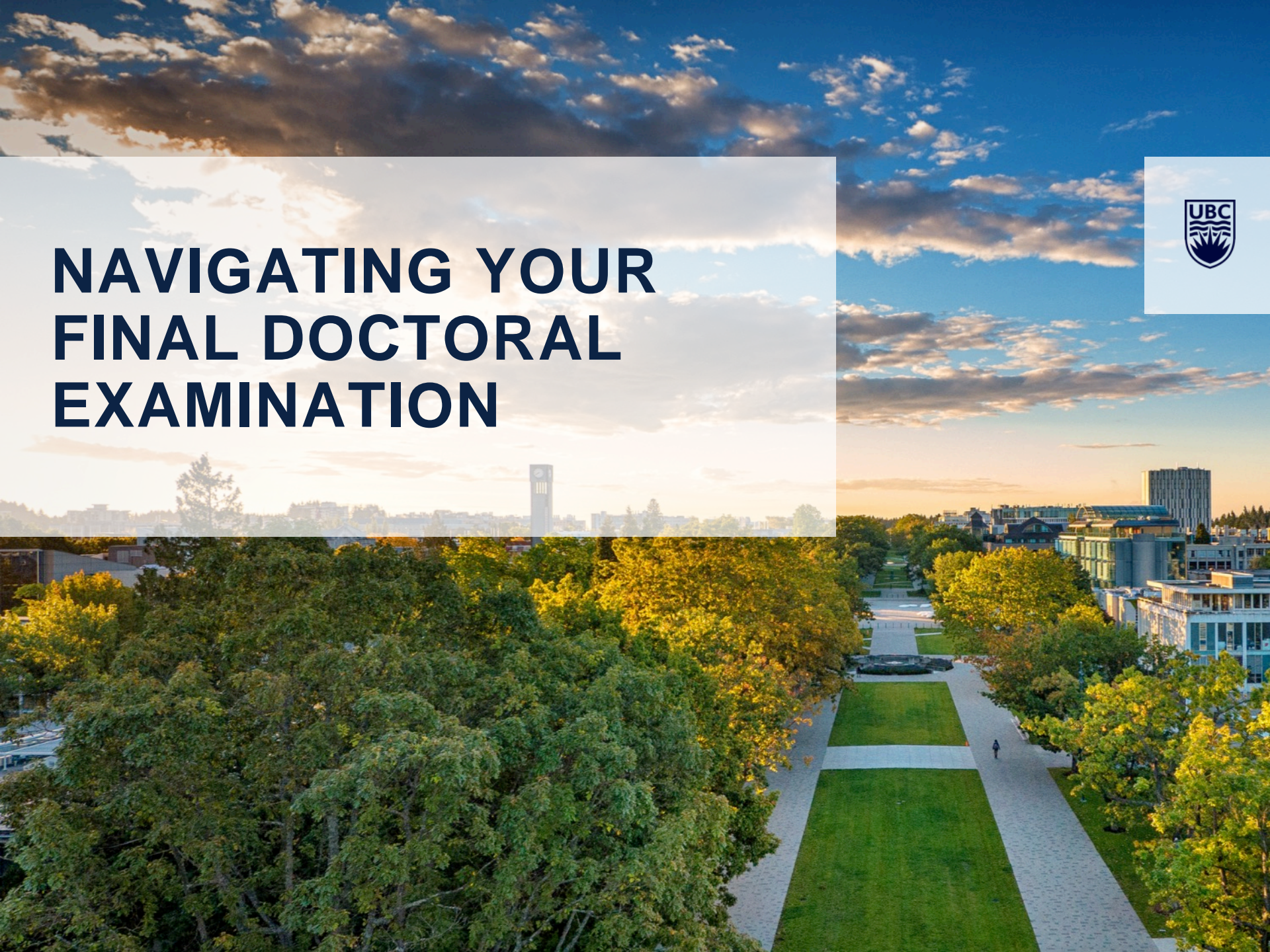


# NAVIGATING YOUR FINAL DOCTORAL EXAMINATION



# Session Objective

- To provide you with:
  - An overview of the Doctoral Exam Process
  - Tips to help you plan effectively
  - A clear sense of your responsibilities and ours
  - Answers to your questions







a place of mind

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Vancouver Campus



Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
Graduate School

- Home
- Prospective Students
- Current Students
- Campus & Community
- Awards
- Deadlines
- Forms
- Faculty & Staff
- About Us

