

Oral Exam Procedural Guidelines

- For all doctoral dissertation oral exams and for those master's programs that require an external or outside examiner, the written comments provided by the external examiner will be made available to the committee prior to the oral exam.
- At the oral exam, the student may be given the opportunity to present an oral summary of his or her work. If this procedure is followed, the Chair of the exam committee will inform the student and indicate the time available.
- Normally, the first round of questions will refer to general aspects of the work. Subsequent questions will deal with more detailed matters. For all doctoral dissertation oral exams and for those master's programs that require an external or outside examiner, the external examiner will normally begin each round of questioning and will be followed by the other members of the committee in an order agreed upon before the exam.
- The Chair of the exam committee will ensure that each member of the exam committee has an equal opportunity to pose questions. After the formal rounds of questioning, general discussion and order of further questioning will be at the Chair's discretion.
- The question period should normally run its natural course, with members of the exam committee indicating when they are satisfied. The Chair of the exam committee will, however use his/her discretion as to the appropriate closing point. For a master's thesis, a general guideline for the length of the oral exam is approximately 10 to 20 minutes for presentation (if applicable) and 1.5 hours for questioning. For a doctoral dissertation, a general guideline for the length of the oral exam is 20 to 40 minutes for presentation (if applicable) and 2 hours for questioning.
- After the candidate and any observers have left the room, the exam committee will discuss the work and the oral defense of that work, the discussion beginning with the external examiner's remarks.
- The Chair of the exam committee will then assess the committee's opinion from the discussion.
- If there is no consensus, the Chair of the exam committee will call for a vote to determine the outcome of the oral exam. The outcome of the vote shall be governed by the master's thesis oral exam evaluation guidelines and doctoral dissertation oral exam evaluation guidelines.
- In cases of *accepted pending specified revisions*, the nature of the revisions will be agreed to by the exam committee and reported in detail by the Chair in the "comments" section of the Oral Examination Report Form.
- In cases of *major revision*, the Chair of the exam committee will confirm which of the following two procedures, agreed upon by the committee before the exam is adjourned, will be used to finalize the oral results: a) the committee will reconvene within twelve months to continue the oral examination; or, b) the revised dissertation will be circulated within twelve months to all members, who will inform the Chair whether they feel the stipulated requirements have been met.
- After the exam committee has reached a decision, the candidate will be recalled and informed by the Chair of the outcome of the examination. Should revisions be required, their exact nature will be transmitted to the student by the Chair.
- The written comments of the external examiner will, with his or her permission, be provided to the student and program director.
- The Oral Examination Report Form will properly completed (including, where appropriate, a clear description of required revisions) and signed by the Chair and returned to the thesis coordinator in the Office of the Dean, Graduate Studies.
- In cases of *accepted pending specified revisions*, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that all of the specified revisions are made and the Chair will confirm that this is the case. Specified revisions must be completed within six months of the date of the oral examination. Approval of specified revisions should be reported to the Office of the Dean, Graduate Studies, via the [Revisions Approved Memorandum \(.pdf\)](#) or via email to the [thesis coordinator](#) .
- In cases of *referred pending major revisions or failure*, the Chair will provide detailed reasons for the exam committee's decision in writing to the Dean, program director and student within two weeks of the oral exam. When major revisions have been completed satisfactorily as decided by the exam committee, the Chair should report approval of the major revisions to the Office of the Dean, Graduate Studies, via the [Revisions Approved Memorandum \(.pdf\)](#) or via email to the [thesis coordinator](#) .

Doctoral Dissertation Oral Exam Evaluation Guidelines and Reporting of Results

Evaluation Guidelines

- Doctoral dissertations submitted by students in partial fulfillment of degree requirements must be successfully defended at oral examinations. The oral examination will centre on the dissertation.
- The dissertation oral examination requirement is met if one of the following situations exists: if the committee accepts the dissertation with no revisions; or, if the committee accepts the dissertation with specified revisions.
- Specified revisions could range from typographical errors or changes of a minor editorial nature, to specified insertions or deletions which do not radically modify the development/argument of the dissertation. The committee must specify such changes with precision. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that all such changes are made, and the Dean's representative will confirm that this is the case. Specified revisions must be completed within six months of the date of the oral examination.
- In cases where there are no more than two votes for major revision or one vote for failure, then specified revisions are expected.
- A dissertation is referred for major revision if any of the following conditions exist: the committee agrees that the dissertation requires substantive changes in order to be acceptable; or, there are two votes for failure; or, there is one vote for failure plus a minimum of one vote for major revision; or, there are at least three votes for major revision.
- In the cases of major revision, one of the following procedures, agreed upon by the committee before the examination is adjourned, must be used to finalize the oral results: the committee will reconvene within twelve months to continue the oral examination; or, the revised dissertation will be circulated within twelve months to all members, who will inform the Dean's representative whether they feel the stipulated requirements have been met.
- Detailed reasons for referring pending major revisions must be supplied in writing by the Chair to the Dean, the program director and the student concerned within two weeks.
- After an adjournment and when the major revisions have been completed, the dissertation is failed if there are two or more votes for failure. A dissertation cannot be referred for major revisions more than once and no further adjournment is permitted. In the event of failure, detailed reasons must be supplied in writing by the Chair to the Dean, program director and student within two weeks.
- A dissertation is failed if there are a minimum of three votes for failure. In the event of failure, detailed reasons must be supplied in writing by the Chair to the Dean, program director and student within two weeks.

Reporting of Results

- The results of the oral exam, as determined by the exam committee in accordance with the evaluation guidelines described above, are reported to the Office of the Dean, Graduate Studies, via the [Oral Examination Report Form \(.pdf\)](#). The form should be signed by the Chair of the exam committee and should include, where appropriate, details regarding any required revisions under "comments".
- In accordance with the evaluation guidelines described above, the Oral Examination Report Form requires that the committee reach one of the following four decisions:
 - Accepted with No Revision*
 - Accepted Pending Specified Revisions*, The nature of the revisions should be agreed to by the exam committee and reported in detail on Oral Examination Report Form under "comments". Specified revisions must be completed within six months of the date of the oral exam. Specified revisions must be completed within six months of the date of the oral exam. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that all of the specified revisions are made and the Chair will confirm that this is the case. Approval of specified revisions should be reported to the Office of the Dean, Graduate Studies, via the [Revisions Approved Memorandum \(.pdf\)](#) or via email to the [thesis coordinator](#).
 - Referred Pending Major Revisions*, In cases involving a referred pending major revisions decisions, one of the following procedures, agreed upon by the committee before the examination is adjourned, must be used to finalize the oral results: a) the committee will reconvene within twelve months to continue the oral examination, or b) the revised dissertation will be circulated within twelve months to all members, who will inform the Chair whether they feel the stipulated requirements have been met.
- Please note that a clear consensus must be reached by the committee as to the extent and nature of the revisions required. Detailed reasons for referring pending major revision must be supplied in writing by the Chair of the exam committee to the Dean, the program director and the candidate concerned within two weeks.
- Approval of major revisions should be reported to the Office of the Dean, Graduate Studies, via the [Revisions Approved Memorandum \(.pdf\)](#) or via email to the [thesis coordinator](#).
- Failed
In the event of failure, detailed reasons must be supplied in writing by the Chair of the exam committee to the Dean, program director and candidate within two weeks.