Supervisors and Supervisory Committees

1.0 Selection of a Supervisor

1.1 General Advice to Students

All students must have either an interim advisor or an approved Supervisor at the time of first registration, and a permanent Supervisor no later than the second annual registration. It would help the student in program planning if the selection of a Supervisor were completed as quickly as possible. Students are encouraged to think about and select their areas of specialization as early as possible, and preferably before beginning the program.

1.2 Supervisor Selection

The initial selection of a Supervisor should be by mutual agreement between student and faculty member, and approved by the Graduate Coordinator. Difficulties or conflicts in selecting or recommending a Supervisor should be referred promptly to the Dean by any of the persons involved.

1.2.1 Supervisor Eligibility Requirements

Continuity of supervision throughout a graduate program is important to a student’s success. Normally, faculty members with Continuing Board appointments in the professorial ranks are chosen as Supervisors. However, there are occasions when it is to the student’s advantage for a program to recommend the appointment of a Supervisor who does not have a Continuing Board appointment. For example, an individual who holds an appointment that is Specific Term (Contingent, Limited Term, Term Certain), Clinical or Adjunct, or Honorary, or has Emeritus status, or is from outside the University, may be appointed Supervisor. In cases such as these, the Faculty of Graduate Studies requires assurance that the proposed Supervisor will be able to provide continuity.

The proposed Supervisor must understand the commitment expected in terms of time and funding and be familiar with current graduate program and Faculty of Graduate Studies regulations. The Graduate Coordinator must ensure that supervision will be provided for the probable time period required for the completion of the degree program.

If the proposed Supervisor is someone from outside the graduate program who does not have a Continuing Board appointment, or is from outside the University of Calgary, a Co-supervisor must be appointed. The Supervisor should be currently active in research in an area related to the student’s interest. Faculty members working on their own graduate degrees cannot be approved in any supervisory capacity without special dispensation from the Dean. For detailed policy and the required forms, see http://www.grad.ucalgary.ca > Policies and Procedures.

1.2.2 Conflict of Interest

The relationship between Supervisor and student is an academic one. Where other relationships exist or develop that might give the appearance of conflict of interest they must be immediately reported to the Graduate Coordinator who can consult with an Associate Dean or the Dean if the Coordinator is unable to
resolve the situation. (See Graduate Studies Conflict of Interest Policy: http://www.grad.ucalgary.ca/policies/conflictofinterest).

1.3 Appointment of Co-supervisor

In addition to those cases noted above in which it is required that a Co-supervisor be appointed, a Co-supervisor may be appointed by the Graduate Coordinator upon the written recommendation of the Supervisor and agreement of the student. The role of the Co-supervisor in this case is to provide supplementary guidance, instruction and research stimulation on a regular or extensive basis.

1.4 Supervisor or Co-supervisor from Outside the Department, Program, or Faculty

A Supervisor or Co-supervisor may be from a department, program, or faculty other than the student’s home department, program, or faculty. The recommendation must be endorsed by the student. The faculty member’s home program should be notified by the relevant Graduate Coordinator whenever the faculty member is asked to supervise or co-supervise outside the home program. Such an “external” Supervisor or Co-Supervisor must agree to be responsible to the Graduate Coordinator of the student’s home department in all matters related to the supervisory responsibilities.

1.5 Continuity of Supervision

Students are entitled to continuity of supervision. In the case of the resignation from the University, illness or death of the Supervisor, the Graduate Coordinator must make immediate arrangements to provide continuity of supervision pending the appointment of a new Supervisor.

1.6 Supervisor Selection and Approval Deadlines

Regular students are required to have approved Supervisors within twelve months of initial registration. Doctoral students admitted as special case admissions must have an approved Supervisor and Supervisory Committee before admission.

2.0 Responsibilities of Supervisors

2.1 Knowledge of Rules and Procedures

Supervisors should be familiar with the rules and procedures of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and program regulations and requirements.

2.2 Meetings between Student and Supervisor

A student and Supervisor have a shared responsibility to meet on a regular basis.

2.3 The Role of the Supervisor

The Supervisor should act both as a general academic mentor, with emphasis on guidance, instruction, and encouragement of scholarship and research, and as a judge of the student’s performance. Because of their own involvement in research and related professional activities, Supervisors should provide professional guidance and research stimulation to their students. A fundamental duty of the Supervisor is to impart to the student the skills necessary to plan and conduct original research.

