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GENERAL INFORMATION				
1	Document category		Rules and Regulations	
2	Document approver		VPC	
3	Minimum list of document users to be notified upon release of document update		Principal and CEO, Deputy Principals. Directors. Deputy Directors, All Academic Staff and All Students	
4	Document change history			
	C	Document Change Tracking Number	Date released	Change originator
		12/2025	05/05/2025	Dr Lorna Bonnici West
	Change history (Section/change details)			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Removed Master In Research from Scope of Document</li><li>- Added reference to methodology in the definitions of the Internal and External Examiner.</li><li>- Updated the definition of the Convenor to the Programme Coordinator</li><li>- Updated 4.1 – Supervisor to inform the Programme Coordinator not the MDC</li><li>- Updated 4.2 and 4.8 – changed from hard copies to spiral bound and added requirements for a plagiarism report</li><li>- Updated 4.3 – defined the type of recommendation needed from the Supervisor and changed the remit for the setting up of the VIVA committee from the MDC to the IRC</li><li>- Updated 4.3.2 by changing remit for approval of examiners from the MDC to the Institute BoS</li><li>- Updated 4.3.3 – matched MCAST ACT requirements of having external examiners approved at VPC</li><li>-Updated 4.3.4 – included rule for no contact between students and examiners</li><li>- Updated 4.3.5 to include elements defining conflict of interest</li><li>- in 4.5, and added reference to 2 documents</li><li>- All references to Oral exam were changed to Viva</li><li>- in 4.6 and 4.7 changed reference from MDC to VC</li><li>- Updated 4.8 item 3 to include 6 week deadline</li><li>- Deleted the following from 4.8: <i>Formally notify the Director of Studies, the Examination Team and Registrar of the arrangements for the Viva in writing, following the receipt of reports from the examiners, and shall also make arrangements for the examination to be appropriately publicised.</i></li><li>- Updated Reference Document list in 4.8 adjusting titles and numbering as per new approvals</li><li>- Updated the Viva Process by: Removing from 6.1: <i>The Chair, with the support of the Convenor, shall be responsible for collating all the Examiners' reports and shall seek an agreement amongst examiners regarding the outcome of the Viva putting the onus providing a final decision in case of a lack of agreement between examiners on the Chair re written 6.3 outcomes/examiners' recommendations</i> added reference to DOC 442 with regards to classification</li><li>- Added 6.7 reference to Final Dissertation submission and Hardbound copies</li><li>- Added 6.8 on failure to submit dissertation in time</li></ul>			
	Document change history			
	B	Document Change Tracking Number	Date released	Change originator
		128/2021	25.08.2021	De Raffaele Clifford, Pierre Dalmas
	Change history (Section/change details)			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Updated title</li><li>b) Updated Logo</li><li>c) Updated scope of document</li><li>d) Removed all references to EQF/MQF 8 programme</li><li>e) Added reference to Doc 083</li></ul>			



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## Master by Research VIVA

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document aims to describe the process and the roles of the key stakeholders of the Viva Board session.

### 2 Scope of Document

- 2.1 This procedure applies to the Viva Board Session for the following programmes:

- a) Master's by Research Degree Programmes (EQF/MQF 7)

### 3 Definitions and Acronyms

- MDC: Master's Degree Committee
- VC: Viva Committee
- Internal Examiner: A senior academic at MCAST who is an expert in the area of study/methodology being examined. The internal examiner should be independent of the supervisory team and, thus, should not have been a supervisor or adviser to the student.
- External Examiner: A senior academic who is an expert in the area of study/methodology being examined and who is not affiliated to MCAST. The engagement of an international external examiner is preferable.
- Convenor: The Programme Coordinator in charge of the coordination of the Viva process.
- Supervisor: Dissertation supervisor monitoring the candidate through the course of the programme.

