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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document aims to describe the process and the roles of the key stakeholders of viva sessions for MQF/EQF Level 7 and 8 Research Programmes.

2 Scope of Document

- 2.1 This procedure applies to all viva sessions for MQF/EQF Level 7 and 8 Research Programmes.

3 Definitions

- 3.1 MDC: Master's Degree Committee
3.2 DDC: Doctoral Degree Committee
3.3 VC: Viva Committee
3.4 Internal Examiner: A senior academic at MCAST who is an expert in the area of study being examined. The internal examiner should be independent of the supervisory team, and thus should not have been a supervisor or adviser to the student.
3.5 External Examiner: A senior academic who is an expert in the area of study being examined and who is not affiliated to MCAST. The engagement of an international external examiner is preferable.
3.6 Convenor: The officer in charge of the coordination of the Viva process.
3.7 Supervisor: Dissertation supervisor monitoring the candidate through the course of the programme.

4 The Pre-Viva Session Process

- 4.1 The Supervisor is to inform the MDC/DDC of the candidate's readiness to sit for a viva at least eight (8) weeks in advance of a possible viva date.
- 4.2 It shall be the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that two hard copies and one electronic copy of the dissertation are submitted to the IRC on or before the dissertation submission deadline.
- 4.3 The IRC, in consultation with the Supervisor, and following approval of the MDC/DDC, is to appoint a Viva Committee (VC) that includes as a minimum:
- (a) one internal examiner,
 - (b) one external examiner
 - (c) a Chair, and
 - (d) a Convenor
- 4.3.1 All Examiners will be requested to provide a CV which will be evaluated by the MDC/DDC to ensure that the examiner is deemed to have suitable expertise in the field, and experience in viva examinations. The MDC/DDC shall liaise with the Quality Assurance Department for cost and administration purposes.
- 4.3.2 The candidate shall take no part in the appointment of examiners and shall have no formal contact with the external examiner(s) between the appointment of the examiners and the oral examination.
- 4.3.3 All persons who act as an examiner shall be asked to declare any potential conflict of interest.

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- 4.3.4 An independent Chair shall be appointed who will be responsible for solely chairing the examination and ensuring the associated administration of the Viva is completed satisfactorily. The Chair will not examine the dissertation.
- 4.3.5 Each examiner shall read and examine the dissertation. Within six weeks of receipt of the dissertation, and before the oral or alternative form of examination takes place, each examiner shall have submitted an independent preliminary report (DOC137 – referred to below) to the Chair of the examination panel, via the Convenor. In completing the preliminary report, each examiner shall consider whether the dissertation provisionally satisfies the requirements of the degree and where possible, make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of any oral examination. The preliminary report shall be confidential prior to the oral examination.
- 4.3.6 The Supervisor shall provide provisional grading of the dissertation, which can be used as a reference as required by the MDC/DDC.
- 4.4 The MDC/DDC shall establish general procedures for the conduct of examinations. In any instance where the Chair is made aware of a material failure to comply with all the procedures of the examination process, they may declare the examination null and void, and the MDC/DDC shall appoint new examiners.
- 4.5 The Convenor shall:
- Request the final dissertation (in electronic format) from the candidate, as approved by the Supervisor;
 - Send a copy of the dissertation to each examiner, together with the examiner's preliminary report form (DOC137) and the MCAST Regulations, and ensure that the examiners are appropriately briefed as to their duties.
 - Request both Examiners to provide an initial evaluation report;
 - Request Supervisor to provide a provisional grading of the dissertation;
 - Establish a viva date and location;
 - Formally notify the candidate of the arrangements for the Viva in writing, at least three weeks beforehand.
 - Formally notify the Director of Studies, the Examination Team and Registrar of the arrangements for the Viva in writing, following the receipt of reports from the examiners, and shall also make arrangements for the examination to be appropriately publicised.

