Supervisor’s Instructions & Timelines
Doctoral Final Oral Examination

As you approach the culmination of your doctoral candidate’s time at the University of Toronto, you may have questions about timelines and your responsibilities for the Doctoral Final Oral Examination (FOE). If this is your first time having a candidate prepare for an FOE (at U of T) you might also wonder what to expect in the FOE itself so that you can better help students prepare.

Read below for a simplified version of the full School of Graduate Studies (SGS) FOE Guidelines, which should be followed in their entirety. It is important to follow these timelines leading up to an FOE to ensure an optimal experience for everyone involved and timely completion for doctoral candidates.

Note: This document may be relevant to any member of the supervisory committee, and the instructions take the assumption that you are also a voting examiner in the FOE.

2-3 months before:

☐ Discuss with your graduate coordinator and the candidate’s supervisory committee the process for selecting potential external appraisers:
  • cannot be from the University of Toronto or any of the affiliated teaching hospitals and their research institutes;
  • cannot have supervised you or the candidate, cannot have been a departmental colleague of you or the candidate in the past six years, and cannot have co-authored scholarly works with you or the candidate.

☐ Discuss with your graduate coordinator and the candidate’s supervisory committee the process for selecting potential internal-external examiners:
  • must hold an appropriate level of Graduate Faculty Membership and not have been closely involved in the supervision of the thesis.

6-8 weeks before the exam:

☐ Schedule the FOE with the graduate administrator.
☐ Support the candidate if they work on an opening summary for the FOE, as well as prepare to respond to questions in the defense.
  • N.B.: The Chair of the FOE committee will invite the candidate to summarize the research and conclusions of the thesis orally, in no more than twenty minutes.

2 weeks before the exam:

☐ Ensure that an electronic meeting link is created, even if the FOE is planned to be fully in-person.
☐ All examiners and the candidate should receive the external appraisal; an exam may not be postponed in the case of a negative appraisal.
1 week before the exam:

- You will receive a copy of the FOE program which includes the candidate’s name, exam coordinates, thesis title, and the names of all members approved to be in attendance, including voting members.
- You may inform the Chair by letter of departmental norms, for example, order of questioning.

The day of the exam:

- You may verbally inform the Chair of departmental norms, for example, order of questioning.

After the exam:

If changes are required by the FOE committee, you will be providing the candidate with specific instructions depending on the exam result.

- Editorial corrections: you need to generate the list of required changes and be responsible for reviewing and confirming to the grad unit and SGS that they have been made; the corrections must be made within one month.
- Minor revisions: if you are the convenor of the subcommittee, you need to compile the list of revisions required, assess these revisions and obtain assessment from the other committee member(s) and confirm to the grad unit and SGS that the revisions are satisfactory or not; the revisions must be made within three months.
- Adjournment: you need draft the list of reasons for adjournment and obtain confirmation of this list from the other members of the examination committee. A reconvened exam must be held within a year, but preferably sooner.

Contact:

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