Guidelines and Procedures on the Conduct of Remote Oral Examinations for Research Degrees

The Research Degree Regulations set out the requirements for the conduct of the final examination (Section 16). These state that the oral examination will be held at the College or in central London, unless both the student and the College agree that it is expedient to hold the oral examination elsewhere (Section 16, paragraph 4). In exceptional circumstances, it may be possible for either the external examiner or the candidate, to be in a remote location and conduct the examination by video link. This document sets out the procedures for conducting an oral examination by video link.

Approval of a Suspension to the College Regulations

1. The decision to approve a suspension of the Research Degree Regulations (Section 16, paragraph 6) rests with the Doctoral School Director (Quality, Enhancement and Inclusion).

2. Requests for a suspension of regulations must be submitted via the Online PGR request form. There must be written agreement from all parties involved, that is, the candidate, supervisor, internal and external examiners; this may be email confirmation, which must be uploaded as a pdf when the Online PGR request form is being completed.

3. Approval will normally only be granted in exceptional circumstances, for example where the external examiner, or the candidate, is at a distance from the College and is unable, for good reasons that should be detailed, to travel to the College at the appropriate time.

4. Having agreed to the conduct of a remote viva examination, the student will not be permitted to use this as grounds for appeal, unless the circumstances of technical failure or other unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of the examiners were deemed to have adversely affected the candidate’s performance.

Procedures for the conduct of the examination

1. The Supervisor must ensure that the equipment is suitable, booked for adequate time and that technical support is available for the duration of the examination.

2. Any associated costs of using the technical equipment which would be additional to the normal costs of a viva examination at the College must be met by the Department, or by the candidate.

3. The examination must be scheduled to take into account any time differences resulting from the remote location.

4. The candidate and internal examiner must be given an opportunity to become familiar with using the equipment before the examination; this may be on the day of the examination itself.

5. Where the candidate is the remote party:
a. The supervisor must be present on the day of the viva examination to verify the student’s identity.
b. An independent third party must be present during the viva examination; this should not be a close friend or relative.

6. During the examination, the following must apply:

   a. All parties should be visible to everyone at all times;
   b. Any materials brought into the examination must be identified at the start of the examination.

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