

Guidelines for Conducting Oral Examinations for Master's Examining Committees

Optional: Immediately prior to the defence (10-20 minutes before) the Chair of Defence may request to meet privately with the committee (a separate room near the defence is recommended) to solicit general comments, overall appraisals, and questions the committee might wish to discuss with the candidate.

Defence protocol:

1. *Chair of Defence introduces the committee members and candidate.*
As a courtesy to the candidate and to avoid interruptions guests should be reminded that they may only leave the defence during the short intermission between the public's and committee's question periods and when asked to withdraw in order to allow the committee to deliberate.
2. *Candidate then presents a short (15-25 minute) summary of their thesis.*
3. *After the presentation, the Chair begins the questioning in the following order: general audience, Outside department reader, internal department reader(s), and the student's advisor.*
Although there is no pre-determined ending time, the defence is scheduled for approximately two hours, so questioning should be apportioned among those present with an opportunity for follow-up questions after a round of questioning has taken place.
The Chair does not ask evaluative questions of the candidate during the examination.
4. *Following the period of questioning, the candidate and all guests are asked to withdraw.*
5. *The committee then discusses the defence and thesis, and then:*
 - (i) *Committee votes on the outcome of the defence.* The Chair of Defence does not vote but indicates the voting outcome on the report form (**form provided by the department**) and the candidate is assigned a grade; a letter grade or Pass / Fail. The advisor signs the Report Form where indicated. The Chair of the defence signs and dates the Report Form.
See the Faculty of Graduate Studies Report Form for a description of the four possible voting outcomes: (i) Pass with no changes, (ii) Pass with Minor changes, (iii) Pass with Major changes, and (iv) Fail. If (iii) is decided upon see the above form for a description of the options and instructions.
 - (ii) *Committee members may then sign the Approval page for inclusion in the thesis if they are satisfied that any necessary changes will be made under the advisor's supervision. **The Advisor signs the Approval sheet only after all required changes have been made*** (see next page for detailed voting outcomes and procedures).
 - (iii) *Chair asks the committee whether the candidate should be considered as a potential Governor General's Gold Medalist. If so, this is indicated on the Report Form.*
6. *The candidate and guests return, and the Chair informs the candidate of the outcome.*

Voting Outcomes and Signatures in a Thesis:*

As stated in the graduate calendar: “The minimum basis for acceptance of a Master's thesis is positive unanimity by the examining committee less one vote. Unless an examining committee is unanimously negative, a candidate may resubmit the thesis once, after a minimum period of three months and before a maximum period of twelve months. The second decision shall be final.”

The Chair of the Defence does not sign the Approval page.

The following defines the four possible voting outcomes:

1. **Pass** with no changes.
2. **Pass with minor changes** (e.g., typographical errors, clarification of textual material, qualification of conclusions). In this case the advisor shall determine when the changes have been completed.
3. **Pass with major changes** (e.g., new analyses, substantive textual changes). In this case the committee shall decide how satisfactory completion is to be determined (e.g., full committee approval, a second opportunity to defend, or simply approval by the advisor).

If the Committee recommends a Pass with major changes, a recommendation from the committee, by the Chair of the Defence, should be forwarded to the Dean of Graduate Studies outlining how satisfactory completion is to be determined.

The Report Form should be retained by the advisor until all changes have been satisfactorily completed, after which time it may be forwarded to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

4. Fail.

If more than one negative vote is cast, the student shall be deemed to have failed. If the Committee recommends a failing grade, this Report Form should be completed and forwarded to the Dean of Graduate Studies indicating the voting pattern of the Committee members, e.g., satisfactory, unsatisfactory, abstention.

A meeting will be convened by the program chair with the student's advisor, the graduate coordinator and the Dean of Graduate Studies. At this meeting, the student's options shall be determined and presented in writing to the student by the program chair. These options shall be deemed to be final and subject only to appeal.

Unless an examining committee is unanimously negative, a candidate may resubmit the thesis or dissertation once, after a minimum period of three months and before a maximum period of twelve months. The second decision shall be final.