



Senate

Paper Title	Research Degrees Programmes and Examinations Board Executive Summary June – September 2023
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to note the executive summary of business considered by the Research Degrees Programmes and Examinations Board (RDPEB).
Points for Senate members to note and further information	This paper summarises business considered by RDPEB at meetings held in June – September 2023: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • terms of reference and membership; • proposal for new award title of Clinical Doctorate (DClin); • new Masters by Research in Economics and Finance (International) [ResM]; • review of guidance to examiners on taking account of the disruption caused by Covid-19 in examining a thesis; • other updates for report.
Questions for Senate to consider	Senate is asked to note the report.
Regulatory/statutory reference points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queen Mary Strategy 2030 • Queen Mary Academic Regulations • Queen Mary Code of Practice for Research Degrees Programmes • Office for Students regulations and policies <p>RDPEB has oversight of quality and standards issues relating to research degree programmes.</p>
Strategy and risk	
Reporting/consideration route for the paper	
Authors	Mary Childs, Research Degrees Office
Sponsor	Professor Tim Warner, Dean for Postgraduate Research Director of the Doctoral College and Chair of the Research Degrees Programmes and Examinations Board



RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES AND EXAMINATIONS BOARD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY June – September 2023

Meetings and membership

1. The Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board meets monthly. The membership comprises:
 - Dean for Postgraduate Research [Chair]
 - Faculty Deputy Deans for Research (PGR)
 - One additional representative (a school/institute Director of Graduate Studies) from each Faculty

The secretariat is provided by the Research Degrees Office. The Doctoral College Manager is in attendance.

Examinations Business

2. The Board:
 - considers and approves nominations for internal and external examiners for research degrees;
 - considers and approves outcomes of research degree examinations and reviews all examiners' reports;
 - considers and makes decisions on applications to interrupt studies and extensions to the thesis submission deadline;
 - approves awards for research degrees on behalf of Senate.

Decisions are recorded in the minutes of the monthly meetings of the Board.

Terms of Reference and Membership

3. At its meeting in September, the Board conducted the annual review of its terms of reference and membership.

The Board approved the terms of reference and membership. There are no changes.

The terms of reference and membership are annexed at A to this report.

Approval of new award title of Clinical Doctorate (DClin)

4. The Research Degrees Board and the Education Quality and Standards Board have recommended to Senate approval of the introduction of a new award title of Clinical Doctorate (DClin) proposed by the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry.
5. If approved, Council will be asked to approve the addition of the award of Clinical Doctorate to Ordinance A16, section 1.6 denoting research degrees (FHEQ level 8) awarded by Queen Mary.
6. There is a separate paper on Senate's agenda.

Programme proposal from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for Masters by Research in Economics and Finance (International) [ResM]

7. The Board has approved this new programme in the School of Economic and Finance for enrolment of new students with effect from 2023-4. This expands the programme offering into HSS. The first ResM students enrolled in the Faculty of Science and Engineering in 2022-23.
8. The Masters by Research in Economics and Finance (International) [ResM] is a one-year programme of supervised research, examined by submission of a dissertation. The programme will provide the opportunity to recruit international students as part of articulation arrangements with partner institutions only.

Review of guidance to examiners on taking account of the disruption caused by Covid-19 in examining a thesis

9. In July 2020 the Board approved guidance to examiners on how to take account of the disruption caused by Covid-19 in their approach to examining the thesis for a research degree award. This guidance is sent to all examiners (internal and external) with the thesis and it is included in the examination guidance notes. In their joint report examiners are asked to include a statement summarising the discussion with the candidate of how their work was affected by Covid-19.
10. The Board has reviewed the guidance. There is one change only. A new statement is included that the policy does not apply to students who enrolled with effect from 1 August 2022 in the 2022-23 academic year, after which time the university was open fully for study. The policy is annexed at B.

Other business

11. The Board has under review:
 - the fee paid to internal and external examiners for examining a research thesis;
 - the policy on editorial assistance for research degree theses.

Mary Childs, Research Degrees Office, ARCS



Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board

Terms of Reference and Membership 2023-24

The Research Degrees Programmes and Examinations Board is a sub-board of Senate.

