Postgraduate Research Degrees

A student guide to examination administration

The final stages of preparing to submit a thesis for a higher degree and undergoing examination are important milestones in the lives of all research students. We recognise the years of study and work that you have completed to get to this stage and we want to make the remaining steps on your journey as a PGR student as smooth as possible.

When you submit your thesis, much of the administration connected with the examination process switches from your Research Institute to the central administration of the University in the Directorate of Planning and Academic Administration. There are four people involved in this work:

**Jo Sylvester** *(j.m.sylvester@keele.ac.uk, extn. 33589)*

As the Governance Officer with responsibility for PGR, Jo has oversight of the administration of PGR exams. She can provide guidance on the University’s policies and procedures in relation to research degrees.

Before the outcome of your examination can be formally recorded, the Research Degrees Committee must receive all of the examiners’ paperwork. Jo is also the Secretary to RDC and works closely with Jayne and Catherine to ensure that all of the paperwork is considered by RDC as speedily as possible.

**Jayne Bradley** *(j.e.bradley@keele.ac.uk, extn. 33037)*

Jayne receives your thesis submission, logs it on our systems and sends it to the people approved as examiners for your degree. Jayne also liaises with your examiners to ensure that all of the forms we require are received on time.

**Catherine Greaves** *(c.e.greaves@keele.ac.uk, extn. 34573)*

Catherine is the Student Records & Examinations Officer responsible for all PGR matters. Catherine ensures that the centrally held records of all PGR students are up to date and accurate and processes the recommendations and decisions of Research Degrees Committee onto the system.

Advice about who to contact at each stage of the examination process is given in the information below. However, if you’re not sure who to contact, please get in touch with Jo *(j.m.sylvester@keele.ac.uk)*.

This guide is intended to give you an overview of the administration connected to each stage of the examination process. Detailed information on each stage is contained within the Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees ([http://www.keele.ac.uk/media/keeleuniversity/graduateschool/cop/PGR%20CoP%20v4.5%20(approved%20June%202014).pdf](http://www.keele.ac.uk/media/keeleuniversity/graduateschool/cop/PGR%20CoP%20v4.5%20(approved%20June%202014).pdf)).

Stage 1 – Submission of Thesis

When you know the date that you want to submit your thesis, contact Jayne to arrange a convenient time. It’s helpful for us to know in advance when you will submit so that we can
make as many of the administrative checks that we need to before you arrive in order to
make the submission process run smoothly.

Stage 2 – Thesis Sent to Examiners
After your thesis has been submitted, Jayne will log the details onto the University’s systems
and prepare it for sending to the individuals appointed to examine it. When the thesis is
sent out, your RI and supervisor are also notified. The length of time between sending your
thesis to the examiners and your viva taking place varies, but as a rule of thumb, we allow
up to 12 weeks.

Stage 3 – Examiners’ Part 1 Reports
Your examiners are each required to complete a part 1 report with their initial findings and
recommendations after reading your thesis. Jayne will liaise with the examiners to ensure
that we receive the part 1 reports in good time prior to your viva.

Stage 4 – Viva
Someone from your RI will notify you once the date of your oral examination has been set. If
you have any queries regarding the logistics of the examination, you should contact the
person in your RI who is responsible for organising it. If you’re unsure who this person is,
contact Jo and she will be able to advise you.

Stage 5 – Examiners’ Part 2 Joint Report
Following your viva, the examiners will complete a part 2 report with their decision. The
Code of Practice gives details of the various decisions that the examiners can make. This will
normally be communicated to you informally after the examination. The decision of the
examiners takes the form of a recommendation which has to be ratified by the Research
Degrees Committee and Senate.

Stage 6 – Research Degrees Committee (RDC)
Jo Sylvester is responsible for collating the paperwork from your examiners for
consideration at RDC. The committee considers examiners’ reports and
recommendations and then, based on these, makes its recommendation to Senate.

Once RDC had made its recommendation, Catherine will process the decision and you will
be formally notified by email and a letter to your home address. It is very important that
your contact details are kept up to date. The communication you receive from the
University will outline what you need to do next. This might include making corrections,
preparing your thesis for lodging in the library or planning for a resubmission.

Stage 7 – Senate Approval
The letter you receive after RDC explains what has to happen for Senate to approve the
recommendation of RDC. If the recommendation is to make an award (with or without
minor corrections), that will mean lodging your thesis in the library. If the recommendation
requires a resubmission, this will automatically be sent to Senate without further action
from you.