Examination and Progressions Processes for Postgraduate Researchers

Assessment and Curriculum Office

Student and Academic Administration

September 2025

Aim of the Session

1. For Staff to know:
   - The role of the Assessment and Curriculum Office for PGR examinations and progression (PGR-ACO@brunel.ac.uk)
   - How PGR examination processes work (generally)
   - The main changes to examination processes since July 1st, 2025
   - How progression reviews are currently supported, and planned changes for the future

2. For staff to seek clarification on examination and progression processes, and the recent changes to PGR administration

What we will be covering

- The examination process from beginning to end

- How progression reviews are currently managed, and changes planned for the future

- Other related support provided by the central team

- There will also be time for questions

Background

- July 1st, 2025 – Centralisation of administration/closure of College based PGR Offices
- July 1st to today – Establishment of PGR examination and progression support within the University's new "Assessment and Curriculum Office". This has included:
    - The transfer of relevant College files to the central team
    - New email address for PGR examination and progression support – PGR-ACO@brunel.ac.uk
    - Refinement and simplification of processes
    - Updates to the Code of Practice
- The examination process has not changed in a significant way
- Enhancements have been made based on academic staff feedback
- More enhancements to come!

Background

- The requirements for examinations and progression reviews are set out in the:
  - Code of Practice for Research Degrees
  - Senate Regulation 5

Examinations

Examinations – the journey

- Five main stages:
1. Thesis submission
2. Examination Panel approval
3. Initiating the viva
4. The viva
5. Post viva outcomes and processes

Examinations – Thesis submission Process
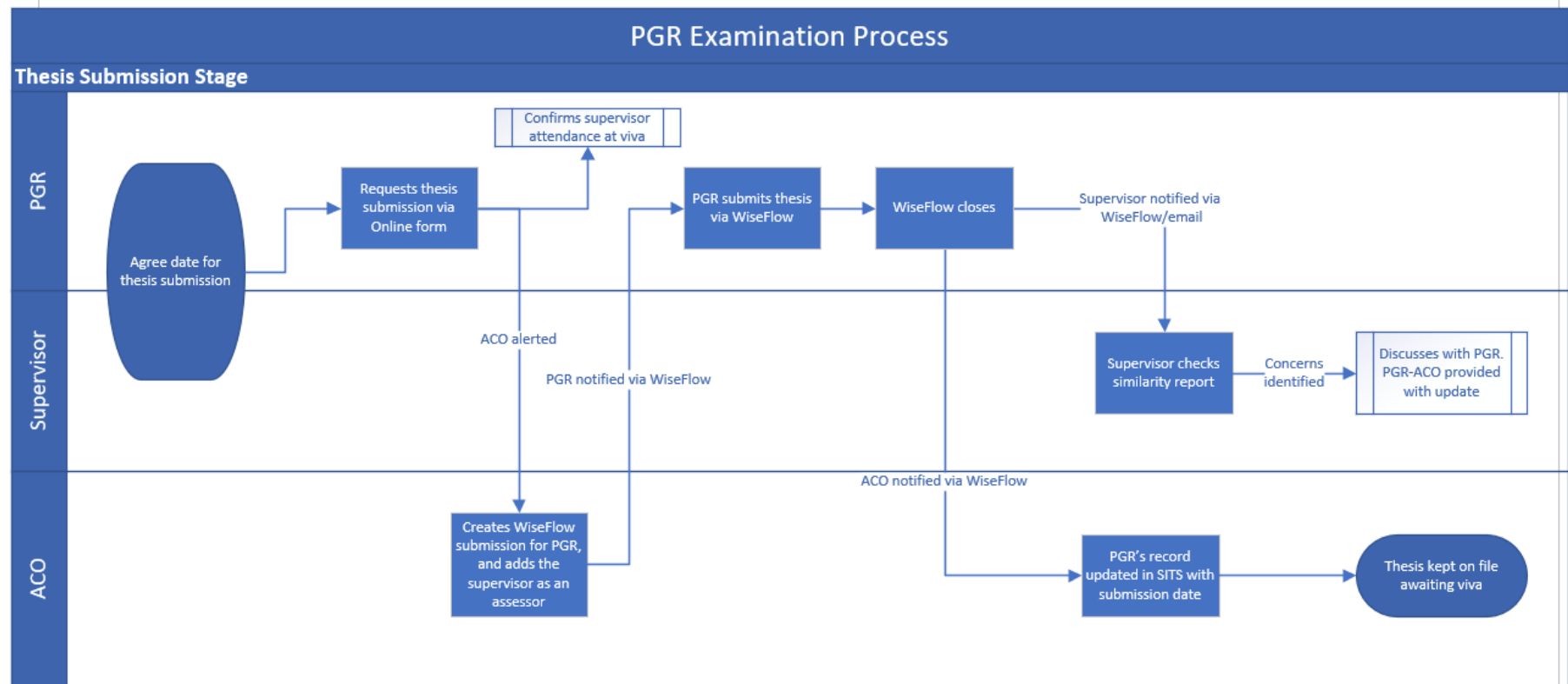
Examinations – Thesis Submission

