

## **Thesis Examination Policy (2009)**

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## **Preamble**

This policy statement is issued by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research to provide a guide to the conduct of and rules for thesis examinations. Different units can justifiably have different procedures for comprehensive examinations and research papers, but theses are the most important research products of both master's and doctoral programs. As such, they are more visible in the public domain and hence reflect the University's standards and requirements to a wider audience. For this reason, as well as to ensure the highest quality of thesis research, certain standard procedures must be followed. Moreover, given the importance of the thesis for a student's successful completion of his/her program, as well as the requirement for an examination, these rules are also intended to ensure fairness and transparency. All candidates and members of examination boards are expected to be familiar with this policy.

Please note: throughout this policy, the term “**chair of the department**” should be understood to refer to the position responsible for administration of the academic unit in which the program is housed. It is further understood that the actual responsibility for carrying out the actions described below may be delegated to another faculty member. In addition, the term “**Faculty Dean**” should be understood to refer to the Dean of the Faculty in which the unit is housed rather than the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

## Section 1 – Master’s Thesis Examinations – Pre-Examination Process

### 1.1 Thesis Submission

- a) The **candidate** informs the thesis supervisor and the chair of the department of the date he/she intends to submit his/her thesis. This notice is expected to be given **at least two weeks in advance** of the submission date.
- b) The **candidate** submits one copy of the thesis for each member of the examination board with the exception of the Faculty Dean. These examinable copies of the thesis must be received by the department **at least two weeks in advance** of the actual date of the examination of the thesis.

### 1.2 Constitution of the Examination Board

- a) The **thesis supervisor** recommends membership of the thesis examination board to the chair of the department.
- b) The **chair of the department** appoints the examination board to comprise, as a minimum:
- Thesis supervisor (or co-supervisors)
  - One additional member from the department concerned
  - One member who is from a Carleton University department outside that of the candidate and who has been at arm’s length from the thesis research
  - Chair of the department (or delegate who serves as chair of the examination board)
  - Dean of the Faculty concerned (ex officio)
  - Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (ex officio)
- c) In the case of **joint programs with the University of Ottawa**, the examination board must include at least one **additional** faculty member from the appropriate department at the University of Ottawa.
- d) It is the responsibility of the **chair of the department** to ensure that specific appointments to the examination board are in accordance with this list. The examination notice that is sent to FGSR should identify the role of each board member.
- e) If any member of the examination board is to participate by telephone, video conference or any other medium, this should be specified in the examination notice.
- f) If a member of the examination board (other than the Carleton examiner outside the department—see 1.5.c) is unable to participate, he or she must submit a brief written report on the thesis to the chair of the department **one week in advance**. This report will include both an evaluation of the thesis and a set of questions to be asked at the examination. (See Appendix \*.) The **chair of the examination** board will present the report to the examination board at the examination by 1) posing the questions contained in the report on behalf of the absent member during the examination question period and 2) providing the absent member’s judgements on the thesis in the *in camera* discussion following the examination question period.

### 1.3 Examination Preparation

- a) When the examination board is appointed, the **chair of the department** writes to the examiners to review procedures to be followed in the defence and to outline the judgements to be made.
- b) When the thesis is approved for examination (by the thesis supervisor or the thesis committee depending on program practice), the **thesis supervisor** circulates copies to all members of the examination board, distributes one copy to the chair of the department, and one copy to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. The Dean's copy of the thesis must be accompanied by a copy of the examination notice (see Appendix A) and the Thesis Supervisor's Approval form, which has been duly signed and dated by the **thesis supervisor**. The thesis and accompanying documentation must be received by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research **at least two weeks in advance** of the date of the examination. The Dean's copy of the thesis will then be sent to the department and be kept available for examination by any Carleton University faculty member or graduate student for one week prior to the scheduled defence.
- c) After receipt of an approved copy of the thesis, the **chair of the department** announces the date, time and place of the thesis examination and defence. Any special arrangements for participation of the examiners (telephone, video-conferencing etc.) will be included on the examination notice. The date of the announcement must be **at least two weeks prior** to the date of the examination.
- d) If any **examiner** has serious reservations concerning the quality of the thesis, he/she must submit written comments in the form of a report to the chair of the department, with a copy to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research **at least two working days in advance** of the oral examination. In the event of serious reservations, the **chair of the department** will consult with the thesis supervisor and the candidate to determine whether the examination will be deferred. The **candidate** has the right to proceed to examination. If the examination is deferred, the **chair of the department** will inform the Dean.

