

# Outcome Categories of an Oral Thesis Examination (MA and PhD)

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The outcome of the oral thesis examination is based on the acceptability of both the thesis and the defence of the thesis at the oral thesis examination. The purpose of the oral thesis examination is to ascertain that the student is able to adequately present and defend the thesis and its underlying assumptions, methodology, results and conclusions in a manner consistent with the degree being sought. At the oral thesis examination, the examining committee will reach one of the 4 decisions listed below and record it on the “Thesis Examination Results” form. **The 4 decisions are Passed, Passed with Major Revisions, Referred or Failed.** The lowest outcome category with two or more votes will be the decision of the examining committee. In all cases, the student will be notified of the result immediately by the Chair of the committee and the decision will then be confirmed in writing by SGSPA.

**Passed:** A thesis is passed if it is acceptable in its present form or pending minor revisions, and its defence at the oral thesis examination was satisfactory. A thesis may be passed if no substantive changes are required. Changes in the form of corrections of typographical or grammatical errors, minor modifications to the thesis, editorial revisions to improve clarity and revisions to clarify results, findings or conclusions, or the like, may be recommended with a thesis classified as passed. A list of the required revisions must be provided by the Chair to the candidate and the supervisor and the completion of the revisions must be certified to the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs by the thesis supervisor or other designated person.

**Passed with Major Revisions:** A thesis is passed with major revisions if it is not acceptable in its present form or pending minor revisions but could be acceptable pending major revisions. Major revisions could include, for example, rearticulation and repositioning of research purpose, substantive integration of new literature, significant additions or revisions to conceptual framework, methodology, results, and/or discussion. In cases of portfolio or manuscript theses, a passed with major revisions outcome may be assigned if one or more of the manuscripts requires major revisions. A result of passed with major revisions does not require a second oral examination; however, all revisions must be completed within 4-months (i.e., one term). All required major revisions must be documented by the Chair and certified to the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs by those whom the examining committee deem responsible for oversight of the major revisions. A minimum of two members of the thesis examining committee are responsible for overseeing the major revisions.

**Referred:** A thesis is referred if it is not acceptable in its present form and, after extensive revision by the candidate, requires re-examination by the oral thesis examining committee. For example, a thesis will be referred if it requires substantive changes such as rewriting a substantial portion of the thesis, substantial reinterpretation, reanalysis or recalculation of data or findings, or additional research in order to attain acceptable standards of coherence and integrity in argument and presentation. The committee will reconvene and hold another oral thesis examination of the revised thesis.

The examining committee may also use the Referred category if it determines that the oral thesis examination itself, either separate from or in conjunction with the written thesis, is unsatisfactory. This means that the candidate did not adequately present and defend the thesis and its underlying assumptions, methodology, results, and conclusions in a manner consistent with the degree being sought. Following the second oral thesis examination, the committee must then return a decision of either Passed or Failed; Passed with Major Revisions or Referred outcomes are not options.

In all cases of referral, the nature of the revisions and/or additional work, and/or the deficiencies associated with the oral thesis examination, must be specified in writing by the Chair to avoid dispute or ambiguity. When outlining the revisions and/or additional work required, the Chair must be as specific as possible. These comments will be passed on to the candidate in a letter from the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs as revisions and/or improvements that must be met for the thesis to be reconsidered.

Any outlined revisions in relation to a referred outcome must be certified by the Chair or delegate as having been completed satisfactorily. Usually, this certification is delegated to at least two members of the Committee. In all cases of referral, the examining committee continues to exist until it has agreed that the thesis outcome is either Passed or Failed.

The outcome of 'Passed with Major Revisions' is not an option once the thesis and/or oral examination has been placed in the Referred category.

#### Notes On The "Referred" Category

1. If the committee returns two or more votes for referred it will hold another examination after the candidate has carried out further research and/or rewritten the thesis, but normally not more than one year later.
2. Candidates have up to twelve months from the date of the first oral thesis examination to complete revisions to their thesis but should be encouraged to do so as soon as possible.
3. A thesis that has been defended by oral thesis examination can be submitted once more only in revised form. A candidate whose thesis and/or defence of the thesis at the second oral examination, does not satisfy the examining committee on the second submission will be failed.

**Failed:** Failure can occur in two ways:

1. A thesis is failed if the document is unacceptable to the discipline even with substantive revisions. If the committee returns two or more votes of Failed on the basis of the document, this means that the committee recommends that the student be required to withdraw on academic grounds.
2. Failure may also result from an unacceptable second oral thesis examination, where the student was manifestly unable to adequately present and defend the thesis and its underlying assumptions, methodology, results and conclusions in a manner consistent with the degree being sought. A decision of Failed on the basis of the second oral thesis examination requires agreement by the majority (more than half) of the examining committee.