

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

1. Doctoral Candidate – Completion of the Thesis Degree Requirement

Normally the entire process, from the Graduate Chair's request for a Thesis Examination to the placement of the candidate's name on the convocation list, requires approximately eight weeks. For an overview of submission dates, please visit Thesis Timelines.

1.1. The Program Requests a Thesis Examination

When the thesis is thought to meet recognized scholarly standards for the discipline and degree and is ready for examination, the Graduate Chair arranges a Thesis Examination by setting a proposed date, and obtaining provisional consent from the potential members of the Thesis Examination Board. (The thesis Supervisor(s), Supervisory committee or the candidate alone may also initiate this process.) They must then submit for approval the Examination Board to the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS), using the Doctoral Thesis Examination Request Form at least seven working weeks before the proposed date, and, where applicable, set a date and time for the Public Lecture.

1.2. In-Person and Remote Examinations and Public Lectures

The thesis examination can be held either in-person or remotely. Both In-Person Examinations, and Remote Examinations, must follow the procedures outlined in the Thesis Examination Guide.

At the time when a thesis examination is arranged, the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) determines with the Supervisor and the Candidate whether the exam will be held in-person or remotely.

In-Person Examinations

The Candidate and a Supervisor attend in-person. Normally, all thesis examiners participate in-person. Upon approval of the Candidate and Graduate Chair, one examiner may participate remotely.

Remote Examinations

The Candidate and a Supervisor attend remotely. All thesis examiners participate remotely.

Public Lectures

Public Lectures are required for PhD Examinations and optional for Master's examinations. The location of the public lecture (in-person or via zoom) will normally

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1.3. Examinations for alternative format theses [Doctoral]

The location of examinations for alternative format theses must be discussed with SGPS to ensure that any technical needs for displaying, demonstrating, or otherwise examining such theses are accommodated.

1.4. SGPS Approves the Thesis Examination Board and Thesis Examination (and Public Lecture, If Applicable)

SGPS approves the Thesis Examination Board provided by the candidate's program. Doctoral candidates must submit the thesis six weeks before the approved date for the Thesis Examination. This ensures adequate time for:

- Providing access to the thesis for the Examiners

- Examiners to read the thesis and prepare their reports

- Examiners to submit reports to SGPS

Candidates are required to present a Public Lecture on their thesis research, normally within twenty-four hours before the Thesis Examination. The Graduate program sets the time and place for the lecture. SGPS announces the public lecture on its website. The lecture is open to all members of the community. The Examiners should normally attend the Public Lecture and Thesis Examination. Doctoral Only - Effective May 2012, public lectures are mandatory for all programs. The Thesis Examination and Public Lecture may be postponed or cancelled if any step in the examination process is not completed on schedule (e.g. the candidate fails to submit the Thesis for Examination on schedule, or the Examiners fail to submit evaluations on time) or if there is a credible allegation of a possible scholastic offence.

Note: The thesis defense is normally a closed event unless the student and program, by mutual agreement, request that the defense is open to the university community (e.g. faculty, academic colleagues, students).-

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Evaluate the candidate's skill and knowledge in responding to questions and defending the thesis
Ensure authenticity of authorship

1.4.2. Arm's-Length Examiners

Examiners must be seen to be able to examine the student and the thesis at arm's-length, free of substantial conflict of interest from any source. The test of whether or not a conflict of interest might exist is whether a reasonable outside person could consider a situation to exist that could give rise to an apprehension of bias. Co-authors or collaborators of any component of the thesis may not serve as Examiners.

Relationships that might appear to have a conflict of interest include:

The involvement of an Examiner with the candidate or Supervisor in a personal capacity, such as:

- A spouse or partner
- A close family member
- A business partner
- Having previous, current, or future negotiations relating to employment

This list, while not exhaustive, illustrates the nature of potential conflicts to be avoided. The candidate's program must take reasonable steps to avoid recommending an Examiner whose relationship with the candidate or Supervisor could be seen as jeopardizing an impartial judgment on the thesis. Best practices include reviewing the potential examiner's CV; having the grad committee members review the list of names nominated as examiners; conducting a literature search on potential examiner's publications. It is recommended that supervisors and programs avoid multiple use of the same examiners.

