

Instructions to Chair of a Final Oral Exam (includes remote instructions)
Responsibilities of the Examination Committee and the Chair of the Committee

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EXAMINATION COMMITTEE

The Examination Committee is responsible for the standard of the Doctoral degree in this University and possesses the full authority of the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) with respect to the examination. This authority of examination extends to both the thesis and its oral defense. Graduate unit examinations held immediately in advance of the final oral must therefore not interfere with attendance at, or thoroughness of, the final examination.

The Committee represents the Council of the School of Graduate Studies and through it, the Governing Council of the University and must:

- evaluate the appraisal of the thesis, which is to be considered only as an individual opinion to be employed as the Committee sees fit.
- examine the Candidate on the content and implications of the thesis. Where someone other than the Candidate is a coauthor of any portion of the thesis, the Examination Committee must be satisfied that the Candidate's personal contribution to the thesis is sufficient to fulfill the requirements of the Doctoral degree. In addition, it must satisfy itself that the thesis document meets the proper standards of scholarship.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAIR OF THE EXAMINATION COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Examination Committee is responsible for, and empowered to ensure, the proper conduct of the examination. The Chair is expected to exercise full control over the proceedings and is entitled to suspend or stop the examination if necessary.

The Chair is the representative of the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies at the examination and his/her responsibilities are:

- to guarantee that the Candidate is given reasonable opportunity to defend the thesis;
- to ensure that it is the Candidate alone, and not the Supervisor or any other member of the Committee, who defends the thesis;
- to protect the Candidate from harassment.

COMPOSITION OF THE EXAMINATION COMMITTEE AND ATTENDANCE

The Examination Committee consists of voting and non-voting members as approved by the SGS Vice-Dean, Students.

Voting Members - Normally, voting membership consists of four to six members including:

- one to three members of the supervising committee;
- at least two examiners who have not been closely involved in the supervision of the thesis; and
- the External Appraiser often serves as an examiner as well.

Non-voting members – Non-voting members may participate in the questioning of the Candidate and may remain during the committee’s deliberations, but have no vote.

Other in Attendance - The examination may also be attended by:

- any member of the graduate faculty of this University who, on the invitation of the Examination Chair, may participate in the questioning of the Candidate.
- a qualified observer. Occasionally the graduate unit, with permission of the Candidate and the Supervisor, may request in writing to the Vice-Dean, Students that someone associated with the research, who is not a member of the graduate faculty, may attend the examination as an observer.

All non-committee members attending the examination may enter the room when the Candidate enters and must leave the room once the Candidate has completed their defense and before discussion about the examination begins.

Before the candidate leaves the room the Chair will remind the Candidate and all committee members that Final Oral Exams at the University of Toronto are closed and confidential and that recording is not permitted. Any recording features included with the video- or tele-conferencing software must be turned off.

CONDUCTING THE EXAMINATION

1. Before the Candidate enters, the Chair:

- confirms that a quorum of four voting members is present, comprising at least two non-supervisory voting members. Should a quorum not be present, the Chair must decide either to delay the examination or to postpone it to another date.
- confirms that each member of the Committee has sufficient knowledge of the thesis to form a judgment as to its acceptability and hence that there will be no abstentions in voting on grounds of ignorance of the thesis content.
- reminds the Committee that the examination covers both the thesis and the oral defense.



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- confirms that each member of the Committee has received and read the external appraisal and, if not, has the appraisal read aloud by one of the examiners. With the exception of a written report from any supervisor, no other written statements or letters of reference are permitted. Any of the examiners present may make an oral statement.
 - consults with the Committee to determine the order of questioning and whether the Chair or the Supervisor will invite the Candidate to make the opening statement.
 - discusses with the Committee the most appropriate means for ensuring that questions raised in the external appraisal are addressed by the Candidate.
 - Reminds the Committee that all electronic devices should be disabled unless an individual exceptional circumstance necessitates their use. If the use of such a device is necessary, it should be set to receive incoming communications in the least obtrusive manner possible, and the committee member should leave the room in order to respond to such communication.
2. The Chair admits the Candidate and the non-committee members, if any. The Chair reminds all present that the recording of all elements of the proceedings is prohibited. The Candidate is then invited to summarize the research and conclusions of the thesis orally, in no more than twenty minutes.
 3. The Chair then invites each member of the Committee, in turns of approximately equal duration, to ask questions of the Candidate. The Chair should consider local norms that include, with the agreement of the student and supervisor, permitting other examiners to pose specific follow up questions during the rounds of questioning.