- Key Points about the process:
  - Supervisors need to review the similarity score for a submission once notified that the WISEflow has closed. Any concerns – alert PGR and PGR-ACO
  - Plagiarism vs poor academic practice – speak to Vice Dean Research in the first instance
  - If the thesis has to be amended following a similarity check, the final submission must go directly to PGR-ACO@brunel.ac.uk (no second WISEflow)

- What's changed?
  - PGRs request submission of their thesis via an online form – PGR Thesis Submission Request
  - Only one WISEflow submission required
  - PGR-ACO will assume that a thesis has passed the similarity check, and the supervisor has no concerns, unless advised otherwise.
 - Corrections go directly to PGR-ACO@brunel.ac.uk

Examinations – Examination Panel Approval Process

Brunel University of London
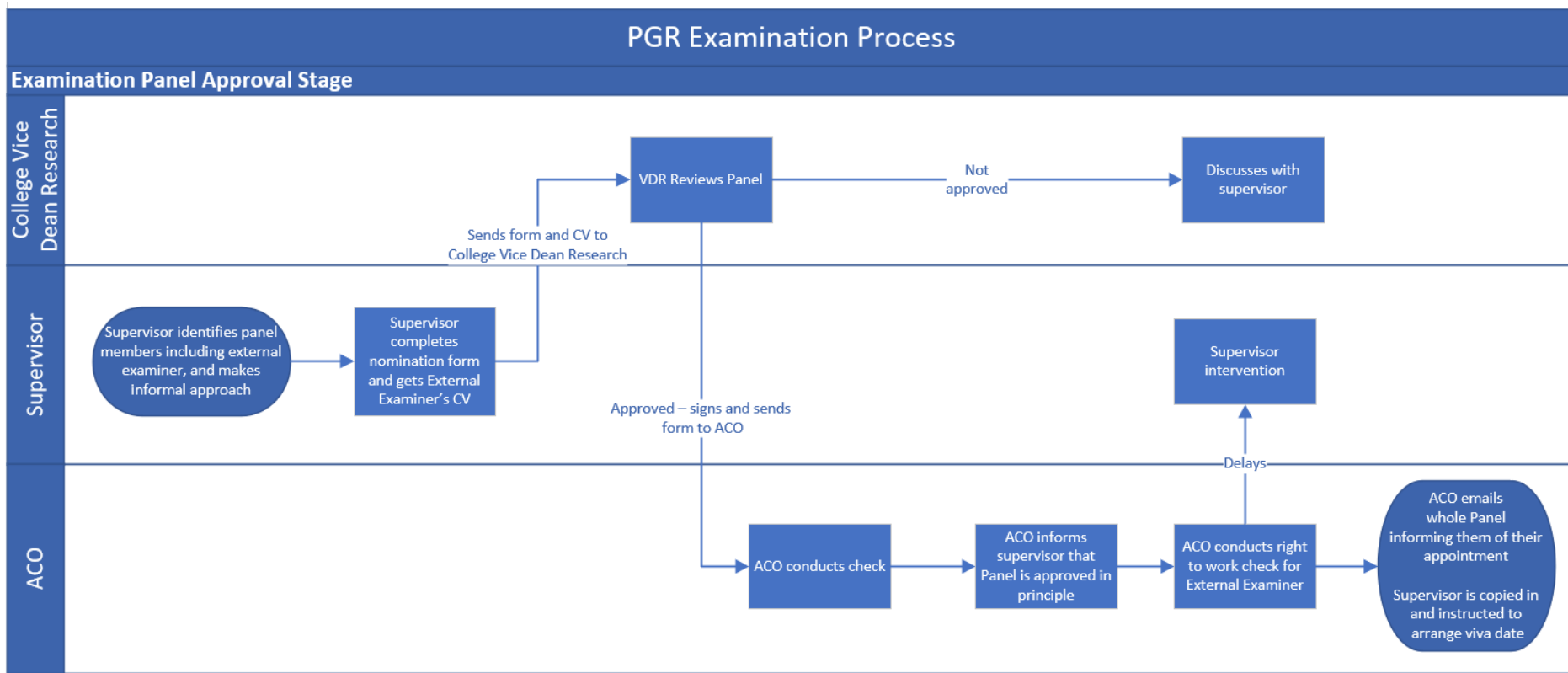
Examinations – Examination Panel Approval

