The Final Doctoral Examination

Instructions for the Exam Chair and the Examining Committee

INTRODUCTION
The final doctoral defence is a public event designed to assess a doctoral candidate's contribution to knowledge and the candidate's ability to express it in writing, formal presentation, and interactive discussion. The event begins with a brief oral presentation of the candidate's dissertation. After summarizing the research, the candidate responds to questions from the examining committee and members of the audience.

Immediately after the public defence, the examining committee meets *in camera* to formulate a recommendation concerning the outcome of the examination. At the conclusion of the *in camera* session, the Chair informs the candidate of the recommendation that the committee will make to the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

QUORUM
The defence may not begin unless the following are present:
- The examination chair
- Two university examiners
- Two members of the supervisory committee

Note: One additional member of the supervisory committee and/or the external examiner may also participate as examining committee members. All committee members must be present throughout the defence and the subsequent deliberations.

ROLE OF THE CHAIR
1. Represent the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.
2. Moderate the defence proceedings; ensure fairness.
3. Ensure that any questions raised by the external examiner are addressed by the candidate during the question period.
4. Chair the *in camera* discussion of the examining committee and convey the outcome to the candidate.
5. Submit a report on the Final Doctoral Examination to the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies using the form provided.

ROLE OF EACH EXAMINING COMMITTEE MEMBER
- Represent her/his academic discipline.
- Scrutinize the dissertation in preparation for the defence.
- Formulate an independent opinion of the work.
- Question the candidate at the defence about the contents of the dissertation and her/his relevant knowledge.
- Participate in the *in camera* discussion and provide an opinion on the recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE RESEARCH SUPERVISOR(S)
- Be prepared to put to the candidate any questions raised in the external examiner’s report (if the external examiner is not participating).
SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE UNIVERSITY EXAMINERS

- Represent the broad academic standards of UBC. Evaluate whether the candidate’s work and presentation meet your expectations for UBC’s standards of excellence.

PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED BY THE CHAIR

1. Determine whether a quorum is present. (If not, contact Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies staff immediately.) Establish the order in which examining committee members will question the candidate. When the external examiner is participating s/he should be called upon first. The research supervisor is normally called upon last. When the external examiner is not participating, her/his questions are usually asked by the research supervisor.

2. Instruct all present to turn off mobile phones, alarms, etc., for the duration of the defence. Recording of the defence is not normally permitted. (The Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies may grant approval in special cases, and if so, the Chair will be made aware of this in advance. The Chair may discontinue the recording at any time if s/he judges that it is interfering with the proper conduct of the examination.)

3. Announce that no latecomers will be admitted, and that any member of the audience who leaves the examination room will not be permitted to re-enter. Ensure that the door is closed.

(In lengthy sessions, the chair may allow a brief recess after the candidate's presentation or during the question period.)

4. Announce that the meeting has been called for the public examination of (candidate’s name) for the degree of (Ph.D., Ed.D. or D.M.A.)

5. Invite the candidate to present a synopsis of the dissertation research. The candidate may speak from notes and use audio-visual equipment, but must not read the synopsis. The presentation should last between 20 and 30 minutes (please enforce these limits) and should not be interrupted by questions.

6. Call upon each member of the examining committee in turn to question the candidate. Exercise discretion in managing the question period; intervene if the questioning or behaviour becomes inappropriate or interferes with the proper conduct of the exam.

7. Ensure that all relevant questions from the external examiner are put to the candidate.

8. Call for questions from the audience.

9. Call for final questions from the examining committee, and, if necessary, ask the candidate to address/clarify any points not adequately covered previously.

10. Instruct the candidate and all persons not on the examining committee to leave the room.

11. Moderate an in camera discussion by the examining committee. The committee should arrive at a decision compatible with the Evaluation Protocol outlined below, and formulate a plan for handling the Doctoral Dissertation Approval form.
Notes: A maximum of three supervisory committee members may be designated as examining committee members and participate in these deliberations. If no decision can be reached, the examination should be adjourned. Possible causes: a medical emergency, loss of quorum during the examination, evidence of academic misconduct, etc. The Chair should inform Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies immediately. The Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies will decide how to proceed, in consultation with the Chair and other members of the Examining Committee.

12. Recall the candidate and, in the presence of the examining committee, inform the candidate of the recommendations that the committee will make to the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Avoid implying that a final decision has been made.

13. Express the thanks of the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies to all in attendance.

14. Complete the Chair’s Report on the Final Doctoral Examination form and submit it to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies within one week of the exam date. Comments on sensitive issues, or personal opinions or observations should be submitted in a separate, confidential report to the Dean. Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies will circulate copies of the report to the Examining Committee and candidate’s program office.

If the dissertation is nominated for an award, the Chair’s Report may be included as part of the nomination package.

EVALUATION PROTOCOL
The examining committee should make an overall recommendation after evaluating two aspects of the candidate’s performance:

- **The Oral Defence**: Discuss the candidate’s performance while presenting the synopsis, responding to questions, and defending the work. Decide whether or not the performance was at the standard of excellence expected of a doctoral candidate at UBC.

- **The Dissertation**: Discuss the overall merit of the dissertation. Consider scholarship, scope and impact of the contribution made, and quality of writing. Take into consideration the external examiner’s report, the assessment of the examining committee, and the questioning of the candidate at the oral exam. Decide what revisions, if any, will be required before the dissertation can be considered fully acceptable.

In any category where the committee’s judgement is unanimous, or nearly so (in that at most one examiner dissents), the chair should express it using the check-boxes on the Chair’s Report form. (including the external examiner if s/he has participated in the defence). Dissenting opinions should be noted in the Chair’s report. In any category where two or more examiners disagree with the majority view, the Chair should select the box labelled “No Decision” and provide a written description of the differing views in the text of the report. If this occurs, the Chair is expected to inform Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies as soon as possible—typically within one business day of the examination. The Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies will review the Chair’s Report and promptly determine an appropriate course of action, in consultation with the Examination Chair and the examining committee.

If the committee considers the dissertation satisfactory and the overall recommendation is “Pass”, the Chair will arrange for members of the examining committee to sign the Doctoral Dissertation Approval.
form as described on the **Chair's Report** form. Any revisions to the dissertation required by the committee must be clearly communicated to the candidate. The time allowed for such revisions (as indicated on the **Doctoral Dissertation Approval** form) should likewise be communicated to the candidate.

Please ensure all audio/visual equipment and room lights are turned off, and doors are locked upon leaving the exam room.