepoint Abbey Park Industrial Estate Premier Way Romsey SO51 9AQ (Tel 01794 552820) www.gbbookbinding.org.uk

Caromar Ltd
Book Binders & Print Finishers
Unit 7 Belgrave Ind Estate
Belgrave Road
Southampton
SO17 3EA

(Tel: 023 8055 8554)

EX11 - Examination Guidelines for Students

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