2018
EdD Thesis Stage Handbook
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EdD Thesis Stage Handbook

University of Liverpool Professional Doctorate programmes
delivered in partnership with Laureate Online Education
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Introduction

Welcome to the thesis stage of the Doctor of Education (EdD) programme, and to this handbook. The handbook is designed in the first instance for you as a student on the EdD. The information provided will also be useful to your supervisors. It specifically covers the thesis period of the programme and should be read in conjunction with information provided about the programme in the Centre for Student Success (see http://success.liverpool-online.com/edd).

- The thesis stage of the programme is entirely framed around the creation by yourself as the student of a practitioner research thesis and by preparation for a viva voce examination on that thesis. A thesis proposal and ethics application are approved before you embark on the research towards the thesis. As such, the thesis stage of the programme constitutes a relatively open period in which you are expected to undertake practitioner research with the support of his or her supervisors.
- Given that the research conducted by each student is unique, it is not possible to provide detailed guidance that is common to all students on how this research will unfold.
- The research project remains your own responsibility and it is the examiners, who are entirely independent of the supervisors, who will ultimately determine the final outcome of the award. Significant reworking is usually expected once an initial draft of the thesis is complete, before the thesis reaches an appropriate standard for submission.

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The EdD Thesis

The thesis element of the EdD programme carries 180 credits, with the thesis comprising 40-50,000 words in length. The thesis is a substantial academic report that chronicles an original piece of practitioner research in higher education, generating new, actionable knowledge that is acknowledged as significant by scholarly and practical stakeholders. The production of the EdD thesis is designed to serve the wider aims and learning outcomes of the programme:

The programme aims to:

- offer an international, research-intensive, high-level education to educational professionals in Higher Education who wish to enhance their skills in dealing with the complex problems posed in their profession;

- extend students’ capacity for educational leadership, as directed towards visible and transformative impact in their own institutional or professional setting;

- enable students to engage in rigorous theoretically-informed practitioner research that extends the actionable knowledge available to educational professionals;

- create a vibrant professional network of educational leaders across the world, encompassing both students and staff from the programme.

As a result of the programme, you will be able to:

- engage in theoretically-informed research applied to their own practice, based on rigorous research methodologies and of a quality to satisfy peer review and extend the forefront of the discipline;

- engage in reflective processes designed to provide insight into their own professional practice, on the basis of strategies that involve self-awareness, the framing of insightful questions, professional dialogue and systematic patterns of critical thinking;

- synthesise ways in which personal, local, organisational, national, cultural and international factors influence research and the transformation of practice, dealing with the associated ambiguities;

- creatively articulate and implement, systematically investigate, and rigorously evaluate innovative forms of practice and organisation, in ways that enhance organisational cohesiveness and take account of the strategic context and the resources available;

- inform research with an appreciation of how learning is shaped by personal and social factors, as experienced within a given environment that is influenced by underlying infrastructures, technologies, organisational factors and global trends;

- critically evaluate how ways of knowing shape research within specific educational settings, framing professional actions in light of this understanding.
The Focus of the Thesis

The aim of the thesis is the production of a substantial academic report that chronicles an original piece of practitioner research in higher education, generating new, actionable knowledge that is acknowledged as significant by scholarly and practical stakeholders. As such the focus of the thesis should be directly related to the study of higher education. While this field may be interpreted relatively broadly (e.g. to include higher-level learning in a range of settings) the University would not expect a thesis to focus primarily on the learning of pupils in schools or on the development of routine skills.

The University would normally expect a thesis topic to fall within one of the research clusters on the programme (see below). The primary focus of the aims and outcomes of the programme concerns education, rather than other specialist areas present within the higher education sector (e.g. facilities management, financial reporting, ICT systems, etc.)

Requirements of a Research Degree

The descriptors for qualifications at Doctoral (D) level from the QAA Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland indicate that doctorates are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

i. the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;

ii. a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;

iii. the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;

iv. a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

a. make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences;

b. continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches; and will have:

c. the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

The University’s Code of Practice for PGR students indicates that standards on its research degrees are set in accordance with the Frascati definition of research, the definition of research in the Research Excellence Framework, the FHEQ qualification descriptor for any doctoral degree (as given above), and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.
Supervision in the EdD

Supervision will operate in accordance with the University of Liverpool regulations and relevant codes of practice, specifically both the PGR CoP Appendix 2: Policy on Research Student Supervision and the Framework for Online Professional Doctorates. Full details of the responsibilities of supervisors are available in the Policy on Research Student Supervision, available at: https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/aqsd/academic-codes-of-practice/pgr-code-of-practice/

The following statement draws out the main responsibilities as stated in this policy, as adapted for Doctor of Education programme.

Responsibilities of all supervisors

(a) It is the responsibility of all supervisors to establish a professional and supportive relationship with their student(s), in order to facilitate their development as a researcher, within a vibrant and stimulating research environment. Supervisors should be aware of and act in accordance with the University’s Dignity at Work and Study Policy.

(b) Supervisors should provide access to the wider national and international research community including opportunities to attend relevant conferences and workshops or through dissemination via journal publications, where appropriate.

c) Supervisors should ensure that students are aware of the current developments in both specific and wider areas of research.

d) Supervisors should encourage students to question critically the existing literature around the specific subject area, the assumptions of the research project and the results they obtain.

e) Supervisors must keep up to date with changes and updates to the relevant University policies and procedures and the academic regulations governing the relevant research degree programme. They should ensure as far as possible that their students are familiar with and adhere to the content of these documents, as appropriate. They should ensure as far as possible that the students are familiar with the various professional and specialist services for students, particularly in relation to health, counselling, finance, disability and immigration.

f) In their professional supervisory relationship with students, supervisors should endeavour to encourage students’ engagement with their research project but should remain critical and realistic about students’ progress. They are required to record any concerns they have, particularly during any formal process for evaluating a student’s academic progress.

g) Supervisors should advise students on issues relating to academic integrity, provide advice and guidance on the University’s policies on such matters, and take steps to assist students to avoid plagiarism, collusion and dishonest use of data.

h) Supervisors should make it clear to students that their research project is the student’s own responsibility and that it is the examiners, who are entirely independent of the supervisors, who will ultimately determine the final outcome of the award. Supervisors must not engage in any activity which could compromise the independence of the viva voce (hereafter referred to as viva) examination, which includes consulting with the appointed examiners regarding the scheduled examination (other than about logistical arrangements) or taking part in any formal examination of the thesis or research project, including attending, in any capacity, the examination.
(i) To document in writing an agreed record pertaining to all formal meetings between supervisors and students, and to ensure that supervisors and students are clear about the frequency, content and outcomes of such supervisory meetings. It is strongly advised that, as a matter of good practice, the opportunity is taken to document in writing (e.g. an email summary) all other substantive interactions between supervisors and students, however informal.

j) It is the responsibility of supervisors to ensure that students are made aware of the consequences of not making satisfactory progress with their research project.

k) It is the responsibility of all supervisors to advise students on the processes for requesting a change in registration, particularly in relation to a suspension of studies if the students’ personal, financial or health circumstances prevent them from continuing on their programme temporarily. Supervisors are required to process such requests in a timely fashion and should explain the implications and the consequences of suspending studies, taking advice as appropriate from the specialist professional services.

l) It is the responsibility of all supervisors to familiarise themselves and comply with the University’s ‘Policy and Code of Practice for Health and Safety Responsibilities of Supervisors towards Postgraduate and Undergraduate Students’ which can be found on the Safety Adviser’s Office webpages.

m) Other than the normal communications between supervisors and a student through their Blackboard classroom, communications with the student must be sent to their liverpool.online.ac.uk email address recorded on the student record system at Laureate. Supervisors would normally be expected to respond to emails within the period of seven calendar days (with any periods of absence indicated through an away message), although a faster response is clearly ideal.

