

**Research Degrees**

**Examination Panel Chair (EPC) Training Guidelines**

**Expectations:**

* Attend training before acting as an EPC for the OU for the first time.
* By accepting the role of EPC, certify that they have read, understood, and agree to abide by the Research Degree Regulations and the Research Degree Handbook.
* Understand the role of the EPC: to ensure that the viva is conducted fairly, with integrity, and *in accordance with the regulations*. Hence, the role includes ensuring that the appropriate process is followed, managing all communication with examiners before and after the viva (including mediating any communication between students and examiners), witnessing the viva, intervening if things go amiss, and taking notes/keeping records in order to facilitate the process and keep an appropriate audit trail.
* Understand what records to keep: In the event of a complaint or appeal (which can only be made on the basis of flaws in the procedure), the chair’s records form an essential part of the evidence of due process.
* Understand the duration of the role: The examination panel is appointed for the whole of the examination process – not just from appointment to submission of the examination report form, but through possible resubmission, subsequent revision, and even appeal. This could last 2 years or more.
* Become familiar with the relevant forms and reporting obligations.
* Understand the duty of care: to the student, supervisors, and university, reporting promptly to the RDO any pertinent concerns. This includes understanding when to intervene (or even to stop the viva altogether), what sorts of issues might arise, and how to address such issues.
* Become familiar with relevant structures and procedures:
  + the QAA Doctoral Characteristics (Appendix 1 of RD regulations) and the relevant UK national qualification frameworks (FHEQ);
  + ethics frameworks;
  + procedure for dealing with allegations of malpractice and misconduct;
  + appeals and complaints procedures;
  + Prevent (Counter-Terrorism) Duty.

**Useful Documents:**

[Research Degree Regulations](https://help.open.ac.uk/documents/policies/research-degree-regulations/files/7/research-degree-regulations.pdf), including:

QAA Doctoral Characteristics (Appendix 1 of RD regulations)

Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students (Appendix 2 of RD Regulations)

[Code of Practice for Research](http://www.open.ac.uk/research/sites/www.open.ac.uk.research/files/files/ecms/research-pr/web-content/Code-of-Practice-for-Research-at-The-Open-University-FINAL-for-the-external-research-website-July-2017.pdf)

[OU Thesis Submission Guidelines](http://www.open.ac.uk/students/research/forms-and-guidance)

[Procedure for dealing with allegations of malpractice and misconduct](https://www.open.ac.uk/research/sites/www.open.ac.uk.research/files/files/Documents/procedure-for-research-malpractice.pdf)

[Plagiarism and Research Misconduct Policy: Postgraduate Research Students](https://www.open.ac.uk/students/research/system/files/documents/pgr-plagiarism-and-research-misconduct-policy-v1.1.pdf)

[Code of Practice for Student Discipline](http://www.open.ac.uk/students/charter/essential-documents/code-practice-student-discipline)

[Dignity and Respect Policy](http://www.open.ac.uk/students/charter/sites/www.open.ac.uk.students.charter/files/files/dignity-respect-policy.pdf)

[Appeals and Complaints Procedure](http://www.open.ac.uk/students/charter/essential-documents/complaints-and-appeals-procedure)