

Procedures for the Review of Final Decisions (post oral examination)

Candidates for the Degrees of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

1. A candidate who is deemed by the Board of the Faculty under section 10 of the regulations not to be eligible for the award of the degree for which he/she was a candidate and is not permitted to resubmit his/her thesis for that award may ask for his/her case to be reviewed.

2. After a thesis has been submitted no review will be allowed on grounds of complaint about the inadequacy of supervisory or other arrangements during the period of study, or on the grounds of undisclosed personal difficulties prior to examination and assessment.

3. Grounds for Review

Eligible grounds are:

- a) circumstances affecting the PhD researcher's performance of which the Board of Examiners was not aware when it made its recommendation (subject to point 2 above);
- b) procedural irregularities in the conduct of the examination, and
- c) evidence of prejudice or bias or of inadequate assessment on the part of one or more of the examiners.

4. Request for Review

A PhD researcher who wishes his/her case to be reviewed shall lodge a written statement with the Doctoral College within one month of the decision of the Doctoral College Board. The Chair of the Doctoral College Board (or appropriate nominee), in consultation with the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research) will give initial consideration to all appropriate requests for review submitted in accordance with sections 1 to 3 above.

Where it is determined that the review is being sought on the basis of procedural irregularity in the conduct of the examination and there is clear evidence to indicate that such an irregularity did occur, the Chairperson of the Doctoral College Board may recommend that a new examination should be conducted in accordance with the appropriate regulations. Replacement examiners may be appointed if it is determined that the original examiners have not acted in accordance with the Regulations.

In all other cases, the request will be referred to the Standing Committee for Research Degree Appeals which is constituted as follows: External Nominee (lay member of Council); Doctoral College Board nominee (the Committee, at least biennially shall appoint a panel of senior academic staff with supervisory experience from amongst whom a nominee will be selected); Senate nominee; representative from the Office of the University Secretary; secretarial support from the Doctoral

College. The nominee from the Doctoral College Board shall be the Chair of the Standing Committee.

5. Review Process

The Doctoral College shall give the PhD researcher ten days' notice in writing of the meeting of the Standing Committee for Research Degrees Appeals and shall inform him/her that he/she has a right to present his/her case in person and to be accompanied by a member of Ulster University of his/her choice. The Standing Committee for Research Degrees Appeals shall meet and consider the PhD researcher's statement and a report from the Doctoral College Board, which shall have consulted with the Board of the Faculty or the Board of Examiners if appropriate.

Reports from the Board of Examiners or the Board of the Faculty as appropriate shall be made available to the Standing Committee for Research Degrees Appeals where this is necessary for the proper consideration of the review. In addition, the Board of the Faculty shall be informed that a review of the decision has been requested; they shall be invited to submit comments to the Committee in a form that can be made available to the PhD researcher and shall be informed that where such comments are not submitted the PhD researcher shall be given an unattributed summary of the main points of the report.

The Committee having considered the evidence and taken such advice as may be necessary shall:

- a) re-affirm the original decision of the Board of Examiners; or
- b) consider what recommendation to make to the Doctoral College Board such as
 - i. to recommend that, for reasons stated, the Board of Examiners should reconsider its decision;
 - ii. to give the PhD researcher permission to revise the thesis and re-submit for re-examination within a specified time limit, or
 - iii. to declare the examination null and void and to direct that a fresh examination be conducted.
- c) make recommendations and comment on other related matters to Doctoral College Board.

6. Re-examination Procedures

Where the outcome of the Review is b) iii, the following procedures for re-examination shall apply. New examiners shall be appointed, in number no fewer than on the original Board of Examiners and containing not fewer than two external examiners. The Board of Examiners shall be given no information about the previous examination except the single fact that it is conducting a re-examination on appeal.

The members of the Board of Examiners shall submit independent reports on the thesis to the Doctoral College before they examine the candidate orally and shall present a joint report or separate reports in accordance with Section 10.2 and 10.4 of the regulations. The reports of the original Board of Examiners and of the new Board

of Examiners shall be presented to the Doctoral College Board who shall take a final decision.

Where the recommendations of the two Boards of Examiners do not agree any agreed recommendation of the new Board would normally be expected to prevail.