

# University of Saskatchewan - Policies and Procedures for Masters and Ph.D. Defences

## THESIS ORAL EXAMINATION RECOMMENDATIONS

<p><b>THESIS ACCEPTABLE</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thesis acceptable, with or without minor revisions</li> <li>• Oral defence acceptable</li> </ul> <p>All members of the examining committee sign the certification pages EXCEPT THE SUPERVISOR, who will sign only after ensuring the necessary revisions have been made.</p> <p><i>As a general guide, if the committee does not feel that thesis revisions can be completed within a two-week time frame by a student working full-time on the thesis, it should consider Recommendation 2.</i></p>	
<p><b>THESIS REQUIRES RE-SUBMISSION</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underlying research adjudged to be sound, but thesis in need of recasting, addition of illustrative material or limited additional data</li> <li>• Oral defence acceptable</li> </ul> <p>Recommendation 2 is often used in a situation where different members of the committee take on specific responsibilities for ensuring that a particular part of the thesis is revised as required. In these circumstances, the normal practice is for those with such responsibilities not to sign the approval page until the revisions have been made, while other members not so involved may sign immediately after the examination. Otherwise, none of the committee members sign approval pages until the revised document has been returned for the committee's final approval (no additional oral defence).</p> <p><i>As a general guide, if the committee does not feel that the thesis revisions can be completed within a six-week time frame by a student working largely full-time on the thesis, it should consider Recommendation 4.</i></p>	<p><b>ORAL DEFENCE ACCEPTABLE</b></p>
<p><b>THESIS ACCEPTABLE</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thesis acceptable</li> <li>• Oral defence unacceptable</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only available to students taking the oral exam for the first time</li> </ul> <p><i>Second attempt at oral defence should be completed within three months of the date of the initial examination.</i></p>	<p><b>ORAL DEFENCE UNACCEPTABLE</b></p>
<p><b>THESIS UNACCEPTABLE</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Recommendation 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thesis does not meet minimum standards, but committee believes that further research and/or revision may bring it to an acceptable standard <u>or</u> thesis defence is unacceptable but the Committee agrees that the Candidate has the potential, with additional preparation, to be able to successfully defend work.</li> <li>• Only available to students taking the oral exam for the first time</li> </ul> <p><i>Re-submission of thesis and second attempt of oral defence no sooner than six months and no later than twelve months after the original defence.</i></p>	<p><b>ORAL EXAMINATION RE-TAKE</b></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Recommendation 5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thesis does not meet minimum standards and committee considers that no reasonable amount of additional research or revision is likely to bring it to an acceptable standard <u>or</u> oral defence of thesis is completely unacceptable and Committee agrees that the Candidate does not have potential to be able to successfully defend the work.</li> </ul> <p><i>Committee recommends Candidate be Required to Discontinue from the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.</i></p>	<p><b>CLEAR FAIL</b></p>
<p><b>EXTERNAL EXAMINER DOES NOT VOTE WITH MAJORITY</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>External Examiner Does Not Vote with Majority</b></p> <p>If the Committee cannot reach a consensus on the acceptability of the thesis and/or the defence, a vote must be taken. The Dean's Designate may not vote but the Chair of the Examining Committee and the Supervisor are entitled to vote. Abstentions shall be interpreted as negative votes. Where the External Examiner does not share the majority view, (whether it is a yes or a no vote) the examination shall be adjourned, the External Examiner shall write a report to the Dean indicating why he or she could not support the majority opinion of the Examining Committee, and the Dean will review the situation and establish appropriate procedures to resolve the matter. In addition, the chairperson must submit a written assessment of the examination. All reports must be copied to the department head.</p>	<p><b>DEAN'S ACTION</b></p>

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## Role of the Examining Committee and External Examiner for Oral Thesis Examinations at the University of Saskatchewan

