

## Guidelines on nominating examiners for MPhil and PhD examinations

For use when completing the [Examination Entry](#) form

### Introduction

1. The [Regulations for Research Degrees](#) (paragraph 42) require the appointment of:
 

*two, or exceptionally three, examiners for each candidate. The examiners are required to be experts in the field of the thesis and to be able to make an independent assessment of the student and the thesis. There will be an examiner appointed from one of the colleges of the University of London (including LSE) and a second examiner appointed from outside the University. With the permission of the Chair of the Research Degrees Subcommittee both examiners may be appointed from within the University, or both may be appointed from outside the University. Only one examiner may be appointed from within LSE. The candidate's supervisors or advisers may not be examiners.*
2. Supervisors are asked to nominate appropriate examiners (by completing the relevant sections of the [Examination Entry form](#)) that meet the School's criteria: the notes below are intended to assist in the nomination process. The Doctoral Programme Director will need to confirm they are content with the nominations made by the supervisor by signing the examination entry form.
3. It is not the responsibility of students to nominate their own examiners and students do not have the right to request and have appointed examiners of their choosing. However, it is usual for a supervisor to discuss possible examiners with their student in particular to establish whether there is any connection between the student and the examiner(s) (see paragraphs 16-17).

### Completing the examination entry form

4. The student, with guidance from their supervisor, should ensure they provide a comprehensive and clear abstract on the relevant section of the examination entry form. The abstract should be written in a manner accessible to non-subject experts and in plain English. The student should ensure that he/she fully understands the declaration they are asked to sign – further guidance on this can be sought from the Research Degrees Manager (Louisa Green; [l.j.green@lse.ac.uk](mailto:l.j.green@lse.ac.uk)).
5. The supervisor will need to ensure he/she makes an articulate case for the choice of particular examiners. It is assumed that nominated examiners will be experts in their field therefore the supervisor should give specific reasons for the choice of that particular examiner in relation to his/her particular academic expertise.
6. The supervisor will need to check whether there are any academic and/or personal connections between a student and an examiner and declare this on the examination entry form. Any connection between a student and an examiner and any connection between a supervisor and an examiner must be declared in full on the Examination Entry Form. Additionally, the supervisor will need to confirm how many previous MPhil/PhD examinations each examiner has conducted and indicate this on the relevant section of the form. He/she will also need to confirm whether each examiner has had previous experience of PhD examining in the UK (as distinct from PhD examining experience in other countries).
7. The Panel (see paragraphs 18-20) considering the examiner nominations are unable to do so if information provided is incomplete. The Research Degrees Unit will return any incomplete forms to the supervisor, which may cause delays to the examination process. Supervisors are therefore asked to provide full information in all sections of the form.

### Internal examiners

8. The internal examiner can be selected from one of the colleges of the University of London or from the LSE (including the student's own department) including Visiting Professors (see also paragraphs 12 and 14). You can find information on the areas of expertise of LSE academic staff in the [LSE Experts Directory](#). The list of Colleges of the University of London can be found on the [University's website](#).

### External examiners

9. When considering suitable external examiners, they must be external to the LSE and the University of London. It is possible to nominate an overseas external examiner, but the supervisor is asked to be mindful of associated travel costs when considering whether to nominate an examiner from overseas.

### Requesting two internals/externals

10. If it is not possible to identify one internal and one external examiner, the supervisor will need to make a special case on the examination entry form for consideration by the Research Degrees Subcommittee Chair. The supervisor will be expected to provide confirmation that there are no other suitable examiners that meet the School's criteria and the reasons for the request of either two internal or two external examiners. In cases where two internal examiners are being nominated, it is not possible for both to be from the LSE.

### Requesting a third examiner

11. In exceptional circumstances, usually connected with the nature of the thesis, it might be necessary to nominate a third examiner. If the supervisor is considering appointing a third examiner for a student, please speak with the Research Degrees Manager (Louisa Green; [l.j.green@lse.ac.uk](mailto:l.j.green@lse.ac.uk)) in the first instance.