**Additional Responsibilities of the Primary Supervisor**

It is the responsibility of the Primary Supervisor:

a) To approve the thesis proposal for the student, together with the secondary supervisor. It is recognised as good practice to involve members of staff outside the proposed supervisory team in assessing the student’s application.

b) To take a lead within any supervisory team in advising students on the academic regulations governing the research degree programme, relevant University policies and submission of thesis and viva examination processes.

c) To provide clear guidelines to students on the required timescales for completion of the relevant research degree programme, including the maximum periods of registration for the relevant research degree programme.

d) To provide guidance about the planning of the research project, set appropriate and clear objectives, targets and deadlines within the overall project plan and critically monitor the student’s progress against this plan.
e) To monitor the progress of the student against the Development Needs Analysis (DNA) undertaken towards the end of the pre-thesis stage of the programme, and to identify any issues in relation to performance against the plan or any adjustments that might be required to the plan.

g) To meet regularly with students, either remotely or in person. Primary Supervisors are formally required to meet with their part-time students at least once every two months (normally via video-conferencing) and to ensure that a formal record of such supervisory meetings is made in their Blackboard virtual classroom. (A meeting every two months remains the formal minimum requirement of the University, but the primary supervisor and the student can quite reasonably meet more frequently than this, as agreed.) These formal supervisory meetings should have an agenda agreed in advance and a record of agreements of outcomes and targets reached during the meeting. Primary Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that their students record such supervisory meetings, as failing to provide a full record is likely to affect the evaluation of their Bi-Annual Progress Monitoring. The primary supervisor and student are welcome to meet more frequently than the minimum formal requirement, as agreed.

h) To ensure that their students are enabled to complete their Bi-Annual Progress Report within the required timescales and to ensure that they themselves complete the supervisor’s evaluation with supportive but critical and realistic feedback in a timely fashion.

i) To be accessible to students as appropriate at times other than formal supervisory meetings (see (g) above). The expectation is that a Primary Supervisor will meet at an appropriate frequency with students outside this formal process (see advice in (i) above about recording such informal supervisory meetings).

j) To ensure that drafts of part or the full thesis are read, with appropriate feedback given within agreed timescales. (For a full thesis, this would normally occur within a month while for a thesis chapter this would normally occur within two weeks.)

k) To convene a meeting at least once every 6 months, to discuss with the student on-going progress issues with the research project, held in person or remotely with other members of the supervisory team. This meeting may either occur through a video-conferencing facility or through an email exchange.

l) To arrange for students to present their work to staff and other students and to provide the opportunity to have practice in viva examinations.

m) To ensure that any requests by a student for a change to their registration, e.g. request to suspend studies, transfer to submission pending, are processed in a timely way in order that the student is not disadvantaged in any way and that their registration record is accurate and up to date.

n) Working along with the Research Cluster Lead, to assist in the process of nominating Examiners for consideration by the UoL Head of School/Institute. Final approval for appointment of the Examiners is given by the Faculty PGR Director.

o) To inform the student of the names of the Examiners and to ensure that the student is prepared and supported to undertake the viva examination.

p) If the student informs them of any exceptional or medical circumstances that might affect their performance in the viva examination, to ensure that the Examiners are informed of these
circumstances prior to the viva by alerting the Director of Studies for the programme, provided that the student has given consent to share this information.

**Second supervision**

Students on the EdD will have a second supervisor who will normally be an academic in the University (with the exception to this only occurring in cases where the primary supervisor is an academic in the University).

It is the further responsibility of the Second Supervisor:

a) To approve the thesis proposal for the student, together with the primary supervisor. It is recognised as good practice to involve members of staff outside the proposed supervisory team in assessing the student's application.

b) Where the Primary Supervisor is not a member of academic staff of the University (i.e. they have ‘Recognised Supervisor’ status), to provide advice and guidance on the University's academic regulations and relevant policies and procedures, taking advice as necessary.

c) To join a meeting at least once every 6 months, to discuss with the student on-going progress issues with the research project, held in person or remotely with other members of the supervisory team. This meeting may either occur through a video-conferencing facility or through an email exchange. Second Supervisors are advised to keep a copy of the record of these supervisory meetings. (The Bi-Annual progress report is normally circulated around one month in advance of its due date – if a joint meeting of supervisors and students has not already occurred, then a meeting should be arranged at this point.)

d) To be available to students at times other than formal supervisory meetings and provide general support as required to the student and the Primary Supervisor. Depending on the proportion of supervision provided to the student by the Second Supervisor, they may make more or less academic input into the research. It is expected that, the more academic input made (i.e. the greater the percentage supervision provided), the greater the frequency of supervisory meetings between the student and the Second Supervisor.

e) To ensure that a draft of the thesis is read within an agreed timescale and suitable feedback given in good time to ensure submission. (For a full thesis, this would normally occur within a month while for a thesis chapter this would normally occur within two weeks. Second supervisors are not normally expected to repeatedly provide feedback on the same sections of the thesis – it is the responsibility of the student and primary supervisor together to address the feedback that is provided by the second supervisor in ensuring that the thesis reaches the appropriate standard.)

Note: Comments on drafts of student work from the second supervisor normally come to the student through the primary supervisor. Given this, the primary supervisor is to be normally responsible for sending on student work to the second supervisor for his or her comment. Similarly, comments from the second supervisor will normally come to the student via the primary supervisor, although there is some flexibility in how the supervisors and student wish to arrange matters. This approach is intended to result in a more consistent view from the supervisory team, although it is also important for students to realise that engaging with different views of their work is an integral part of achieving a doctorate.
The role of second supervisor will be supplemented through the operation of the research clusters on the programme, with informal supervision occurring within this setting on a group basis. It is expected that the Lead for a given Research Cluster will normally act as second supervisor for a number of students within that cluster. Further members of staff will also be linked to given research clusters as second supervisors.

Research Cluster Leads: in certain cases the secondary supervisor also undertakes the following roles for the students within their research cluster (or a sub-group of students within the research cluster):

- Provide leadership for the research cluster.
- Joining asynchronous online discussions for the cluster, and engaging with online presentations made by students.
- Assist with the selection of internal and external examiners for vivas.

**Matching with a Primary Supervisor**

The process of matching with a primary supervisor is a significant stage of the EdD programme. It is important that students and supervisors develop a constructive relationship with each other, and that they are well suited to each other. It is necessary to ensure a good fit, for instance, in relation to methodological expertise, knowledge of the areas of higher education covered by the thesis, and approach to supervision. Discussions around these issues are also helpful in developing the capacity of students for the conduct of research.

- The matching process starts around 5 weeks prior to the official Thesis Start Date.
- Student submits their outline research proposal onto the Thesis Supervisor Matching Page in the Online Doctoral Community (see under Research Environment, below), ideally at the start of the matching period.
- Students then consider the available supervisor profiles, and approach their first choice of supervisor and then if there is no a match made, they move on to the second choice and so on.
- If no match is made on the first or second approach, students are welcome to approach the Thesis Faculty Manager to identify one or more potential primary supervisors who would explicitly be willing to supervise that particular student (e.g. taking into account the availability of supervisors).
- The Thesis Faculty Manager may also approach an individual student with a suggestion for a possible primary supervisor.
- If a match has not been agreed within 2 weeks of the start date of the thesis, then the Faculty will contact the student with details of one or more potential primary supervisors who would explicitly be willing to supervise the student. (This assumes that the outline thesis proposal has been posted into the matching space.)
- If necessary, the Thesis Faculty Manager will allocate a primary supervisor to the student at the end of the matching period.

**Change of supervisor**

Change of one's primary supervisor is not common, but this may be needed when for personal or professional reasons your primary supervisor is no longer able to supervise you (e.g. a change of role...
or institution) or when issues arise between you and supervisor that make it difficult for you to work together. Similar considerations apply to a change of one’s secondary supervisor.

- It is good practice for students and supervisors to review the nature of the supervisory relationship from time to time (e.g. prior to completing the regular reviews of student progress on the thesis stage).

