



## **PGR Examinations and Assessment Protecting the Interests of Students in the Event of Major Disruption**

### **1 Principles**

In the event of major disruption the University will be guided by its commitment to its students.

- 1.1 Pursuant to this commitment, the University will take all proper and legitimate steps to protect the rights and interests of its students to facilitate assessment procedures and in particular to use its best endeavours to ensure that scheduled *viva voce* (hereafter referred to as *viva*) examinations (and any other forms of assessment e.g. for online professional doctorates) are completed effectively and on time for all students.

Should the cause of the disruption be industrial action the University is committed to collegiality as the basis for managing professional relationships within the University community. The University will:

- 1.2 Endeavour by all proper and legitimate means to preserve within the University community a culture of mutual trust based on respect for shared values about the nature and purposes of higher education.
- 1.3 Operate on the basis that while individual staff may judge that the issues prompting strike action and/or “action short of a strike” override their obligations to PGR students, the University at an institutional level has an absolute obligation to safeguard the interests of all its students.

### **2. Actions**

In implementing these principles, the University will put in place the following arrangements and operating protocols. These protocols will only be implemented when disruption may affect student progression and graduation.

- 2.1 In the event that an Internal Examiner for a scheduled *viva* is unable to participate, the Dean of School/Institute will consult with the Faculty PGR Director as to the postponement of the examination or appointment of an alternative member of academic staff with a general knowledge of the subject area (if an expert is unable to undertake the role). In instances where industrial action affects an Internal Examiner’s ability to participate in an examination, any alternative appointee cannot be instructed not to take industrial action as this would contravene the appointee’s rights and, therefore, the most likely possibility is that the *viva* would have to be rescheduled. The appointment of an Internal Examiner with insufficient expertise in PGR *viva* examinations, or with no general knowledge of the subject area, should not be permitted as it would be strong grounds for a student to submit a Research Degree Appeal.
- 2.2 In the event that an External Examiner for a scheduled *viva* is unable to participate, the Dean of School/Institute will consult with the Faculty PGR Director as to the postponement of the examination or the appointment of an alternative External Examiner, who should be an expert in

**POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH CODE OF PRACTICE – APPENDIX 8 – Annexe 1  
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the area of the thesis to be examined. However, if such an individual is unable to be identified and appointed at short notice the *viva* should be rescheduled as the appointment of an External Examiner with insufficient expertise would be strong grounds for a student to submit a Research Degree Appeal.

- 2.3 Review of the thesis without the *viva* taking place is not considered to be an appropriate method of examination for PGR awards as the *viva* is a crucial element of the examination and an opportunity for the student not only to defend their thesis but also their research.
- 2.4 If an international student has to return home under the terms of their visa before a rescheduled *viva* can be arranged, [Appendix 9 of the PGR Code of Practice](#) (Policy and Procedures for Conducting Remote Viva Voce Examinations for Research Degrees) provides for students to participate remotely at a later rescheduled date using specified conference technology.
- 2.5 In the event that an Independent Progress Assessment Panel (IPAP) as defined in the [Policy and Procedures on the Academic Progress of PGR Students](#) (Appendix 3 of the PGR Code of Practice) is unable to meet, the Head of School/Institute will consult with the Faculty PGR Director as to the appointment of alternative members of academic staff to comprise the IPAP. Any delay in the meeting of an IPAP and, therefore, the Annual Progress Monitoring Process for a student, will be taken into account and managed appropriately and the Research Degree Administration Team (in SAS) will action this as required.