UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Degree Committee of the Faculty of Physics and Chemistry

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Note to Examiners of PhD theses in the Faculty of Physics & Chemistry

This note provides advice specific to this Faculty and should be read in conjunction with the University's *Guide for Examiners.*

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the Degree Committee office or refer to our website:
> *http://www.dcpc.physsci.cam.ac.uk/examiners/examinerthesis*

The University of Cambridge respects equality and diversity. We recommend that all examiners complete appropriate training offered by their institutions and watch the Royal Society's brief presentation on Understanding unconscious bias https://youtu.be/dVp9Z5k0dEE.

Research Impact Statements – COVID-19

Candidates were invited to provide an optional commentary on the impact COVID-19 had on their research and what adjustments they made to their research activities in response. If the candidate submitted a statement, we will make it available to you with their thesis.

Examiners should attempt to balance the disruption each candidate experienced with the requirements of the PhD degree and criteria for recommending award, as set out in the attached *Guide for Examiners*, which remain unchanged. Examiner guidance for the use of the Research Impact Statements is provided.

Thesis

The thesis is submitted in electronic format to Moodle. You will be provided with a link to view and download the thesis when it is ready for examination. Examiners should not upload any documents to the Moodle site.

Writing your reports

Your **pre-viva** reports must be written independently, without conferral, and signed and dated before the oral examination; please also complete the coversheet (**PhD1**) independently.
Please make a *detailed report*, <u>no less than one side of A4</u>, for consideration by experts in the field concerned, giving:
- a clear indication of the contents of the thesis and contribution it makes to the subject
- an opinion on the quality of the work and the originality shown by the candidate
- an opinion on the general style of writing and presentation
- a statement as to how much of the work involved is new and evidently the student's own

Include a *brief summary* of the salient points, in terms accessible to non-experts in the field, and, if possible, a *recommendation* as to whether the Degree should be awarded (see section 5 of the *Guide for Examiners*).

The student should not send any additional documents directly to you; should you receive any such documents they should not be examined.

External examiners are asked to email their pre-viva report and completed **Form PhD1** to the Degree Committee in advance of the viva. Scanned or electronic signatures are acceptable. Please send the email from your institutional email address if possible.

Internal examiners may email their pre-viva report and completed **Form PhD1** to the Degree Committee in advance of the viva, or wait and submit with the remaining documents after the viva is complete.

The oral examination

The Internal Examiner liaises with the External Examiner and student to arrange the oral examination at a mutually convenient time. The oral is compulsory; however, if the thesis is a revised version, you may agree to waive the oral in some circumstances (see section 7 of the *Guide for Examiners*).

Some Examiners ask for a structured presentation to be given at the start of the viva (poster, powerpoint etc). This is by no means a requirement. If you do require a presentation you should notify the candidate at least two weeks before the scheduled viva date. Please be clear about the form of presentation you are expecting.

If a candidate discloses a disability that may affect the conduct of the examination, we will let you know and make sure that appropriate arrangements can be made.

The default format of the oral examination is an in-person viva in Cambridge, but candidates may opt for viva by video-conference if they prefer. If you are not able to conduct the viva in the requested format, please let the Degree Committee know.

Viva by video-conference: important points to note:

- The Internal Examiner is responsible for co-ordinating viva arrangements. Please do take any time difference into account.

- Most vivas can be conducted successfully using equipment already available to you and free video-conferencing applications. Examiners may be able to request reimbursement of essential equipment costs to conduct a remote viva if approved by our Finance team in advance. Please contact the Degree Committee to discuss. Equipment will need returning to the University of Cambridge after the viva.

- Video conferencing equipment and the quality of connection should be tested at least one day in advance of the examination, ideally without the candidate.

- All parties must understand that in the event of any failure with the technology, before or during the viva, it will not be possible for the examination to continue and it will be necessary for the viva to be rescheduled. If the video conferencing link fails during a viva, the viva should not be resumed until the video link is up and running. This is the case even if this means deferring to another day. The viva should not be resumed via telephone.

- Examiners need to be able to speak privately to one another before and after the viva.

- Examiners should report to the Degree Committee any notable circumstances that might have affected the examination.

To arrange the viva in Microsoft Teams, create a new meeting through the 'calendar' option in the Teams left-hand menu and invite the candidate and external examiner. If you cannot create a meeting this way you may not yet have migrated your email Hermes to Exchange online. You will need to do this in order to invite participants who do not have an @cam.ac.uk email account (i.e. the external examiner). You may wish to discuss with your department IT support or see https://help.uis.cam.ac.uk/service/email/exol-migration/hermes-eol-migration/migrate-hermes.

Asking a candidate to sketch out an answer (e.g. formulas, equations) using pen and paper should still be possible if required. Potential tools to assist include Whiteboard facilities in Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Web Whiteboard linked to Google Hangouts, a graphics tablet or having the candidate using two video inputs (one on themselves and one on their desk). Do let us know of any other tools you use successfully so we can update this list.

After the oral examination

Your **joint** report can, if the result is very straightforward, be a brief comment on the candidate's overall performance in the thesis and viva, including any correction advice. Should the examiners' pre-viva *recommendations* differ significantly, or one or both examiners wish to reserve judgement on their recommendation until after the viva, the **joint** report should clearly articulate how any concerns were addressed and how the joint recommendation was reached.

Please write your joint report on coversheet **PhD2**, or supply it as a separate file. In either case, please make sure you complete the coversheet, making a firm *joint recommendation* by indicating one outcome, and both sign and date the form.

In this Faculty, we suggest that if the candidate is required only to make very *minor corrections*, that these are made and approved by the Examiner(s) before the reports and correction approval are sent to the Degree Committee. In which case, please let the student know what is required and ask them to return one corrected version (which may be in electronic or bound copy) to the Internal Examiner for checking.

However, where corrections are likely to take more than a few days and in *every case if revision and resubmission of the work for re-examination is required*, the reports should be returned to the Degree Committee Office immediately after the oral with clear specifications for corrections or revision as relevant.

Returning your reports

Examination reports are considered by the Degree Committee at one of the 10 meetings held each year. You may wish to consult the Degree Committee meeting schedule at https://www.dcpc.physsci.cam.ac.uk/DCphys-chem/meetings-schedule. The deadline for receipt of examination reports is Monday for consideration at the Friday Degree Committee meeting the same week.

The Internal Examiner is asked to take responsibility for returning the papers to the Degree Committee Office by email, copied to the External Examiner:

- Signed copies of each Examiner's **independent report** and **Form PhD1** (scanned or electronic signatures are now acceptable);
- **Form PhD2** with your **post-oral joint report**, either on the form or attached, and signed by both (scanned or electronic signatures are now acceptable);
- Your expenses claim forms, with any supporting receipts attached (can be emailed later if preferred);
- If corrections have already been completed, please send us the completed **Form PhD3** (scanned or electronic signatures are now acceptable).

Corrections

Please send your reports to us right away, and do not wait for the corrections to be done unless they will be done within two days of viva.

If corrections are needed, the corrected work will be sent by the candidate direct to the examiner(s) responsible for checking them within the deadline set by the University (usually three months for minor corrections or six months for major corrections). When the corrections have been checked and are completed to your satisfaction please send the Degree Committee Office the completed **Form PhD3** as soon as possible.

What happens to your reports?

Once the Degree Committee has deliberated on your reports and decided on the outcome, the University's Student Registry will write to the candidate and send the reports to them and their supervisor.

If the student's thesis is to be entered into a prize competition, the University reserves the right to provide the reports as supporting evidence to the jury.

Thank you for your kind assistance