- Key Points about the process:
  - The supervisor must identify panel members, and approach them to confirm they can undertake the examination
  - The VDR must approve the nomination <u>before</u> it reaches PGR-ACO@brunel.ac.uk
  - The external examiner cannot review the thesis until PGR-ACO has confirmed the appointment of the Panel, which includes the <u>government mandated </u>right to work check

- What's changed?
  - At the moment…nothing really. Same form, same process.
  - Vice Dean Research now approves forms (and has for a while)
  - Move to online form in the next month (hopefully)

Examinations – Initiating the Viva Process
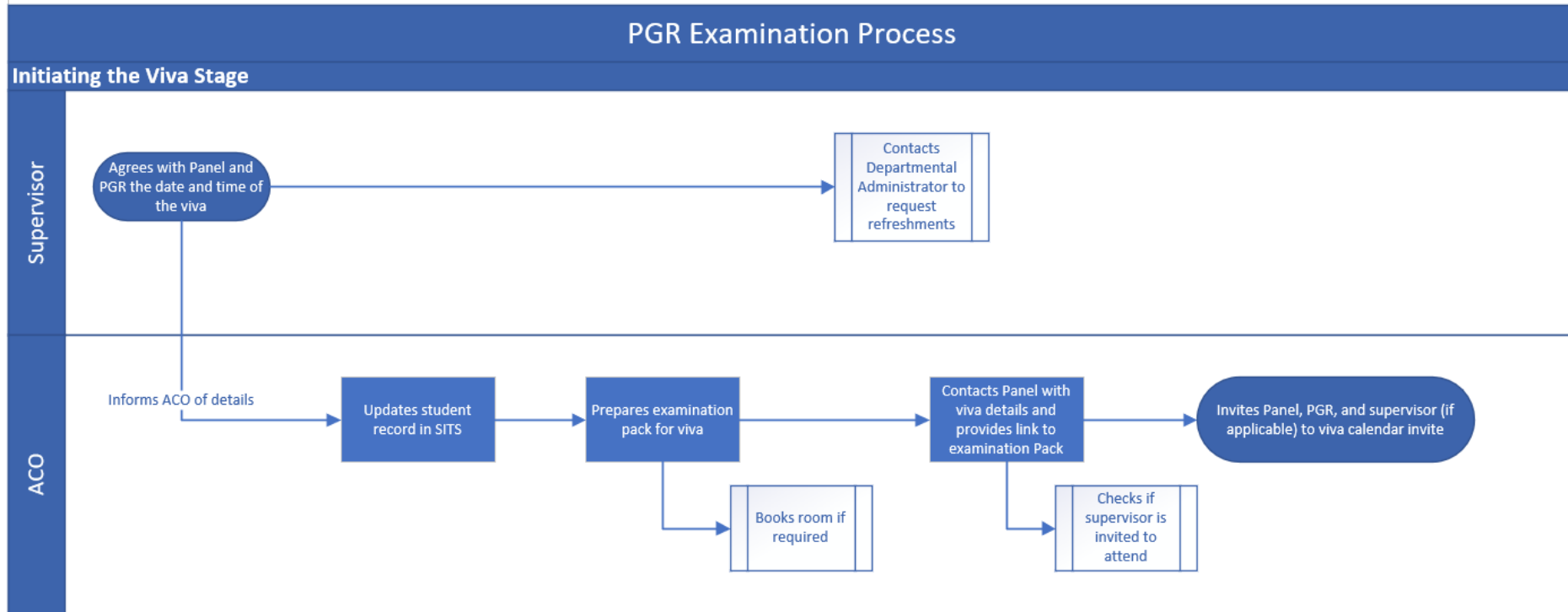
Examinations – Initiating the Viva

