

7. THESIS EXAMINATION

7.1 Introduction

The procedures apply to all programmes of study by research where assessment is entirely by thesis, supplemented by a *viva voce* examination online (for all PhD candidates). They set out the framework for study for research degrees and the conditions for their award.

7.2 Procedures for Submission of the Thesis

- (i) MPhil/PhD Students will be expected to publish at least **one** Research Paper in an internationally peer-reviewed impact factor Journal prior to the final submission of their Thesis for examination.
- (ii) A student is required to notify the Dean of Faculty/ Director, CILL with the approval of his/her supervisor(s) of his/her intention to submit the thesis three months prior to the proposed date of submission using a Notification for submission of Thesis form (RDE1). A *Transfer Report/Thesis Declaration Form* (RDDC) will have to be filled in and submitted together with the RDE1 form. A two- page abstract duly approved by the main supervisor must be attached with the forms.

After receipt of the RDE1 form and until submission of the MPhil Thesis or PhD Thesis, a reminder shall be sent every month by the Dean of Faculty/Director of Centre to the student concerned for submission of the MPhil Thesis or PhD Thesis.

https://www.uom.ac.mu/Images/Files/regulations/MPhilPhD/2020_2021/forms.pdf

- (iii) The thesis should be submitted with the approval of the supervisor(s). Under exceptional cases, if the student does not obtain the supervisor(s)' approval, the case shall be referred to the FRC/ CILLRC. The latter will investigate and make appropriate recommendations to the Faculty/ CILL Board.
- (iv) The thesis shall be submitted to the AO's Office in one soft copy on google drive.
- (v) Also, all students must compulsorily upload their thesis through the Turnitin Platform except for cases where there are IPR/commercialisation issues.
 - Main Project Supervisor(s) are expected to apprise their research students on what Turnitin is, how it operates and the reason why the use of Turnitin is recommended in the assessment of theses, as per established guidelines.
 - Project Supervisor shall create one (1) Class and two (2) Assignments [one (1) for draft & one (1) for final] in the Turnitin Platform for all thesis students.
 - Each student shall be allowed to submit his/her draft thesis through 'Turnitin' prior to submitting the final thesis.
 - The student will have access to his/her first originality report(s) and will be able to revise his/her work (if necessary) before submitting the final thesis.
 - Only the Main Supervisor shall have access to the final Turnitin originality reports. Same will have to be made available to the other Co-Supervisor and Associate Supervisor.

- Any MPhil Thesis, MPhil Transfer Report or PhD Thesis not submitted through the Turnitin Platform will be unreceivable.
 - A copy of the Report generated through the Turnitin Platform should be submitted to the Chairperson of the Faculty Research Committee/CILLRC.
- (vi) At the time of the first submission for examination, the student shall also submit a separate signed declaration of originality, countersigned by the main supervisor (RDDC).
- (vii) On submission of the hardbound copy and one final soft copy, a student shall also submit a signed statement from the supervisor(s) certifying that all necessary corrections have been completed satisfactorily (RDDC), together with a signed statement from the student, on the appropriate form, that the copies of the thesis are (apart from any corrections made) identical to the original submission.
- (viii) Any work in an unbound form must be referenced in the thesis (e.g. CD-ROM, software, maps, statistics, artwork, etc.).

7.3 Thesis

Format and Layout

Refer to Section 4: “**FORMAT AND LAYOUT OF DISSERTATIONS AND THESES**”

Copyright

The copyright of a thesis remains with the author.

The student is required to submit one soft copy on google drive of the final thesis, one copy to be deposited in the University library. One copy to be kept by the main supervisor and the third copy to be submitted to the Dean of Faculty/ Director of Centre.

The student may request that a moratorium be imposed on access to the thesis for a period of time not exceeding 3 years as from the date of final submission. Any request for a moratorium should be addressed to the Dean of Faculty /Director of Centre, who will send his/her recommendations to the Faculty/CILL Board. The final approval will have to be sought from the Teaching and Research Committee.

7.4 Procedures for Appointment of External Examiners

- (i) Upon receipt of the Thesis Submission Form (Form RDE1), the Faculty/CILL Research Committee shall normally be held within two weeks to consider the appointment of External Examiners and shall approve at least four External Examiners in order of priority from:
- (a) Up to four names of External Examiners submitted by the supervisor(s) within one week after student’s notification; and
 - (b) Four External Examiners identified by the Faculty/CILL Research Committee.

