Final Oral Examination Chair’s Checklist

Doctoral Final Oral Examination

Thank you again for serving as Chair of the Final Oral Examination (FOE)! The Chair holds a vital role which helps to ensure the future success of our students, while upholding the academic mission of the University. As you approach this important task, you may have questions about the timelines and your responsibilities for the FOE. You might also wonder what to expect during the FOE itself.

This document provides a simplified version of the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) Guidelines for the Doctoral Final Oral Examination, which should be followed in their entirety. Following the SGS Guidelines is a key component of ensuring an optimal experience and timely completion for doctoral candidates.

1 week before the FOE:
You should receive the FOE Chair’s Examination File from the graduate unit that will include:

- A copy of the FOE program (includes name of candidate, time, date and location of FOE, title of thesis, and names of all approved attendees; this should help you establish quorum and ensure that only approved persons are present);
- A copy of the thesis abstract, appraisal, FOE Guidelines, Chair Summary Form, and Voting Ballots; in addition, you may be provided with a letter from the unit with further explanation on local norms;
- Login information to the videoconference (even if it is only the backup to the in-person FOE); and
- Relevant contact information for the graduate unit.

Day of the FOE, prior to the exam:
- Please arrive (in person or virtually) 5 minutes prior to the scheduled start time.
- If you are running late or unable to make it, please notify the graduate unit, as well as your own graduate administrator, as soon as possible so they can either search for a replacement Chair or delay starting the examination until you arrive.
- If there are technical difficulties, please connect with the graduate unit or, if the examination is being held at SGS (63 St George Street), connect with the front desk, who will notify the SGS Graduate Program Completion Office.

Day of the FOE, during the exam:
- Confirm quorum is present: quorum is at least 4 voting members, two of whom must be external to the supervisory committee; the exam cannot proceed if quorum is not met.
- Invite the candidate and any non-voting attendees to leave the room (or move them to the virtual waiting room), advising them that they will be asked to rejoin.
While only the voting members are present, ensure everyone has read the appraisal and has sufficient knowledge of the thesis to form a judgement, determine the order of questioning, remind the committee the exam covers both the thesis and the defense, review the voting ballot and outcome options, ensure questions raised in the appraisal will be addressed, and discover if the supervisor wishes to add a written report to the file or any of the examiners wish to make an oral statement.

- Invite the candidate and any non-voting members to rejoin the examiners.
- Invite the candidate to deliver an opening statement (typically, no more than 20 minutes in length).
- Invite the examiners to take turns to ask questions. Non-voting members and qualified observers may also ask questions with your permission.
- Once you determine that there are no further questions, ask the candidate and any observers to leave the room (or move them to the virtual waiting room), advising them that they will be called back following deliberations and voting.
- Ensure the committee has sufficient time to deliberate and form a decision, reviewing the voting options as needed.
- Once examiners have formed a decision, collect the votes, read them aloud, and complete the Chair's Summary Form.
- To collect and record the votes, SGS recommends that members email their vote to the graduate unit and the Graduate Program Completion Office, or use a digital or paper ballot.

Day of the FOE, after the exam:

- If the thesis and defence are accepted, invite the candidate to re-enter the room and inform them of the result.
- If the thesis and/or defence are not accepted, then you and the supervisor (if present) will jointly notify the candidate of the adjournment.
- Submit your completed Chair's Summary form and forward all votes to the graduate administrator and Graduate Program Completion Office. The Chair's Summary form also requires you to indicate if the FOE was conducted in accordance with SGS procedures, or to provide details of any procedural concerns.
- If you are submitting a report outlining irregularities in the FOE, then it is due within one week.

The School of Graduate Studies appreciates your contributions and continued commitment to graduate program completion at the University of Toronto.

Contact:
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