Specifically, the Supervisor should:

Work with the student to establish a realistic timetable for the completion of the various requirements of the program of study; discuss with the student and establish mutual expectations for the student’s vacation time;

Develop a relationship with the student conducive to research and intellectual growth;

Guide the student in the pursuit of knowledge and provide constructive criticism in support of the highest standards of research and professional development.

2.4 Participation of Supervisor in Thesis Preparation

The Supervisor is expected to provide frequent and prompt comments on drafts of the thesis and should attempt to be critically constructive and encouraging but the thesis must be the creation of the student.
2.5 Supervisory Provision for Leave of Absence

A program and Supervisor must ensure that the student is provided with adequate supervision during a Supervisor’s leave, potentially through the appointment of an interim Supervisor. In doctoral programs, the interim Supervisor should be a member of the Supervisory Committee. Students should be informed well in advance about the Supervisor’s plans for forthcoming leaves of absence. With current means of communication, continued supervision while on a research and scholarship leave is the expectation for faculty members. These arrangements must be communicated in writing to the Graduate Coordinator, who bears the responsibility for ensuring continuity of supervision for students in his/her graduate program.

2.5.1 Interim Supervisory Arrangements

When an interim Supervisor is appointed to cover a period of a Supervisor’s absence, the regular Supervisor retains final responsibility for the adequate supervision of the student. Faculty members approved as interim Supervisors must indicate in writing to the Graduate Coordinator their willingness to accept responsibility for the day-to-day supervision of such students.

2.6 The Supervisor and Setting up Examinations

The Supervisor is responsible for scheduling the candidacy examination and the thesis oral examination.

2.7 Suggested Procedures in the Event of Problems between Graduate Students and Their Supervisors

Students should first try to resolve problems with Supervisors by talking to the Supervisor. Supervisory Committee members might be able to give helpful advice in this situation. Problems that are not resolved in this fashion should be discussed with the Graduate Coordinator, and then the Department Head or equivalent. If it appears that a solution cannot be reached, the student and/or the Graduate Coordinator may consult the Faculty of Graduate Studies for advice about a resolution of the matter.

2.8 Procedures for the Curtailment of Supervisory Duties

The Dean of Graduate Studies approves the initial appointment of a faculty member to supervisory duties. If a complaint is made against a Supervisor, the Dean will first discuss the matter with the Department Head or equivalent, and then with the faculty member concerned. The issue may be resolved informally. If the Dean decides that a more formal approach is needed to resolve the dispute, the Dean will inform both the Head and the faculty member of his/her conclusions in writing. If the result of the Dean’s investigation is curtailment of the supervisory duties of the faculty member, the Dean will inform the faculty member in writing.

3.0 Doctoral Supervisory Committee

3.1 Composition of the Supervisory Committee

The Supervisor and Graduate Coordinator must inform the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the Supervisory Committee composition no later than three months after the appointment of the Supervisor.

The Supervisory Committee should be constituted by the Supervisor in consultation with the student. It will normally consist of the Supervisor and two members, and must be approved by the Graduate Coordinator and sent to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for information. Committee members may be external to the student’s program. At least one of the members of the Supervisory Committee should have had supervisory experience at the doctoral level. If a Co-supervisor and a Supervisor are appointed, the Supervisory Committee will require two other members.

3.2 Non-Board Appointees on Supervisory Committee

Persons who are not Board appointees of the University of Calgary may be approved to serve on supervisory committees. A recommendation to the Dean by the Graduate Coordinator for such an appointment must be accompanied by a curriculum vitae.
3.3 Duties of a Supervisory Committee

Members of a doctoral Supervisory Committee should provide support to both the student and the Supervisor by expanding the range of expertise and experience available to advise and assess the student. Members should provide constructive criticism and discussion of the student’s ideas, methods and performance as the program develops; should be accessible to the student for consultation and discussion; should suggest other sources of information to the student; and must participate in examinations and in periodic meetings with the student and provide regular assessment of the student’s progress as required by the program regulations.

THE DOCTORAL THESIS

4.0 Thesis Quality Requirements

The doctoral thesis must embody original work conducted while in program, and must constitute a significant contribution to knowledge. It should contain evidence of critical understanding of the relevant literature. The material embodied in the thesis should merit publication.

The general form and style of thesis may differ from program to program but a thesis should be a coherent document. This means that if a thesis contains separate manuscripts, there needs also to be an introductory and concluding chapter that explain how these separate manuscripts fit together into a unified body of research. If previously published materials are included, it should be made clear what exactly is the student’s own work and what is the contribution of other researchers.

