The final doctoral examination is the culmination of the student’s doctoral program. Overriding policy regarding the final exam is set by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) in Section 8.3.4 of the Graduate Program Manual (GPM) (https://www.ualberta.ca/graduate-studies/about/graduate-program-manual/section-8-supervision-oral-examinations-and-program-completion/8-3-conduct-of-examinations). These procedures are prepared per Section 8.3.4 to highlight important matters for the PhD Program in Business.

Examination Committee Membership
The final exam must be attended by at least five committee members, including the supervisory committee and at least two arm’s length members (GPM Section 8.2). The latter shall not have been involved in the student’s or supervisor’s research. Details on committees, including a checklist, can be found at I:\PhD Public and in Section 8 of the Graduate Program Manual: https://www.ualberta.ca/graduate-studies/about/graduate-program-manual/section-8-supervision-oral-examinations-and-program-completion

Each thesis must be reviewed by one arm’s length member from outside the University. When attending the exam in person or electronically, this person is an External Examiner; if not, then the person is an External Reader. The supervisory committee and the Associate Dean of the PhD program shall agree on a nominee for the external. The Associate Dean will then formally nominate the person to FGSR at least two months in advance of the proposed exam date.

Preliminary Acceptance of the Thesis
Section 8.3.4. of the GPM states: “Before the thesis is forwarded to the External, the supervisory committee members must declare in writing to the supervisor(s) either that the thesis is of adequate substance and quality to warrant that the student proceed to the final examination or that the thesis is unsatisfactory and the student should not be allowed to proceed to the final examination.” Email is sufficient for accomplishing this.

Approval of the Final Doctoral Examining Committee
In order to meet FGSR deadlines, the supervisor will recommend names of all members of the final examining committee to the PhD Program Office at least four weeks before the date of the final examination.

Scheduling the Final Doctoral Examination
The supervisor shall work with the Administrative Assistants of the PhD Program office to schedule the exam as soon as practical to ensure an appropriate room and technology.
Conduct of the Final Doctoral Examination
1. Preliminaries, including introductions and explanation of the examination format by the committee chair.
2. Presentation by the student (approximately 15-20 minutes)
3. Question period (typically 90 minutes)
4. Evaluation and decision, taking place in the absence of the student.
5. Complete the Thesis Approval / Program Completion form.
6. Informing student of the decision.

Decision of the Doctoral Final Examining Committee
This sub-section quotes Section 8.3.4 of the GPM, accessed October 18, 2016, on this topic.

The decision of the examining committee will be based both on the content of the thesis and on the student's ability to defend it. The final examination may result in one of the following outcomes:
• Adjourned
• Pass
• Pass subject to revisions
• Fail

There is no provision for a final examination to be "passed subject to major revisions".

If the Examining Committee fails to reach a decision, the department will refer the matter to the Dean, FGSR, who will determine an appropriate course of action.

Adjourned: An adjourned examination is one that has been abandoned officially. A majority of examiners must agree to an outcome of Adjourned. The final examination should be adjourned in the following situations:
• The revisions to the thesis are sufficiently substantial that it will require further research or experimentation or major reworking of sections, or if the committee is so dissatisfied with the general presentation of the thesis that it will require a reconvening of the examining committee. In such circumstances the committee cannot pass the student, and must adjourn the examination.
• The committee is dissatisfied with the student's oral presentation and defence of the thesis, even if the thesis itself is acceptable with or without minor revisions.
• Compelling, extraordinary circumstances such as a sudden medical emergency taking place during the examination.
• Discovery of possible offences under the Code of Student Behaviour after the examination has started.

If the examination is adjourned, the committee should:
• Specify in writing to the student, with as much precision as possible, the nature of the deficiencies and, in the case of revisions to the thesis, the extent of the revisions required. Where the oral defence is unsatisfactory, it may be necessary to arrange some discussion periods with the student prior to reconvening the examination.
• Decide upon a date to reconvene. If the date of the reconvened examination depends upon the completion of a research task or a series of discussions, it should be made clear which committee members will decide on the appropriate date to reconvene. This new examination must be held within six months of the initial examination.
• Make it clear to the student what will be required by way of approval before the examination is reconvened (e.g. approval of the committee chair or supervisor, approval of the entire committee, or of select members of the committee).
• Specify the supervision and assistance the student may expect from the committee members in meeting the necessary revisions.
• Advise the Dean of the department’s Faculty following the procedures established for this purpose.
• Advise the FGSR in writing of the adjournment and the conditions.
• When the date is set for the adjourned final examination, the department will notify the Dean of the department’s Faculty and the FGSR. Normally, a Pro Dean attends the examination.

**Pass:** All or all but one of the examiners must agree to an outcome of Pass. If the student passes the examination, the department should submit a completed Thesis Approval/Program Completion form to the FGSR. If one of the examiners fails the student, that examiner does not have to sign this form. The form is available on the FGSR website (see Forms Cabinet).

**Pass Subject to Revisions:** All or all but one of the examiners must agree to an outcome of Pass Subject to Revisions. The student has satisfactorily defended the thesis but the revisions to the thesis are sufficiently minor that it will not require a reconvening of the examining committee.

If the examining committee agrees to a “Pass subject to revisions” for the student, the chair of the examining committee must provide in writing, within five working days of the examination, to the Dean, FGSR, the graduate coordinator and the student:
• the reasons for this outcome,
• the details of the required revisions,
• the approval mechanism for meeting the requirement for revisions (e.g. approval of the examining committee chair or supervisor, or approval of the entire examining committee, or select members of the committee), and
• the supervision and assistance the student can expect to receive from committee members.
The student must make the revisions within six months of the date of the final examination. These changes should be checked and approved by the examining committee chair or supervisor, who does not sign until the required changes are satisfactorily completed. Other committee members may also wish to withhold their signature until they can verify that their required revisions have been made to their satisfaction.

Once the required revisions have been made and approved, the department should submit a completed Thesis Approval/Program Completion form to the FGSR indicating "pass subject to revisions". If one of the examiners fails the student that examiner does not have to sign the form. If the required revisions have not been made and approved by the end of the six months deadline, the outcome of the examination is a Fail.

**Fail:** All or all but one of the examiners must agree to an outcome of Fail. If the examination result is a Fail, no member of the examining committee signs the Thesis Approval/Completion form.

When the outcome is a Fail, the committee chair will provide the reasons for this decision to the graduate coordinator. The department will then provide this report, together with its recommendation for the student’s program, to the Dean of the department’s Faculty, the FGSR, and to the student.

An Associate Dean, FGSR will normally arrange to meet with the student and with the graduate coordinator before acting upon any department recommendation that affects the student’s academic standing.

**History**

Updated 2016 October 18 to reflect web link changes and additional paragraphs added in the Graduate Program Manual regarding Pass Subject to Revisions.

Approved by Business PhD Policy Committee on 2015 November 17.

This version updated the Decision of the Doctoral Final Examining Committee section to reflect that the external examiner no longer has veto power. The entire section is pasted herein.

Previous version approved by Business PhD Policy Committee on 2014 April 10. It added the section called “Conduct of the Final Doctoral Examination.”

Previous version was approved 2013 April 18.