Reference Documents:

*“Document 016: Master by Research Programme Regulations”
Regulatory and Operational Framework for Applied Research
“Document 137: Masters Programme VIVA Report Form”*

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5 The Viva Session

- 5.1 Subject to confirmation by the candidate, the Supervisor is invited to attend the session as a silent observer.
- 5.2 Examiners are provided with a copy of the Examiners Report Form referred to below.
- 5.3 The Chair shall explain the structure of the Viva to the VC and the candidate (i.e. presentation followed by questions, immediate discussions or otherwise).
- 5.4 The Chair shall coordinate the entire process of the viva session, keeping timing, set closure etc.

Reference Document

“Document 137: Masters Programme VIVA Report Form”

6 The Post-Viva Process

- 6.1 Immediately following the oral examination, the examiners shall, where they are in agreement, submit a joint report and recommendation relating to the award of the degree to the MDC/DDC. The Chair, with the support of the Convenor, shall be responsible for collating all the Examiners' reports and shall seek an agreement amongst examiners regarding the outcome of the Viva.
- 6.2 In the rare occurrence of a lack of agreement, the Chair is to liaise with the MDC/DDC to decide upon a solution that may consist of separate reports and recommendations from each examiner or a second viva with different examiners. Following consensus, the Chair shall be responsible for informing the candidate of the outcome of the Viva via the Convenor.
- 6.3 The examiners may recommend to the MDC/DDC that:
 - (a) the candidate be awarded the degree;
 - (b) the candidate be awarded the degree subject to minor amendments being made to the dissertation as provided for in the relevant programme regulations. Such amendments will include typographical errors, grammatical and/or replacement of, or additions to, the text, or diagrams. For example, the replacement or addition of up to one or two paragraphs of text. Such amendments should be capable of being completed and approved within one month by one member of the examination team.
 - (c) the candidate be awarded the degree subject to revisions being made to the dissertation. Such revisions would not normally constitute more than 10% of the work and may include empirical work, for example, the revising of a complete chapter of the dissertation and/or typographical or grammatical errors that are so numerous as to suggest carelessness on the part of the candidate, or so intrusive as to distract the reader's attention from the argument of the dissertation. The amendments should be capable of being completed and approved within three months from the date of the oral examination. The examination team should decide which examiner(s) will check the amendments.
 - (d) the candidate be referred in the first examination and be permitted to re-submit for re-examination for the degree with or without a further oral examination. A re-submission

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may include the restructuring of the dissertation and should be capable of being completed within one year FTE from the date of the oral examination.

In line with the above, the outcome of the Viva will fall under one of the following five classifications:

1	Pass	No Amendments	Details and submission date to be agreed upon and defined by the VC.
2	Pass	Minor Amendments	
3	Pass	Major Amendments	
4	Repeat Viva within one (1) year FTE		
5	Failed Viva, no repeat		

6.4 Re-submission

Only one re-submission may be permitted by the MDC/DDC, on the recommendation of the examiners, to a candidate who fails to satisfy the examiners at the first examination. In such cases, the examiners will have provided the candidate, through the Convenor, written guidance on the deficiencies of the first submission. The candidate shall be required to re-submit for re-examination and approval within a period of time specified by the VC, which shall not exceed twelve months from the date of the oral examination. Candidates who fail to re-submit their dissertation by the date specified may be withdrawn by MCAST.

6.5 Upon re-submission, further options are available to the examination team:

- (a) that the candidate not be awarded the degree; or
- (b) that in the case of an MRes examination, the candidate be awarded the Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma by Research subject to the presentation of the dissertation amended to the satisfaction of the examiners;
- (c) that in the case of a doctoral examination, the Examiners may recommend to the DDC alternative exit routes.

Having confirmed the recommendation from the VC through the Convenor and IRC, the MDC/DDC shall, where appropriate, submit its recommendations to the Registrar.

6.6 Following the submission of the final version of the dissertation and related documentation to the Convenor, the award will be formally conferred by the Registrar.

Reference Documents

"Document 137: Masters Programme VIVA Report Form"