### 4 The Pre-Viva Session Process

- 4.1 The Supervisor is to inform the Programme Coordinator of the candidate's readiness to sit for a viva at least eight (8) weeks in advance of a possible viva date.
- 4.2 It shall be the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that two spiral-bound copies, one electronic copy of the dissertation and the plagiarism report (through a plagiarism detection software that is approved by the College) are submitted to the IRC on or before the dissertation submission deadline.
- 4.3 The IRC, following recommendations for an External and Internal Examiner from the Supervisor, is to initiate the process for the setting up of the Viva Committee (VC) that includes as a minimum:
- (a) one internal examiner,
  - (b) one external examiner
  - (c) a Chairperson, and
  - (d) a Convenor
- 4.3.1 All Examiners will be contacted by the Director of Research & Innovation/Chair IRC and the external examiner is requested to provide a Curriculum Vitae.
- 4.3.2 The IRC puts forward the examiner nominations and respective CVs for evaluation by the respective Institute Board of Studies (BoS) to ensure that the examiners are deemed to have suitable expertise in the field/methodology.



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4.3.3 The Director of Research & Innovation/Chair IRC may consult with the MDC as necessary and will submit the VC nominations for the approval of the Vocational and Professional Council.

4.3.4 The candidate shall take no part in the appointment of examiners, who in turn shall have no communication with the candidate in relation to the dissertation and viva between the appointment of the examiners and the viva examination.

4.3.5 All persons who act as an examiner shall be asked to declare any potential conflict of interest. Conflict of interest constitutes one or more of the following:

- Personal Relationships such as family members or relatives of the candidate or close friends of the candidate, current or past romantic relationships with the candidate.
- Commercial relationship with the candidate.
- Current or recent supervisors or mentors of the candidate.
- Significant personal connections with the candidate which could lead to possible biases.
- Known biases or prejudices towards the candidate.

4.4 An independent Chair shall be appointed who will be responsible for solely chairing the examination and ensuring the associated administration of the Viva is completed satisfactorily. The Chair will not examine the dissertation.

4.5 Each examiner shall read and examine the dissertation. Within six weeks of receipt of the dissertation, and before the viva examination takes place, each examiner shall have submitted an independent preliminary report using the Master by Research Programme Preliminary Report Form (DOC 480 – referred to below) to the Chair of the examination panel, via the Convenor. In completing the preliminary report, each examiner shall consider whether the dissertation provisionally satisfies the requirements of the degree and make an appropriate provisional mark and recommendation using the Academic research grading rubric' (DOC 382) subject to the outcome of the viva examination. The preliminary report shall be confidential prior to the viva examination.

### **Reference Documents**

- *Doc 480 Master by Research Programme Preliminary Report Form*
- *Doc 382 Academic research grading rubric'*

4.6 The Supervisor shall provide provisional grading of the dissertation, which can be used as a reference as required by the VC.

4.7 The VC shall ensure that the examination is conducted professionally. In any instance where the Chair is made aware of a material failure to comply with all the procedures of the examination process, they may declare the examination null and void, and the MDC shall appoint new examiners.

4.8 The Convenor shall:

- Request the final dissertation (in two spiral-bound copies and electronic format) and the plagiarism report from the candidate, as approved by the Supervisor;

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- Send a copy of the dissertation to each examiner, together with the examiner's Master by Research Programme Preliminary Report Form (DOC480), Academic Research Grading Rubric (DOC 382), and the MCAST Regulations (DOC 016 and DOC 237), and ensure that the examiners are appropriately briefed as to their duties.
- Request both Examiners to provide an initial evaluation report and mark within six weeks of receipt of the dissertation;
- Request the Supervisor to provide a provisional grading of the dissertation;
- Establish a viva date and location; Formally notify the Director R&I, VC, and the candidate of the arrangements for the Viva in writing, at least three weeks beforehand..

### **Reference Documents:**

Document 016: Master by Research Programme Regulations (EQF/MQF7)

Document 480: Master by Research Programme Preliminary Report Form

Document 083: External Reviewer Policy and Procedure

Document 382: Academic Research Grading Rubric

## **5 The Viva Session**

- 5.1 Subject to confirmation by the candidate, the Supervisor is invited to attend the session as a silent observer.
- 5.2 The Chair shall explain the structure of the viva to the VC and the candidate (i.e. presentation followed by questions, immediate discussions or otherwise).
- 5.3 The Chair shall coordinate the entire process of the viva session, keeping timing, set closure etc.

