Research Degree Examiners' Reports: Guidance for Examiners

Information and guidance on the examination process is provided in the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes ("the Regulations and Code"), available on the University’s website at http://www.bris.ac.uk/esu/pg/cop-research-degrees.html
Section 9: Assessment is of particular relevance and is included in this booklet.

Examiners must complete independent preliminary reports before the oral examination and a joint report, containing a firm recommendation, after the oral examination. Taken together, the examiners' reports must enable the University's Research Degrees Examination Board (RDEB) to assess the scope and significance of the work submitted by the candidate and to determine whether the candidate satisfies the University's criteria for the award of the research degree as set out in Annex 7 of the University's Regulations and Code (which is also included in this booklet) and in the regulations for the specific degree, contained in Annexes 1 and 2 of the Regulations and Code.

1. The examiner's preliminary reports record their assessment of the candidate's submitted work (dissertation or published work), and identify topics for discussion during the oral examination. Reports should be made on the appropriate forms available on the University's website (http://www.bris.ac.uk/exams/research/), and should be filled in using Word or a comparable package and signed. Examiners must exchange their preliminary reports prior to the oral examination. Examiners should bear in mind that reports may be made available to candidates after being considered by the RDEB.

2. The Internal Examiner (or Internal Co-ordinator) is responsible for making practical arrangements for the oral examination, including: liaising with the External Examiner(s) to set a date, booking suitable accommodation and refreshments, and giving the Examinations Office, the supervisor and the candidate at least ten days' notice of the time and place of the examination.

3. The examiners' joint final report after the oral examination sets out their assessment of the candidate and of his/her submitted work and makes a firm recommendation, with appropriate justification, to the University Research Degrees Examination Board concerning the award. Reports should be made on the appropriate forms available on the University's website (http://www.bris.ac.uk/exams/research/), and should be filled in using Word or a comparable package and signed. Where the joint report differs in its findings from any of the preliminary reports, examiners should justify the changes in their joint report. If examiners cannot agree their joint report, they should submit separate final reports.

Examiners should comment on the strengths, as well as any weaknesses, of the candidate's work. Reports need to be informative and specific to the candidate and his/her submitted work. Generic reports will not be accepted.
Examiners’ individual and joint reports should address the following issues:

(a) purpose of the research and the overall approach taken
(b) candidate's application of research methods
(c) candidate's review of the literature
(d) extent of any collaboration
(e) candidate's contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the subject represented
(f) literary form and quality of presentation of the work submitted, and the inferences that can be drawn about the candidate's ability to present and defend intellectual arguments in writing
(g) candidate's general knowledge of the subject
(h) candidate's performance in the oral examination, and the inferences that can be drawn about the candidate's ability to present and defend intellectual arguments verbally

The examiners' recommendation should take into account the criteria set out in Annex 7 (Criteria for award of research degrees) of the Regulations and Code, as well as any specific criteria contained in the regulations for the individual award (included in Annexes 1 and 2 of the Regulations and Code).

4. Where the recommendation involves correction of errors of substance, or resubmission, examiners should attach clear, comprehensive guidance for the candidate to the final report. For minor errors, examiners should make clear to the candidate, in writing, the corrections required.

You should inform the candidate of your recommendation, but should ensure that they are aware that the recommendation may not be accepted by the Research Degrees Examination Board, and that no award will be made, or timescale for corrections formally agreed, until the reports have been considered by the board.

The University welcomes comments from examiners on any aspect of the research degree examination process. Please send your comments to the Examinations Office (postgraduate-exams@bristol.ac.uk) for consideration by the University Graduate Studies Committee.

The Internal Examiner is responsible for ensuring that the examiners' independent preliminary examination reports and their final report(s) are sent, via the School/Department agreed administrative processes, for countersigning by the Head of School/Department (or agreed nominee).

If the Head of School/Department or the agreed nominee is the candidate’s supervisor or internal examiner, an alternative senior member of the School/Department’s staff should sign the form.

The Head of School/Department (or agreed nominee) should forward the signed forms to the Examinations Office to arrive no later than two weeks after the date of the oral examination.