- Key Points about the process:
  - Formal confirmation of the Panel will include a request to the supervisor to confirm a date and time for the viva. Once agreed the supervisor needs to confirm the details to PGR-ACO@brunel.ac.uk
  - PGR-ACO shares thesis and other documents with the Panel, via an online folder
  - PGR-ACO books room/sets up Teams meeting, and creates calendar invite
  - Refreshments – speak with your Departmental Administrator

- What's changed?
  - Again…nothing really.

Examinations – The Viva Process

PGR Examination Process

Viva Stage

PGR

Examination Panel
- Internal and External Examiners produce preliminary reports
- Chair determines if viva should go ahead
- Attend viva
- Sends viva outcome to PGR-ACO within 5 working days of examination

Supervisor
- Concerns raised

ACO
- Send reports
- Forwards reports to Panel,

Brunel University of London
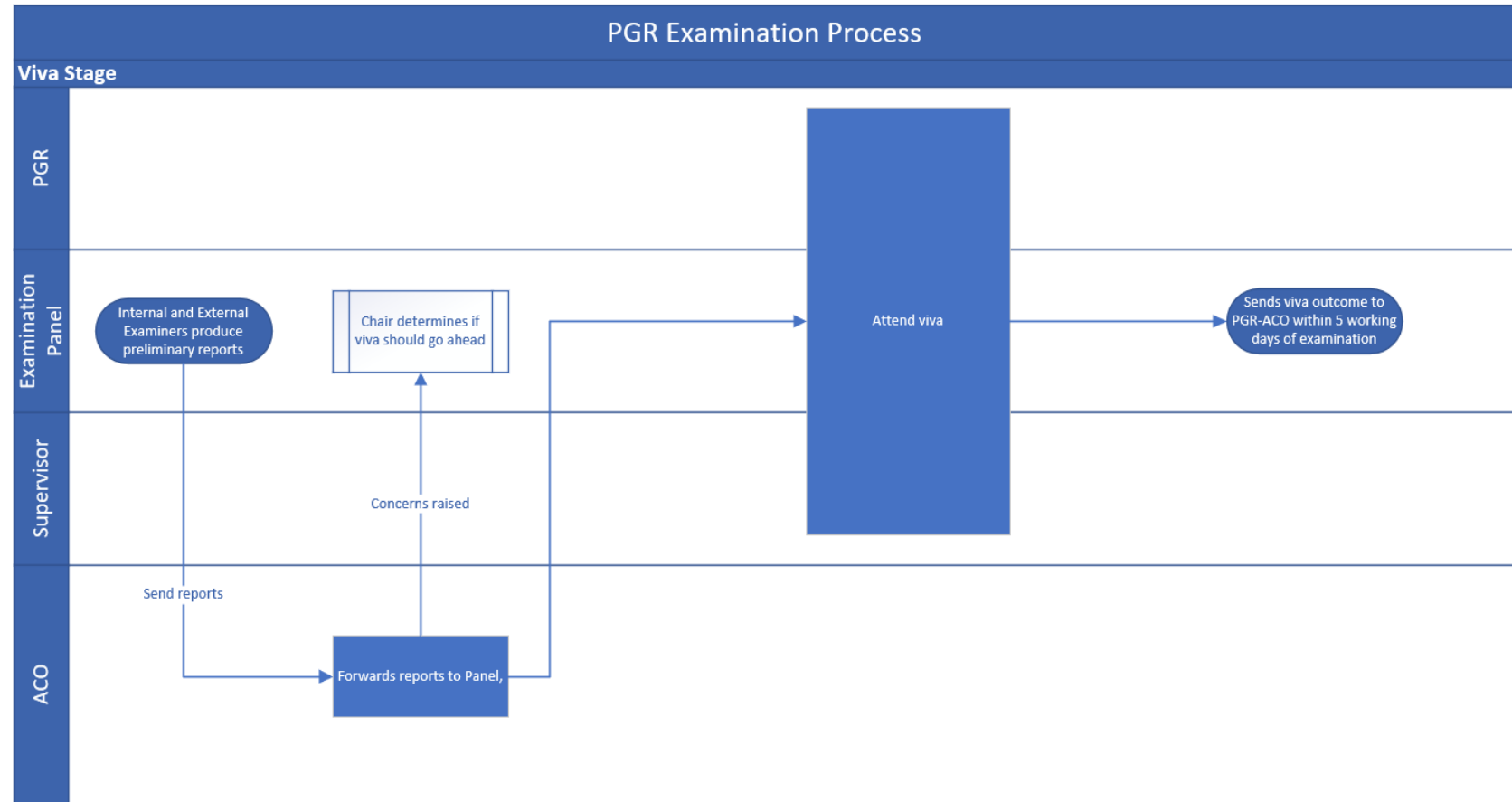
Examinations – The Viva

- Key Points about the process:
  - PGRs confirm if they want their supervisor to attend when requesting a WISEflow submission
  - Supervisors will need to meet Panel members and their PGR before the viva
  - PGR-ACO@brunel.ac.uk has no role in the actual viva itself
  - Issues during the viva? Email PGR-ACO@brunel.ac.uk