Terms of reference

- To consider and approve proposals for all new research degree programmes, including all proposals for collaborative research degree programmes;
- To consider and approve proposals for the withdrawal of research degree programmes;
- To consider amendments to the Academic Regulations for research degree programmes, and associated policies and guidance;
- To consider and approve nominations of internal and external examiners for all research degrees examinations;
- To monitor outcomes of research degree examinations and review examiners' reports;
- To approve awards of research degrees to individual candidates;
- To consider requests for interruptions of study and extensions to the maximum registration period/writing-up period;
- To monitor compliance with the Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes within Schools and Institutes;
- To consider action to be taken following the publication of national guidance relating to research degrees, and the quality assurance and monitoring activity of external agencies such as QAA, the Office for Students, UK Research and Innovation, and research funders;
- To have oversight of the admission of students to research degree programmes;
- To provide regular reports to Senate, including recommendations for further action where appropriate.
- The quorum for the meeting is one third of the Board's members.

Membership

- Dean for Postgraduate Research [Chair]

Professor Tim Warner (ends March 2024)

- Faculty Deputy Deans for Postgraduate Research

Dr Akram Alomainy EECS (S&E) (ends July 2024)

Professor Paul Chapple WHRI (SMD) (end date tbc)

Dr Costanza Russo CCLS (HSS) (ends January 2024)

- One further representative from each Faculty

Dr Guven Demirel, School of Business and Management (HSS) [term of office 2023-24 and 2024-25]

Professor Himadri Gupta, School of Engineering and Materials Science (S&E) [term of office 2023-24 and 2024-25]

Dr Eleni Hagi-Pavli, Institute of Dentistry (FMD) [term of office 2023-24 and 2024-25]

[Faculty representatives are appointed for a term of two years. The appointment may be extended by one year to a maximum of three years with the approval of the Board. The Faculty representative should not be from the same school or institute as the Faculty Deputy Dean. The Faculty representative is usually one of the Directors of Graduate Studies from amongst the schools or institutes of the Faculty concerned.]

In attendance

- Assistant Academic Registrar (Research Degrees)
- Members of the Research Degrees Office
- Head of the Doctoral College

Mary Childs
Research Degrees Office

Approved by the Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board at its meeting on 20 September 2023.

Research Degrees Programmes and Examination Board

Guidance to examiners on taking account of the disruption caused by Covid-19 in examining a thesis

1. Covid-19 has impacted on research students' work in a wide variety of ways since early 2020. Students submitting their theses during periods of library and/or laboratory closure, for example, may have been unable to complete all their references. Students at an earlier stage of their research, on the other hand, may have had to revise the scope and methods of their project.
2. It is appropriate to take these circumstances into account when examining a thesis. This is in line with a principle articulated for PhD theses in [Queen Mary's Academic Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), Appendix 1, section 5: "The scope of the thesis shall be what might reasonably be expected after three or at most four years of full-time study". Similar formulations are set out in relation to other research degrees: MPhil (para. 2), MD(Res) (para. 17).
3. What can "reasonably be expected" of a thesis submitted by a student whose work was disrupted by Covid-19, *whether or not the student was granted additional time to complete their thesis because of that disruption*, is not the same as what can be expected of a thesis completed in different circumstances.
4. There is no expectation that the "standard" of work done by students should have been compromised by studying through the Covid-19 crisis, rather that the volume of work, referencing etc. may have been affected.
5. For this reason we would ask examiners to consider the disruption experienced by students when making their decisions. In some cases, students may include a brief statement in their thesis to explain the impact of their disruption (e.g. a footnote in their introduction and/or conclusion to explain missing references, further fieldwork or experiments that would have been carried out if circumstances permitted, etc.). However, such statements may not always be present. Examiners must therefore ask a student, during their oral examination, to summarise briefly how their work was affected by Covid-19. The Outcome of Research Degree Examination report requires examiners to confirm that this matter was discussed. Examiners will also be prompted to include a statement in the joint report that they produce after the oral examination.
6. This policy applies to all Queen Mary postgraduate research students who enrolled before March 2020 – when UK universities and other research facilities began a period of closure, and when research travel was not possible – and who had not submitted their thesis for examination at that time. The policy does not apply to students who enrolled with effect from 1 August 2022 in the 2022-23 academic year, after which time Queen Mary was open fully for study. It will be reviewed annually.
7. Please contact the Research Degrees Office with any queries:
pgrexaminations@qmul.ac.uk

For further information please see the information for examiners of research degrees

<http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/research-degrees/research-degree-examiners/>