A faculty member asked to examine a thesis should declare possible sources of conflict.

1.4.3. Doctoral Thesis Examination Board Roles

1.4.3.1. Chair

The Chair is a non-voting member of the Thesis Examination Board. As the Vice-Provosts' (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) representative, the Chair presides over the thesis examination and provides leadership to ensure that the established procedures are followed. It is not appropriate for the Chair to ask the Candidate thesis related questions during the examination period.

Chair Duties:

- Determines when a quorum exists
- Opens and closes the examination proceedings
- Sets the order of questioners and the length of their question periods
- Monitors the length and conduct of the candidate's presentation
- If the External Examiner is not present, ensures that questions raised in the External Examiner's report are put to the candidate
- If requested by the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies), where the External Examiner has submitted a negative report but is not

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Attend the thesis examination and participate in the questioning of the candidate, evaluating the thesis and the candidate's defense of the thesis

Contribute your decision in the final determination of the acceptability of the thesis and oral defense

If the final determination is a pass conditional upon revisions be willing to review and approve the revisions

If needed, participate in a re-submission and/or a re-examination hearing

1.4.3.3. University Examiner

This academic examiner provides an interdisciplinary/other discipline perspective on the student's research. The University examiner is normally a faculty member whose primary appointment is not in the same department as the student's program.

Criteria:

The University examiner must have Teaching/Advisory, Associate, Masters or Doctoral SGPS membership and must be able to bring an interdisciplinary or other disciplinary perspective

Must not have had any involvement in the development of the thesis nor interest in the outcome

Responsibilities:

See Thesis Examination Guide for Remote and In-Person examinations

Conduct and submit a preliminary evaluation of the thesis artifact no later than one week before the final thesis defense

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If needed, participate in a re-submission and/or a re-examination hearing (this may be waived)

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The Graduate Chair (or designate) takes on the role of the Supervisor in this process, oversees the student's progression, and attends the exam in place of the supervisor.

This involves making the necessary arrangements for the defense to occur, inviting the examiners, and completing the Doctoral Thesis Examination Request Form.

- f* No later than six weeks before the date of the Thesis Examination, the Doctoral candidate submits a copy of their work for preliminary examination. This is done through digital submission via the Scholarship@Western Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository.
- f* The Graduate Chair (or designate) attends the thesis examination and oversees the process (including all supervisory responsibilities).
- f* The Supervisor does not attend the thesis examination or the public lecture. The integrity of the process requires that a strict arms

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When the “delay of publication” expires, the author can be granted a one-year extension through a written request to the Thesis Coordinator. Exceptionally, a candidate may request a six-year delay of publication by

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grammatical errors; errors in calculation, labels for tables, nomenclature, and bibliographic form; and the need for clarification of content.

2. Unacceptable to go forward to defense

- f* **Unacceptable:** A thesis judged unacceptable may contain, for example, faulty conceptualization, inappropriate or faulty use of research methodology, misinterpretation or misuse of data, neglect of relevant material, illogical argument, unfounded conclusions, seriously flawed writing and presentation, and failure to engage the scholarly context.

The completed examiner reports are confidential to the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) until the examination is completed. SGPS must receive the completed forms from all the Examiners at least five working days before the date scheduled for the candidate's Thesis Examination. The reports will be included in the chair's package and all examiner reports are shared with the Supervisor and candidate after the examination.

If the Written Thesis is Judged Acceptable

A majority of the Examiners must judge that the thesis is acceptable to allow Stage Two: The Thesis Examination to proceed. An Examiner's preliminary judgment of acceptability is provisional. It does not preclude the Examiner changing their judgment to finding the thesis unacceptable at the Thesis Examination.

If the Thesis Content and Thesis Form is Judged Unacceptable

If there is not a majority of Examiners who judge the written thesis to be acceptable, SGPS cancels the Thesis Examination, and the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) appoints a Re-Submission Hearing Committee which reviews the case, including the examiners' reports, and decides whether or not to allow the candidate to prepare a revised version of the thesis for examination and, if so, the time limit for doing so.