**Issues in the supervisory relationship**

- It is important that any problems in the supervisory relationship are addressed as early as possible. For instance, it is much more difficult to respond to complaints about supervision after the examination of the thesis.
- If you have begun to feel that issues have arisen around your relationship with your supervisors, you should, where possible, discuss the issues directly with your primary supervisor.
- If you feel it is not appropriate to discuss any issues directly with your supervisor, you should approach the Thesis Faculty Manager or the Director of Studies.
- The expectation is that an opportunity would be provided for the student and supervisor to adapt their way of working together before any change of supervisor is considered. Prior to considering any change of primary supervisor, the Faculty Thesis Manager or Director of Studies would normally expect to see some evidence on the part of one or more parties to address the identified issues (e.g. in the agreed meeting notes of supervision, email records or within the regular reports on student progress).
- Any need to change a supervisor will be agreed between the Faculty Thesis Manager and the Director of Studies before it is confirmed. The view of the supervisor will be sought before any course of action in relation to the supervisory relationship is proposed or any change is agreed.

**Changing a supervisor**

- Where it has been agreed that a change of primary supervisor would be appropriate (either because of an issue raised by yourself or because the current supervisor is no longer available to supervise you), the Faculty Thesis Manager will propose one or more potential supervisors with you, with scope for you to discuss the match with the potential supervisor(s).
- Any new secondary supervisor would be assigned by the Director of Studies.
- Given the various stages indicated above, a change in primary supervisor is likely to take time. There is no expectation that problems in the supervisory relationship will lead to a change of supervisor on a swift basis. Before leaving her/his role the former primary supervisor should provide a briefing for the new supervisor on the research and progress of the student.

Supervision will operate in accordance with the University of Liverpool regulations and relevant codes of practice, specifically the Framework for Online Professional Doctorates, which is available at: [https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/aqsd/academic-codes-of-practice/pgr-code-of-practice/](https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/aqsd/academic-codes-of-practice/pgr-code-of-practice/)

**Student Responsibilities**

*EdD Thesis Handbook*
It is important to remember that this is your thesis, not your supervisor’s thesis. The research project is your own responsibility and it is the examiners, who are entirely independent of the supervisors, who will ultimately determine the final outcome of the award. You should not expect your supervisor to chase you to meet deadlines nor to strictly direct your research.

You should keep in regular contact with their primary supervisor and submit work for review at regular intervals. Under the procedures for the Termination of Studies on the grounds of non-engagement (Deemed Withdrawn) (see Appendix 3 at https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/aqs/app/academic-codes-of-practice/pgr-code-of-practice/), students can be deemed withdrawn for failure to attend as expected or failure to be in contact with the University (via Supervisor or other staff as appropriate) for a period of one month or more.

It is crucial that you listen to the advice of your supervisor as this will help you to avoid making major errors. However, you should not expect your supervisor to comment on the minutiae of your work (s/he is not a proof-reader) nor to supply you with a definitive set of references. You should aim to be an expert in your field by the time you submit your thesis and this will normally mean having a more detailed knowledge of your research area than anyone else, including your supervisor.

Specifically, you will need to:

1. Ensure that you have ethical approval and thesis proposal approval for your work before you begin to collect any data or make any form of intervention. You should discuss this with your supervisor who will guide you on the process and format.

2. Regularly check your liverpool.online.ac.uk email account and your Blackboard classroom in Laureate LENS, depending on the pattern of communication agreed with your supervisor. Students are expected to answer emails from their supervisors within the period of seven calendar days.

3. Arrange and attend regular meetings with your primary supervisor (at least once every two months).

4. Maintain regular contact with your primary supervisor. The normal expectation in the University’s PGR Code of Practice is that you contact with the University at least once a month (whether your primary supervisor or other relevant members of staff, such as your secondary supervisor, Student Support Manager or so on).

5. Keep a record of any meetings that are not recorded in the learning platform and send these to your supervisor. (Students are required to complete the student-supervisor meeting form after each meeting with their supervisor, which is available within the repository on the online doctoral community site.)

6. Submit a full draft of your thesis for review by your supervisor and a second supervisor before formally submitting.

7. Where comments have been made by your supervisors on a draft thesis proposal, thesis chapter or full thesis, and you have revised the text in light of the comments, you are normally expected to include a response to the overall thrust of those comments alongside your revised material. It may also help to use track changes so that the nature of the changes that have been made is clearly evident. This mirrors expectations of peer review for submissions to academic journals.

8. Inform your supervisor that you intend to formally submit your thesis and gain his/her agreement to this.
9. Make your own local arrangements for the viva voce that will be run by teleconference. These arrangements should be fully tested prior to the conduct of the viva. (See the section on Viva Voce below for further details.)

Developmental Needs Analysis

Developmental Needs Analysis (DNA) now occurs as an integral aspect of the supervisory process. Every 6 months you are expected to undertake a relevant professional and personal development plan to advance your research progress and to meet your longer-term personal and professional ambitions. This analysis is undertaken as an integral aspect of the review of your progress that occurs on the thesis stage every 6 months. Completion of this analysis will encourage you to reflect and review your current skills and abilities, and promotes planning towards developing new skills and professional competences.

This analysis will then be used in discussion with your supervisor to decide your priorities for development and identify appropriate training. Training and development recommendations for EdD students are provided within the Online Doctoral Community. See:

https://onlineliverpool.ac.uk/sites/doccomm/EdD/SitePages/EdD%20Thesis%20Related%20Documents.aspx

You and your Primary Supervisor will then agree on a programme of professional development for the coming year. Your plan and your progress with completing your development and training will be reviewed every 6 months as part of your Independent Progress Assessment Panel.
Student Progress

Overall expectations for progress

Progress occurs on a different basis on the thesis stage in comparison to the pre-thesis stage of the programme. Under the Framework for Online Professional Doctorates (see Appendix 12 at https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/aqsd/academic-codes-of-practice/pgr-code-of-practice/) progress on the pre-thesis stage is governed by the University regulations that apply to postgraduate taught programmes, with specific deadlines set for assessed work. On the thesis stage, however, progress is governed by the postgraduate research regulations, as outlined in the Policy and Procedures on the Academic Progress of Postgraduate Research Students (see Appendix 3 and Appendix 12 (Annex 1) at https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/aqsd/academic-codes-of-practice/pgr-code-of-practice/).

No formal deadlines are set on the thesis stage for the submission of work, given that the thesis stage of the programme is assessed through the submission of the thesis and a viva voce examination (with any recommendation for the award of the Doctor of Education or Master of Research (as appropriate) to occur by the final date of registration).

Independent Progress Assessment Panel

Your progress on the thesis stage of the programme is staged, and carefully monitored by an Independent Progress Assessment Panel (IPAP).

The programme-level Panel will receive two reports per year on each student’s progress. You are expected to complete and sign part of this progress report. These reports will be submitted by the primary supervisor to the panel. The normal minimum expectations around progress are that the Thesis Proposal will be approved within 6 months of embarking on the thesis stage, and that the ethics application will have been approved within a few months afterwards. You are normally expected to have given at least one presentation (see below under Research Environment) during the first twelve months, and a second presentation within the second year. Draft thesis chapters are expected on a regular basis after data collection has been completed.

You are also encouraged to contribute to asynchronous discussions within their research cluster. You are further be expected to engage in specific developmental activities identified in agreement with their supervisory team, to ensure adequate expertise in relation to any areas of specialist expertise required for the agreed thesis topic or agreed approach employed within the thesis.

The partial staging of the work towards the thesis that is implied in these requirements for student progression assists in the following:

- Providing a clearly defined basis for student progress on the thesis stage of the programme, thus ensuring that the judgements of the IPAP are adequately grounded.
- Developing communities of practice amongst students and supervisors, facilitating a modest degree of interaction between the students undertaking the thesis stage of the programme.
- Enhancing the research infrastructure that underpins the programme
- Building the confidence of the research student
- Supporting the transition of the student towards independence as a researcher.
• Assisting dissemination of the research for the doctoral thesis, including its impact on practice.