### 1.4 Observers

- a) Any faculty member from within the University (or from the joint institutes) may attend the examination as an observer. Other observers may also attend the examination provided they have obtained the permission of the **candidate** and the **chair of the examination board**. Observers are not permitted to ask questions during the examination or participate in any other way and may not leave the examination without permission of the chair.
- b) Faculty members other than those on the examination board may be granted the privilege of asking questions during the examination if they have provided a written submission at least **two working days in advance** of the examination to the **chair of the examination board**.

### 1.5 The Examination

- a) The **chair of the department (or deputy)** chairs the examination board.
- b) It is the responsibility of the **chair of the examination board** to enforce the rules of procedure governing the conduct of examinations, to ensure that academic standards are maintained, and to protect the candidate from unfair or unreasonable forms of questioning. The **chair of the examination board** ensures that the examination is conducted according to the highest standards of academic integrity, collegiality and professionalism. In exceptional circumstances, if the **chair of the examination board** is not satisfied that the spirit of the guidelines for the evaluation of the thesis has been met, he/she will adjourn the examination and consult with the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.
- c) The examination cannot take place if the Carleton examiner outside the department is not present unless specific arrangements have been approved in advance for this examiner to participate by telephone, video-conferencing or similar media.
- d) In exceptional circumstances, if a member of the examination board is unable to participate and has not submitted a report on the thesis, the **chair of the examination board**, in consultation with the board, determines whether the examination will proceed. The **chair of the examination board** will inform the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research following the examination.
- e) The **chair of the examination board** conducts a brief *in camera* meeting with the examination board at the outset to review the examination procedures and potential outcomes. The definitions of minor and major revisions will be addressed along with the criteria for medal eligibility (see Appendices \* and \*). The **chair of the examination board** inquires whether any member of the board can foresee any significant difficulty with respect to the final acceptability of the thesis. If significant difficulties are foreseen, concerning either content or scholarly presentation, the **chair of the examination board** determines whether there is reason to adjourn the examination. If the examination proceeds, the **chair of the examination board** informs the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research following the examination.
- f) The **chair of the examination board** admits the candidate to the room and reviews the examination procedures.
- g) The **candidate** may make a brief introductory statement and may use audio/visual aids or other appropriate methods supporting this statement.
- h) In the first round of questions, the examiners normally proceed in the order set out in the examination notice (see Appendix \*). Questioning in this round is one-on-one, with no interventions from other members of the board.
- i) This will be followed by a second round of questions without a set order. In this round, questions may come from any of the examiners, and comments and general discussion may take place. The duration of this round is at the discretion of the **chair of the examination board**.
- j) The **candidate** may make a closing statement but is not required to do so.

k) The candidate is asked to withdraw while the examination board deliberates.

## 1.6 Examination Outcome

a) The **chair of the examination board** polls the members of the examination board to determine if the candidate passes or fails. The **chair of the examination board** records in writing all required revisions, major or minor, agreed to by the board. In addition, the **chair of the examination board** records in writing the process for approving required revisions.

b) If consensus cannot be reached among the members of the examination committee as to the categorization of the thesis (Accepted, Acceptable after minor revisions, Acceptable after major modifications, Rejected), the thesis grade (Pass with Distinction, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory) or oral defence (Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory), a vote will be taken to determine the outcome. In exceptional circumstances, if the **chair of the examination board** is not satisfied that the spirit of the guidelines for the evaluation of the thesis has been met, he/she should adjourn the examination and consult with the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (see 1.5. b).

c) The **chair of the examination board** polls the members of the examination board regarding recommendation of the candidate for a medal if the thesis is judged to be outstanding (see Appendix B). If the board members agree to recommend the candidate, the **chair of the examination board** submits a written report to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

d) The **chair of the examination board** ensures that the Examination Report is prepared and signed by all members before the adjournment of the examination board. The **chair of the examination board** signs for absent members of the examination board.

e) The **chair of the examination board** invites the candidate back into the examination room to discuss the examination outcome.

f) The total duration of the examination should not normally exceed two hours.