1. The External Examiner is appointed by the Dean of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and normally is present at the examination by invitation of the Dean. In accepting the invitation to serve, the External Examiner is also indicating that he or she has not been involved with the research project or the preparation of the thesis.
2. The College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies requires the External Examiner to indicate that the thesis is in a suitable condition, in terms of both content and format, for examination. In serious cases, where the External Examiner does not believe that the thesis is ready for examination, he or she should so inform the Dean of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. For Masters degrees, the External Examiner should contact the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research prior to the day of the examination. For PhD degrees, this indication should be included as part of a written report (GSR 403.1) evaluating the quality of the thesis. This report must be in the hands of the Dean before the examination takes place. The PhD Pre-Defence Report of the External Examiner will be distributed to all members of the Examining Committee prior to the defence. The External Examiner is required to submit a report evaluating the oral defence (GSR 403.2).
3. For a Masters defence, the Department Head or designate (usually the Graduate Chair) will chair the Examining Committee. For a PhD defence, the CGPS Dean or designate will chair the Examining Committee. At the discretion of the Chair, another member of the Committee may assume the Chair of the Committee for a portion of the examination when the Candidate makes his/her presentation and for the question period.
4. According to the practice of the Department or Unit in which the student is registered, other individuals who are not members of the Examining Committee may or may not attend the Candidate's presentation and questioning.
5. The person chairing shall invite the Candidate to make a brief (about 10 to 20 minutes) oral presentation, highlighting the major issues dealt with in the thesis and the conclusions which have been reached. If the presentation takes significantly longer than 20 minutes, the person chairing should ask the Candidate to conclude the discussion. At the conclusion of the Candidate's presentation, the External Examiner, who has a major responsibility for examining the Candidate, is given the first opportunity to question the Candidate. Subsequently, each member of the Examining Committee shall be invited to examine the Candidate. The External Examiners and other members of the Examining Committee shall be given a second opportunity to ask questions. Both the person chairing and the Supervisor may ask questions.
6. The purpose of the examination is to permit the Examining Committee to satisfy itself that the standards of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and the University have been met. The questions should reflect this purpose. Inadequate questioning denies the Candidate the right to demonstrate mastery of the subject, but extensive questioning is unnecessary once the Committee feels it has enough evidence to make a decision.
7. Questions should be based mainly on the content of the thesis, but the Committee should satisfy itself that the Candidate has the appropriate knowledge for a specialist in the area defined by the thesis. The External Examiner shall comment on this background in his/her report to the Dean.
8. At the end of question period, the members of the Examining Committee convene in the absence of the Candidate and other individuals who may have been present for the presentation and question period. The Committee's decision is reported to the CGPS Dean using Form GSR 403.3: Report of Thesis Oral Examination. If the Committee cannot reach a consensus on the recommendation, a vote must be taken. The decision will be one of the recommendations outlined on Policies and Procedures for Masters and PHD Defences (see reverse). The Dean's Designate (for Ph.D defences) may not vote, but the Supervisor will vote. The Chair of the Advisory Committee will vote ONLY in two circumstances: i) if she or he has been substantially involved academically in the student's advisory committee [the voting status of the chair of the Advisory Committee as determined by her or his involvement in the Advisory Committee will be indicated on the application for oral examination(GSR 300.1) that is submitted to CGPS]; or ii) ex officio in the event of a tied vote. Abstentions shall be interpreted as negative votes. A simple majority shall prevail as the Committee's decision, where the External Examiner does not share the majority view, the examination shall be adjourned, the External Examiner shall write a report to the Dean indicating why he or she could not support the majority opinion of the Examining Committee, and the Dean will review the situation and establish appropriate procedures to resolve the matter. In addition, the Dean's Designate must submit a written assessment of the examination. All reports must be copied to the department head.
9. Should further work by the Candidate be required, the person chairing the Examining Committee must see that the Committee states clearly, for the Candidate and the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, what work is to be done and whether or not the Examining Committee shall meet again before the thesis can be accepted.
10. In addition to his/her evaluation of the thesis and its defence, the External Examiner is invited to comment on any matter, which deserves the Dean's attention.
11. When satisfied with a positive report of the Examining Committee, the Dean shall recommend the Candidate to the Faculty of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for the award of the degree.