- What's changed?
  - The local support provided to Panel members and the PGR on the day of the viva has reduced. Departments/supervisors will need to manage this.
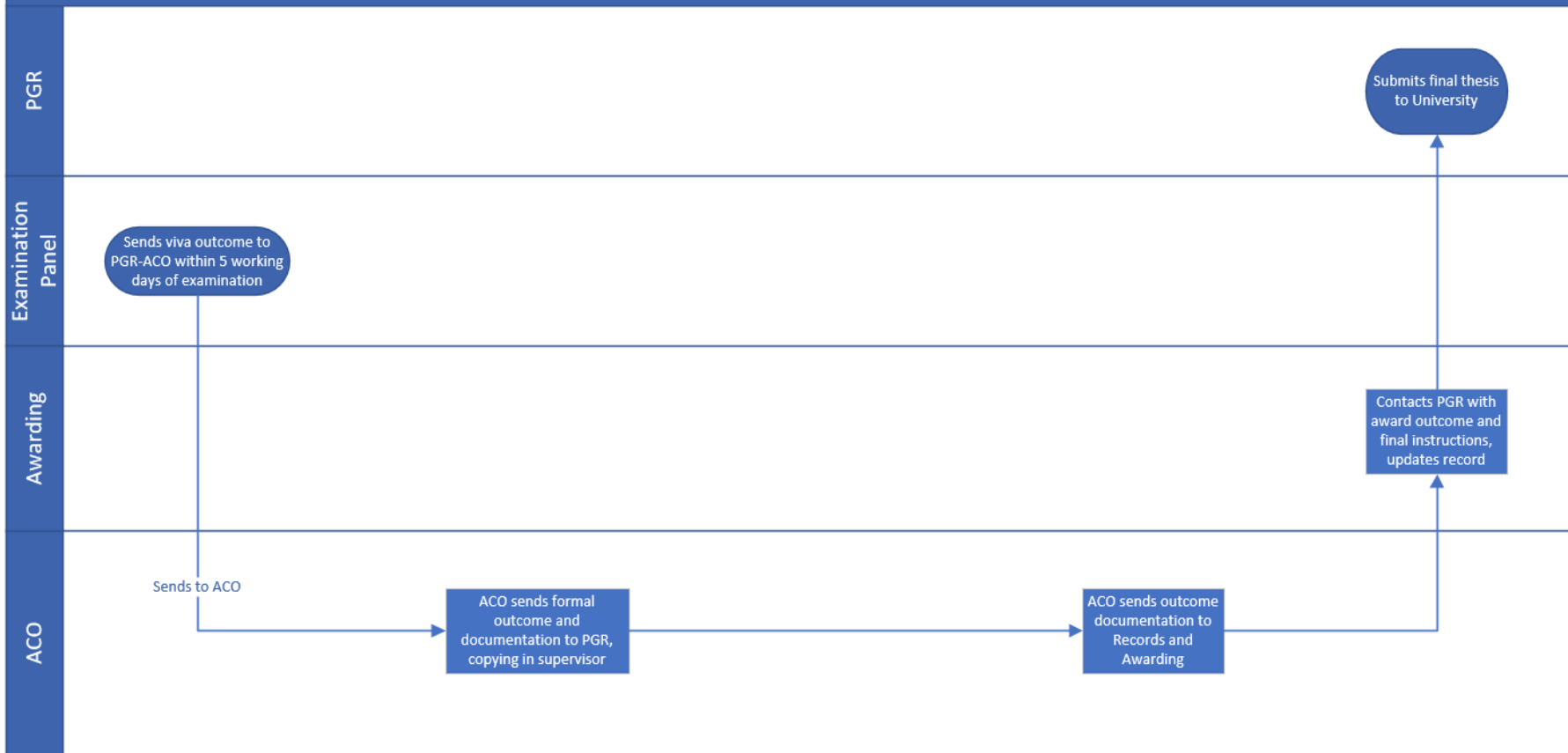
Examinations – Post Viva Outcomes and Processes

- **Pass** – immediate recommendation for the award

- **6-month corrections** - the thesis <u>meets the standards</u> for the award but requires minor amendments