The IPAP process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial indication of insufficient progress</strong></td>
<td>If there are grounds to believe that the student is in danger of making insufficient progress, then the programme-level IPAP may either ask the primary supervisor to remind the student about the importance of progress (e.g. to undertake further work towards a thesis proposal of an adequate standard within a given time frame or to complete a specific further piece of work towards the thesis) or the IPAP may request an action plan from the student that is to be received within two months. If the primary supervisor is asked to issue an informal reminder, then the primary supervisor will report back at a specified meeting of the IPAP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Insufficient progress</strong></td>
<td>If insufficient progress on the part of the student is identified, the Chair of the programme-level IPAP will formally write to the student to ask him or her to submit the next appropriate piece of work to an acceptable standard within a given time frame (typically within three months). This letter will indicate that it constitutes a formal warning, and it should include prior evidence of lack of progress or poor quality of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal meeting of the IPAP (School level)</strong></td>
<td>If the student does not complete the identified piece of work to an acceptable standard within the given time-frame, then the student would be called to a personal meeting of the PGR Progress Panel within the School of Histories, Languages and Cultures, as indicated within the progress regulations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the indicated time-frames for submission of requested work may be adjusted to reflect any extenuating circumstances experienced by the student (e.g. health difficulties, change of supervisor, etc.). One week in addition is normally allowed in order for the communication from the IPAP to reach the student.

Stages in the Thesis Process

1. Student prepares an outline proposal and posts into the ‘matching space’.
2. Matching process for primary supervisor – online conversations over a period of c. 4 weeks.
3. Student assigned to a Secondary Supervisor.
5. Ethical approval secured locally (if available) and from the University of Liverpool.
6. Progress checks on student by IPAP (including completion of presentations, for instance).
7. Completion of two online presentations.
8. Conduct of mock viva.
10. Viva voce. (This normally occurs within three months of the submission of a thesis.)
11. If required, minor modifications or the resubmission of the thesis.
12. Recommendation that the degree of Doctor of Education be awarded.
13. Deposit of the thesis in the University library.
14. Graduation occurs in either July or December each year (see below).

Road map of the main phases of the thesis stage

Matching Phase (a)
- Starts 4 weeks before official Thesis Start Date
- Student required to submit their outline research proposal into the matching page in the Online Doctoral Community.

Matching with Supervisor (b)
- Student considers the available supervisor profiles from the matching page
- Student approaches their first choice of supervisor and then if there is no a match made, they move on to the second choice and so on.

Confirmation of Match
- Student and proposed Primary Supervisor email EdD Thesis Faculty Manager.
- EdD Thesis Faculty Manager considers the workload of the potential supervisor prior to making a decision to confirm match

Towards Official start of Thesis stage
- Once a match is confirmed, the EdD Thesis Faculty Manager enters appropriate information into the Sharepoint site.
- Thesis Administration then organise the setting up of a BlackBoard classroom for the student.

Official start of Thesis stage
- Student and Primary Supervisor meet and agree their ways of working and organise a calendar of meetings.

Thesis start date to 3 months
- At or around the 3 month date from the official start date, the student should have made progress towards their draft full research proposal.
- This is then sent to the second supervisor for formative feedback

Thesis start date to 3 months - 6 months
- Student considers the formative feedback received and amends their draft proposal to form their final version of their research proposal.
- Research proposal submitted via Turnitin.

Approval or Not Yet Approved
- Primary Supervisor reviews the submitted proposal, adds comments in GradeBook and emails to alert Second Supervisor
- Secondary Supervisor considers the submission and adds their comments in Gradebook.
- Result confirmed in GradeBook.
Suspensions of Study

In some circumstances an academic suspension of study during the thesis stage may be appropriate but this is subject to the approval of your Primary Supervisor and the Director of Studies for the programme. An academic suspension allows you to take time away from your research without you losing overall time to complete your programme. If you academically suspend your studies you are not entitled to receive supervision or access university facilities but you will still have access to your University email account. Suspensions should be applied for in whole months up to a maximum of one year and should normally be applied for in advance of the suspension start date. Common reasons for suspending study include: Ill health, Maternity/paternity leave, Personal issues, Financial issues. You are advised to seek advice from your Primary Supervisor or your Student Support Manager. Further details and the electronic form for submitting the request are available at:

http://success.liverpool-online.com/SuspensionOfStudies/application-thesis
Extension of Study

An extension gives you extra time on your research degree, extending your end date. Regulations on the length of time that you are normally permitted to complete the various stages of the programme are detailed in the Framework for Online Professional Doctorates, which is available at: https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/aqsd/academic-codes-of-practice/pgr-code-of-practice/

An extension of study will only be considered where compelling reasons apply. Please contact your Primary Supervisor or your Student Support Manager in order to discuss the possibility of an extension to your studies. Requests for extensions of study are completed and submitted by the Director of Studies for the programme, with the request considered by the University's Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research (or his/her designate). You will be notified in writing of the outcome of the request.

Voluntary Withdrawal

Occasionally circumstances are such that you may wish to withdraw from your programme. Before you take this decision you are strongly advised to discuss withdrawing with your supervisor(s) and your Student Support Manager, as this may have academic and financial consequences. To formally withdraw from the University you will be asked to complete the relevant Withdrawal Form.

Termination of Studies/Deemed withdrawn

If your progress is deemed as unsatisfactory (see Student Progress above) or if you are deemed to have not engaged with your studies (see Appendix 12, Annex 1 as above), then the termination of studies procedure may be invoked leading to you being withdrawn from your degree. In addition, there may be financial consequences that result from you being withdrawn from your degree.

It is your responsibility to engage with the programme and to submit your thesis in sufficient time to complete your viva examination and your and revisions within your permitted period of registration on the programme. Failure to meet any of your responsibilities may result in deemed withdrawn procedures being invoked.
Research Environment

The environment within which research is conducted by students on the programme constitutes an important element of the support provided to students in order to successfully complete the thesis. You are each student linked to a research cluster, providing as this also does a focus for secondary supervision.

- Presentations conducted by students during the thesis stage of the programme will constitute a central part of the activity conducted by each research cluster, helping to form an integral part of the research environment for the programme.
- You are also welcome to engage in asynchronous discussions within their research cluster. Students, for instance, are welcome to post draft thesis chapters for discussion, if the primary supervisor has confirmed that there are no issues around confidentiality of material within the draft.
- You will normally be part of one main research cluster, although would remain free to engage with activity in other clusters as appropriate.
- Clusters will be established on the basis of a range of considerations, including recognition of significant divisions in the field of research into higher education, the research interests of students on the programme, and the research interests of members of staff.

Research clusters are currently offered that pertain to the following aspects of the field of higher education studies: Learning and Teaching; Organisation and Management; Internationalisation; Technology- Enhanced Learning; Professional Education.

Supporting ICT systems

Several supporting Information and Communication systems are used to support you on the thesis stage of the programme:

- Blackboard classroom: each primary supervisor has a single classroom for all of his or her students. This virtual environment is intended primarily as a space for the formal submission of documents (thesis proposal and thesis – to be submitted under the appropriate Turnitin submission link) and for depositing notes of meetings between supervisor(s) and student (placed with the discussion group that is private to the student and the supervisors). Depending on working patterns, email communication between supervisor and student can also occur within this environment. The tool Blackboard Collaborate is also available within this classroom for video conferencing and to record short videos.

- Online Doctoral Community: see below for further details. This system is currently based on a Sharepoint site. Use of this online environment is partly intended to facilitate communication across the entire group of students on the thesis stage, whereas the Blackboard classrooms are limited to the students linked to individual primary supervisors.

- Other tools: students and supervisors are also welcome to use email (with at least a copy all messages to be sent to the student’s online.liverpool email address); and Skype (or equivalent) for video-conferencing.
Online Doctoral Community

The research environment on the programme is supported by an Online Doctoral Community site (which incorporates asynchronous discussion groups in research clusters):

https://onlineliverpool.ac.uk.sharepoint.com/sites/doccomm/EdD/SitePages/Home.aspx

This site includes spaces for matching students to primary supervisors, document storage, storage of examples of approved thesis proposals, announcements, links to online presentations made by students, and asynchronous discussions in clusters. A space is also provided within which students can communicate with each other.