### Expertise of the examiners

12. Both examiners should be experts in the field of the thesis although not necessarily in all parts of the precise topic. Many theses are interdisciplinary and the aim should be to appoint examiners who, between them, cover all aspects of the work to be presented by the student. It is usual that both examiners will be members of academic staff in a higher education institution (see paragraph 13 below on retired staff) and this can include Visiting Professors. The status (whether classed as internal or external for the purposes of examining) of a Visiting Professor will be determined by the institution currently employing them in that capacity rather than their home institution (see also paragraph 14 below).
13. Retired members of academic staff, who are still active in their fields, can usually act as examiners. Their institutional affiliation, in terms of whether they will be considered an internal or external examiner, will be that of their last employer.
14. Where an examiner has been a member of the University of London previously (for example, where an academic at LSE or one of the other Colleges has moved to another institution) a period of at least three years must have passed since they left the University before they can be classed as an external examiner and act in this capacity. This also applies to a member of academic staff who has been a Visiting Professor at the LSE or University of London.
15. Between them examiners are required to be familiar with the UK MPhil/PhD examining process, including experience of conducting MPhil/PhD examinations previously. It is accepted that an academic has to examine an MPhil/PhD thesis for the first time; if such a person is nominated, she/he should be paired with an experienced examiner. The supervisor will be asked to confirm the amount of prior examining experience each examiner has on the examination entry form.

### Independence

16. It is accepted that examiners will usually be acquainted with the supervisor, and sometimes the student, and this in itself is not a bar to acting as an examiner. The supervisor must declare in full any academic and/or personal connections on the examination entry form. All connections will be considered by the Panel before an examiner can be appointed.
17. The examiners appointed should have had no direct involvement in the student's research or close connections with either the supervisor or the student that might inhibit a completely objective examination. It is not possible to specify all instances where close connections will prevent a potential examiner from being considered as independent. However previous nominations have been rejected on the basis of the following:
  - (i) both external examiners being from the same institution;
  - (ii) the internal examiner also being the Doctoral Programme Director and from the same department as the candidate;
  - (iii) an internal examiner who had been involved in the candidate's upgrade decision;
  - (iv) an internal examiner who had also been the candidate's tutor on a previous degree;
  - (v) a candidate who was holding a job offer from the same academic department as the nominated external examiner;
  - (vi) an examiner who had written a reference for the candidate in support of an application for funding; and
  - (vii) where an external examiner was affiliated with a Research Centre at LSE.

Where connections have existed but were deemed by the Panel as not strong enough to bar the examiner from acting have included (but are not limited to):

- (i) the candidate had met the examiner at a conference where they had spoken briefly about his/her thesis;
- (ii) the internal examiner was based in the same department as the student/supervisor;
- (iii) the examiner had supervised the candidate's supervisor, but more than 5 years ago;
- (iv) the candidate's supervisor had supervised the examiner, but more than 5 years ago;
- (v) the examiner had co-authored a paper with the supervisor, but the paper had been written more than 10 years previously; and
- (vi) the examiners and the supervisors were known to each other as experts within the field.

#### **What happens next?**

18. Once the examination entry form has been submitted, the Research Degrees Unit will send the examiner nominations to the appropriate subject panel of the Research Degrees Subcommittee for approval. Where the Panel has any concerns over particular nominations, the Unit will contact the supervisor in the first instance for further information.
19. On approval of the nominations, the RDU will formally contact the examiners to ask if they are willing and able to act. Once confirmation from them has been received, the Unit will confirm to the student and their supervisor that the examiners have been formally appointed. At that stage, it is expected that the supervisor will begin to make the relevant arrangements for the viva (please see the [Guidelines on MPhil/PhD Examinations](#) for further information).
20. The process of approving and appointing examiners can sometimes be lengthy, for example, if the RDSC subject panel reject the original examiner nominations, new nominations will need to be made. The examination entry form should therefore be completed and submitted to the RDU **at least two months in advance of the thesis being submitted** to allow sufficient time for the process to be completed so that once the thesis has been received it can be sent immediately to the examiners.

Research Degrees Subcommittee  
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