In case the supervisor(s) does/do not submit up to four names of External Examiners by the given deadline, the Faculty/CILL Research Committee shall identify and approve at least four External Examiners in order of priority.

External Examiners should normally be required to meet the following criteria:

- (a) One External Examiner shall be a Professor and the other shall be at least at an Associate Professor level or equivalent.
- (b) The External Examiner should have recent experience of either supervising or examining PhD students in the relevant subject area.
- (c) For moderating an MPhil Thesis, the appointment of an External Examiner at Senior Lecturer level can also be considered subject to the Department concerned submitting strong justifications for such appointment. However, one of the two External Examiners should be at Professorial level.
- (d) One of the External Examiners of the PhD thesis could be one of the External Assessors of the MPhil Transfer Report and the second External Examiner should however, be a newly appointed one.

It is recognised that in some cases, the most suitable person to act as an External Examiner for a particular student may be someone outside academia but who has recent experience in examining research degrees in the relevant field.

If External Examiners are not appointed within a period of two (2) months, after the submission date of the Theses, the Dean of Faculty/ Director of Centre should inform the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academia), who would look into same.

- (ii) Upon approval by the Faculty/CILL Research Committee, the Faculty/Centre Administrative Officer shall send an email to the approved External Examiners regarding
 - (a) whether potential conflict(s) of interest is/are likely to occur as a result of examining a candidate's thesis and if so disclose it to the University and
 - (b) IPR issues, in case the research work has IPR with potential for commercialisation.

Examples of 'potential conflict of interest' include:

- closely connected with or to the student to be examined, the supervisor (e.g. relative, friend, someone in regular correspondence with the student about his/her work, former tutor of the student etc);
- someone who has been a staff member at the University of Mauritius within the last five years.

- (iii) If any of the approved External Examiners express any conflict of interest, the Faculty/CILL Research Committee shall identify and approve another External Examiner for the thesis.
- (iv) If no conflict of interest is expressed by the approved External Examiner(s), the Faculty/CILL Research Committee shall recommend the External Examiners in order of priority. Once approved by the Faculty/CILL Board, approval shall be sought from the Teaching and Research Committee and Senate will be informed accordingly.

In case of any identified conflict of interest, the views of the Director of Legal Affairs shall be sought through the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academia) and the Vice-Chancellor.

- (v) Within two weeks following appointment, the Faculty/Centre Administrative Officer shall send the theses to the first two External Examiners requesting the submission of the completed RDE2 (A) and (B) forms within two months.
- (vi) If the External Examiner(s) has/have not submitted the completed forms (A) and (B) at the end of the second month, the Faculty/Centre Administrative Officer shall send the Thesis(es) to the next External Examiner(s) on the list of External Examiners appointed in order of priority.

However, if in the meantime the External Examiners have responded, their reports will be considered by the Board of Examiners and the new External Examiner(s) will still assess the thesis and he/she/they will be paid the usual honorarium.

- (vii) A penalty fee will be charged to students who do not submit their thesis by the prescribed deadline unless the students submit evidence of ill health or other cause which has been approved by the Dean of Faculty/Director of Centre as constituting sufficient reason for the delay in the submission of the thesis.

7.5 The Assessment and the External Examiners' Tentative Reports

- (i) The tentative recommendation from the External Examiner [Form RDE2 (A)] shall be one of the following:
 - (a) Award of PhD with no corrections;
Definitions:
Grammatical errors, technical/layout/format changes, minor changes to sentences and explanations that do not affect the science or the way in which the results were interpreted and presented.
 - (b) Award of PhD subject to minor corrections to the satisfaction of the supervisor(s) and a person designated by the Dean of Faculty/Director, CILL;
Definition:
Minor corrections refer to revisions of a larger extent than those mentioned in option 1 above, for instance improving logical arguments or critical discussions and/or Changing the layout and/or technical finishing.
 - (c) Award of PhD subject to major revision to the satisfaction of the supervisor(s) and a person designated by the Dean of Faculty/ Director, CILL;
Definition:
Major revision refers to major or sizable changes for instance rewriting, specific parts, updating missing information or completing half-finished arguments.
 - (d) Award of PhD subject to major revision to the satisfaction of the External Examiners;
 - (e) Award of lower degree (MPhil Degree);