While it is expected that the thesis could be the basis for a publication, the Supervisor and examiners should recognize that even an excellent thesis might not be perfect in all respects. ‘Perfection’ is not a prerequisite for acceptance of the thesis as a “partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree”. The thesis may vary in quality from passable to outstanding.


EXAMINING COMMITTEES, EXAMINATIONS AND STANDARDS

5.0 Standards of Performance

5.1 Judgement of Student Performance

Supervisors and Graduate Coordinators must inform students on a regular basis about their academic progress. If a student’s performance is judged to be below an acceptable level, this judgement should be expressed to the student formally and in writing at as early a stage in the program as possible. A student may be required to withdraw from the Faculty of Graduate Studies for reasons of “unsatisfactory progress” (see also section 6.2).

5.2 Annual Progress Report

The Supervisor and each continuing student must jointly submit an annual progress report on the student’s performance. This form must be signed by the Supervisor, the Graduate Coordinator, and the student, and must be forwarded to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The student must sign the report after the Supervisor and the Graduate Coordinator have completed their comments to acknowledge that he/she has reviewed these comments.

6.0 Faculty of Graduate Studies Examinations

6.1 Faculty Examination Requirements

The Faculty of Graduate Studies requires that candidates for doctoral degrees sit both an oral candidacy examination and a thesis oral examination.

6.1.1 Faculty Regulations for Candidacy Oral Examinations

Candidacy oral examinations are examinations of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. No changes in the
composition of the examination committee may be introduced without prior approval from an Associate Dean of Graduate Studies or the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Faculty of Graduate Studies must be informed of changes in the scheduling of the examination.

6.1.2 Faculty Regulations for Thesis Examinations

Thesis oral examinations are examinations of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. No changes in the composition of the examination committee may be introduced without prior approval from an Associate Dean of Graduate Studies or the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Faculty of Graduate Studies must be informed of minor changes in the scheduling of the examination (e.g., for illness or weather). Changes of more than two weeks will need prior approval by the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

6.2 Program Examination Requirements and Standards

Program requirements may include examinations that are in addition to the Faculty of Graduate Studies requirements. Programs are entitled to set their own standards of adequate performance in such examinations, provided these are not in conflict with Faculty of Graduate Studies standards. When a student fails to meet either Faculty or program standards, the program may recommend to the Dean of Graduate Studies that the student be required to withdraw. (See also section 5.1).

6.3 Communication of Examination Requirements to Students

Programs should provide their students, as early as possible, with information about the precise nature and form of program examinations and tests.

7.0 Admission to Candidacy

Admission to candidacy is an acknowledgement that a student is fully prepared to devote his/her full attention to the dissertation research. For admission to candidacy, the Faculty of Graduate Studies requires that (1) all mandatory course work has been completed, (2) an oral candidacy examination has been successfully passed, and (3) a dissertation research proposal has been approved by the student’s Supervisory Committee. Programs may require the examination and proposal to be completed in any order, including approval of the proposal within the examination.

Although the oral candidacy examination is the official Faculty of Graduate Studies examination, graduate programs have the option of adding a written component. If there is a written component, the period during which the written examination and the oral examination are conducted must not exceed one month. The written examination should be circulated among the examiners and may serve as a basis for questioning at the oral. If the student fails the written component of the candidacy examination, the oral examination should still go ahead as scheduled in order to give the candidate an opportunity to defend the written answers, as well as deal with other questions.


7.1 Rationale for Candidacy Examinations

The candidacy examination should focus on the background knowledge of students in their discipline, as well as their preparedness to conduct research of high quality in their particular fields of study.

7.2 Program Guidelines and Regulations

Although the candidacy examination is a Faculty of Graduate Studies examination, individual programs determine the precise requirements. All programs must have written guidelines describing the examination regulations and the timing of the dissertation research proposal relative to the candidacy examination. These guidelines and regulations must be given to doctoral students as soon as they enter the program.

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1 Exceptions apply to students in Clinical Psychology (CPSY) and Applied Psychology (APSY).

Faculty of Graduate Studies

Handbook of Supervision and Examination: Doctoral Programs

Updated June 4, 2009
7.3 Assessment of the Candidacy Examinations
Assessment of the candidacy examination must take place immediately following the completion of the oral candidacy examination. This assessment should be based on the candidate’s overall performance in all components of the examination.