- **12-month corrections:**
  - the thesis does <u>not</u> meet the standard for the award
  - Candidate must resubmit the thesis in a revised form for re-examination
  - Additional viva (unless resubmission meets the required standard for a PhD, and where the examiners are satisfied with the candidate's performance in the viva voce in the first examination)
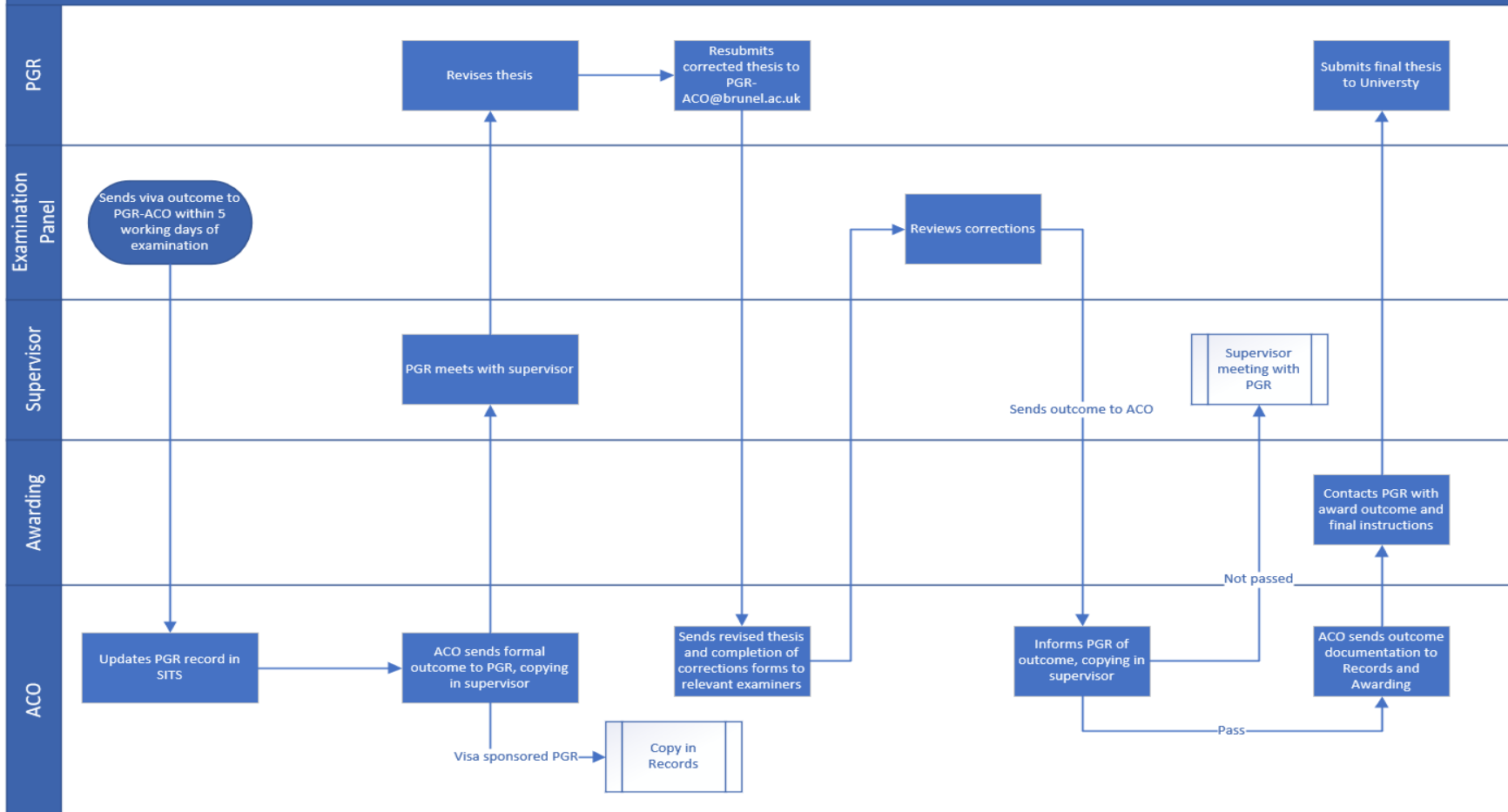
Examinations – Post Viva Outcomes and Processes

- **Standard met but viva unsuccessful -** the candidate may be allowed to re-submit the same thesis for re-examination at a second viva voce examination within three months.

- **Resubmission for MPhil**
  - The thesis is judged by the Examiners to be of an insufficient standard for a doctoral award
  - 6 months revisions
  - Additional viva (unless resubmission meets the required standard for an MPhil, and where the examiners are satisfied with the candidate's performance in the viva voce in the first examination)

- **Fail** - upon consideration of the thesis and the candidate's performance at the viva voce, make the recommendation that the degree not be awarded.