- (f) Award of lower degree subject to minor/major corrections;
 - (g) To fail the thesis with no right of resubmission (No award).
- (ii) The BoE will deliberate on the recommendations received from the External Examiners, i.e two (2) External Examiners tentative recommendations RDE2(A) and the joint final Report RDE3.
 - (iii) Any amendments proposed by the External Examiner(s) must be communicated in *toto* by the Chair to the student through the supervisor(s) and relevant extracts of the External Examiner(s) Reports as decided by the BoE should be given to the student(s) through the supervisor(s). The Full External Examiner Report(s) [Form RDE2 (B)] must not be disclosed to non-BoE members. In case of amendments subject to supervisor(s) satisfaction, the supervisor(s) must inform the Chair of the BoE in writing that all corrections have been made to his/her/their satisfaction; the Chair will then make recommendation directly to the Faculty/CILL Board.

7.6 PhD VIVA/Oral Examinations

The oral examination should be viewed as a “validation exercise”, with the aim of adding value to both the quality and standard of the thesis in addition to the general development of the candidate as a mature researcher and professional in the relevant field of study. The viva will take place via video conference.

The purpose of the viva/oral examination is:

- (i) To enable the PhD candidate to demonstrate his/her knowledge and understanding of the discipline or field of study, the appropriateness of the research methodologies employed and methods of analysis as well as the validity of the conclusions.
- (ii) To clarify any matters that the External Examiners may have or judge unclear.
- (iii) To allow the External Examiners and candidate to discuss any amendments which may be required.
- (iv) To assist the candidate in better understanding the Examiners' comments.
- (v) To assist both External Examiners in reaching a joint decision.
- (vi) To enable the PhD candidate develop the proper communication skills to defend his/her thesis, skills which s/he would have acquired during the MPhil/PhD training.

COMPOSITION OF THE VIVA/ORAL EXAMS COMMITTEE

The Viva Committee shall consist of 4-8 persons including the following:

- (i) Two (2) External Examiners as appointed by TRC.
- (ii) The supervisor(s).
The supervisor(s) are in attendance only and shall not intervene during the PhD defence unless solicited by the External Examiners.
- (iii) An Independent Chairperson (IC).
The IC is selected on advice from the Dean of Faculty/Director CILL. The IC will normally be a senior academic, with extensive supervision experience and a track record of successful PhD completions. S/he will normally be from a related discipline to the candidate's thesis and will have had no direct involvement with the candidate's PhD. The IC will be appointed

by the Dean as soon as the two (2) External Examiners have been approved by TRC. In case the Dean cannot appoint an IC from the related discipline, a senior academic from another department should be appointed.

- (iv) A Rapporteur as selected by the Dean/Director CILL.
The Rapporteur's task is to take notes during the examination and record the deliberations and decision of the Examiners.
- (v) Independent invited members duly approved by the Dean of Faculty, in attendance only and limited to two members, who are not officially part of the jury/research unit. The Supervisor(s) shall submit two names – one academic staff from the Faculty and one stakeholder with interest in the area. The Independent invited members should not participate during the Viva.

Terms of reference of the Viva Committee

The Viva Committee will be expected to establish the following among others:

- (i) That the doctoral thesis is the candidate's own work.
- (ii) That the thesis makes a substantial contribution to knowledge, and/or provides significant evidence of original work.
- (iii) That the candidate demonstrates satisfactory knowledge of the doctoral thesis.
- (iv) That the candidate demonstrates an understanding of background and other studies related to the thesis
- (v) That the candidate demonstrates the ability and confidence to defend the contents of the thesis.

Role of the Independent Chairperson (IC).

It is the responsibility of the IC, once appointed, to finalise the date and time and to make all the arrangements for the oral examination.

The IC should inform the candidate the date, time and venue of the viva voce two (2) weeks in advance.

It is important that IC briefs the External Examiners, through a pre-viva meeting, on the viva process and agree any order of questioning to the mutual satisfaction of both Examiners. Examiners should not exchange preliminary reports prior to the viva, but it is expected that their contents will be shared and discussed at the pre-viva meeting.

The key functions of the IC are thus to ensure that:

- (i) The viva process is rigorous, fair, and consistent.
- (ii) Questioning by the examiners is conducted fairly and professionally
- (iii) The candidate has the opportunity to defend his/her doctoral thesis and respond to all questions from the External Examiners.
- (iv) The thesis examiners' preliminary reports have been completed and received prior to the viva
- (v) The External Examiners duly complete and sign the joint report after the viva.
- (vi) The recommendations of the Examiners are communicated to the student after the committee's deliberation.