7.4 Candidacy Examination and Course Work
All required course work must have been completed prior to the candidacy examination. No further course work may be required of a student who has successfully completed the candidacy examinations, but a student may elect to complete additional courses subject to approval by the Graduate Coordinator.

7.5 Deadlines for Admission to Candidacy
A student entering a doctoral program with a completed Master’s degree must attempt the candidacy examinations and submit a research proposal acceptable to the Supervisory Committee no later than twenty-eight months after initial registration in the doctoral program. A student entering a doctoral program with a bachelor’s degree, or transferring into a doctoral program from a Master’s program before the Master’s program is completed, must attempt the candidacy examinations and submit a research proposal acceptable to the Supervisory Committee no later than thirty-six months after initial registration in the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

7.6 Establishing the Candidacy Examination Committee
A written recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Studies on the composition of the candidacy examination committee must be received in the Faculty of Graduate Studies office at least four weeks before the scheduled date of the examination. The committee will not be approved by the Faculty of Graduate Studies earlier than three months before the planned examination date.

7.7 Composition of the Candidacy Examination Committee
Normally, the Candidacy Examination Committee consists of the Supervisory Committee plus two additional members recommended by the Graduate Coordinator who shall ensure that no conflict of interest exists between the student or the Supervisor and the additional members of the examination committee. (See Graduate Studies Conflict of Interest Policy: http://www.grad.ucalgary.ca/policies/conflictofinterest). Normally, the Supervisor is a voting member, but a graduate program may choose to have the Supervisor attend as a non-voting observer. The Graduate Calendar notes programs that have chosen this option.

7.7.1 Neutral Chair of the Candidacy Examination Committee
The examination is chaired by a member of the academic staff appointed by the Graduate Coordinator. The Neutral Chair is not a member of the examining committee and is non-voting.

7.7.2 Responsibilities of the Supervisor and the Neutral Chair
The Supervisor arranges scheduling of the examination. The Neutral Chair presides over the candidacy examination and reports the results to the student. The Neutral Chair gives the report to the Graduate Coordinator, who ensures that it is submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies within 24 hours of the examination.

7.7.3 Non-Board Appointees on Examination Committee
Persons who are not Board appointees of the University of Calgary may be approved to serve on candidacy examination committees. A recommendation to the Dean by the Graduate Coordinator for such an appointment must be accompanied by a curriculum vitae.

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2 Exceptions apply to students in Clinical Psychology (CPSY) and Applied Psychology (APSY).
7.8  Notice of Candidacy Oral Examination

The official Notice of Candidacy Oral Examination form must be received in the Faculty of Graduate Studies office at least four weeks before the time of examination. The form identifies the time and place of the examination, the names of the recommended members of the examination committee, and by the signature of the Graduate Coordinator confirms that the candidate has completed course requirements.3 The membership of the examination committee must be approved by the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

7.9  Attendance at Candidacy Oral Examinations

The candidacy oral examination is a formal examination limited to the examination committee and the student. The Dean of Graduate Studies or Dean’s representative and the Department Head or equivalent, or designate, may attend without prior notice.

8.0  Conduct of Candidacy Oral Examination

8.1  Examination Regulations

No one other than a member of the examination committee is allowed to question the candidate. All examiners should be given an opportunity to question the candidate during the early part of the examination, e.g., by rounds of questioning.

8.2  Suggested Examination Procedure

Questions to the candidate should be clear and succinct. The student should be given reasonable time to answer. If the student has understood the question and cannot answer, the examiner should pass to another question and not attempt to extract an answer by prolonged interrogation, or by leading the candidate. The chair should guard against any tendency of examiners to interact with each other instead of concentrating on the examination of the candidate.

8.3  Length of Examination

The candidacy examination should not exceed two hours. This does not include the deliberation time of the Committee.

9.0  Post Candidacy Oral Examination Procedures

9.1  Official Examiners’ Discussion

At the end of the candidacy examination, the student is asked to withdraw from the room. If the program has chosen to allow the Supervisor to attend the examination as a non-voting observer, at the end of the candidacy examination the student and the Supervisor are asked to withdraw from the room. Before any discussion of the candidate’s performance, each examiner must identify, by secret ballot, which recommendation (pass/fail) he/she favours. This procedure provides the committee with a frame of opinion upon which to base a full discussion of the student’s performance. The examiners then conduct a post-examination discussion, in which the Department Head or equivalent, or designate (e.g., Graduate Coordinator), and the Dean of Graduate Studies or the Dean’s representative may participate, although they have no vote.

