



ACADEMIC PROGRESS

Thesis Submission and Examination



BEAUMONT, SIMON K.
Associate Professor

Getting ready to submit?

Here's your guide to what's involved and the relevant links.

Thesis submission process

The university provides information about the process for thesis submission on the Graduate Matters pages here:

<https://durhamuniversity.sharepoint.com/teams/GraduateSchool/SitePages/howto-submit.aspx>

and here:

<https://durhamuniversity.sharepoint.com/teams/GraduateSchool/SitePages/Thesis-Submission.aspx>

(Also reached by clicking the purple box in the first link. The guidance here is quite generic and you may find it helpful to refer back to the guidance information for progress reviews and discuss with your Supervisory Team for the expected structure and elements required).

There is also useful information in the Learning and Teaching Handbook and you should read both carefully.

In addition to the degree entry form you submit with your thesis copy, you should arrange with your supervisor to submit a nomination of examiners form - [Form a8.03 in the Learning and Teaching handbook](#). It is important this happens in a timely fashion as the graduate office can only process your thesis on receipt of this, and examiners are typically given up to 3 months from receipt of a thesis to carry out the oral viva examination.

It should be noted that external examiners are appointed as university employees doing work for the university, and are therefore legally subject to a "Right to Work" check.

While the strong preference of many chemists is for an in person viva, the use of video conferencing technologies is permissible if certain criteria are met, including that the use of video conferencing software is acceptable to both student and examiners (a student's written permission without undue pressure must be sought). Further details can be found in the "*Examination Process for Research Degrees*" section of the Learning and Teaching Handbook.

You should also discuss whether you want or need to embargo your thesis for any period - for UKRI students this is for a maximum of 1 year, and may be due to having results still to publish, or information which is restricted due to confidentiality agreements. You should keep in mind indefinite embargo is not possible and not include other parties confidential information in the thesis accordingly.

For industry funded students you may also need to get an NDA in place for the examiners. A starting point / sample for this can also be found in the appendices to the postgraduate section of the Learning and Teaching Handbook ([part a8.10](#)).

The oral examination process

Once your thesis has been sent out to the examiners with accompanying documentation, the internal and external will consult with the student and supervisor to identify a mutually convenient date for the viva.

There is no prescribed format or length for the viva, but you can expect in depth questions from the examiners that probe both your background knowledge and your understanding of your own work, its outcomes, and its context. Most PhD vivas in Chemistry tend to be between 2 and 4 hours in duration. It is, of course, fine to request a short break at any point during the examination. You should expect to briefly outline your main achievements at the outset, but unless otherwise specified by your examiners it is not expected that viva's in Chemistry

should commence with any formal presentation (the examiners have already read the thesis and are acquainted your work).

If you have a disability that may impact on the viva please ensure you follow the guidance on the Graduate School Sharepoint site and get an updated Disability Support Plan in place prior to your thesis submission. This is essential to give time to discuss accommodations with examiners and ensure the process can be carried out robustly, but in a way that supports you to flourish.

Above all, you should remember that (like the progress review discussions) it is primarily a scientific discussion, and you are now the expert in the room, so should be a rewarding or even enjoyable end to the PhD process.

KEN WADE THESIS PRIZE

In 2014 the Department inaugurated the annual Ken Wade Thesis Prize to celebrate the tremendous contributions of Professor Ken Wade FRS.

The prize is awarded annually to the author of an outstanding PhD thesis submitted for examination in the previous year.

Nominations usually occur in February or March and take the form of a nomination letter from the candidate's PhD supervisor and the recommendation of the PhD examiners.

Nominations should be submitted to the Director of Postgraduate Studies.

The award is supported by donations from the family and friends of Professor Wade and by Durham University.