Procedure for the Oral Exams

Before the examination

- (i) The candidate sends to the Dean of Faculty/Director of Centre a summary (abstract) and powerpoint (ppt) presentation of the research (3 days before the viva voce).
- (ii) The AO will then send the summary (abstract) and powerpoint (ppt) presentation of the research (at least 2 days before the viva voce).
- (iii) The IC, once appointed, is responsible to finalise the venue, date and time and to make all the arrangements for the oral examination.
- (iv) The Examiners and the IC should meet virtually before the viva to ensure they are clear on the structure of the examination and to discuss the approach of questioning.
- (v) To agree on a contingency plan in the event of a technical failure which should be agreed beforehand.
- (vi) Viva examinations must be conducted using visual as well as audio interaction.

During the examination

At the start of the examination, the IC should introduce all parties present and detail the viva process

- (i) After introducing the candidate to the Examiners, the IC should request the candidate to have a presentation of thirty (30) minutes after which the Examiners' questions and discussions will follow.
- (ii) The primary role of the IC is to ensure that the viva voce process runs smoothly and if deemed necessary, the IC should refocus the conversation or pause the examination if a break is felt.
- (iii) The candidate can also call for a break when s/he needs one.
- (iv) The IC is not expected to question the student about the work being examined.
- (v) When the Examiners have finished their discussions with the candidate, the IC should ensure that everyone, including the candidate, has had an opportunity to ask any questions.
- (vi) when the viva is concluded, the candidate, the supervisor/s and the two Independent invited members will be asked to leave the room and the Examiners will begin their deliberations. Candidate will be requested to return at an agreed time, while the Examiners consider the outcome(s) of the examination and their recommendation.
- (vii) The IC should ensure that the candidate is clearly informed of the outcome of the examination and the procedures for outcomes and corrections should be explained to the candidate
- (viii) The IC must ensure that the other examiners sign the PhD Examiners' joint report (Part 1 and Part 2 and Part 3 to be filled) within 1 week after the Viva date. Same must be signed by the IC as well and returned to the relevant Dean of Faculty/Director of Centre.
- (ix) The IC and the two External Examiners should agree who among the two External Examiners would submit the joint final report within one working week of the Viva Voce.

Examination Reports

External Examiners are required to complete two examination reports namely one independent report to be completed before the viva examination (form RDE2(A)) and a joint report after the viva.

The independent report should include examiners' comments and a *tentative* recommendation with respect to the result of the examination. Same should not be indicated to the candidate before the oral examination and it should be submitted to the Dean's office/Director's office in a maximum of 6 weeks after receipt of the thesis. The viva will have to be organised by Week 7 or 8 (after receipt of the thesis) and the date and time have been mutually agreed by both examiners and the IC in Week 1 (after receipt of the thesis).

The examiners' joint report will confirm the official outcome of the examination and should include a narrative of the examination outcome, the rationale for the decision and a list of corrections to be made.

The joint report should be sent to the Dean of Faculty/Director of Centre or his/her representative within one working week of the viva. The Board of Examiners will then take note of the report and inform the candidate of the revisions to be made if required.

In case there is no consensus on the final decision with respect to the award of the degree, a third Independent External Examiner will have to be appointed as per UoM regulations with respect to External Examiners. The recommendation of the third External Examiner will be final.

7.7 Board of Examiners

- (i) Any recommendation by the External Examiners as per 7.5 (i) and the joint report after VIVA will have to be considered within one week by the Board of Examiners, which will report to Faculty/CILL Board.
- (ii) It is only when the Faculty/CILL Board recommends *either* an "Award for PhD or MPhil Degree" *or* a "No Award" that its recommendations are submitted to Senate. The decision of Senate shall be communicated to the student through the Supervisor(s).
- (iii) Disagreement between External Examiners, where there is a major disagreement between the External Examiners a third External Examiner will be appointed. The recommendation of the third External Examiner will be final and no second viva voce will be held.

7.8 Appeal

There shall be no appeal on academic grounds. However, if the student feels that there has been a procedural irregularity, s/he may appeal against Senate's decision on receipt of a formal letter from the Registrar. Any appeal with necessary justification(s) shall be lodged in writing to the Registrar within four weeks from the date a student is informed of Senate's decision.

All cases of appeal shall be dealt with as per the existing University Regulations.

Updated on 03.08.22