9.2  Recommendation of the Candidacy Examination Committee

After the final vote, each examiner must record a recommendation of pass or fail on the official Faculty of Graduate Studies Report of Candidacy Oral Examination form. Every effort should be made to reach a unanimous recommendation. Should the outcome of the final vote include one negative vote, the candidate will pass. Should the outcome include two or more negative votes, the committee’s recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Studies will be “fail”.

The final decision will be at the discretion of the Dean of Graduate Studies. Should the Dean of Graduate

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3 Exceptions apply to students in Clinical Psychology (CPSY) and Applied Psychology (APSY).
Studies uphold the recommendation of “fail,” the student will be allowed a retake of the examination. Within five working days of the failed examination, the Neutral Chair must submit a written report of the examination procedures to the Dean of Graduate Studies and copy it to the Graduate Coordinator. Within five working days of the examination each committee member must provide a confidential written report to the Dean of Graduate Studies explaining the reasons for his/her vote and copy it to the Graduate Coordinator and the Supervisor. After consultation with the Supervisor, the Graduate Coordinator then summarizes the essential points to the student, copied to the Supervisor.

The Neutral Chair must inform the student of the committee’s recommendation immediately following the vote of the examination committee. The Neutral Chair will record the final recommendation of pass or fail on the Report of Candidacy Oral Examination form which must be submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies within one working day of the completion of the examination.

9.3 Re-take of Candidacy Examination

Only one re-take of a candidacy examination will be permitted. The re-take must take place no sooner than two months and no later than six months from the date of the first examination. Normally the composition of the committee will remain the same. In reporting the results of the second examination, the committee will be limited to recommending either a pass (i.e., no more than one negative vote), or fail. A recommendation of “fail” requires that, within five working days, each examiner must submit a confidential written report to the Dean of Graduate Studies, copied to the Graduate Coordinator and the Supervisor, detailing the reasons for his/her vote. Within five working days, the Neutral Chair must also submit a written report of the examination procedures to the Dean of Graduate Studies, copied to the Graduate Coordinator. If the Dean of Graduate Studies upholds the recommendation to fail, the student will be required to withdraw from the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

10.0 Thesis Oral Examinations

10.1 Right of Student to Submit and Defend Thesis

A student who has successfully completed all Faculty of Graduate Studies and program requirements has the right to submit and defend a thesis even if doing so may be contrary to the advice of the Supervisor.

10.2 Composition of the Thesis Oral Examination Committee

The thesis oral examination committee shall consist of the student’s Supervisory Committee and at least two other examiners, one of whom shall be external to the student’s home program and the other external to the University. The composition of the committee must be approved by the Dean, upon the recommendation of the Graduate Coordinator. The Dean may approve a recommendation that the examiner external to the University not attend the thesis oral examination in person, but participate electronically, by teleconference or videoconference. In rare cases, the Dean may approve a recommendation that the examiner external to the University not participate in the oral examination in person, but furnish the examination committee with a list of questions to be put to the candidate together with a detailed appraisal of the thesis. When acting in this capacity, the examiner external to the University is designated the external reader.

10.2.1 Examiner External to the University

The Graduate Coordinator must recommend the examiner external to the University to the Dean at least six weeks before the proposed date of the examination on the form Approval of External Examiner or Reader, accompanied by a curriculum vitae. For further guidelines on external examiners and readers, refer to http://www.grad.ucalgary.ca > Policies and Procedures > Examination.

10.2.2 Relationship of the Examiner External to the University to the Student

In order to ensure impartiality, the proposed Examiner must not be a close personal friend of the candidate’s Supervisor, have collaborated with the Supervisor in the last five years, be closely related to the candidate, nor have worked with the candidate, and must not have been a Supervisor in the candidate’s graduate program for the last three years. If any of the criteria are not met, the proposed Examiner is not necessarily precluded from serving, but the graduate program must clearly explain the circumstances to the
10.2.3  Non-Board Appointees on Examination Committees

Persons who are not Board appointees of the University of Calgary may be approved to serve on thesis oral examination committees. A recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Studies by the Graduate Coordinator for such an appointment must be accompanied by a curriculum vitae.

10.2.4  The Neutral Chair

The examination is chaired by a neutral member of the academic staff appointed by the Graduate Coordinator. He/she is not a member of the examining committee and is non-voting.

10.2.5  Responsibilities of the Supervisor and the Neutral Chair

The Supervisor arranges scheduling of the examination. The Neutral Chair presides over the thesis oral examination and reports the results to the student. The Neutral Chair gives the report to the Graduate Coordinator who ensures that it is submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies within 24 hours of the examination.

