

GUIDANCE FOR PANELS IN THE APPROVAL OF EXAMINERS FOR SOAS RESEARCH DEGREES



To ensure the good standing of SOAS, University of London research degrees and the robustness of quality assurance procedures, the aim of the approval mechanism is to appoint Examiners who will be able, and seen to be able, to make a fair and independent assessment of the candidate and the thesis and ensure that appropriate and consistent standards for the PhD prevail throughout the School.

Examiners should be approved well before the candidate submits the thesis so that the School can formally appoint the examiners and the examination process can start immediately on submission of the thesis to the Doctoral School Section, Registry.

Proposals from Supervisors will be circulated to Panels normally by the Research Tutor, together with the description of the thesis as submitted to the Doctoral School Section, Registry with the Examination Entry form. This will normally be by email. A 10 day turnaround is recommended.

All members must respond. **If a panel member's own candidate's examiners are being discussed, that member must excuse themselves from the panel.** Panel members are asked to copy their comments and responses to all members of the panel.

Panel members may not always feel competent to comment in a particular case. In such circumstances it is perfectly acceptable to consult academic colleagues who work in the specific area. Panel members should indicate when they have so consulted.

The Research Tutor will collate comments of Panel members and add them to the Nomination of Examiners form, resolve any queries and sign off the form. Comments of the panel members should be anonymised if it is necessary to refer them to the Supervisor for comment. The form, together with the comments of panel members and the abstract will then be sent to the Doctoral School Section, Registry who will obtain the approval of the Associate Dean (Research) as representative of the School.

- 1. Supervisors are asked to nominate two examiners at least one of whom must be external to SOAS.**
- 2. Both examiners shall be experts in the field of the thesis** but not necessarily in all parts of the precise topic. The aim should be to appoint a team of examiners who, between them, cover all aspects of the work to be presented by the candidate and who demonstrate experience of SOAS and University of London examination procedures. It may sometimes be necessary to appoint **three examiners** to achieve this and in that case the supervisor should propose three examiners to act jointly.
- 3. The examiners proposed shall have had no direct involvement in the candidate's research or close connections with either the candidate or the supervisor** which might inhibit a completely objective examination. It is accepted that examiners will usually be acquainted with the supervisor, and sometimes with the candidate, and this in itself is not a bar to acting as an examiner. Members of the candidate's supervisory committee are automatically precluded from being eligible to serve as that candidate's internal examiner.
- 4. The appointed team of examiners must demonstrate a good experience of examining in the University of London and the UK Higher Education sector.** If there is insufficient experience between the two examiners, a Chair may be required to ensure the Regulations and Procedures are adhered to.

5. **At least one of the examiners must be able to provide an independent external oversight of the procedures.**
6. **Examiners from within the same department as the supervisor/candidate are strongly advised against, but not prohibited.** In such cases, a statement from the supervisor to the Associate Dean (Research) will be needed justifying such an appointment.
Academic staff who have taken an active role in considering a candidate's transfer to PhD are ineligible to serve as examiners. Staff members who may have attended seminars/presentations given by the candidate may be examiners provided that they have taken no part in the transfer decision.
7. **Former members of the academic staff of the School** are not eligible to serve as external examiners until the expiry of three years from the date of their departure from the School.
8. **Supervisors are asked to avoid repeatedly using the same person as an examiner**, either SOAS or external, or nominating each other to act for the other's student within a short timeframe.
9. **First time examiners.** It is accepted that every academic has to examine a PhD thesis for the first time. In such cases the examiner should be paired with an experienced examiner.