

Instructions for the Chairs of Thesis Defenses

First, thank you for volunteering to act as the chair for this defense! This is one of the most important and exciting parts of a student's graduate degree, and it is crucial that it proceeds properly. We would not be able to conduct all the thesis defenses without your help!

Role of the Chair

As the Chair of the examination committee, you are expected to be impartial and ensure that the treatment of the candidate is fair. You are also responsible for ensuring that the examination is conducted at the level expected for the degree. The Chair is not an additional examiner, but rather is the facilitator of the examination process. The defense is a formal event, and part of your role is to ensure that all participants conduct themselves appropriately. (You do have the authority to ask any defense attendee to leave the defense if they are disruptive or influencing the candidate.)

Attendance at a Thesis Defense

- **Masters:** For a Masters defense the external examiner must participate (possibly remotely). The following must be in actual attendance: chair; supervisor or co-supervisor. At least one member of the committee (other than the supervisor or co-supervisor) who has signed off on the acceptability of the thesis for defense must participate (possibly remotely). Some academic units require more than one member of the supervisory committee to be in attendance.
- **Doctoral:** For a Doctoral defense the external examiner must participate (possibly remotely). The following must be in actual attendance: chair; supervisor or a co-supervisor. Two members of the supervisory committee (other than the supervisor or co-supervisor) who have signed off on the acceptability of the thesis to go to defense must also participate (possibly remotely).
- In extenuating circumstances, the candidate may participate remotely—this will be arranged (and you will be informed) well in advance of the defense.
- Individuals not on the examination committee are welcome to attend the defense, but you may limit the number who attend. (If there is considerable interest in the thesis topic, it is expected that the academic unit will have the candidate present a seminar, after the defense.)
- **FGSR must be notified prior to the defense if the required number of examiners is not in attendance (as the defense may need to be rescheduled).**
- If a member of the examining committee must leave during the defense, ask them to give to you in writing their opinion of the thesis and defense before they leave the room.

Defense Procedures

1. Prior to the start of the defense, ensure that all cell phones and electronic devices (that are not apart of the defense) have been turned off. Recording of the defense is not permitted.
2. Introduce the candidate and all members of the Examining Committee. Briefly outline the examination procedures to the committee.
3. The candidate will give a presentation that is a brief overview of their research, findings and conclusions (approximately 15 minutes for a Masters candidate, and 30 minutes for a Doctoral candidate). No questions are allowed at this time.
4. After the student's presentation, ask the supervisor or co-supervisors if the candidate has omitted any major points of the work in the presentation.
5. Begin the questioning; audience members may stay, but they may not speak.



6. Invite the External Examiner to question the candidate. This is expected to be the longest single period of questioning, usually from 30 to 60 minutes. The External Examiner is expected to deal with major matters of importance to the thesis, leaving minor matters (such as concerns about style, typographical errors, etc.) for after the defense. In the case that the External Examiner has sent questions, you will read these questions. It will be up to the members of the examining committee to decide if the student is responding appropriately.
7. Invite the other members of the examining committee (in turn) to question the candidate. Again, the focus should be on the academic substance of the thesis leaving concerns about style until later. The supervisor (or co-supervisor) is the last examiner. Please ensure that a faculty seminar does not develop, although some discussion will be allowed to clarify points.
8. After the first round of questioning is completed, invite further questions (in the same order).
9. **When the questioning is completed, ask the candidate, and all individuals who are not members of the examining committee, to leave the room.** Ask the candidate to wait nearby since they will be called to return to the room after the deliberations of the committee.
10. The examining committee will discuss the thesis and its defense. The acceptability of the thesis and the defense are two different issues. The chair polls the committee, beginning with the external examiner, and asks two questions:
 - a. Whether the thesis: (i) Passes without revision,
(ii) Passes with revision,
(iii) Must be rewritten and re-defended.
 - b. Whether the defense was: (i) Acceptable,
(ii) Not acceptable and must be repeated,
(iii) Not acceptable and student fails.

For the thesis to pass (either without or with revision) the External Examiner must agree that it passes; further, at least half of the examinee committee (other than the external examiner) must also agree that the thesis passes.

