



# 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 (G+PS).

### QUORUM

The defence may not begin unless the following persons are present:

- The Doctoral Candidate
- The Examination Chair
- Two G+PS-approved University Examiners
- Two members of the Supervisory Committee

*Notes: All Examining Committee members must be present throughout the defence and the subsequent deliberations. If quorum is lost at any point during the proceedings, the examination must be immediately adjourned and G+PS notified.*

*One additional member of the Supervisory Committee and/or the External Examiner may also participate as Examining Committee members. Additional members of the Supervisory Committee (i.e., more than a total of three) may take part in the examination as members of the audience and, as such, are not permitted to participate in the *in camera* discussion or cast a vote in the proceedings.*

### REMOTE PARTICIPATION

Unless approved by the Dean or Associate Dean of G+PS in advance, examiners participating in the defence remotely (i.e., by telephone or videoconference) cannot be counted as part of the quorum. Normally, only a third member of the Supervisory Committee and/or the External Examiner may participate remotely. The remote attendance of audience members and/or the transmission of doctoral defence proceedings outside the exam room is not permitted without prior approval of the Dean or Associate Dean of G+PS. Any such exceptions will be communicated to the Chair by the G+PS Doctoral Exams office.

In cases where remote participation is approved by G+PS, the Candidate's graduate program or Research Supervisor(s) will be responsible for providing and managing the required technology. The Chair has the authority to discontinue a remote connection at any time if s/he judges that it is interfering with the proper conduct of the examination.

### 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 posed in the External Examiner's Report 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 and Postdoctoral 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 RESPONSIBILITIES 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.
- Maintain an arm's length relationship with the Candidate throughout the examination process.
- Avoid discussing the Candidate's research with either the Candidate or any member of the Supervisory Committee until the Oral Defence begins.

## PARTICIPATION OF THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER

While not required, the participation of the External Examiner in the Oral Defence is encouraged, as it offers the opportunity for valuable dialogue about the dissertation and the research it presents. When in attendance (either in person or remotely), the External Examiner is a full, voting member of the Examining Committee. The External Examiner should be granted adequate time to question the Candidate, and invited to participate in the *in camera* discussion of the Examining Committee.

As a guest of UBC, the Chair is asked to extend a welcome to the External Examiner on behalf of the Dean of G+PS.

## PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED BY THE CHAIR

1. Determine whether a quorum is present. (If not, contact G+PS immediately at 604-822-2848 or [graduate.doctoral@ubc.ca](mailto:graduate.doctoral@ubc.ca).) 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. This is normally followed by questions from each of the University Examiners and then the member(s) of the Supervisory Committee. The Research Supervisor is normally called upon last.

*Note: If an Examining Committee member not required for quorum is absent at the scheduled exam start time, it will be up to the Chair and Committee to decide whether to proceed or wait for his/her arrival. Members arriving late are not normally permitted entry into the exam room and are never allowed to participate in the in-camera discussion or vote in the official proceedings.*

2. Instruct all present to turn off mobile phones, electronic devices, alarms, etc., for the duration of the defence, and indicate that recording of the defence is not normally permitted. The Dean of G+PS 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. Permission is only ever granted to record the presentation portion of the examination; the question and answer and *in camera* sessions are never recorded.
3. If a member of the Examining Committee not required for quorum is participating remotely (see Remote Participation above for more details), inform all present that the examination cannot be paused to resolve any technological issues that may arise. Remind the Committee that only those members who are present for the full duration of the exam can participate in the *in camera* discussion and cast a vote in the proceedings.



4. 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.  
  
*(If required, the Chair may allow a brief recess after the Candidate's presentation or during the question period.)*
5. 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.).
6. 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.
7. 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. Take care to ensure all members of the Examining Committee are provided with a reasonable opportunity to question the Candidate. In particular, the External Examiner and University Examiners must be permitted sufficient time to develop their questioning fully.
8. Ensure that all relevant questions from the External Examiner are put to the Candidate. When the External Examiner is not participating in the Oral Defence, his/her questions are normally asked by the Research Supervisor.
9. Call for questions from the audience.
10. Call for final questions from the Examining Committee and, if necessary, ask the Candidate to address/clarify any points not adequately covered previously.
11. Instruct the Candidate and all persons not on the Examining Committee to leave the room.
12. 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.  
  
*Note: If no decision can be reached, the examination should be adjourned. Possible causes: a medical emergency, loss of quorum, evidence of academic misconduct, etc. The Chair should inform G+PS immediately. The Dean of G+PS will decide how to proceed, in consultation with the Chair and other members of the Examining Committee.*
13. 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 G+PS. *Avoid implying that a final decision has been made.* Communicate any revisions to the dissertation required by the Committee, the time allowed for completing the revisions and final submission process, and which Examining Committee members must review and approve the final revisions.
14. Express the thanks of the Dean of G+PS to all in attendance, including any audience members, who may now be invited to re-enter the examination room.
15. Ensure all audio/visual equipment and room lights are turned off, and doors are locked upon leaving the exam room.
16. Complete the **Chair's Report on the Final Doctoral Examination** form and submit it to G+PS ([graduate.doctoral@ubc.ca](mailto:graduate.doctoral@ubc.ca)) 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.



G+PS will circulate copies of the report to the Examining Committee, the Candidate's graduate program office, and the Associate Dean for the Candidate's faculty.

**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 Examining Committee's judgment 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. Dissenting opinions should be noted in the text of 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 G+PS as soon as possible—typically within one business day of the examination. The Dean of G+PS 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 Examining 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 page 2 of the **Chair's Report** form) should likewise be communicated to the Candidate.

### ***Inclusion of Published Material in the Dissertation***

The inclusion of published material in the dissertation is acceptable in some circumstances, but does not negate the need for review and critique by the Examining Committee. It is the role of the Examining Committee members to use their independent scholarly judgment and appraisal in reviewing the Candidate's dissertation. It is fully within the mandate of the Examining Committee to require revisions be made to the dissertation, regardless of whether the material has already been published elsewhere.

### ***Examinations with Two External Examiners***

In cases where a Candidate has been required to make revisions to the dissertation based on feedback from an External Examiner and submit a revised dissertation for examination, two External Examiners will be sought to evaluate the dissertation. Reports on the revised dissertation from both External Examiners will be circulated to the Examining Committee in advance of the Oral Defence. It is expected that the Examining Committee will take into consideration the assessments of both External Examiners and that the questions from both reports will be posed to the Candidate during the Oral Defence.