VOTING PROCEDURE

1. When there are no further questions for the Candidate, the Chair asks the Candidate and all non-committee members to retire.

If conducting a remote or hybrid exam, depending on the software used, this means that the candidate and all non-committee members will be moved to the virtual waiting room, or put on hold, or perhaps disconnected until the appropriate time.

The Chair reminds the Committee that:

- they should discuss the thesis and the voting options before the vote is taken.
 - the examination covers both the thesis and its oral defense.
2. A discussion of the examination follows and then the Chair distributes the ballots and explains the voting options in detail:



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- Members must vote yes or no on the question whether or not the thesis and its defense are acceptable. More than one negative vote (or abstention) causes the thesis examination to be adjourned.
- Members of the Committee will have agreed to become sufficiently acquainted with the content of the thesis to form a judgment as to its acceptability; hence there should be no abstentions from voting on grounds of ignorance of the thesis content. A member of the Committee can indicate an abstention for other reasons by writing "abstention" on the ballot.

Those committee members who find the thesis acceptable must also indicate whether the thesis is acceptable as is, or requires editorial corrections, or minor revisions.

- **Editorial corrections** involve typographical errors, errors in punctuation, or problems in style; they must be correctable within one month.
 - **Minor revisions** are more than changes in style and less than major changes in the thesis. A typical example of a minor revision is clarification of textual material or the qualification of research findings or conclusions. Minor revisions must be feasibly completed within three months.
3. The Chair collects the signed ballots, reads aloud the names of the Committee members and their respective votes, and records the vote on the voting Chair's Summary Form.

If conducting a remote meeting, voting members have been provided with the necessary email addresses and are to email the Chair the vote that would normally be indicated on a ballot, and to copy (cc) the graduate administrator of the Candidate's graduate unit and also the Graduate Program Completion Office. They will write Yes or No to indicate the acceptability of the thesis, and if Yes, whether they accept it "As Stands", "with Editorial Corrections" or "with Minor Revisions." The Chair opens the emailed responses, reads aloud the names of the Committee members and their respective votes, and records the vote on the Chair's Summary Form or equivalent.

The decision of the vote is determined in the following manner:

- On a first examination, if there is more than one negative vote and / or abstention, the examination is adjourned. On a reconvened examination, more than one negative vote and / or abstention constitutes a failure.
- Following a judgment that the thesis with its defense is acceptable, then:
 - If every examiner, or every examiner bar one, considers the thesis acceptable in its present form, then the thesis is approved in its present form.
 - Otherwise, if every examiner, or every examiner bar one, considers the thesis acceptable in its present form or with editorial corrections, then the thesis is approved with editorial corrections.
 - Otherwise, the thesis is approved with minor revisions.



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4. A member of the Examination Committee who is participating remotely will vote in the following manner.

They will vote by emailing a signed ballot to the Chair of the Examination Committee, or, if they do not have access to email, will follow these steps:

- After the ballots of those present at the oral exam have been collected, but before they are read aloud, he / she will announce their vote. The Chair will then record that vote on a ballot, signing on behalf of that examiner.

NOTIFICATION TO CANDIDATE OF DECISION ON THE VOTE

If the thesis and its defense are accepted, the Chair of the Examination Committee informs the Candidate. The Candidate will be brought back into the exam meeting.

If the thesis and/or defense are not accepted, the Chair of the Examination Committee and the Supervisor (if present) should jointly advise the Candidate.

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH EDITORIAL CORRECTIONS

Editorial corrections must be completed within one month of the date of the examination. The Supervisor will inform the Candidate in writing the necessary corrections and will work with the Candidate to ensure that the corrections have been made. The Supervisor must confirm in writing (by email) to the Graduate Program Completion Office that the corrections have been made.

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH MINOR REVISIONS

The Chair must appoint a Subcommittee to be approved by the Examination Committee. The Candidate has three months from the date of the examination to complete the minor revisions.

