Pass with major modifications FAQs

• **What is changing?**
Currently, the *viva* exam outcomes that are available across the University of Liverpool’s postgraduate research programmes include:

1- Pass
2- Pass (with minor modifications)
3- Resubmission
4- Fail

From Monday, 2 September 2019 the range of *viva* exam outcomes will be expanded to include a new ‘pass with major modifications’ option. Therefore, from Monday, 2 September there will be five possible *viva* exam outcomes for candidates who submitted their initial thesis on or after this date:

1- Pass
2- Pass (with minor modifications)
3- Pass (with major modifications)
4- Resubmission*
5- Fail

*Please note that if you submitted your initial thesis on or after Monday, 2 September 2019 and receive a ‘resubmission’ outcome in your examination, you must complete a follow-up *viva* examination. This is compulsory and will apply in all resubmission cases. This is necessary to ensure that ‘pass with major modifications’ and ‘resubmission’ categories are sufficiently distinct.

• **Who is affected?**
The update applies to all University of Liverpool postgraduate research candidates (MPhil, PhD, MD, On Campus and Online Professional Doctorates) who make the first formal submission of their thesis in preparation for their initial *viva* examination on or after Monday, 2 September 2019. This includes the following award types:

- Joint and dual postgraduate research awards offered by the University of Liverpool in association with collaborative partner institutions;
- University of Liverpool postgraduate research awards delivered as part of wider Doctoral Training Partnership activity;
- Candidates enrolled for a University of Liverpool postgraduate research award who are based away from the University of Liverpool’s campuses for all or part of their studies.

• **The deadline for formal submission of my initial thesis falls before the implementation date/ I have already submitted or resubmitted my thesis/ I have already commenced the examination process. How am I affected?**
Candidates who have already submitted or resubmitted their thesis, and/ or have commenced the examination process as at Monday, 2 September 2019 are not eligible for assessment under the new regulations. This means that their examiners will not have the option to award a pass with major modifications outcome. In these circumstances, however, the examiners will retain the option to exceptionally waive a resubmission *viva*, only in cases where the examiners agree that the resubmitted thesis meets the requirements of the award sought without the need to undertake further examination.
The University is committed to doing all that it can to minimise the potential impact of this change on candidates. Individuals whose initial thesis submission date falls between 1st August 2019 and 1st September 2019 inclusive are advised to seek guidance from their Faculty’s Link Officer in the University of Liverpool Postgraduate Research Student Administration Team (contact details available [here](#)) in the first instance.

- **I am due to resubmit my thesis on or after the implementation date. How am I affected?**
  Resubmission pending candidates are not affected by these changes because the ‘pass with major modifications’ category is not available for selection by the examiners in resubmission viva examinations.

- **Why is the University changing its examination outcomes?**
  ‘Pass with major modifications’ will be established as an intermediate exam outcome situated between the existing ‘pass with minor modifications’ and ‘resubmission’ categories.

  The change is being introduced in response to feedback from colleagues within and outside the University, and is intended to establish a clearer set of viva outcomes for examiners and candidates. The ‘pass with major modifications’ viva examination outcome is widely recognised and well-established within the Higher Education sector, and is already being successfully implemented by many Universities in the United Kingdom.

  At the University of Liverpool, ‘pass with major modifications’ will be managed similarly to the existing ‘pass with minor modifications’ category. However, there are some key differences, which are summarised in the guidance below.

- **What will be the difference between ‘pass with minor modifications’, ‘pass with major modifications’ and ‘resubmission’?**
  - The ‘pass with minor modifications’ outcome remains unchanged, and involves revisions which do not alter the substance of the thesis in any significant or fundamental way (for example, minor typographical errors);
  - A ‘pass with major modifications’ signifies that changes of a larger scale are required by the examiners, which may include some re-structuring of the thesis and/or clarification of arguments. The requested revisions should not materially alter the conclusions of the thesis, nor require additional research beyond the scope of the original thesis. **No further viva examination will be held.** A ‘pass with major modifications’ outcome is only permitted to be awarded to candidates undergoing their first viva exam and **will not be available in resubmission viva examinations**;
  - ‘Resubmission’ means that significant further work is required to the thesis in order to meet the requirements of the award. This may include re-conceptualisation of arguments, amendment to the conclusions and/or additional research that extends beyond the scope of the original thesis. **A follow-up viva examination will be compulsory in all resubmission cases.**