## 1.7 Final Thesis Submission

a) The **candidate**, after completing the revisions as directed by the examination board, will submit the final five copies of the thesis to the thesis supervisor (or six in the case of co-supervisors). The **candidate** will also complete the required forms for microfilming and/or digitization by Proquest for the National Library (see Appendix D).

b) Having verified that the required revisions have been completed, all those involved in the approval of the revisions or modifications (see 2.6 b)) sign the Thesis Approval Form. The **thesis supervisor** forwards the copies of the thesis and the forms to the chair of the department.

c) The **chair of the department** checks the thesis copies to verify that the required revisions have been completed, dates and signs the Thesis Acceptance Form, completes the Thesis Deposit Form and forwards the copies of the thesis and the forms to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

d) Provided that all master's program requirements have been satisfied, the **Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research** recommends to Senate, through the Faculty Board of Graduate Studies, that the degree be awarded.

e) The **Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research** makes the appropriate arrangements for the binding of the **five** copies of the thesis: two copies to the Library on acid-free bond paper (one of which must be the original), one copy for the department, one copy for the candidate, and one copy for the thesis supervisor. In the case of co-supervisors, six copies may be submitted for binding. The cost of such binding, to a maximum of six copies, is borne by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and the Library. For information on the binding of extra copies of the thesis, the student should contact the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

## **Section 2 – Doctoral Thesis Examinations – Pre-Examination Process**

### **2.1 Thesis Submission**

a) The **candidate** informs the thesis supervisor and the chair of the department of the date he/she intends to submit the thesis. This notice is expected to be given **at least two weeks in advance** of the submission date.

b) The **candidate** submits six examinable copies of the thesis to the department **at least six weeks in advance** of the actual date of the examination of the thesis.

### **2.2 Constitution of the Examination Board**

a) After consultation with the thesis supervisor, the **chair of the department** recommends membership of the thesis examination board to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. The **chair of the department** also provides information, including abbreviated cvs., regarding the appropriateness of the nominated external examiner. This information should address issues of expertise and conflict of interest (see 2.2.1 below).

b) The **Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research** appoints the examination board to comprise as a minimum

- One member from outside the university who is a recognized scholar or authority in the subject of the thesis (external examiner).
- One member who is from a department other than that of the candidate and who has been at arm's length from the thesis research
- Thesis supervisor or co-supervisors

- At least two thesis advisory committee members. If no thesis advisory committee has been established, two department members may be appointed
- Chair of the department (ex officio)
- Dean of the faculty concerned (ex officio)
- Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research or deputy (chair of the examination board)

c) In the case of **joint programs with the University of Ottawa**, the examination board must include at least one **additional** faculty member from the appropriate department at the University of Ottawa.

d) It is the responsibility of the **chair of the department** to ensure that specific appointments to the examination board are in accordance with this list. The examination notice that is sent to FGSR should identify the role of each examination board member.

e) If any member of the examination committee is to participate by telephone, video conference or any other medium, this must be specified in the examination notice.

f) If a member of the examination board is unable to participate, he/she must submit a written report on the thesis to the Chair **at least one week in advance**. The **chair of the examination board** will present the report to the examination board at the examination by 1) posing the questions contained in the report on behalf of the absent member during the examination question period and 2) providing the absent member's judgements on the thesis in the *in camera* discussion following the examination question period.