Appointment of the **Examination Subcommittee**:

The Chair of the Examination Committee, before the Committee disperses, shall:

- Appoint a Subcommittee of the Examination Committee (to be approved by the Examination Committee) to supervise the proposed minor revisions;
- Indicate by means of asterisks the names of those appointed to the supervising Subcommittee and underline the Convenor's name on the Chair's Summary Form.

The Examination Subcommittee includes:

- At least two members of the Examination Committee; under exceptional circumstances the Subcommittee may be limited to one member;



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- One member of the Subcommittee designated as Convener with the approval of the Examination Committee. The Convener may be the supervisor and should normally be a member of the Supervisory Committee.

Role of the Convenor of the Examination Subcommittee shall:

- Report with a brief written statement of the necessary minor revisions, preferably before the Examination Committee disperses but as soon after the examination as possible;
- See that the Candidate, Supervisor, and Graduate Program Completion Office receive a copy of the required minor revisions;
- Work with the Candidate and the other members of the Subcommittee to ensure completion of the required minor revisions;
- Within three months of the date of the examination report in writing to the Graduate Program Completion Office and to the Chair of the Graduate Unit the state of completion of the required minor revisions.

Role of the Examination Subcommittee members:

- Individually report to the Convenor on the acceptability of the required minor revisions. The report should be made in time for the Convenor to submit their written report on the state of the completion of the revisions to the Graduate Program Completion Office.

Dissatisfaction of Subcommittee members with minor revisions:

- Should one or more members of the Subcommittee not be satisfied that the minor revisions have been properly completed, the graduate unit must arrange a reconvened oral examination within a year from the date of the original examination.

PROCEDURES IN THE EVENT OF AN ADJOURNMENT

In the event of an adjournment, the Chair of the Examination Committee shall:

- Remind the Examination Committee that a reconvened examination is to be held within one year.
- Explain that a written report must be prepared for the Candidate, setting out the reasons for adjournment and the Committee's requirements for a reconvened examination; the drafting of this report shall be the responsibility of a member of the supervising committee who is also a member of the Examination Committee; and the Committee must agree, before dispersing, on the procedures whereby the report will be drafted for approval by the Committee.



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- The Committee must provide the Candidate and the Graduate Program Completion Office, as soon as possible, with the written statement that indicates the reasons for the adjournment and the Committee's requirements for the reconvened oral examination.

The Candidate shall be advised in writing by the Graduate Program Completion Office of the approximate date of the reconvened examination, with a copy to the graduate unit in the Candidate's file.

A copy of the original thesis shall be retained for the Examination Committee's reference in the Candidate's graduate unit until the Candidate is recommended for the degree.

RECONVENED EXAMINATION

At the reconvened examination, no new members shall be added except for necessary replacements. It is the obligation of the original examiners to attend this examination. Any member of the original Committee who did not attend the examination and who did not have good cause for absence should be stricken from the Examination Committee.

The normal procedures for the conduct of the examination and voting are to be followed.

However, no further adjournment will be allowed and, if unsuccessful, the Candidate will be ineligible for further Doctoral candidacy at this University. The Examination Committee must provide the Candidate, as soon as possible, with a written statement that explains clearly and directly why the examiners found the Candidate's performance unsatisfactory on the written or oral components of the examination, as may be relevant.

SUBMISSION OF MATERIAL TO THE GRADUATE PROGRAM COMPLETION OFFICE

The Chair of the Examination Committee is responsible for seeing that the Candidate's file is submitted to the Graduate Program Completion Office, 63 St. George Street, with all original materials, immediately after the examination. In the case of an exam at the end of the day, the material can be submitted on the next working day. The final paperwork for the Candidate cannot be completed until the file is returned.

The Chair should also remind the Candidate to contact the Graduate Program Completion Office immediately after the examination or (in the case of an exam at the end of the day) on the next working day.

Contact:

Graduate Program Completion Office
School of Graduate Studies
63, St George Street, Room 104
Telephone: +1 (416) 978-5258
Email: sgs.doctoral@utoronto.ca

For the full FOE Guidelines, please visit:

[Guidelines for the Doctoral Final Oral Examination](#)