Where the Re-Submission Hearing Committee* agrees that the candidate should be given the opportunity to revise the thesis to bring it to the acceptable scholarly standard for examination, the committee first establishes a new Thesis Examination date, no earlier than 12 weeks after the date of the originally scheduled examination. Normally the same Examiners assess the re-submitted thesis. The Chair of the committee provides the Graduate Chair, Supervisor(s), and student written notification of the decision and the changes suggested by the committee.

*The Re-Submission Hearing Committee is chaired by an Associate Vice-

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same Thesis Examination Board, within a time period determined by the committee. The Chair of the committee provides the Graduate Chair, Supervisor(s), and student written notification of the decision. All examinations for re-submitted theses should be held in an SGPS examination room during working hours.

* The Re-Examination Hearing Committee is chaired by an Associate Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) and includes the two Program Examiners, University Examiner (the External Examiner's presence is waived), the Supervisor, and the Graduate Chair of the program concerned. Note: The candidate does not attend the committee meeting.

If the candidate has already been through a Re-Submission Hearing Committee or a Re-Examination Hearing Committee (following Stage Two: The Thesis Examination), then the Thesis Examination Board's decision is final. The candidate has no further opportunity for resubmission and/or re-examination. However, if a candidate has been through a Re-Submission Hearing Committee following Stage One: The Preliminary (or Pre-Examination) Evaluation of the Thesis, then the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) refers the case to a second and final Re-Submission Hearing Committee.

Communicating the Decision to the Candidate

When the Chair and the Examiners have completed the documentation, the Chair invites only the candidate back into the room and informs them of the result.

If the thesis is passed conditional upon revision the Supervisor(s) must meet with the candidate, to ensure that he/she understands the revisions required by the Thesis Examination Board.

Following the Examination

The Chair of the examination returns all forms to SGPS .

1.7. Final Submission of the Thesis

When the candidate has completed any changes recommended by the Thesis Examination Board the candidate must submit the final copy of their work via digital submission through the Scholarship@Western Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository.

The candidate accesses their original submission within the repository and submits a revised copy of their work.

Once the thesis is published, the candidate has officially completed the thesis requirement for their degree. The candidate's name is placed on the Convocation list.

1.8. Publishing the Thesis

A thesis is a research document. It is a record of the research that the student conducted while completing a graduate degree. Given the research and education

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mandate of Canada's publicly funded universities, it is expected that the results of this research will be made publicly available.

For those theses that are submitted through the Scholarship@Western ETD Repository, the University requires that successful graduate theses be made available through the Western Library's Scholarship@Western program. The thesis will be published electronically at the conclusion of the degree process and will be available online globally.

At the same time, the University recognizes that the student is the author of the

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2.1. The Program Requests a Thesis Examination

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2.2. In-Person and Remote Examinations and Public Lectures

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The Candidate and a Supervisor attend in-person. Normally, all thesis examiners participate in-person. Upon approval of the Candidate and Graduate Chair, one examiner may participate remotely.

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The Examiners do their work in a two-stage process.

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The Examination Begins

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If the candidate has already been through a Re-Submission Hearing Committee or a Re-Examination Hearing Committee (following Stage Two: The Thesis Examination), then the Thesis Examination Board's decision is final. The candidate has no further opportunity for resubmission and/or re-examination. However, if a candidate has been through a Re-Submission Hearing Committee following Stage One: The Preliminary (or Pre-Examination) Evaluation of the Thesis, then the Vice-

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Note: Students should be conscious of the implications of electronic publication in the digital context: material is accessible to any interested party, academic and non-academic. The record should also be understood to be permanently available – once published electronically, it can be withdrawn from Scholarship@Western, but digital copies will inevitably persist. Students engaging in thesis preparation and research should be mindful of electronic publication and availability as an endpoint of their research. Supervisors, equally, have a responsibility to be acquainted with the implications of electronic publication, and advise their students accordingly.

In certain cases, a “delay of publication” may be appropriate. See above. The candidate is asked to permit the release of the thesis to be used for research and also to agree to allow the non-