### 2.2.1 Conflict of Interest

The external examiner should be an impartial scholar with recognized expertise in the thesis research area. In addition, it is necessary that the external examiner be at 'arm's length' from the candidate, from the supervisor(s) and from the university. To guarantee the impartiality of the external examiner, the following conditions must be met:

- the external examiner should have no family ties or close business ties or close professional ties to the candidate or the supervisor(s)
- the external examiner should have neither hold an appointment at Carleton University nor be a member of the joint institutes with Ottawa University
- the external examiner should have no prior supervisory relationship with the candidate or with the supervisor(s)
- the external examiner should not have been a co-author or research collaborator with the candidate or with the supervisor(s) in the preceding six years

While this list is not an exhaustive one, it provides an indication of the kinds of relationships that call into question the impartiality of the external examiner.

### 2.3 Examination Preparation

a) When the thesis is approved for examination, the **thesis supervisor** circulates copies to all members of the examination board, and sends one copy to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate



Studies and Research. The Dean's copy must be accompanied by a copy of the notice and the Thesis Supervisor's Approval Form, which has been duly signed and dated by the **thesis supervisor**. The thesis and accompanying documentation must be received by the Office of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research **at least four weeks prior to the date of examination**.

b) The Dean's copy of the thesis is available for examination in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Office by any member of the University. The Dean's copy is also for use by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (or deputy) who will act as chair of the examination board.

c) After receipt of an approved copy of the thesis, the **Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research** announces the date, time and place of the thesis examination. Any special arrangements for participation of the examiners (telephone, video-conferencing etc.) will be included on the examination notice. The date of the announcement must be **at least four weeks in advance** of the date of the examination.

d) The **Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research** writes to the external examiner to review procedures followed in the defence, to outline judgements to be made and to ask that any major concerns be communicated in the report to be submitted **at least one week in advance** of the examination (see Appendix E).

e) The **external examiner** submits written comments on the thesis to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research **at least one week in advance of the oral examination**. (See Appendix \*) *Normally, the thesis defence will not proceed without receipt of the report of the external examiner one week in advance of the date of the defence.*

f) Each examiner on the examination board signs the Examiner's Approval form (see Appendix F) **one week in advance of the oral examination**. If any examiner has serious reservations regarding the thesis, these must be noted on the form at this time.

## 2.4 Observers

a) Any faculty member from within the University may attend the examination as an observer. Other observers may also attend the examination provided they have obtained the permission of the **candidate** and the **chair of the examination board**. Observers are not permitted to ask questions during the examination or participate in any other way and may not leave the examination until the Chair has adjourned the proceedings.

b) Faculty members other than those on the examination board may be granted the privilege of asking questions during the examination if they have provided a written submission at least two working days in advance of the examination to the **chair of the examination board**.

## 2.5 The Examination

- a) The **Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (or deputy)** chairs the **examination board**.
- b) It is the responsibility of the **chair of the examination board** to enforce the rules of procedure governing the conduct of examinations, to ensure that academic standards are maintained, and to protect the candidate from unfair or unreasonable forms of questioning. The **chair of the examination board** ensures that the examination is conducted according to the highest standards of academic integrity, collegiality and professionalism. In exceptional circumstances, if the **chair of the examination board** is not satisfied that the spirit of the guidelines for the evaluation of the thesis has been met, he/she should adjourn the examination and consult with the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.
- c) An examination cannot take place if external examiner is not present unless specific arrangements have been approved in advance for this examiner to participate by telephone, video-conferencing or similar media. The written report of the Ph.D. external examiner must also be available. This report must be received at least one week prior to the date of the examination board.
- d) In exceptional circumstances, if a member of the examination board is unable to participate and has not submitted a report on the thesis, the **chair of the examination board**, in consultation with the board, will determine whether the examination will proceed. If the examination proceeds, he/she will inform the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research following the examination.
- e) The **chair of the examination board** conducts a brief *in camera* meeting with the examination board at the outset to review the examination procedures and potential outcomes. The definitions of minor and major revisions will be addressed along with the criteria for medal eligibility (see Appendices A and B). The **chair of the examination board** inquires whether any member of the board can foresee any significant difficulty with respect to the final acceptability of the thesis. If significant difficulties are foreseen, concerning either content or scholarly presentation, the **chair of the examination board** determines whether there is reason to adjourn the examination. If the examination proceeds, the **chair of the examination board** informs the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research following the examination. The **chair of the examination board** invites the external examiner to present his/her report.
- f) The **chair of the examination board** admits the candidate to the room and reviews the examination procedures.
- g) The **candidate** may make an introductory statement and may use audio/visual aids or other appropriate methods of supporting this statement. It is usual to limit such statements to about twenty minutes, but in certain departments the statement may be of somewhat longer duration.
- h) In the first round of questions, the examiners normally proceed in the order set out in the examination announcement (see Appendix \*). Questioning in this round is one-on-one, with no interventions from other members of the board.

