

Guidelines for The Master of Science (AVC) Examination

The Atlantic Veterinary College Master of Science degree is a departmental examination. However, all four departments have agreed to harmonize the approach to policies and practices applied to this degree. Where differences apply for a department, they will be specifically noted in this document.

Students should be aware that the MSc public presentation and thesis defense require months of planning. The Examination Committee should have the final thesis to review for a minimum of four weeks but four-weeks' notice is often too short to ensure that the entire exam committee is available for the examination day. It is preferable to confirm the date of the examination at least 8 weeks ahead, but we realize that students often receive final Supervisory Committee approval of their thesis later than they anticipate. For that reason, some date options should be provided when planning the examination. Students must work with their supervisor (and Supervisory Committee) closely in the last weeks leading up to the thesis submission date to ensure that there are no surprise absences and that all supervisory committee members have sufficient time to review and comment.

Purposes of the Examination

The Master's Examination has three purposes:

1. to establish that the student can present and defend the thesis, in other words, that the student can justify the objectives, methods, assumptions, and conclusions of the thesis research,
2. to establish that the student has a sound general knowledge of the discipline of study,
3. to evaluate the thesis

General criteria for which the thesis should be evaluated are:

- a) Clarity (organization, conciseness, style)
- b) Quality of, and student contribution to, the Research (design, execution, interpretation)
- c) Significance of Research

Components of the Examination

The Examination consists of three components:

- a) a public presentation of the research results
- b) a review of the thesis by the Examination Committee
- c) an oral examination conducted by the Examination Committee

The public presentation and the oral Examination will be conducted through two distinct and separate meeting links.

Conduct of the Public Presentation

1. Whenever possible, the public presentation will be done in-person. In the rare instance that it is not possible to have the student or a component of the examination committee attend in-person, a **virtual presentation** by the student can be arranged. It is also possible to have some of the Examination committee attend through electronic means (e.g. zoom). However, this arrangement can introduce more complications and variables during an already stressful time for the student and for that reason, it is highly recommended to have the student present in-person and have no more than one of the examination committee members attend virtually. The arrangements for any

component to be virtual should be discussed with the AVC-GSR Office as early as possible.

2. If there is a plan to have either the student or an exam committee member attend virtually, the link to the presentation portion only may be shared with the public but this link should not be shared on open social media sites. The oral Examination link will be provided to only those individuals who are part of the Examination (i.e. the student and / or exam committee). The public may attend the examination portion but only in-person.
3. To restrict interruptions, attendees to the Examination will not be permitted entry if they arrive after the examination has started.
4. The Exam Committee Chair will **start the public presentation session** by introducing the Supervisory Committee members and then the Examination Committee members. The Chair will then give a brief background of the candidate by way of introduction.
5. **Following the presentation**, the Chair should state the Exam Committee must hold their questions for the examination but the audience may ask questions of the candidate. Questioners should identify themselves prior to asking their question. The Chair will call a close to questions when they feel the time has been sufficient to address all questions (usually not more than 15 min of questions). The Chair will also ensure that a respectful manner is part of all proceedings.
6. The public presentation of research results is normally expected to be 30 to 45 minutes in duration followed by up to 15 minutes of questions.

Conduct of the Oral Examination

1. The Masters oral examination should be conducted to meet the purposes stated above.
2. Unless previously arranged with the AVC-GSR Office to involve virtual attendance by any party, the Oral Examination will be done in-person with the Examination Committee and open to public members, attending through electronic means (e.g. zoom). It is permissible for the student and up to one Examiner to use a seminar room (previously arranged to have appropriate IT support) at UPEI if they believe it will assist in their internet connection. All other Examiners (and public attendees) must attend virtually.
3. The link for the Examination meeting shall only be provided to individuals who contact the AVC-GSR office prior to the Examination. The setting for the meeting will require that the Chair acts as host and admit individually the student, committee members, and each guest. All attendees to the Oral Examination must commit to attend for the *entire* Examination and will not be permitted entry into the Examination if they arrive after the examination has started. Attendees who are not part of the Examination Committee, or not part of the list generated prior to the Examination, will not be permitted access to the electronic meeting.
4. The candidate and each Examination Committee member will keep their video on (microphone muted except when required) during the entire Examination (unless internet reception is improved with video off). All guests must identify themselves with their first and last names and keep their video and microphone off unless directed by the Chair for the purpose of a question, then they must have video and microphone both turned on for the question and answer by the candidate. It is the Chair's responsibility to ensure these rules of virtual meeting etiquette are

followed.

5. The Chair should consult with all Examination Committee members prior to the Examination and agree upon the order for questioning. The Chair will **start the Oral Examination session** by describing the process for the student. At this point, the Chair should remind all participants that they must maintain audio silence during the Examination if they are not called by the Chair to unmute.
6. Both general knowledge questions about the area of study and specific questions about the thesis research should be part of the examination. Questions and comments about specific typographical, grammatical and spelling errors should not be part of the oral examination but should be given to the candidate in writing prior to and/or after the examination.
7. The supervisor of the candidate's research, although a member of the Examination Committee, may wish to refrain from asking direct questions of the candidate. The Chair should establish this with the supervisor prior to the Examination.
8. Upon invitation of the Chair (if there is sufficient time), members of the audience may pose question(s) to the Candidate after the oral Examination when the Examiners have completed their questioning.
9. The oral examination has no time limit but is expected to be about 1.5-2 hours in length.

