Doctoral Defence

Doctoral examination & Virtual defence procedure
What we will cover

- Overview of the doctoral examination process.
- Timelines and pressure points
- Defence options for Fall
- Defending on Zoom.
- Your questions and concerns.
The major steps in a doctoral examination

1. Nomination of External Examiner
2. Submission of Dissertation for External Examiner
3. External Review
4. Oral Defence
5. Submission to cIRcle
Timeline: about 4 months

- Nominations for External Examiner 8 weeks before submission.
- External review takes minimum 4 weeks.
- **At least** 10 days between External review due date and defence
- Normally one month between defence and final submission to cIRcle
Example timeline

▪ Nomination form submitted August 20.
▪ Submission to Doctoral Exams October 13.
▪ Dissertation sent to Examiner October 15.
▪ External Examiner’s report due date November 16.
▪ Defence booked on October 23.
▪ Defence November 29.
▪ Submission to cIRcle January 2; accepted January 6.
External Examiner Eligibility

- Subject matter expertise.
- Experience with PhD Supervision and Examination.
- Associate Professor.
- Arm’s Length.
- Has not been an examiner in the last 3 years.

Says yes.
Troubleshooting

- Doctoral Exams must begin the process.
- Have some extra nominees in reserve.
- Anonymous to candidate until dissertation is sent.
- Submission delays may cause extra delay. Don’t assume 1:1 time delay.
Submission Delays

- Delays are common, and something Doctoral Exams staff are used to.
- If you know there will be a significant delay, let us know.
  - If we know about delays, we can work to ensure the examination proceeds smoothly.
  - Your external examination & defence may take longer if you do not notify us of a change to your submission date in advance.
Submission for Examination

- Committee must approve your work.
- Signed **Graduate Program Approval Memo** must be received before we send.
- You must be registered with tuition paid.
- Make your final draft which will go to all of the examining committee.
- Send the PDF of your dissertation to graduate.doctoral@ubc.ca
Booking the Defence

▪ You can book only after your dissertation is sent.
▪ Book at least 4 weeks before the defence date.
▪ Book using the Online Booking Form.
▪ For online defence, Zoom details will be confirmed 1 week before the defence.
Examining Committee

- Examination Chair (normally G+PS responsibility).
- 2 Supervisory Committee Members (including Research Supervisor).
- 2 G+PS approved University Examiners.
- External Examiner (welcome at the defence but not required).
- Quorum is 5; 1 extra supervisory committee member may attend.
University Examiners

▪ Associate, Full, Emeritae Professors.
▪ Breadth of experience with UBC standards.
▪ One must be from outside your program and outside your supervisor’s dept.
▪ Arm’s length from you and your supervisor.
Timeline to defence

- Book at least 4 weeks in advance.
- Chair confirmation sent 2 weeks before defence.
- Virtual room booked 1 week before defence.
- Exam reminder sent to committee with report 1 week before defence.
Defence Format Choices

- In Person - all committee members required for quorum in the room. XX can be remote.
- Virtual - everyone on Zoom.
In Person Defence

▪ G+PS rooms not available for fall (roofing issues).
▪ Find a suitable room.
▪ Practice in the room.
▪ Audience will also be in person.
▪ External Examiner or 3rd committee member may attend remotely.
Defending Online

- Zoom is what we are using.
- Examining committee + you.
- Some limited capacity for audience, indicate when you book.
- Do at least one practice with some other people.
- Meetings are set to start 30 mins before.
Potential Issues

▪ Doctoral exams staff will be present for the half hour prior to the start for all defences.
▪ Fairly common for issues to arise, so use that half hour to check in and address them.
▪ We will do what we can to make sure the defence goes forward.
Hybrid defence

- This is new territory for everyone.
- 1-2 committee members joining remotely.
- You will need a room with good technology, or an OWL.
- We will want to practice with you.
- If it looks problematic, we will do Zoom for everyone.
Structure of Defence

- The same for every defence mode.
- You present 25-30 minutes (not read).
- Committee asks 1 round of questions.
- There may be a second round.
- Candidate is excused.
- Committee deliberates and then asks you back.
- Verbal result given.
Tips from Defenders

- Practice! Practice! Practice!
- Check your physical environment.
- Check your electronic environment.
- Do you need a whiteboard?
- Have your dissertation handy.
- Doc Exams will send you a virtual guide when you book virtual or hybrid exams.
Examiners & Questions

- Resist the temptation to read your presentation.
- Chair may set time limit or question limit for each examiner.
- Answer questions fully, but succinctly.
- Don’t be afraid to say you don’t know, or ask for clarification.
- Examiners can ask you anything.
Revisions and cIRcle

- Usually 1 month for revisions.
- Supervisor normally collects signatures.
- YOU need to submit all paperwork to your program.
- cIRcle deadlines are hard deadlines for acceptance of the work.
- Once you have your email, you will be able to get a completion letter.
- Apply for graduation.
What are your biggest concerns?
Need more information?

Web:
https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-doctoral-examination

Email:
graduate.doctoral@ubc.ca

Further reading:
https://www.mcsweeneyes.net/articles/faq-the-s nerve-fight-portion-of-your-thesis-defense