Recommended procedure for Final Oral Examination

1. The Chair explains the purpose of the examination to the student.

2. The Chair, in the student’s presence, reviews the student’s record with the committee.

3. The Chair calls for questions on the above material (offers to circulate file to examiners).

4. The Chair recommends an order of questioning and breaks. The student is given the opportunity to ask questions or make requests. The external examiner on the committee is normally given the opportunity to begin the questioning.

5. Commence questions from the examiners. Usually a first round of 20 minutes, followed by a shorter second round of 5-10 minutes.

6. When an external examiner cannot be present, the Chair or the supervisor will ask the student questions raised by the external examiner in his/her written evaluation of the thesis.

7. At the conclusion of the examination the student is given the opportunity to make a closing statement or ask closing questions.

8. After the student has left the room, the examiners deliberate.

9. A final decision is normally arrived at via discussion until a consensus is reached. A distinction should be made between quality of the dissertation and strength of the defense.

Possible conclusions of the examining committee:

i) Pass. No revisions are required.

ii) 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. It is expected that the student will make the changes in time to submit the thesis to the FGSR on or before the deadline for the next convocation or no later than 6 months from the date of the exam. Any changes should be checked and approved by the committee chair or supervisor, who does not sign the FGSR ‘Thesis Approval/Program Completion’ form 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.

iii) Adjourned. Usually this is recommended if there are severe shortcomings in the defense of thesis, although the thesis itself may fall in one of the above categories.

The final oral examination should be adjourned in the following situations:
• The revisions to the thesis are sufficiently substantial (if further research or experimentation or major reworking of sections are required, or if the committee is not satisfied with the general presentation of the thesis) that it will require a reconvening of the examining committee. The committee should not propose that the candidate has passed, rather the committee shall adjourn the examination.

• The committee is dissatisfied with the candidate'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 during the examination. If the examination is adjourned, the committee should:

  a. Specify in writing to the student the nature of the deficiencies and the extent of the revisions required. Where the oral defence is unsatisfactory, it may be necessary to arrange some discussion periods with the candidate prior to reconvening the examination.

  b. Decide upon a date to reconvene. If the date of the reconvened oral 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. The final date set for reconvening shall be no later than six months from the date of the examination. A final decision of the examining committee must be made within six months of the initial examination.

  c. Make it clear to the student what will be required by way of approval before the examination is reconvened (eg, approval of the committee chair or supervisor, approval of the entire committee, or of select members of the committee).

  d. Specify the supervision and assistance the student may expect from the committee members in meeting the necessary revisions.

  e. Advise the Assoc. Chair (Grad. Studies) in writing of the adjournment and the conditions.

  f. When the date is set for the adjourned final oral examination, the department will notify the FGSR. Normally the Dean, Vice-Dean, Associate Dean or Pro Dean attends the examination.

iv) Fail. The quality and substance of the thesis are insufficient to justify the awarding of a degree. If the final examination committee agrees that the student has failed, the committee chair shall provide the reasons in writing to the Associate Chair of Graduate Studies along with the recommendation for the student's program. The Associate Chair of Graduate Studies will then advise FGSR in writing of the outcome and recommendation of program. The Dean, FGSR will arrange to meet with the candidate and with department representatives before acting.
upon any department recommendation. A decision of the FGSR which affects a student's academic standing (ie, required to withdraw) is appealable.

- **If all but one member of the committee vote favourably:** majority rules unless the dissenting vote is that of the external examiner (in which case the occurrence is reported to Dean, FGSR, who will determine appropriate action).

- **If two or more examiners cast dissenting votes:** the thesis is rejected and a full report is submitted to the Associate Chair (Graduate Studies) for final adjudication.

10. **Paperwork to be completed at the exam:**

   - The final decision of the examining committee should be recorded on the FGSR form entitled *Thesis Approval/Program Completion.*

   If revisions are required, the supervisor may withhold their signature from the form however, the form must be placed in the student file and returned to the Assoc. Chair Grad Studies office at the conclusion of the defense. Once the revisions are completed, the supervisor will sign the form on the student’s file.

   If the external examiner does not attend in person, the external examiner's name and institution will be printed on the form and the chair of the examination will initial the external examiner’s signatory line.

   - The chair of the committee should complete the department’s form: *“Report of Final Oral Examination”* which provides the Assoc. Chair Grad Studies with details of the committee’s recommendation.

11. **Advise the student of the final decision.**