10.3  Composition of Examination Committee for Re-take of Thesis Oral Examination

Normally, the composition of the examination committee will remain the same. Upon the recommendation of the Graduate Coordinator and approval of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, an examiner may be replaced.

10.3.1  Appointment of Examination Committee for Re-take of Examination

The Notice of Thesis Oral Examination must be received in the Faculty of Graduate Studies office at least four weeks prior to the time of the examination. Should a new examiner external to the University be recommended, the Faculty of Graduate Studies must receive the recommendation at least six weeks before the proposed date of the examination on the form Approval of External Examiner or Reader, accompanied by a curriculum vitae.

11.0  Scheduling the Thesis Oral Examination

11.1  Supervisor Responsibility

The Supervisor is responsible for all steps in setting up the thesis oral examination.

11.2  Notice of Thesis Oral Examination

The official Notice of Thesis Oral Examination form, indicating the title of the thesis, the time and place of the examination, the names of the recommended members of the examination committee, and confirming that the candidate has completed all program requirements to proceed to oral examination, endorsed by the Graduate Coordinator, must be received in the Faculty of Graduate Studies office at least four weeks prior to the time of the examination. The membership of the examination committee must be approved by the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

11.2.1  Posting the Notice of Thesis Oral Examination

A Notice of the Thesis Oral Examination form, bearing the names, but not signatures of the student, the Supervisor, the Graduate Coordinator and the Dean of Graduate Studies, or designate, must be posted at least two weeks before the date of the examination. The Graduate Coordinator must ensure that copies of the Notice are sent to the student and to members of the examination committee.

11.2.2  Student Approval of Designated Area of Specialization

The format of the University degree parchment presented to successful candidates shows the degree, the department or area of study, and the approved area of specialization. Students should ensure that the

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4 Exceptions apply to students in Clinical Psychology (CPSY) and Applied Psychology (APSY).
approved area of specialization identified on the Notice of the Thesis Oral Examination form is correct, before it is sent to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

11.3 Form of Thesis

The thesis submitted to the members of the examination committee for final examination must be in all respects a final, complete copy and not a draft.

11.4 Thesis to Examiners

The student must ensure that the thesis is in the hands of the examiners (including the examiner external to the University) at least three weeks prior to the proposed date of the oral examination. The examination begins when the thesis is distributed. The examiners should not discuss the thesis or their evaluation of it with each other (or anyone else) prior to the oral examination. The Examiner’s Report is considered a confidential document and must not be shared with the candidate or the other examining committee members before the final decision of the examining committee.

11.5 Format of Final Thesis Oral Examination

Normally, final thesis oral examinations are open, but only the examiners may question the student. The examiners’ deliberations are private and confidential. Only the Neutral Chair, the examining committee, and, if present, the Department/Program Head and the Dean of Graduate Studies or the Dean’s Representative may be present.

12.0 Conduct of Thesis Oral Examination

12.1 Examiner’s Report on Thesis

Before the oral examination, each examiner is required to prepare an assessment of the thesis, on the official Examiner’s Report on Thesis form. These assessments are to be submitted to the Neutral Chair of the examination committee before the oral examination begins. The assessments are CONFIDENTIAL: they are not to be made available to the student or to the examination committee before the final recommendation of the examination committee. After the examination, the Neutral Chair should submit the reports to the Graduate Coordinator who ensures that they are forwarded to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. After the examination, the graduate program must make the Examiners’ Reports available to the student, upon request.

12.2 Examination Regulations

12.2.1 Formal Examination

The oral examination is a formal examination, not an informal discussion with the candidate.

12.2.2 Questioning of the Candidate

No one other than an examiner (as identified on the Notice of Thesis Oral Examination form) is allowed to question the candidate. All examiners must be given an opportunity to question the candidate early in the examination, e.g., by rounds of questioning.

12.2.3 Length of Examination

Ordinarily, the oral examination should not exceed two hours. This does not include deliberation time of the committee.

12.2.4 Editorial Comments on Thesis

Examiners’ editorial comments on the thesis should not be discussed at the oral examination. It is recommended that each examiner hand the student a list of any such comments for post-examination final thesis revisions.
12.3  Suggested Examination Procedures

12.3.1  Opening Summary

It is common practice to ask the student to present a brief (up to fifteen minutes) opening summary of the thesis. Although this is not mandatory, students may appreciate the opportunity to introduce their research work and summarize its significance.