PASS

PGR Examination Process

Post Viva - Pass

PGR

Submits final thesis to University

Examination Panel

Sends viva outcome to PGR-ACO within 5 working days of examination

Awarding

Contacts PGR with award outcome and final instructions, updates record

ACO

Sends to ACO

ACO sends formal outcome and documentation to PGR, copying in supervisor

ACO sends outcome documentation to Records and Awarding

Brunel University of London

6 Months

PGR Examination Process

Post Viva – 6 Month Corrections

PGR
- Revises thesis
- Resubmits corrected thesis to PGR-ACO@brunel.ac.uk
- Submits final thesis to Universty

Examination Panel
- Sends viva outcome to PGR-ACO within 5 working days of examination
- Reviews corrections
- Sends outcome to ACO

Supervisor
- PGR meets with supervisor
- Supervisor meeting with PGR

Awarding
- Contacts PGR with award outcome and final instructions
- Not passed

ACO
- Updates PGR record in SITS
- ACO sends formal outcome to PGR, copying in supervisor
- Sends revised thesis and completion of corrections forms to relevant examiners
- Informs PGR of outcome, copying in supervisor
- ACO sends outcome documentation to Records and Awarding
- Visa sponsored PGR
- Copy in Records
- Pass

Examinations – Post Viva Process

- Key Points about the process:
  - All formal communication regarding the outcome of the viva must be provided by PGR-ACO@brunel.ac.uk
  - Corrected/amended theses go directly to PGR-ACO@brunel.ac.uk (no WISEflow)
  - Fail or resubmit for MPhil outcomes should be discussed with PGR-ACO.

- What's changed?
  - Process wise, nothing really.

Advice for Examinations

- Get your panel approved early! The biggest delay to a viva is the right to work check for an external examiner. Advice – get the Panel approved 4 months before the planned date.

- Don't agree a viva date before the thesis has been submitted and the Panel formally approved.

- Don't set the viva up yourself. PGR-ACO needs to know what's going on and when.

- We're still getting up and running and also clearing a backlog. Feel free to email PGR-ACO@brunel.ac.uk if you're worried that someone or something has been missed (it may have been!).

Progression Reviews

Progression Reviews

- Progression reviews are managed via eVision.

- Review dates are created automatically based on the PGR's intended start date.

- Completion of one review will create the record for the next.

- Report templates are downloaded from eVision

- New technical guidance will be published in the next few weeks

Progression Reviews – Support in the new structure

- Because of the reduction in staff, the support previously provided for progression reviews is unable to continue.

- Work is underway to make the process for staff and PGRs easier.

- We are in an interim period.

Progression Reviews – current responsibilities

Supervisor responsibilities

- Ensures that their PGR has a Panel in place

- Supports their PGR in preparing for the Panel

- Arranges panel times and dates

Panel Chair responsibilities

- Downloads the report template from eVision and completes it

- Sends the completed report to PGR-ACO

- For decisions other than progress, refers them to their VDR (for approval), before submitting the report to PGR-ACO

PGR-ACO responsibilities

- Uploads the completed report to eVision

- Troubleshooting and guidance for PGRs and staff

Assessment and Curriculum Office

PGR-ACO@brunel.ac.uk

- This email/team has replaced the <u>examination and progression support</u> provided by the old PGR offices.

- It is part of the wider Assessment and Curriculum Office functions which supports all programmes.

- The PGR team deals with:
  - Examinations
  - Progression support
  - Extensions
  - Recognised supervisors

- For supervisory team changes – email records@brunel.ac.uk

- For funding, accommodation, immigration, abeyance requests, and welfare and wellbeing support – PGR's should visit/contact the Student Hub - StudentHub@brunel.ac.uk

Closing

Sources of information

- Research degrees | Brunel University of London – provides:
    - The Code of Practice
    - All guidance documents and forms for examinations
    - Other policies and forms (Recognised Supervisors)

- Thesis preparation, submission & viva voce examination – guidance for PGRs

- PGR-ACO@brunel.ac.uk for day-to-day queries

And finally…

- Thank you for all the support, guidance and patience you have shown during what has been a very challenging time.

- Please let us know how the experience for PGRs and staff can be improved and enhanced.