To access this site, navigate to:
https://onlineliverpool.ac.uk.sharepoint.com/sites/doccomm/EdD/SitePages/Home.aspx

The sections of the site are available from the menu item at the top: EdD Doctoral Community (as indicated in this screen capture):

Click on the down arrow next to the EdD Doctoral Community for the different sections of the community.

Informal Whatsapp thesis stage student group

A Whatsapp group was created by one of the thesis students in March 2016. It has become a helpful way to link EdD students with each other on the thesis stage of the programme. The group is supportive, with a sharing of experiences and questions. If you are interested in being part of the Whatsapp group please email the student representative for the thesis stage at: edd-thesis.rep@online.liverpool.ac.uk

While this group is an informal initiative and not one that is monitored by the University, students are reminded of the University’s Social Media Compliance Policy, which is available at: https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/csd/regulations/
Student Presentations

Students are expected to give two presentations as an integral aspect of progress on the thesis stage of the programme. The first of these presentations should normally constitute an outline of the proposed research. The second presentation would normally occur after data collection, in order to present preliminary findings. These presentations are intended to help ensure that students engage in a constructive and critical discussion around their thesis research.

Online conference

Presentations now typically occur as part of an online conference that is held several times a year (as per announced dates). Presentations in the conference can either be delivered online (synchronously or asynchronously). Full details are available in the EdD Thesis Related Documents section (located under the Thesis Documents sub-section) of the Doctoral Community sharepoint site (above).

Other presentation formats

Students’ presentations can also take place face-to-face during the residency. Presentations made at academic conferences can also be counted against the requirements, provided that there is scope for sufficient critical engagement on the part of others as an integral aspect of the presentation. Students should communicate with their supervisors and with the EdD Thesis Faculty Manager so that everyone is informed. Moreover, it would be ideal if the presentation could be made available online afterwards as a recorded file or if the student’s presentation appears in the conference proceedings.

Library Support for Research Programmes

In addition to Library facilities such as access to online databases, web-based applications and Library enquiry services, the Library also provides a variety of facilities and services which will be valuable for research programmes and the development of the thesis.

- Please see a brief guide to the Library for Online Programmes at: http://libguides.liv.ac.uk/onlineprogrammes/intro. Further information is available at: http://libguides.liv.ac.uk/onlineprogrammes.
- See the Thesis area of the Library for Online Programmes to search for comparative theses for your area of research: http://libguides.liv.ac.uk/onlineprogrammes/theses
- See also the research support guide for advice on research-related Library issues (such as copyright, open access, assessing journal impact statistics and data protection), referencing management, current awareness tools and links to e-Books on a wide range of research skills: http://libguides.liv.ac.uk/onlineprogrammes/research.
Thesis Proposal

The Thesis proposal will incorporate the following:

- Introduction
- Literature review
- Research methodology
- Plan for impact
- Timeline for key deliverables

The Thesis Proposal may draw on work originally submitted by the student towards the pre-thesis stage of the programme. In this case, material is to be developed and adapted rather than copied wholesale.

Full details of the requirements for the thesis proposal are provided within the EdD Thesis Related documents section of the Online Doctoral Community. Examples of approved thesis proposals are also provided within the Online Doctoral Community.

Thesis Proposal criteria

Thesis Research Proposals are approved on the basis of the following criteria:

The proposal must outline a research project that is likely to lead to an original piece of practitioner research in higher education, generating new, actionable knowledge that is acknowledged as significant by scholarly and practical stakeholders. The focus of proposal must broadly fit within the overall parameters of the programme, as indicated by the programme outcomes.

Significance of the study

- The proposal displays a good understanding of the proposed area within which the research is to be conducted.
- The significance to the field of an investigation on the research area is articulated in relation both to relevant literature and to the researcher’s own professional context.
- The aims of the research are indicated, as is their importance to both the researcher and a wider audience.

Research methodology

- Research question(s) are well-focused and align with the identified gap in the literature/field, and explicitly draw attention to a consideration of the implications for practice.
- There is a persuasive argument and justification for the study design and methods, including sampling, data collection, analysis, plan for impact and ethical considerations, as well as an indication of how the findings will be explained (for instance, in terms of one or more theoretical frameworks).
- The argument provided for the study design and methods offers a justification as to why the methodology is relevant to the specific research questions and aims of the study, taking into
account the positionality of the researcher and the paradigm within which the research is framed.

Planning

- Realistic timeline shown for carrying out all elements of the research.

Presentation

- Competently structured and reasonably well focused, but some weaknesses may remain in expression or presentation. Correctly referenced. No serious errors are made.

A grade will not be awarded for the proposal as such, but completion of an acceptable Thesis Proposal is expected as a part of the student progress procedures.

Completion of the Thesis Proposal

As noted above, where comments have been made by your supervisors on a draft thesis proposal, and you have revised the text in light of the comments, you are normally expected to include a response to the overall thrust of those comments alongside your revised material. It may also help to use track changes so that the nature of the changes that have been made is clearly evident.

In some cases it does take significant time for a student to develop a proposal to an appropriate standard. Further guidance is provided under the section on Student Progress above about the expected time frames. The standard on the thesis stage is a demanding one, as represented by the conduct of fully rigorous and professional practitioner research. It is important that the research is undertaken on a fully rigorous basis from the outset, as it can be difficult to address significant weaknesses in a research project without effectively starting the research again.
Ethical Approval

You are advised to consult your primary supervisor before submitting any application for ethical review of your thesis research.

1. The University of Liverpool now requires that research conducted outside of the UK is first approved by a locally-based ethics committee before also receiving ethical approval from the University. The requirement for such external research ethics review can only be relaxed if the applicant can demonstrate that this option is not available.

2. You are advised to take note of the full details of the review process and to consult with their primary supervisor before applying for local approval in their own country (if local approval is available to them). In addition to the advice of the supervisor(s), a preliminary review of the intended local ethics application may be possible.

3. You complete different ethical approval forms depending on whether external research ethics (i.e. local) approval has been secured first of all. The relevant forms are available from the thesis documents section of the online doctoral community site, along with any other necessary paperwork that is required.

4. An ethics application is only to be submitted after the thesis proposal has been approved by the supervisors. The application will normally be submitted within 6 months of a student commencing the thesis stage of the programme. Data collection or any research intervention must not occur until both the proposal and the ethics application have been approved.

5. The ethics application will be submitted to the EdD Virtual Programme Ethics Committee (VPREC), and considered by at least two approved EdD supervisors (not including the student’s supervisors). (The terms of reference for this committee are available within the repository for the EdD in the online doctoral community site.)

6. All applications which are deemed to fall into the category of expedited approval or where an application subject to a local approval process also meets the expectations of the University will be approved by this committee. A record of students granted ethical approval in this way will be forwarded to the Chair of the Board of Studies for the programme in the University.

7. All applications which do not meet these conditions indicated in 5. (above) will be considered by the Liverpool Online Research Ethics Committee (LOREC). A record of students granted ethical approval in this way will be forwarded to the Chair of the Board of Studies for the programme.

8. LOREC (or a sub-committee thereof) will review and monitor cases that have been considered by VPREC.

Advice on preparing documentation for the ethics review process is available in the “VPREC lessons learnt” document in the thesis documents section of the EdD online doctoral community site.
Documents required for ethical approval (after local ethics approval)

Application for Recognition of External Ethics Committee Approval

with the following attachments:

- Information on the Constitution of the international research ethics committee (IREC)
- Information on ethics approval process of IREC
- Copy of application to IREC
- Copy of the fieldwork risk assessment (if not included in the application to the IREC)
- Copy of approval letter from IREC

You are also advised to take note of the review questions in the ‘EdD Ethics Reviewer Form for studies taking place at an overseas research site that have received local approval’ below before applying for local approval.

