**Guidance on the appointment and role of the Independent Chair**

**Criteria for the appointment to the pool of Independent Chairs**

Criteria for appointment:

* Have served as an internal or external examiner on a minimum of two occasions.
* Have supervised a minimum of one student who has successfully passed the Confirmation of Registration process.
* Have appropriate to be able to confidently engage with the examiners, many of whom will be distinguished scholars in their field.
* Able to deal with difficult circumstances with confidence and firmness.

**Process for approval of candidates to the pool of Independent Chairs**

1. The School (usually the Director of Research or Research Programme Director) will submit proposals to the Graduate School via <https://forms.office.com/e/3099WYmYSS>
2. Proposals will be screened by The Graduate School for eligibility.
3. Eligible candidates will be sent to the Chair of Research Degrees Sub-Committee for approval by Chairs’ Action.

Proposals for inclusion on the list of approved Independent Chairs may be made at any time in the academic year.

**Training for Independent Chairs**

All newly appointed Independent Chairs must complete the relevant training as organised by the university.

Existing Independent Chairs are expected to keep appraised of any changes to the Academic Regulations and attend refresher training as appropriate.

A list of all approved Independent Chairs will be maintained by the Graduate School and published on our website. The list will be reviewed on a three-yearly cycle.

**Role of an Independent Chair**

An Independent Chair is primarily responsible for ensuring that:

* All viva-voce examinations are conducted in accordance with our University Academic Regulations
* All requirements for amendments or re-submission (as appropriate) are agreed by the examiners and clearly conveyed to candidates before the conclusion of the examination.
* The date for submission of any amendments or re-submission is set and agreed by the examiners
* All relevant information is sent to the respective parties in a timely way
* An Independent Chair is not an examiner. An Independent Chair will not participate in any decision on the academic merit of the thesis, which is the responsibility of the examiners.

**Responsibilities of an Independent Chair include the following:**

*Prior to the viva*

The Independent Chair will:

* Acquaint themselves with the thesis
* Read the preliminary reports of the examiners in order to consider how the process of examination might best be carried out (in particular deciding whether a meeting between the examiners may be required in the case of an MRes examination).

*During the Viva*

The Independent Chair will:

* Chair the proceedings
* Ensure that due process is followed and that the student is offered a full opportunity to
* defend his or her thesis
* Ask questions of the student or the examiners where the purpose of this is to elucidate or clarify due process during the viva
* Give regulatory guidance
* Ensure all Academic Outcomes are determined in accordance with our University Academic Regulations and any relevant procedures
* Ensure all outcomes, including the requirements for amendments or re-submission are agreed and clearly conveyed to the candidate before the conclusion of the viva

*After the Viva*The Independent Chair will:

* Provide the details of the outcome of the examination are provide to the Graduate School as soon as possible after the viva
* Check and sign relevant correspondence to be sent to the candidate regarding the outcome of the examination for accuracy
* Be available to the candidate if they have queries about the outcome of the examination, providing clarification where necessary.
* Act as the intermediary between the candidate and examiners where required (candidates are not permitted to contact examiners directly). Ensuring that an agreed response from the examiners can be sent to the candidate
* Ensure due process is followed in respect of our University Academic Regulations and any relevant procedures
* Independent Chairs are expected to be fully conversant with Section 11 of the

Academic Regulations)

* Independent Chairs will help to clarify, for the benefit of the examiners and the candidate, the meaning of the available outcomes (details contained Section 11 of the

Academic Regulations)

**Disagreement between Examiners**

In the event of disagreement between the examiners, the Independent Chair will seek to reach an agreed conclusion.

In the event of the examiners failing to reach agreement, ensuring that the examiners understand the requirements of the university for individual reports and recommendations such as to enable the Research Sub-Committee to satisfy itself that due process has been followed.

**Duration of Role**

The Independent Chair will act in this capacity throughout the examination process of the student in question, including any re-submission.

The Independent Chair may be called upon to comment or give evidence to any Appeal Hearing granted in respect of the outcome of an examination process.