12.3.2  Questions to the Candidate

Questions to the candidate should be relevant to the subject matter of the thesis, and should be clearly and succinctly phrased in order to minimize doubt in the candidate’s mind as to what is being asked. The student should be given reasonable time to answer. If the student has understood the question but cannot answer, the examiner should pass to another question and not attempt to extract an answer by prolonged interrogation. The chair should guard against any tendency of examiners to interact with each other instead of concentrating on the examination of the candidate.

13.0  Post Thesis Oral Examination Procedures

13.1  Provisional Recommendations

At the end of the thesis oral examination, everyone except the Neutral Chair, the members of the examination committee, the Department/Program Head or designate and the Dean of Graduate Studies and/or Dean’s representative, is required to withdraw from the room. Before any discussion of the candidate’s performance, each examiner must identify, by secret ballot, whether he/she favours recommending a pass or fail on each of the thesis and the oral defence. This procedure provides the committee with a frame of opinion upon which a full discussion of the student’s performance may then be based.

13.2  Official Examiners’ Discussion

Following a count of the straw vote the Neutral Chair will facilitate a post-examination discussion, in which the Department/Program Head and the Dean of Graduate Studies or their representatives may participate, although they have no vote. At the conclusion of the discussion, each examiner must write his/her final recommendations on the official Report of Doctoral Thesis Examination form. Unanimous decisions are required for both the thesis and the oral defence. If the examiners are unable to achieve unanimity regarding one or both components, there must be no further discussion regarding that component of the examination and the Neutral Chair must immediately inform the Dean of Graduate Studies of “lack of unanimity.” The final decision will be at the discretion of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

13.3  Recommendation of Examination Committee

Thesis oral examinations are designed to establish a level of achievement consistent with the standards of the Faculty of Graduate Studies as outlined in section 4, “Thesis Quality Requirements.” The following section (13.4) defines the official Faculty recommendations to the Dean of Graduate Studies respecting outcomes of thesis oral examinations. In each case, the committee recommendations must be reported to the Dean on the official Report of Doctoral Final Examination form within one working day of the completion of the examination. Immediately following the conclusion of the examination, the Neutral Chair must report the outcome to the student.

13.4  Recommendations

Thesis examinations must be judged to be either acceptable or unacceptable with respect to the thesis itself and, with respect to the oral defence, if the thesis is judged acceptable.

13.4.1  Recommendation for the Thesis

If the unanimous final decision is that the thesis conforms to the requirements for a doctoral thesis (see section 4) then all members of the examination committee shall sign the signature page except the Supervisor, who will sign after reviewing and approving any necessary minor corrections on behalf of the committee.
If the unanimous final decision is that the underlying research reported in the thesis is judged to be sound, but the presentation of or analysis in the research requires attention that one or more members of the examination committee wish to review personally, then those members will not sign the approval page until they have seen and approved the revisions. Other members of the committee should sign immediately after the examination. The Report of the examination should specify who has withheld his/her signature.

If the examining committee unanimously determines that the underlying research is not acceptable, then the examination committee recommends a failed thesis to the Dean of Graduate Studies. The final decision will be at the discretion of the Dean of Graduate Studies. Should the Dean of Graduate Studies uphold the recommendation of “fail”, the candidate will have a second opportunity to present and defend an acceptable thesis. No judgment should be made on the oral defence, because the revised thesis will need to be defended anew.

If the examiners fail to arrive at a unanimous final recommendation, the Neutral Chair must adjourn discussion on this component of the examination, and that same day inform the Dean of Graduate Studies of “lack of unanimity.” The final decision will be at the discretion of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

For either a unanimous decision to fail the thesis or a lack of unanimity, within five working days the Neutral Chair must submit a written report to the Dean of Graduate Studies, describing the examination procedures and copy it to the Graduate Coordinator. Within five working days, each examination committee member must provide a confidential written report to the Dean of Graduate Studies explaining the reasons for his/her recommendation and copy it to the Graduate Coordinator and the Supervisor. After consultation with the Supervisor, the Graduate Coordinator then summarizes the essential points in a written report to the student, copied to the Supervisor.

In the case of a failed thesis, whether by committee or Dean’s decision, only one re-submission will be allowed and a new defence will be required. In view of the magnitude of the revisions required, a second oral exam must be held no sooner than six months and no later than twelve months from the date of the first examination. This new examination will normally be conducted by the original examination committee.