Documents for ethical approval (without local ethics approval)

Ethics Response Form EdD (CORE approved)
UoL Ethics Application Form Online Programmes 31Jan

with the following attachments (as appropriate after consultation with the primary supervisor):

- Study Plan / Protocol
- Recruitment advertisement
- Participant information sheet
- Participant Consent form
- Research Participant Advocate Consent form
- Evidence of external approvals
- Questionnaires on sensitive topics
- Interview schedule
- Debriefing material
- Other

Note: the form *UoL Ethics Application Form Online Programmes 31Jan* is a standard institutional form, and some details provided in the form around the process of approval are different for the EdD. All forms should be submitted by the student to the Chair of the EdD Virtual Programme Ethics Committee (VPREC), Dr Lucilla Crosta (lucilla.crosta@online.liverpool.ac.uk), with a copy provided in their private discussion group on their Blackboard. Submission should occur when both the student and the primary supervisor are satisfied with the application.
Thesis

The thesis is a substantial academic report that chronicles an original piece of practitioner research in higher education, generating new, actionable knowledge that is acknowledged as significant by scholarly and practical stakeholders.

- Examples of theses from students who have successfully completed the programme and received the award of a Doctor of Education are available within the online doctoral community.

Presentation of the Thesis

The formal requirements on the presentation of a thesis are available within the University's 'Policy on Submission of a Research Degree Thesis for Examination' and within Annex 2 of Appendix 12: 'Guidelines on Submission of a Research Degree Thesis for Examination for Online Professional Doctorates'

See: https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/aqsd/academic-codes-of-practice/pgr-code-of-practice/

These regulations indicate the following in relation to the thesis. It is recommended that candidates consult the regulations indicated above to view the full set of requirements.

Word count

- The thesis will normally contain at least 40,000 and no more than 50,000 words. The maximum word count includes footnotes and appendices but not the bibliography.
- If, in exceptional circumstances, the candidate wishes to exceed the relevant maximum word count, they should contact their Primary Supervisor, who will make application for approval by the relevant Programme Director/Director of Studies. If such approval is given it shall be communicated to the Examiners by the relevant UoL administrator. Criteria for approval of an application to exceed the word count include: extensive primary material; translation of primary material; extensive data.

Further notes

1. Formatting. A common font and style should be used throughout the thesis, with clear text, illustrations and pagination. The main body of the text should be in black ink on white paper. Pages should be numbered consecutively and the position of page numbers (candidate's choice or as advised by the supervisor) should be consistent throughout.

2. Sources. Candidates must state generally in the preface and specifically in the body of the thesis the sources from which their information is derived with the appropriate acknowledgement of the work of others.

3. References. References to published work should be provided in a consistent format that is currently accepted in the field covered by the thesis. If in doubt, candidates should consult their supervisors about the most appropriate
approach. Further guidance about referencing systems can be found on the University Library website at: http://libguides.liverpool.ac.uk/

4. Title page. The following format should normally be observed:
   (Centred) Title of thesis
   'Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy (or other degree as appropriate) by full forenames and surname.'
   (centred) Date (month and year) with suitable line spacing.

5. Table of contents. The table of contents must include chapter headings and page numbers. All separate sections of the thesis, such as bibliography, lists of abbreviations, supporting papers etc. must also be identified on the contents page.

6. Abstract. Each copy of the thesis must contain an Abstract indicating the aims of the investigation and the results achieved. It should be no longer than one side of an A4 sheet using single-spaced font (normally about 450 words) and should include a heading indicating the author and title of the thesis.

7. Page Layout. The layout of the page should normally be A4 format.

8. Margins and line spacing. 1½ line spacing is advised, but at least double line spacing should be used for text that contains many subscripts and superscripts. Quotations may be indented. Candidates should check the text carefully and it is strongly advised to make full use of error-checking facilities. Margins must be 25mm minimum.

9. Supporting material. Diagrams, maps and illustrations should be placed as near to the relevant text as possible. All such supporting material should normally be included within the same electronic file as the main body of the thesis, rather than provided as a separate file. Images must be of good quality and adequate size. The Director of Studies for the programme should be consulted as to the appropriate means of submission in any cases where the thesis includes material that cannot easily be included within the submitted electronic file (e.g. video recordings, audio recordings, large charts). There is no expectation that a full set of documentation for the ethics approval is included, but the formal approval notice(s) should be included. It may also be appropriate to include other (e.g. Participant Information Sheet, Consent Sheet, etc.).

10. Language of thesis: The thesis must be written in English, except for quoted material, which may be in the original language.

11. Academic Integrity: There are conventions of academic practice, such as established referencing and citation protocols, which both display and ensure academic integrity. Failure to adhere to these conventions can result in poor academic practice or, if there is a clear intention to deceive examiners, in unfair and/or dishonest academic practice. The PGR Academic Integrity Policy sets out
the University's approach to promoting academic integrity and the courses of action which will be pursued when academic misconduct is suspected. Acts that would be subject to UoL’s Disciplinary or Fitness to Practise procedures will be dealt with under those procedures.

**Further guidance on the thesis**

Restrictions on access to theses: An author may impose restrictions on access to theses and copying annually for up to five years, if the supervisor endorses the author's statement that such restriction is necessary for good reasons, e.g. preparation for publication or a patent application. This will not prevent the publication of the Abstract. Permanent restriction is not permitted, nor does the University accept theses written under contracts of secrecy.

Plagiarism and Fabrication of Data: The thesis is subject to the University's 'PGR Policy on Plagiarism and Dishonest Use of Data' available at: [https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/aqsd/academic-codes-of-practice/pgr-code-of-practice/](https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/aqsd/academic-codes-of-practice/pgr-code-of-practice/)

It is expected that the Thesis will contain material initially presented within the Thesis Proposal. It may also draw on work that you originally submitted during the pre-thesis stage of the programme. In these latter cases, material is to be developed and adapted rather than copied wholesale.

**Draft submission**

Prior to the submission of your thesis, you are encouraged to submit a draft version of your thesis into the DRAFT FINAL THESIS Turnitin submission link within your LENS thesis classroom. You are advised to view the academic integrity report that is available on the document, and to discuss the results with your primary supervisor prior to finalising, and subsequently submitting, your thesis.

As noted above, where comments have been made by your supervisors on a draft thesis, and you have revised the text in light of the comments, you are normally expected to include a response to the overall thrust of those comments alongside your revised material. It may also help to use track changes so that the nature of the changes that have been made is clearly evident.

**Mock viva**

- It is highly recommended that you undertake a mock viva prior to the formal submission of their thesis. The completion of this activity will help in finalising the thesis. Significant reworking is usually expected once an initial draft of the thesis is complete, before the thesis reaches an appropriate standard for submission.
- This mock viva should be arranged in conjunction with the supervisory team, ideally with the involvement of someone who is not previously familiar with the research. A draft version of the thesis should be available prior to scheduling the mock viva.
- The outcome of any mock viva cannot be taken as any formal indication of the likely result for the viva itself, given that the examiners are entirely independent of the supervisors.
Submission of your Thesis for Examination

- Candidates must submit a single electronic copy of their thesis via the relevant Turnitin submission link in the thesis classroom for the supervisor and student provided through the programme's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) that is maintained by Laureate. The copy of the thesis submitted for examination must be in Portable Document Format (pdf).
- The student must also email a copy of the thesis to the relevant UoL administrator and notify his or her primary supervisor that the thesis has been submitted.
- You submit a declaration of academic integrity upon entering the thesis stage via the thesis classroom in Blackboard.

It is important that you submit your thesis within a reasonable time frame from commencement of studies, to ensure that you do not exceed the maximum periods of study set out by the University or the terms of any funding that you may be in receipt of. The normal expectation is that you should plan your research project to ensure submission of your thesis for examination well before the end of your formal registration.

