Completion Process for PhD Final Oral Thesis Defence

The examination committee for a Final PhD Defence will consist of:

- The Candidate's PhD Committee: Supervisor and 2 additional Faculty members
- An Internal/External Examiner: A Faculty member from within Queen's, but outside of the Department of Philosophy, who has sufficient expertise in the topic at hand
- An External Examiner: A Faculty member from a different institution who has sufficient expertise in the topic at hand
- A Chair: the Chair is a non-voting member of the committee and thus does not require specific expertise with the topic in question. The Chair must be a Faculty member from Queen's, but does not need to be from the Philosophy Department.

The Chair, the External Examiner, and at least one other examiner must be "arms-length" to the candidate, meaning they cannot have a present or prior supervisory relationship, nor can they have co-authored or co-presented with the candidate.

It is the responsibility of the Supervisor to select and invite all members of the examination committee, with input from the Department Graduate Coordinator as necessary.

The supervisor, in discussion with the examination committee and the student, will select a time and date for the oral examination and inform the Graduate Assistant. If a Chair has not yet been secured, the Graduate Assistant can try to assist, but all reasonable effort should be made to have a Chair already secured by this point. The Graduate Assistant will prepare the notice paperwork to send to SGSPA. **This paperwork must be sent to SGSPA no later than twenty-five working days (5 weeks) prior to the proposed date of the oral examination** and must include the following information:

- Date, time, and location of the defence
- Names of the Student and full Examination Committee (including Chair)
- Title of Thesis
- Signatures from Supervisor, Graduate Coordinator, and Department Head

The student must provide a copy of the thesis to all committee members*, the Department Graduate Assistant, and the Thesis Coordinator in SGSPA** (thesis.schoolofgradstudies@queensu.ca) **no later than twenty-five working days (5 weeks) prior to the oral examination.** It is the responsibility of the student to provide the

examining committee with the thesis, but the Graduate Assistant can provide help as needed. In most cases, examiners are happy to receive a dissertation by email, but if any examiners request a hard copy of the dissertation, the Graduate Assistant can help with the printing and shipping of the work. Please keep in mind that the regulations for a PhD dissertation defence are that the examiners need to have the full twenty-five working days to read over, assess, and report on the dissertation. As such, it is good to know as soon as possible if an External Examiner would like a hard copy and to factor mailing time into deciding when to hold the oral defence.

*While the student candidate should be the one to send the dissertation to almost all committee members, the one exception to this is the External Examiner. The Graduate Assistant should be the one to send the dissertation to the External Examiner.

**It is not strictly necessary to send a copy of the dissertation to SGSPA at this point, but the Thesis Coordinator can ensure the dissertation is in line with Queen's formatting requirements.

Once SGSPA is notified of the upcoming defence, the Thesis Coordinator in SGSPA will send instructions about preparing for the defence to all examiners and to the Chair. Examiners are expected to submit a report summarizing their thoughts on and questions about the thesis prior to the examination. The communication from the SGSPA Thesis Coordinator will include information on when and how to submit these reports confidentially.

Important Note: In the case of PhD examinations, the reports of the examining committee **MUST** be confidential. Reports are not to be shared with the candidate or supervisor prior to the oral examination. Examiners should address any concerns directly to the School of Graduate Studies, not to the candidate or supervisor. These reports will be provided to the Chair to read aloud at the examination.

If two or more negative reports (indicating that the dissertation is not ready to proceed to oral examination) are received by SGSPA, the defence will be cancelled and the negative reports will be provided to the supervisor and the candidate in order to facilitate a decision on what next steps to take. Decisions about those next steps will be made in discussion between the supervisor and Graduate Coordinator, along with the Department Head if needed.

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NB: PhD examinations at Queen's are by default open to visitors. These visitors are permitted only to watch the proceedings, they may not disrupt or contribute to any part of the examination. Visitors must also leave the proceedings during any and all closed deliberation sessions. If there is a desire for an examination to be closed to any visitors, a request including rationale must be made to the Thesis Coordinator in SGSPA.

NB: In the event of a hybrid or remote defence, it is the responsibility of the Chair to move the candidate and any visitors to the Waiting Room of the Zoom meeting during any closed deliberation sessions, and to move those participants back into the meeting once a closed deliberation session has ended. Given this responsibility, the Chair of the defence must always be the Host or Co-Host of the meeting.

Once the candidate has completed their examination, the committee will discuss and agree on the outcome of the examination. The possible outcomes are: Passed, Passed with Major Revisions, Referred, and Failed. Please see the *"Outcome Categories of an Oral Thesis Examination"* document for detailed descriptions of each outcome, and the next steps that accompany each.

Once a decision is reached, the Chair will complete the requisite paperwork and will request any commentary from the examining committee regarding the conduct of the examination that they would like to have included in the final report. This outcome and final report will then be sent directly to the Thesis Coordinator in SGSPA by the Chair of the examination.

If the outcome of the examination was a Pass, the candidate will then need to complete any minor revisions required by the examination committee, ensure that all formatting requirements are adhered to, and then upload the final thesis to QSpace. Details about formatting requirements and instructions on how to upload to QSpace are available on the SGSPA website.

The degree will not be considered complete until the thesis is uploaded to QSpace, so it is crucial to consider this part of the process when planning an examination date.

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Timeline Planning Notes

- It is usually a good idea to factor in a couple of days between when the examination is completed and when the submission to QSpace is made, to allow time for minor revisions. This means if a student is hoping to finish by a specific date, the examination should be scheduled 1-3 days before that date.
- It is often a good idea to factor in a couple of days between deciding on a date/time, and sending notice in to SGSPA to allow for finding a Chair if the first choice is not available.
- It is important to note that neither departmental nor SGSPA staff work on weekends or holidays, so if a student is trying to finish by a specific date, scheduling should plan to allow completion by the nearest non-holiday weekday before that specific date.

Scheduling Example: PhD requirements must be completed before **August 1**. With this timeline in mind, this is the latest we would want to complete these pieces:

- June 21 - Supervisor advises Graduate Assistant of examination, leaving time to secure a Chair
- June 23 - Notification form submitted to SGSPA and thesis sent to examiners
- July 28 - Oral Examination
- July 31 - Submission to QSpace with time allowed for minor revisions

If possible, it is always beneficial if we can allow slightly more time between these steps, but hopefully this illustrates the tightest turnaround manageable with notification requirements.