

Guidelines for Conducting Oral Examinations for Doctoral Examining Committees

Optional: Immediately prior to the defense (10-20 minutes before) the Chair of Defense may request to meet privately with the committee (a separate room near the defense is recommended) to solicit general comments, overall appraisals, and questions the committee might wish to discuss with the candidate. At this time, the Chair may choose to read the External examiner's review of the dissertation.

Defense protocol:

1. *Chair of Defense 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 defense 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 dissertation.*

3. *After the presentation, the Chair begins the questioning in the following order: general audience, External examiner, the outside departmental reader, the internal departmental readers, and the student's advisor. * This order can be changed if felt necessary.*

Although there is no pre-determined ending time, the defense is scheduled for approximately two to three 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 defense and dissertation, and then:*

(i) *Committee votes on the outcome of the defense.* The Chair of Defense does not vote but indicates the voting outcome on the report form (**form provided by the department**) and the candidate is assigned a grade of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. The advisor signs the Report Form where indicated. The Chair of the defense 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 dissertation 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 necessary 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 Dissertation:*

As stated in the grad calendar: “The minimum basis for acceptance of a Ph.D. dissertation shall be **positive unanimity less one vote providing the dissenting vote is not by an external examiner** who is present at the defense, and the chair of the defense determines that the examination by the external examiner has been fair to the candidate. Unless an examining committee is unanimously negative, a candidate may resubmit the dissertation 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 Defense 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 Defense, 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.

* If the research advisor is the sole dissenting vote, please consult with the Faculty of Graduate Studies for direction.