- It is strongly recommended that the thesis is submitted **at least 9 months prior to the end of your formal registration**, to allow time for the viva examination to be arranged and, if these were to be required by the examiners, the completion of any minor modifications to the thesis.
- The normal maximum length of registration on the programme as a whole is currently 6.5 years. The maximum period of registration is increased to take into account any formally approved periods of suspension (up to a maximum of 18 months). The University has indicated that students who embarked on the programme prior to 4th April 2016 will be treated according to the maximum length of registration that was in place when they embarked on the programme if this were to be more favourable to them.
- Submission of the thesis is a key responsibility for all research students, with the support of your supervisory team. Full details of minimum and maximum timescales for submission of theses for research degrees may be obtained from the Framework for Online Professional Doctorates, which is available at: https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/aqsd/academic-codes-of-practice/pgr-code-of-practice/

The process begins at least two months before you expect to submit your thesis, at which point you need to complete a ‘Notice of Intention to Submit’ (ITS) form and forward this to both the Doctor of Education email address (docedd@liverpool.ac.uk), to your Primary Supervisor and to the EdD Thesis Faculty Manager. The Secondary Supervisor should normally have seen a working draft of the thesis before the ITS form is completed. This form is used to nominate your examiners so it is important to allow sufficient time for examiners to be approved and appointed in advance of your thesis examination. Copies of the ITS form are available within the Online Doctoral community.

Note: The date for the viva itself will only normally be agreed after the submission of the thesis, although it may be possible to arrange a provisional date when it is clear that the submission of your thesis is imminent. It is expected that a viva would normally occur within three months of the submission of the thesis.
Publication of research

You are encouraged to publish research conducted as part of their studies on the programme in appropriate journals. It would normally be anticipated that both the primary supervisor and the secondary supervisor would be co-authors on papers resulting from the thesis research. Supervisors normally make a significant intellectual contribution to the conduct of the research, a contribution that would normally be fairly reflected in co-authorship of research publications.

In formal terms, those listed as authors of a paper should have made a substantial contribution to at least one component of the work, be able to identify who is responsible for each other component, have contributed to drafting or revising the paper, and have given final approval of the version to be published.

- The University’s ‘Policy on Exploitation and Commercialisation of Intellectual Property’ indicates that such publication is conditional on the agreement of the programme director or research supervisor.
- This permission to publish is also subject to any appropriate prior Intellectual Property protection that may have been specifically agreed in relation to the research.

Once a viva has been successfully completed, and the recommendation for the award of ‘Doctor of Education’ has been made, details will be provided on the process by which an electronic version of the thesis is submitted to the University’s research repository. A thesis would normally be included within this repository, although see Presentation of the Thesis above. Please raise the issue with the Faculty Manager for the thesis stage of the programme if you are considering a request to restrict access to your thesis once it has been deposited in the repository.
The Viva Voce Examination

The final thesis examination entails a viva voce (oral) examination to allow you to defend your thesis. As indicated above, it is expected that the viva would normally occur within three months of the submission of the thesis.

a) The doctoral thesis will be examined by at least two Examiners one of whom will be external to the University of Liverpool and Laureate Online Education. Where the candidate is a member of staff of the University of Liverpool or of Laureate Online Education, or where the candidate’s employment with any other organisation may require additional external scrutiny to ensure sufficient independence within the examination process, two External Examiners will be appointed in addition to an Internal Examiner.

b) A viva voce examination will take place, which will normally be conducted using videoconferencing in accordance with the University’s Policy on the Conduct Remote Viva Examinations (see below for further details).

c) Internal Examiners shall be appointed by the relevant Head of Department or School in accordance with the University of Liverpool’s PGR Code of Practice. Where a member of Laureate staff is nominated and approved to act as Internal Examiner, a member of University of Liverpool academic staff must be appointed to act as independent chair to the examination. Laureate staff who have been approved as a ‘recognised supervisor’ may be appointed to act as Internal Examiner where they are appropriately qualified.

d) External Examiners shall be nominated by the programme teams and approved by the relevant Faculty Director of Postgraduate Research. Each External Examiner will be appointed on an annual basis for a maximum of four years and join a ‘pool’ of appropriately qualified experts, to be nominated and approved by the relevant Faculty Director of Postgraduate Research, to examine individual theses.

e) No person shall be appointed as Examiner for the examination of a thesis for which they have acted as supervisor, in any capacity.

f) The submission of the thesis will be in accordance with the agreed procedure between the University of Liverpool and Laureate Online Education.

Examiners will be provided with all relevant academic regulations, including advice on the expectations of the academic quality and standard for a professional doctorate thesis and expectations for conducting remote viva examinations in accordance with University Policy.

g) Supervisors should not be consulted in any way by the Examiners, prior to the viva voce examination.

Remote Vivas

Full details of the arrangements for a remote viva are provided as indicated in the University’s Policy on the Conduct Remote Viva Examinations policy (to be available at https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/aqsd/academic-codes-of-practice/pgr-code-of-practice/) This policy indicates that students studying for a professional doctorate online may request that they come to
Liverpool in person for their viva examination but they must have good reason to request such an adjustment and such a request should be made at the point when they submit their thesis, if not before. Such requests should be submitted to the Director Studies for the programme at the University at least three months prior to the expected timing of the viva. Approval for the adjustment must be made by the University’s Head of School. Under these circumstances it would be expected that some of the examiners would still conduct the viva examination from remote locations, but that at least one of the examiners, or the independent chair, would be in the same room as the student. Students are expected to meet their own personal costs if they travel to Liverpool for the viva examination.

Students are advised to consult the University’s Policy on the Conduct Remote Viva Examinations policy in good time in advance of the submission of their thesis prior, in order to ensure that they will subsequently be able to put in place appropriate arrangements for a remote viva (e.g. in particular to ensure they are able to meet the requirements in relation to venue and technology). Further advice will be available from the Thesis Manager for the programme in fulfilling these requirements.

**Preparation for the viva**

Helpful advice on how to prepare for the viva can be found on the University’s PGR development website: [http://www.liv.ac.uk/pgr-development/further-development/online-resources/](http://www.liv.ac.uk/pgr-development/further-development/online-resources/)

**Assessment criteria for the thesis**

Recommendations made by the examiners should be specifically justified in relation to the assessment criteria for the practitioner research thesis and viva:

- **Conduct of the practitioner research**: The practitioner research has been conducted with a soundness that would satisfy peer review, for instance with regard to its methodology, application of research technique, use of theory, incorporation of critical analysis and ethical appropriateness.

- **Understanding and evaluation of existing research**: The candidate has demonstrated a sound understanding and selection of a body of literature that suitably underpins the research in relation to its focus, approach and context for practice.

- **The creation of new knowledge and/or a contribution to practice**: The candidate has explicitly demonstrated an original and substantial contribution to knowledge that is both relevant to practice and of a quality to extend the forefront of the discipline.

- **Engagement with practice**: The candidate has demonstrated a reflexive awareness of the extent to which the research is relevant to his or her own context for practice, addressing both the scope for impact of the research on practice and any issues of equity; and has articulated how he or she has developed personally and professionally through the conduct of the research.
The presentation of an academic thesis: The thesis demonstrates an argument that is clearly presented, explicit and coherent; all parts of the thesis contribute to the argument. The thesis is written in intelligible English, with due regard for standard academic convention. (The presentation of the thesis in the context of the oral examination is further judged in relation to the capacity of the candidate to respond comprehensively and robustly to questions posed by the assessors).

Outcomes of the examination of a EdD candidate’s thesis

The examiners are asked to come to one of the following judgments on the basis of the thesis and the responses of the student within the viva, in relation to a consideration of attainment against the specified assessment criteria. A review may also be undertaken of previous performance in the programme.

1. that the degree of Professional Doctorate be conferred;  
2. that the degree of Professional Doctorate be conferred subject to the candidate making minor modifications to the thesis, which do not alter the substance of the thesis in any significant or fundamental manner to the satisfaction of one or more of the Examiners as may be agreed between them, within a period of no longer than 6 months, provided that this period of time does not exceed the maximum period of registration of the candidate on the programme;  
3. that the candidate be permitted to re-submit the doctoral thesis on one occasion only within a prescribed re-submission period which should be no less than 6 months and no more than two years and re-submit for the award of Professional Doctorate, provided that this period of time does not exceed the maximum period of registration of the candidate on the programme. It is a normal expectation that in re-submission cases a second viva will be held in order to allow the candidate the opportunity to defend their thesis, although exceptionally this may be waived at the discretion of the Examiners. The viva shall not be waived if it is the considered initial view of the Examiners that the re-submitted thesis has not reached the standard for the award of the degree sought.  
4. that the thesis has not met the required doctoral standard and that the degree of Master is recommended based upon the student’s work at the pre-thesis stage.  
5. that the candidate be deemed not to have attained the standard required for the Professional Doctoral degree and that no award be made and there be no further opportunity for examination. This decision would be made only where the Examiners have determined that the student has engaged in academic misconduct to such an extent as to render the candidate ineligible for either the Professional Doctorate or the degree of Master. Examiners should determine whether or not, under these circumstances, the candidate is eligible to receive any exit award. Suspected cases of plagiarism or fabrication of data should be handled in accordance with the University of Liverpool’s ‘PGR Policy on Plagiarism and Dishonest Use of Data.’