- **Where will I be able to find the full list of viva examination outcomes associated with my programme of study?**
  Specific guidance is in place based on your formal date of initial thesis submission. Therefore you must take care to refer to the ordinance or framework which corresponds with your formal date of initial thesis submission, as well as the date when you commenced your studies.
Details of the range of exam outcomes associated with each postgraduate research programme are available in the following locations:

- For MPhil, PhD and MD programmes, please refer to the programme ordinances available from the University of Liverpool Corporate Governance web pages;
- For On Campus Professional Doctorates (DDSc, DClinPsychol), please refer to the relevant programme specification available from the Academic Quality and Standards Division web pages;
- For Online Professional Doctorates (DBA, EdD) please refer to the relevant OPD Frameworks (Appendices 12a and 12b of the PGR Code of Practice), available from the Academic Quality and Standards Division web pages.

• If I am awarded a ‘pass with major modifications’, how much time will I have to make the revisions and submit my modified thesis?

Eligible candidates who are enrolled on MPhil, PhD, MD and campus-based Professional Doctorate (DDSc or DClinPsychol) programmes will be given six months in which to complete their revisions and submit their modified thesis.

Eligible candidates who are enrolled on Online Professional Doctorate programmes (DBA or EdD) will have up to nine months to complete their major modifications and submit their modified thesis (on the basis that they do not exceed their maximum period of registration). In the event that an OPD candidate receives a ‘pass with major modifications’, their maximum registration period will be extended by three months. The preparation period for major modifications will commence from the date that the University formally advises the candidate of their examination outcome in writing.

• Is there a minimum submission period that I must observe before I may submit my revised thesis?

No, there are no minimum submission periods in place in respect of ‘pass with minor modifications’, ‘pass with major modifications’ or ‘resubmission’ viva outcomes.

Candidates enrolled on Online Professional Doctorate programmes (EdD, DBA) are no longer be expected to observe a minimum submission period when they receive a ‘resubmission’ exam outcome. This applies to all candidates, regardless of whether they are enrolled under Online Professional Doctorate Framework 12a or 12b.

• If I receive a ‘pass with major modifications’ must I participate in another viva?

Eligible candidates who receive a ‘pass with major modifications’ outcome will not undergo a second viva exam.

• If I am given a ‘resubmission’ outcome in my first viva, is it possible to be awarded pass with major modifications in my second viva?

No. ‘Pass with major modifications’ is not available to the examiners in resubmission exams.

• If I receive a ‘pass with major modifications’ will I be required to re-register for my studies? Will I pay any fees?

As with minor modifications, eligible candidates who pass with major modifications are not required to re-register for their studies and are not liable for further tuition or re-examination fees. The arrangements in place for resubmission remain unchanged (candidates will re-register for their studies and pay the corresponding fee).
Online Professional Doctorate candidates are reminded that modifications to their theses must be signed off by the examiners prior to the candidate’s registration end date.

- **Do I need to continue to meet regularly with my supervisor whilst I am working on major modifications? Am I expected to continue to attend Independent Progress Assessment Panels?**
  Eligible candidates who pass with major modifications are expected to continue to meet regularly with their supervisors whilst they prepare their thesis revisions. However, they are not expected to participate in Independent Progress Assessment Panels. This is consistent with the existing arrangements in place for candidates who pass with minor modifications.

- **How/where do I submit my modified thesis?**
  The revised thesis will be submitted to the designated examiner, as outlined in the *viva* examination outcome confirmation letter issued by the University’s Postgraduate Research Student Administration Team.

- **Who is responsible for reviewing major modifications?**
  The revised thesis will be reviewed by each of the examiners who were involved with the initial *viva* examination to determine whether the modifications have been completed to the satisfaction of all of the examiners.