### **Reference Document**

Document 481: Master by Research Programme VIVA Report Form

## **6 The Post-Viva Process**

- 6.1 Immediately following the viva examination, the examiners shall, where they are in agreement, submit a preliminary mark (DOC 382), a joint report and recommendation relating to the award of the degree using the Master by Research Programme VIVA Report Form (DOC 481).
- 6.2 In the rare occurrence of a lack of agreement, the Chair is to intervene and provide the final decision, considering all feedback. Following consensus, the Chair shall be responsible for informing the candidate of the outcome of the Viva via the Convenor.
- 6.3 The examiners may recommend the following:
  - (a) No amendments—the candidate be awarded the degree based on the final mark agreed by the examiners;
  - (b) **Minor amendments**
    - (i) Very minor amendments—the candidate be awarded the degree subject to minor amendments being made to the dissertation as provided for in the relevant programme regulations. Such amendments will include typographical errors,

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grammatical and/or replacement of, or additions to, the text, or diagrams. For example, the replacement or addition of up to one or two paragraphs of text. It should be possible for such amendments to be completed and submitted within one month and approved by one member of the examination team. If the examiner/s is/are satisfied that the changes have been performed properly, the VC's mark is confirmed. If the changes are not satisfactory, the VC shall issue a mark reflecting the submitted dissertation.

- (ii) Minor amendments—the candidate be awarded the degree subject to revisions being made to the dissertation. Such revisions may include empirical work, for example, the revising of a complete chapter of the dissertation and/or typographical or grammatical errors that are so numerous as to suggest carelessness on the part of the candidate, or so intrusive as to distract the reader's attention from the argument of the dissertation. It should be possible for such amendments to be completed and submitted within three to six months from the date of the Viva examination. If the examiner/s are satisfied that the changes have been adequately addressed, they shall agree a final mark that shall not be greater than 10 percent of the original provisional mark for the original submission. If the changes are not satisfactory, the VC shall confirm the original mark reflecting the original submitted dissertation.

- (c) **Major amendments**—when the dissertation is verging on a fail and in order to qualify for the minimum pass mark (i.e. 50%), the VC shall recommend a re-submission for re-examination of the dissertation with or without further research and with or without a further Viva examination. It should be possible for such amendments to be completed and submitted within one year from the date of the Viva examination. If the examiners are satisfied that the changes have been adequately addressed, the minimum pass mark (i.e. 50%) is confirmed. If the changes are not satisfactorily addressed, the dissertation is considered as fail.

- (d) **Fail**—the candidate will not be awarded the degree.

#### 6.4 Post Viva Request for Amendments as per Clause 6.3:

Students who fail to fully satisfy the examiners at the first examination, following the Viva process, may be asked to effect minor or major amendments to their dissertations. In such cases, students can submit amendments for minor and major amendments only once. The summative and written feedback will be provided in the form of an outcome letter collated by the Viva Chairperson (through the use of DOC 481 referenced below) and communicated by the MRes convenor. The student shall be required to submit the amendments for re-examination and approval within a specified period of time. Students who fail to submit their dissertation amendments within the stipulated timeframe shall be considered as not completing the programme.

#### 6.5 The overall grading procedure details for the Master by Research degree classification are as per DOC442 "Certification and Classification Rules and Regulations"

#### 6.6 Having confirmed the recommendation from the VC through the Convenor, the Director for Research and Innovation shall inform the MDC and submit its recommendations to the



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Registrar, who will formally confer the award. Additionally, the Convenor shall input the mark on the College's Data Management Software and inform the candidate of the result.

- 6.7 Final Level 7 dissertation submissions shall, unless specified otherwise, submit to MCAST two hard-bound copies and one PDF soft copy of the final corrected dissertation by no later than four weeks after successful completion, including any amendments as directed by the Viva Committee, as applicable. One hard copy of the dissertation will be retained in one of the MCAST Libraries, while the Institute will retain the other hard copy.
- 6.8 Students, who fail to submit all copies of their dissertations in time shall have their Certificates withheld. Whilst such students will be allowed to take part in the graduation ceremony, however, they will only be provided with a Transcript. The Certificate will only be issued upon the submission of all copies of the final dissertation as required by this procedure.

### **Reference Documents**

*Document 100: Dissertation Guidelines and Grading Rubrics*

*Document 481: Master by Research Programme VIVA Report Form*

*Document 382: Academic Research Grading Rubric*

*Document 442: Certification and Classification Rules and Regulations*