In reporting the results of the second examination, the committee will be limited to recommending either pass or fail. A recommendation for “fail” requires that each examiner submit within five working days a confidential written report to the Dean of Graduate Studies, copied to the Graduate Coordinator, and the Supervisor detailing the reasons for his/her assessments. Within five working days, the Neutral Chair must also submit a written report of the examination procedures to the Dean of Graduate Studies, copied to the Graduate Coordinator. If the Dean of Graduate Studies upholds the recommendation to fail, the student will be required to withdraw from the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

13.4.2 Recommendation for the Oral Defence

If the unanimous final decision is that the oral defence is acceptable, the recommendation regarding the oral defence is a pass.

If the examining committee unanimously determines that the oral defence is not acceptable, then the examining committee recommends a failed oral defence to the Dean of Graduate Studies. The final decision will be at the discretion of the Dean of Graduate Studies. Should the Dean of Graduate Studies uphold the recommendation of “fail”, the candidate will be allowed a second, final attempt to present an
acceptable oral defence of the thesis.

If the examiners fail to arrive at a unanimous final recommendation, the Neutral Chair must adjourn discussion on this component of the examination, and that same day inform the Dean of Graduate Studies of “lack of unanimity.” The final decision will be at the discretion of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

For either a unanimous decision to fail the oral defence or a lack of unanimity, within five working days the Neutral Chair must submit a written report to the Dean of Graduate Studies, describing the examination procedures and copy it to the Graduate Coordinator. Within five working days, each examination committee member must provide a confidential written report to the Dean of Graduate Studies explaining the reasons for his/her recommendation and copy it to the Graduate Coordinator and the Supervisor. After consultation with the Supervisor, the Graduate Coordinator then summarizes the essential points in a written report to the student, copied to the Supervisor.

In the case of a failed oral defence, whether by committee or Dean’s decision, the candidate will be given only one further opportunity to present an acceptable defence. The second oral examination will be scheduled and normally heard by the original examination committee not later than six months from the date of the first examination. Any necessary revisions to the thesis must be completed by the candidate and approved by the committee before the second oral examination is scheduled.

In reporting the results of the second oral examination, the committee will be limited to recommending either pass or fail. A recommendation for “fail” requires that each examiner submit within five working days a confidential written report to the Dean of Graduate Studies, copied to the Graduate Coordinator, and the Supervisor, detailing the reasons for his/her assessments. Within five working days, the Neutral Chair must also submit a written report of the examination procedures to the Dean of Graduate Studies, copied to the Graduate Coordinator. If the Dean of Graduate Studies upholds the recommendation to fail, the student will be required to withdraw from the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

13.5  Dean’s Action in Lack of Unanimity

When the Neutral Chair of a thesis oral examination does not report a unanimous recommendation, the Dean of Graduate Studies may consult with the Graduate Coordinator, the Supervisor, and the examiners before making a decision. At her/his discretion, the Dean of Graduate Studies may consult with the student as well. A decision should normally be made within seven business days of receiving all the required post-examination reports, and all persons involved informed in writing of the result of the decision.

13.6  Convocation Clearance

The names of the candidates who have successfully completed the final thesis oral examination will not be added to the convocation list until the Faculty of Graduate Studies receives two unbound copies of the thesis and a Departmental Clearance Form. Students will continue to be assessed continuing fees until cleared for convocation.

TRANSFERS

14.0 Transfers Within Program

14.1 Application for Change of Area of Specialization

A student may apply through the graduate program to the Dean for permission to transfer from one area of specialization to another while remaining within the degree program. Such application must be made prior to the candidacy examination.
15.0 Transfers to Master’s Programs

15.1 Transfer from Doctoral to Master’s Program

A transfer from a doctoral program to a Master’s program, within closely related areas of specialization, may be recommended where, in the opinion of the Graduate Coordinator and the Supervisor, such a transfer is in the best interest of the student. Such application should normally be made before the candidacy examination. Transfers may be approved if the student is unsuccessful in the candidacy oral examination on the first attempt. The Dean of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Coordinator of the Master’s program to which the student transfers must approve the transfer.

15.2 Course and Examination Requirements

Courses credited to the doctoral program may be accepted as fulfilling Master’s course requirements where applicable, in accordance with program regulations for required Master’s course work. Such a student must complete all requirements for the Master’s degree.

15.3 Time Limits on Transfers

Transfers from a doctoral to a Master’s program should normally be completed no later than the beginning of the student’s third annual registration year. All transfer students must complete the Master’s degree program within their fourth registration year.