For the defense to be found acceptable, the External Examiner must agree that it is acceptable; further, at least half of the examining committee (other than the external examiner) must also agree that the defense was acceptable. (Details on the following page.)

11. Make sure that you confirm the final decision with the committee.
12. Ask the committee members if they wish to view a revised thesis before agreeing to its final acceptance. (Normally the committee will agree that it be left to the supervisor to ensure that their concerns about the thesis are addressed.)
13. Complete the “Report of the Examining Committee Form” and ask if the committee wishes to include comments about the thesis and defense on the form.
14. Ask the committee if they wish to nominate the student for an award. Complete the “Recommendation for Nomination for Graduate Awards” form (this form has more details about the awards and guidelines for when to recommend nomination).
15. Have all members of the examining committee in attendance sign the “University of Regina: FGSR Certification of Thesis” form.
16. Invite the candidate back into the room and announce the decision of the committee.
17. Return all forms to FGSR and give the Post-Defense Instructions to the student (and thanks again for your help)!
18. Please instruct the student to read the post defense instructions as the library forms will be completed on the Library’s website through the link noted below:

<https://uregina.libwizard.com/f/thesis-form>



Details on whether a student passes or fails

If the external examiner decides that the thesis passes, then each member of the examining committee votes on if the thesis passes. If half, or more, of the examining committee (other than the external examiner) feel that the thesis is acceptable, then the thesis is acceptable. The only remaining decision is if there are edits. (It is very rare for a thesis to pass without any revisions). If less than half of the committee decides that the thesis passes, then the thesis must be rewritten (even if the external examiner thinks that the thesis should pass).

If the external examiner thinks that the thesis must be rewritten, then the decision is that the thesis must be rewritten (this would be an extraordinary event, since the external examiner has signed off on the thesis).

The same procedure is followed for the defense. If the external examiner decides that the defense is acceptable, then each member of the examining committee votes on whether or not the defense is acceptable. If half or more of the committee (other than the external examiner) decides that it is acceptable, then the defense is acceptable. If more than half of the committee feels that the defense is unacceptable, then the defense fails (even if the external examiner found the defense acceptable).

If the external examiner finds that the defense is unacceptable, then the defense is unacceptable.

If the defense is found to be unacceptable, then the committee must decide if the student will be given a chance to repeat the defense, or if the student fails (in this case the student will not be awarded the degree and will be required to discontinue).

There are two cases in which a student can fail:

1. if a student's defense is found to be unacceptable on their second attempt;
2. if the external examiner and the committee agree unanimously that the student should fail.

Otherwise the student whose defense is found to be unacceptable, will be given a second opportunity to defend their thesis in the following semester.

Failed Defense:

In an exam with multiple portions, a failure of any portion of the examination is considered to be a failed examination.

When a student fails either their thesis or defense, the chair must inform the student and FGSR immediately. Only the "Report of the Examining Committee" form needs to be completed.



FORMS RELATED TO THESIS DEFENSE

Required Forms: (These forms are to be submitted to FGSR immediately following the defense.)

Committee Forms:

1. **Report of the Examining Committee:** This form is filled out by the Chair. It is a good idea to double-check this form and useful if you can get the committee to add comments!
2. **Committee Assessment for Post-Defense Awards:** This form is used to provide guidance to the FGSR Scholarship and Awards Office in determining eligible candidates for graduating awards.
3. **Certification of Thesis Work:** This form is to be signed by the attending Committee members only (not the Chair). Only those Committee members listed on the form are eligible to sign. If all of those listed are not in attendance at the defense, the Chair will mark absent on the signature line. If any Committee member participated by teleconference or videoconference, the Chair will mark teleconference or videoconference on the signature line.

Student Forms:

4. Students will confirm their library permissions by using the web form accessed online at:

<https://uregina.libwizard.com/f/thesis-form>

This website replaces any forms that were previously used.

5. **Application for Graduation:**

The Application for Graduation is no longer a hard copy form but the student will apply through UR-Self-Service on the university website.

Additional Form:

6. **Certification of English Standard:** This form is included only if the FGSR office has deemed the thesis does not meet an acceptable standard of English and requires revision and verification by a qualified proof-reader. The Chair is to give the form to the student and the student must submit the completed form with the final corrected version of the thesis.