Assessment and Reporting of Student Performance

1. Following the end of the examination, the candidate and all guests are asked to leave the meeting (the Chair should obtain a method of contacting the candidate for the invitation to rejoin the meeting following deliberations). Once the Chair is satisfied that only the Examination Committee remains virtually connected, they should agree on the manner in which they will deliberate on the outcome. Normally, each Examination committee member (the Chair moderates but does not factor into the decision) would decide independently if the candidate met the criteria for satisfactory or unsatisfactory, then divulge to the other committee members their opinion. The Examination Committee members would normally communicate their assessment decision to the Chair through a personal (confidential) message in the chat.
2. The assessment should be based upon the Examination Committee member's evaluation of:
 - a. the written thesis,
 - b. the student's presentation and defense of the thesis, and
 - c. the student's knowledge of the discipline.
3. The Chair will then lead a discussion toward the final outcome, in which the student's performance is provided a grade of satisfactory or unsatisfactory to appear as a thesis grade on the transcript. All three criteria should be deemed satisfactory before a grade of satisfactory is assigned. A member of the Examination Committee may assign a grade of satisfactory even though some revisions to the thesis may be required. However, these revisions should be relatively minor and only be required to clarify the presentation of the material or the conclusions drawn. A thesis requiring extensive revision would normally be deemed unsatisfactory.

4. The Candidate is deemed to have passed the MSc examination if no more than one member of the Committee, excluding the Chair (who does not vote), assigns a grade of unsatisfactory (an abstention constitutes a negative vote).
5. If a grade of Satisfactory is assigned, changes and corrections to the thesis may be requested by the Examination Committee. The Chair should keep a record of the list of required changes, and the Committee should agree on a mechanism to oversee these changes and a time frame for their completion (normally within two weeks). If the changes are not made to the satisfaction of the Examination Committee within the time frame specified, the grade will be switched to unsatisfactory and this grade will be forwarded to the Registrar.
6. The assessment of unsatisfactory/satisfactory should be made based on the evaluation of the thesis and its defense with approximate weights based on the “Criteria for Thesis Assessment” (below).
7. If the result is “unsatisfactory,” the Candidate may be given the opportunity by the Examination Committee of a second attempt for a satisfactory Examination. The Examination Committee should consider if a result of satisfactory is possible if the opportunity for a second attempt is provided. If it is deemed impossible, then the second attempt opportunity should not be offered. This second attempt will normally include all three components – review of thesis, public presentation and oral Examination, however individual elements of the Examination may be waived with the unanimous consent of the Examination Committee. A second “unsatisfactory” result will terminate candidacy for the degree at this University.
8. Following deliberation, the candidate is contacted and asked to rejoin the meeting. The Chair will then provide the candidate with the conclusion (i.e. satisfactory or unsatisfactory) and any requirements regarding completion of remaining tasks and timelines, such as thesis revisions or the need for a second Examination.
9. Following the Examination, the Chair should email (as soon as feasible) the conclusion to the Associate Dean of AVC-GSR and copied to the Department Chair and AVC-GSR administrative assistant. The email should include who is responsible to ensure all revisions are completed and the expected timeline.
10. Following completion of all revisions required by the Examination Committee, the Chair notifies the AVC-GSR office by email of this completion and copies each member of the Examination Committee. Each Examination Committee member must then reply to AVC-GSR office to electronically approve their satisfaction and this will be logged as the official record (in the absence of signatures).

Criteria for Thesis Assessment		Points
Quality of Research		50
-	contribution of student to the project	
-	contribution of student to originality of research (criterion applies to PhD students only)	
-	thoroughness - has the subject been investigated thoroughly	
-	rigour - has the work been rigorous and meticulous	
-	analysis - have the results been thoroughly analyzed	
-	refereed publications arising from the thesis and/or expected	
Quality of Thesis		35
	Written Thesis	
-	is the material presented in an organized manner and an easily readable fashion?	
-	grammatical quality - freedom from mistakes (typos, spelling errors etc.)	
-	clarity of: background information presented (including literature review) presentation of the problem (including putting the problem into context and statement of objectives) results (including figures and tables) interpretation of results and discussion	
Oral Presentation of Thesis		5
-	organization of presentation	
-	clarity of presentation - voice, audio visuals, etc.	
-	questions - ability to clearly understand and answer questions (including - assessment of depth of understanding of the material)	
Defense of Thesis		10
-	ability to clearly understand and answer questions from examiners (including assessment of depth of understanding of the material)	
-	ability to extrapolate results beyond the narrow bounds of the thesis research	