

Thesis Defence Examination Procedures

Pre-Examination Assessment

The External Examiner is requested to brief assessment of the thesis (a page or less) before the examination. A copy of the document will be made available to the student and supervisor after the defense is completed. The report need not be lengthy; however, if the candidate is being nominated for higher awards, then a report highlighting the excellence of the research and the thesis would be helpful.

Presentation and Examination

The exam will begin with a brief introduction of the candidate and the Examination Committee followed by a ~30 min presentation by the candidate. The audience will have an opportunity to ask questions of the candidate and a short break will follow. Once the Committee resumes, the formal examination will include two rounds of questions in which each member of the Examination committee will have 15 min per round to ask questions of the candidate. At each round, the first member to ask questions will be the External examiner, and the last will be the Supervisor. If required, there will be a chance to ask additional questions after those two rounds.

Examination Committee Decision

Once the questions are finalized, the candidate and the audience will be invited to leave, and the Examination Committee will start deliberation. During this period the Chair will ask each member of the Examination Committee, starting again by the External Examiner, to provide a brief assessment of three elements: presentation, defense, and the written thesis. Each member must indicate whether each of these elements is satisfactory or not satisfactory. In our programs, "satisfactory" allows for the request of some corrections/revisions after the defense.

Based on the comments from the Examination Committee, if each element of the examination (presentation, defense, thesis) is deemed "satisfactory", the Committee will decide whether the thesis is accepted "as is", or if "minor" or "major" corrections are required (first three options in the form attached). In general, major corrections imply the re-analysis (and not just the re-writing) of a set of results and their interpretation. One or more sections of the examination will be considered "failed" if two or more members of the Examination Committee consider them to be not satisfactory. The committee must then complete the Assessment of Graduate Examination. To provide the candidate with additional feedback if the defense is deemed satisfactory "as is" or "with minor revisions", the Chair will ask the Committee, apart from the Supervisor, to rank the overall thesis as "satisfactory", "above satisfactory", or "outstanding".

Notification of Candidate

After the deliberation is completed, the student will be notified of the outcome. The student should be invited back into the room to privately deliver the outcome of the deliberations, regardless of whether they passed.

The Chair should also inform the student of whether revisions are required, and which committee members need to approve the revised thesis before it is submitted to the Faculty of Science, Graduate Studies Coordinator (gsc@upei.ca).

For minor revisions, the examination committee usually leaves final approval of the revised thesis to the supervisor, although examination committee members may require that they approve the revisions prior to submission.

Usually, the committee members provide comments or marked-up thesis to guide revisions; supervisors may also take notes about any other comments that arise during the defense.

Before leaving the examination, the committee should sign 5 copies of the Certification of Thesis Work, and the student should sign the Thesis/Dissertation Non-Exclusive License to allow for proper licensing of the thesis document. These should be returned to the Faculty of Science, Graduate Studies office.