

18. Remit of a Faculty Assessor

The Faculty Assessor is nominated by the Dean of the Faculty/Head of Independent Research Centre to serve on the Higher Degrees Committee and relevant Higher Degrees Committee Sub-Committees.

All research degree documentation is required to be submitted to the Faculty Assessor prior to being forwarded to the Graduate School Office for subsequent consideration by the Higher Degrees Committee or Higher Degrees Committee Sub-Committee.

The basic remit of a Faculty Assessor is:

To ensure that the research degree documentation prepared by staff in the Faculty in respect of individual research students is of a high standard and meets the requirements of the University's Research Degree Regulations and Procedures. (Procedure 7.2)

The critical scrutiny by the Faculty Assessor is intended to avoid the Higher Degrees Committee (HDC) or Higher Degrees Committee Sub-Committees being distracted and wasting time in dealing with omissions, inaccuracies and other minor issues in documentation presented to it for consideration.

18.1 The duties of a Faculty Assessor are as follows:

General Duties

- a) To ensure that Faculty staff are made aware of the dates of forthcoming HDC and HDC Sub-Committee meetings and the deadlines for submission of material.
- b) To ensure that research degree documentation for the relevant Committee is sent to the Faculty Assessor for approval and is not submitted directly to the Graduate School Office without such approval.
- c) To liaise with the Graduate School Office in dealing with queries arising from both staff in the Faculty and from the Graduate School Office following decisions made by the HDC and HDC Sub-Committee.
- d) To attend all HDC Sub-Committee meetings. If, exceptionally, absence is unavoidable then the Assessor must brief another Committee member in the same Faculty to speak to items involving Faculty documentation.
- e) To be suitably briefed in detail by any member of staff submitting documentation which the Assessor believes could give rise to particular scrutiny/controversy in a HDC and HDC Sub-Committee meeting.

- f) Assessors must ensure that the completion of all forms satisfies the requirements detailed in Procedure 7.2 regarding the accuracy of student details, dates, details of supervisory team, institutional and departmental titles, type size, layout, attachments and signatures. The Assessor's signature and date in the box provided will indicate that a form has passed scrutiny. Forms not satisfying the requirements should be returned to the originators for amendment.

Assessors may find it helpful to maintain a log of material submitted with dates, together with actions required and the final dates of submission to the Graduate School Office.

18.2 Duties specific to the various RDC forms

The following checklist is designed to act as an *aide-memoir* for Faculty Assessors.

18.2.1 For the document RDC: R proposing initial registration (Regulation 4.10, Procedure 8)

Is the research plan clearly described with references to, and set in, the context of previous work? In the case of MPhil/PhD, is the break point for transfer clearly specified?

Are any or all acronyms used in the proposal preceded by the titles in full the first time they are used?

Are the questions about intellectual property collaborating establishment, confidentiality and ethical approval clearly answered?

Are there any very obvious points concerning the supervisor team that the HDC or HDC Sub-Committee may question? For example:

- a) Do the proposed supervisors collectively have previous supervisory experience to completion? (Regulation 5.2)
- b) Do any of the supervisors have an apparently excessive supervisory load, which would need justification? (The Graduate School Office will provide Assessors with the data to enable them to perform this latter task). Should this be the situation, the possibility of making a special case for exceptional circumstances should be drawn to the attention of the staff concerned.

Are the key references listed in Section 12.5 of the form correctly formulated in accordance with the established bibliographical systems associated with appropriate Professional Body standards and are they cited appropriately in Section 12.2?

18.2.2 For the documents RDC: T (A), RDC:T (B) proposing transfer from MPhil to PhD. (Regulation 13, Procedure 9)

Does the Abstract set the work in context, list the tasks actually done and the outcomes and conclusions reached up to that point? (Procedure 9.1)

Following the Abstract, is there a clear statement of the work proposed for PhD and is there at least some plausible argument to demonstrate the increase in intellectual level associated with this proposed work?

Are the statements, which have been written by the Supervisor(s) clear and adequate?

Is the required nomination for Internal Assessor detailed on Form RDC:T(B)? (Procedure 9.2)

Does the relevance of the experience of the proposed Internal Assessor make it plausible that he/she is well suited to scrutinise the transfer report?

If the Faculty Assessor is not the Chair of the Faculty Research Degrees Committee they should ensure the transfer reports and form are submitted to the Chair for approval of the nomination of the internal assessor.

18.2.3 For the document RDC:E proposing the examination arrangements (Regulation 16, Procedure 16)

Has the proposed External Examiner had actual previous examining experience at the appropriate level? An External Examiner without relevant experience can only be approved after a close scrutiny by HDC of the overall experience of the examining team at the level in question.

Have two External Examiners been nominated if the student is a permanent academic member of university staff? (Regulation 15.4)

Has the proposed Internal Examiner had actual previous examining experience at the appropriate level? An Internal Examiner without relevant experience can only be approved if paired with an experienced Internal Examiner. If more than one Internal Examiner is proposed, an appropriate case must be made. (Procedure 16.6.2)

The section on the form requesting further supporting information should explain fully the reasons for the choice of Examiners.

Check the degree to which, if any, the proposed Examiners have been involved previously with the project/student/institution. (Regulations 16.5.4, 16.5.5)

18.2.4 Other Forms

These are normally fairly straightforward for originating supervisors to deal with and seldom present any difficulties for an Assessor. However, should there be any queries or problems about the completion of these forms they should be addressed to the Graduate School Office.

Note that all forms other than those dealing with the examination and extension process are dealt with by the Faculty Research Degrees Committees rather than directly by HDC. Final submission dates for those forms are published by the Faculties. The deadlines for the submission of all Application for Approval of Examination Arrangements RDC:E and Application for Extension of Period of Registration RDC:EXT forms are given in the schedule provided by the Graduate School Office.

It should be noted that the final responsibility for the approval or not of the content of all RDC forms resides with the Higher Degrees Committee or its Sub Committees. Faculty Research Degrees Committees are delegated to approve forms with the exception of those dealing with examination arrangements.