i) This will be followed by a second round of questions without a set order. In this round, questions may come from any of the examiners, and comments and general discussion may take place. The duration of this round is at the discretion of the **chair of the examination board**.

j) The **candidate** may make a closing statement.

k) The candidate is asked to withdraw while the examination board deliberates.

## 2.6 Examination Outcome

a) The **chair of the examination board** polls the members of the examination board to determine if the candidate passes or fails. The **chair of the examination board** records in writing all required revisions, major or minor, agreed to by the board. In addition, the **chair of the examination board** records in writing the process for approving required revisions.

b) If consensus cannot be reached among the members of the **examination** committee as to the categorization of the thesis (Accepted, Acceptable after minor revisions, Acceptable after major modifications, Rejected), the thesis grade (Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory), or the Oral Defence (Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory), a vote will be taken to determine the outcome. The **chair of the examination board** may approve the thesis as satisfactory if the majority of Board members recommend it as satisfactory. The majority must include the external examiner. In exceptional circumstances, if the **chair of the examination board** is not satisfied that the spirit of the guidelines for the evaluation of the thesis has been met, he/she should adjourn the examination and consult with the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (see 2.5. b).

c) The **chair of the examination board** polls the members of the examination board regarding recommendation of the candidate for a Senate Medal if the thesis is judged to be outstanding (see Appendix \*). If the board members agree to recommend the candidate, the **chair of the examination board** submits a written report to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

d) The **chair of the examination board** ensures that the Examination Report is prepared and signed by all members before the adjournment of the examination board. The **chair of the examination board** signs for absent members of the examination board.

e) If the thesis is accepted as submitted or is acceptable after revisions, the **chair of the examination board** ensures that the external examiner signs the Thesis Acceptance Form and delivers it to the Chair of the department.

f) The **chair of the examination board** invites the candidate back into the examination room to discuss the examination outcome.

g) The total duration of the examination should not normally exceed three hours.

## 2.7 Final Thesis Submission

- a) The **candidate**, after completing the revisions as directed by the examination board, will submit the final five copies of the thesis to the thesis supervisor (or six copies in the case of co-supervision). The **candidate** will also complete the required forms for microfilming and/or digitization by Proquest for the National Library.
- b) Having verified that the required revisions have been completed, all those involved in the approval of the revisions or modifications (see 2.6 b)) sign the Thesis Approval Form. The **thesis supervisor** forwards the copies of the thesis and the forms to the chair of the department.
- c) The **chair of the department** checks the thesis copies to verify that the required revisions have been completed, dates and signs the Thesis Acceptance Form, completes the Thesis Deposit Form and forwards the copies of the thesis and the forms to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.
- d) Provided that all doctoral program requirements have been satisfied, the **Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research** recommends to Senate, through the Faculty Board of Graduate Studies, that the degree be awarded.
- e) The **Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research** makes the appropriate arrangements for the binding of the **five** copies of the thesis: two copies to the Library on acid-free bond paper (one of which must be the original), one copy for the department, one copy for the candidate, and one copy for the thesis supervisor. In the case of co-supervisors, six copies may be submitted for binding. The cost of such binding, to a maximum of six copies, is borne by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and the Library. For information on the binding of extra copies of the thesis, the student should contact the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.