Following the re-examination of a thesis, the Examiners are permitted to recommend only outcomes (1) (2) (4) and (5) as listed above.

Examiners are asked to come to these judgements in light of the following descriptors:
I. The degree of Doctor of Education be conferred

The assessment criteria have been fully met.

II. The degree of Doctor of Education be conferred subject to minor modifications

- The assessment criteria for the degree of Doctor of Education to be conferred have not yet been fully met.
- The assessment criteria would be met if the candidate made specific modifications to the thesis that do not alter its substance in any significant or fundamental manner.

III. The candidate be permitted to re-submit the doctoral thesis

- A reasonable attempt was made at the construction of a thesis to the required standard; BUT
- The assessment criteria for the degree of Doctor of Education to be conferred have not been fully met.
- In order to meet the above assessment criteria fully, the candidate would need to make modifications to the thesis that alter its substance in a manner that is significant or fundamental, possibly involving consideration of a further body of literature across the thesis, additional analysis of existing data, the collection of new data, or the construction and execution of a more fully revised research project.

IV. The degree of Master be awarded and there be no further opportunity for examination

- The assessment criteria for the degree of Doctor of Education to be conferred have not been met; AND
- No reasonable attempt was made at the construction of a thesis to the required standard; OR
- One could not reasonably expect that it would be possible for the student to reach the appropriate standard within the permitted period under further supervision.

V. No award be made and there be no further opportunity for examination

- The student engaged in academic misconduct to such an extent as to render under the University’s ‘PGR Policy on Plagiarism and Dishonest Use of Data’ the candidate ineligible for either the Professional Doctorate or the degree of Master.

Notes on the assessment criteria and viva outcomes

The following notes are intended to assist examiners in the interpretation of the assessment criteria and viva outcomes, given that the extent to which knowledge is relevant to practice will vary from thesis to thesis:

Practice setting
• Some theses will report on knowledge developed by the candidate that is closely related to their practice setting. In some cases this may also entail a more modest scope for generalisation or applicability to other settings. One might then, for instance, expect to see more extended attention to the underpinning reflexivity that is characteristic of practitioner research (Furlong and Oancea, 2005), to the compelling narrative that is associated with ethnographic validity (Erickson, 1986) or to the provisional nature of the actionable knowledge as constructed in a complex setting for practice. Furlong and Oancea (2005), for instance, refer to the value of practitioner research for both its wider usage and also for its scope to foster the growth of both practitioners (which would include the candidate himself or herself) and policy makers. In such cases one might then not expect to see a candidate demonstrating as full a base of knowledge of relevant literature as might be the case for a PhD candidate or to devoting as much attention to establishing a gap in relation to extant literatures. Where scope to undertake action on the basis of knowledge developed within practitioner research is relatively limited, one would expect that relevant sections of the thesis to devote specific attention to the associated limitations. It might also be appropriate to explore such limitations further within the viva examination.

What constitutes a fundamental or significant alteration to the substance of the thesis?

• Minor modifications must be completed within 6 months. A resubmission of the thesis must occur no less than 6 months and no later than two years after the date of the recommendation (provided this latter period of time does not exceed the maximum period of registration of the candidate on the programme). It is difficult for examiners to assess the amount of time that a student might actually take to complete revisions. It is often the case that once a set of required changes are clearly indicated, that it is then possible for the student to make the changes relatively quickly. The decision on whether alterations to the substance of the thesis are fundamental or significant should be taken on its own merits. Any consideration of the time that might possibly be taken to complete the changes should primarily be of a secondary nature, in order to help the examiners come to a view about whether the changes to be required are fundamental or significant.

• A fundamental or significant alteration to the thesis is principally to be understood in relation to the assessment criteria. A range of examples are provided below, although these are not intended as comprehensive:

Conduct of the practitioner research: the methodology is problematic in overall terms, at least for the thesis in question; there is no little or no attempt to frame judgments made in the thesis with the use of appropriate theory; important lines of critical analysis were omitted that would affect the conclusions the student can reasonably draw from the research.

Understanding and evaluation of existing research: the literature review does not underpin the thesis sufficiently, failing to assist in establishing the significance of the study or in providing an adequate basis for the analysis.

Creation of new knowledge and/or a contribution to practice is unclear or not in evidence.
Engagement with practice: the thesis substantively ignores the relevance of the research to practice, or the manner in which the research relates to his or her context for practice.

The presentation of an academic thesis: it may be difficult to discern what the written thesis is expressing, or the candidate is unable to respond appropriately to questions or to defend their thesis.

Second viva in a re-submission case

- It is a normal expectation that in re-submission cases a second viva will be held in order to allow the candidate the opportunity to defend their thesis, although exceptionally this may be waived at the discretion of the Examiners. If the examiners feel after examining the thesis initially that modifications to the thesis are required but that there is no need for a second viva, then this might suggest that the proposed modifications are minor in nature. The normal expectation is that the decision on whether a second viva is to be required in the case of a re-submitted thesis would be made after the thesis has been re-submitted.

References


Prior to the viva examination

Before the viva examination, an independent initial report should be prepared by each Examiner. An Examiner is asked to make an initial recommendation to accompany the report, with the report of sufficient length to substantiate the recommendation. Examiners may exchange Initial Reports with each other before the viva.

A (completed and signed) copy of the Initial Report Form should be scanned along with the Joint Final Report and Recommendation Form and returned to the programme administrator within seven working days from the date of the viva.

You are reminded that supervisors should not be consulted in any way by the Examiners, prior to the viva voce examination.

National guidance on doctoral standards

The University’s Code of Practice for PGR students indicates that in examining research degree theses, examiners will use their academic and professional knowledge and judgement and the reference points referred to there (the Frascati definition of research, the definition of research in the Research Excellence Framework, the FHEQ qualification descriptor for any doctoral degree, and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area) to determine whether the candidate has achieved the standard required for the award to be made. In the case of Professional Doctorates, examiners shall have regard to the specific criteria set out in the relevant programme specification. In the case of the MRes exit award, the examiners’ expectations with regard to the originality of the research and/or the scope/size of the thesis will be appropriately moderated.
Appeals

Following the viva voce examination, students may appeal against the decision of the Examiners in accordance with the Regulations for Research Degree Appeals. Regulations for research degree appeals are available at: https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/agqsd/academic-codes-of-practice/pgr-code-of-practice/
Graduation
The University holds graduation ceremonies in July and December each year. Only those with a confirmed result are eligible to graduate at any given ceremony. This includes confirmation that minor modifications have been made to your thesis and you have submitted the final version of your thesis and relevant documentation to the University. Please note that additional time is required for examiners to review any minor modifications made to a thesis.

The thesis should also be submitted in advance of the administrative deadline that is indicated to you by the programme team. For students who would hope to graduate in July, the thesis should be submitted at least by the end of January, and for students who would hope to graduate in December the thesis should be submitted by the end of June. The viva voce examination is normally arranged within 3 months of the thesis submission. The final version of your thesis (and the associated documentation for copyright clearance) needs to have been submitted to the University in sufficient time in advance of graduation for you to be eligible to graduate.

If you are barred from graduation due to financial suspension, you will have four opportunities to settle your accounts and attend a graduation in person, after which you will not be able to attend a graduation but will instead receive your certificate in the post.

Further details about rules and processes for graduation ceremonies are available online at: www.liv.ac.uk/graduation.

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