

Guidelines for Chairs of Oral Examinations PhD and Master's-with-Thesis

As a representative of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, examination Chairs are responsible for the integrity of the examination and are expected to remain impartial during the proceedings.

1. **Arrive 10 minutes prior to exam** start time.
2. **Introduce yourself** as Chair acting on behalf of Faculty of Graduate Studies. Begin with the statement “Welcome – We acknowledge with respect the ləkʷəŋən [Lekwungen] peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ [“w’Saanich”] peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.”
3. **Introduce the candidate.**
4. **Ask examining committee members to introduce themselves.**
5. **Review the process.**
6. **Conduct the examination** (normally lasts from 1 ½ - 2 hours):
 - a. Candidate begins with a brief (10—20 minutes) summary of work
 - b. Examining committee asks two rounds of questions
 - External Examiner begins each round followed by
 - Committee member(s) from outside the academic unit followed by
 - Committee member(s) from the academic unit followed by
 - Supervisor
 - c. If time permits, you may call for questions from other members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies
 - d. If time permits, you may call for questions from the audience
 - e. When questioning is complete, ask the candidate and the audience to withdraw so that the examining committee can consider the thesis and oral exam *in camera*.
7. **Conduct post-oral discussion in camera**
The discussion and decision of the examining committee should be based on the content of the dissertation or thesis as well as the candidate’s ability to defend it.
8. **The committee chooses an outcome** from the options listed below **and all examining committee members sign the Chair’s Report to confirm agreement.**
9. **Invite the candidate to return** to the examining room for discussion and presentation of the results.
10. **The Chair completes the Chair’s Report** and returns it to Graduate Studies within two days.
 - a. The Chair’s Report must contain the names and signatures of all examining committee members present at the examination.
 - b. If the external examiner or other committee members participate virtually, the Chair should sign the Chair’s Report only on behalf of the external or committee member.
 - c. If a committee member is absent or has been substituted, please note this on the form.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF THE ORAL EXAMINATION

1. The dissertation or thesis is **acceptable subject to editorial changes** as presented **and the oral examination is acceptable.**

ACTION: All members of the examining committee sign the Thesis/Dissertation Approval Form (brought to exam by supervisor) and the Chair’s Report.

2. The dissertation or thesis is **acceptable subject to minor revisions** and the oral examination is acceptable.
Minor revisions are more than corrections of typographical or punctuation errors. Typical examples of minor revisions include: clarification of textual material, the qualification of research findings or conclusions, or minor additions that improve the reading and understanding of the dissertation or thesis.

ACTIONS:

- i) All members of the examining committee sign the Chair’s Report.
- ii) All members of the examining committee except the supervisor sign the Thesis/Dissertation Approval Form.
- iii) The Chair makes a record of the required minor revisions and ensures that all members of the examining committee agree to them.
- iv) The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the revisions are satisfactorily completed.
- v) The supervisor signs the Thesis/Dissertation Approval Form and the Letter of Recommendation when the dissertation or thesis has been revised to meet the committee’s requirements.

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3. The dissertation or thesis is **acceptable subject to major revisions** and the **oral examination is acceptable**

An example of when a dissertation or thesis is acceptable subject to major revisions and the oral examination is acceptable might be when a candidate has orally convinced the examining committee of the validity of the research results but has failed substantively to express this in the dissertation or thesis.

ACTIONS:

- i) All members of the examining committee sign the Chair's Report.
- ii) No one on the examining committee signs the Thesis/Dissertation Approval Form.
- iii) After consultation with the candidate, the maximum length of time permitted for the revisions (not to exceed one year) shall be set by majority vote of the committee. A detailed and complete list of the necessary revisions shall be set by majority vote of the examining committee and provided to the student at the conclusion of the examination.
- iv) The primary supervisor oversees the major revisions.
- v) When the dissertation or thesis is acceptable to the supervisor, s/he/they distributes it to the rest of the examining committee.
- vi) When it is acceptable to the entire committee, the supervisor ensures that each member signs the Thesis/Dissertation Approval Form.
- vii) The head of the academic unit and the student's supervisor sign the Letter of Recommendation.

4. The examination is **adjourned**.

This result should not be confused with failure (see 5. Failure, below). Adjournment may be called for three different types of circumstances:

- A sudden illness or emergency that does not allow for the examination to be completed; an external environmental situation arises that forces the exam to be prematurely terminated (such as fire alarm, power failure or natural disaster); or when the technology being used breaks down and cannot be repaired in time to continue the examination.

ACTIONS:

- i) All members of the examining committee sign the Chair's Report.
- ii) The Chair shall make a written report to the Dean of Graduate Studies within three (3) working days of the date of the oral examination.
- iii) The Dean of Graduate Studies will set a date for reconvening the examination. The date for reconvening shall be no later than six months from the date of the first examination.

- The external examiner casts the lone dissenting vote.

ACTIONS:

- i) All members of the examining committee sign the Chair's Report.
- ii) Each member of the examining committee shall make a written report to the Dean of Graduate Studies within 10 working days of the date of the oral examination.
- iii) The Dean of Graduate Studies will set a date for reconvening the examination. The Dean shall also determine whether or not the composition of the original committee is appropriate for the reconvened examination. The date for reconvening shall be no later than six months from the date of the first examination.

- The thesis is acceptable but the student has failed the oral defense.

ACTIONS:

- i) All members of the examining committee sign the Chair's Report.
- ii) Each member of the examining committee shall make a written report to the Dean of Graduate Studies within 10 working days of the date of the oral examination.
- iii) The Dean of Graduate Studies will set a date for reconvening the examination.
- iv) The Dean shall also determine whether or not the composition of the original committee is appropriate for the reconvened examination. The date for reconvening shall be no later than six months from the date of the first examination.

5. The examination is **failed**.

If two or more members of the examining committee are opposed to passing the student, the student will not be recommended for the degree.

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ACTIONS:

- i) All members of the examining committee sign the Chair's Report.
- ii) The examining committee collectively makes a written report to the Dean of Graduate Studies within 14 calendar days of the date of the oral exam outlining the reasons for the failure.
- iii) A student who fails an oral exam has the right to appeal and may consult with the Dean of Graduate Studies regarding the appropriate procedures.