Graduate School » Current Students » Final Doctoral Exam

# Final Doctoral Exam

- Newly Admitted
- Student Status & Classification
- Student Responsibilities
- Supervision & Advising
- Managing your Program
- Graduate Pathways to Success
- Dissertation & Thesis Preparation
- Final Doctoral Exam**
  - » Doctoral Exam Guide
  - » Tools for Planning
  - » Doctoral Deadlines
  - » Doctoral Exams FAQ
  - » Doctoral Exams Forms
  - » Upcoming Exams

- Newly Admitted
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- Dissertation & Thesis Preparation
- Final Doctoral Exam**
- Final Dissertation & Thesis Submission
- Graduation
- Resources & Links

...the culmination of years of research and writing. It is the last step toward the conferral of the doctoral degree.

...to provide the candidate with the opportunity to showcase his/her work and have it probed by the academic community, both at UBC and beyond.

...that UBC doctoral candidates excel in their fields and wish them the greatest success in the future.

[www.grad.ubc.ca](http://www.grad.ubc.ca)



UBC Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

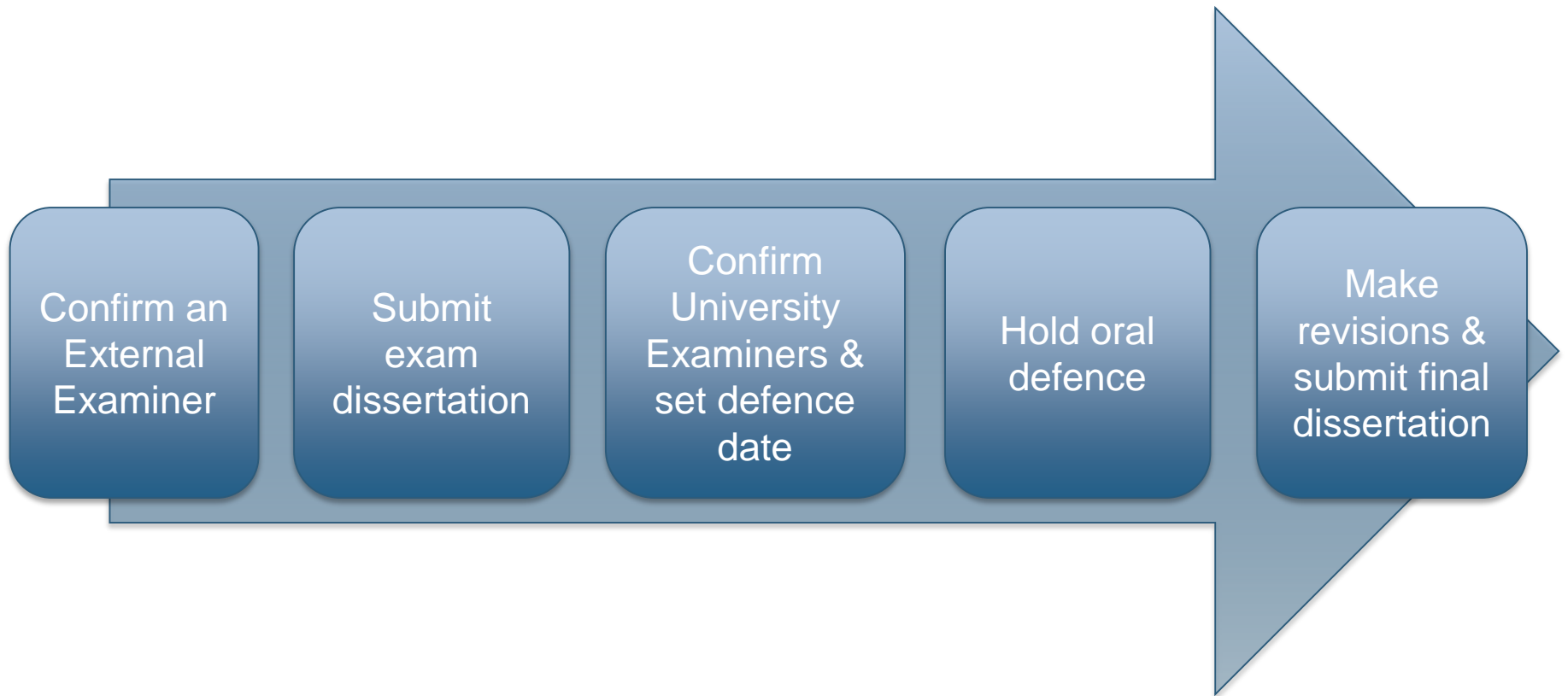
# Examination Overview

The Final Doctoral Examination is composed of 2 parts:

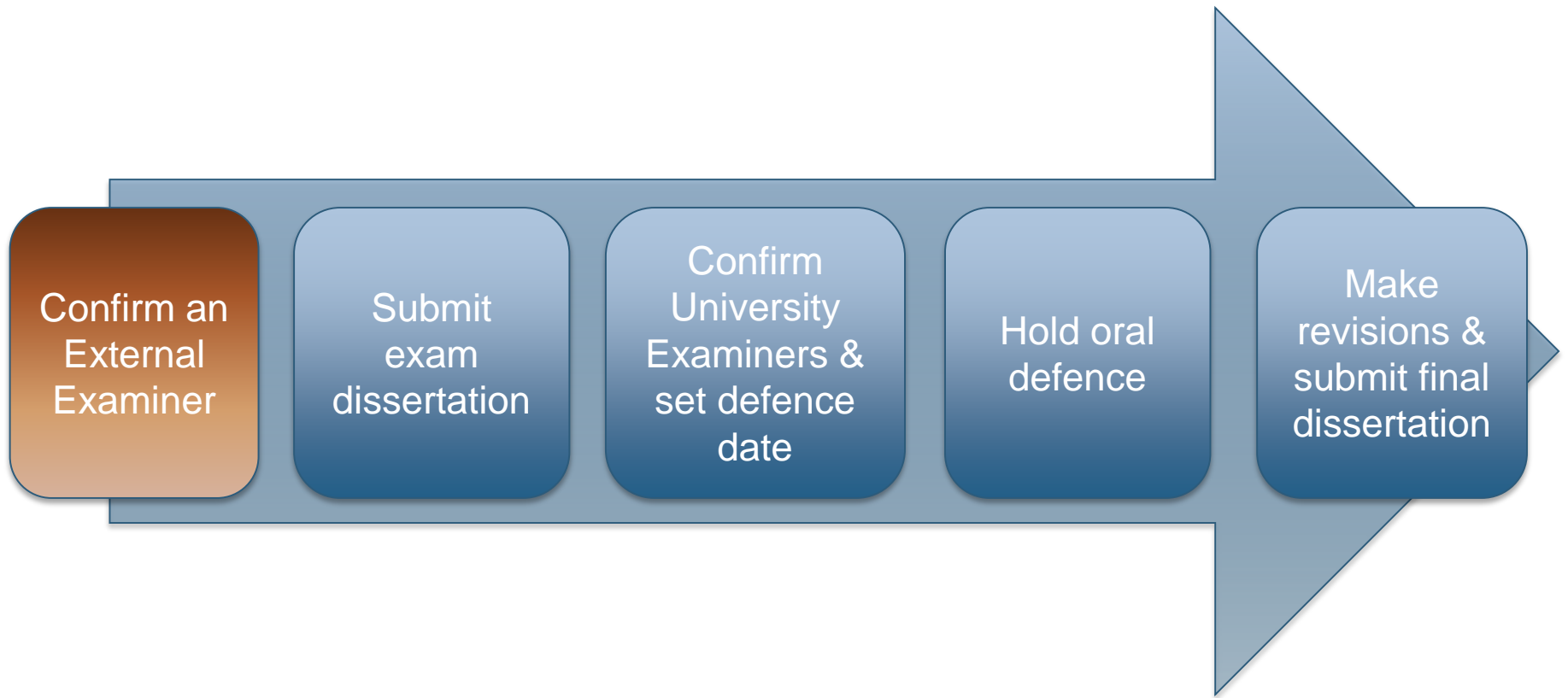
1. External Examination — *dissertation only*
  - An expert outside UBC reads & evaluates
  - **Must be passed before the oral defence can take place**
2. Final Oral Defence — *oral presentation & dissertation*
  - Panel of UBC faculty members evaluates



# Major Steps in Doctoral Exam



# Major Steps in Doctoral Exam



# External Examiner Eligibility

- Not associated or affiliated with UBC
- Established reputation in the area of your dissertation research
- Recent experience with doctoral supervision and examination
- Full, Associate or Emeritus Professor
  - Not Assistant nor Clinical



# External Examiner Eligibility

- Arm's length from you and your supervisory committee members
  - No co-authors, research collaborators, future bosses, former supervisors/students, family
- Must not have acted as External for a candidate in your program or for another of your supervisor's students for at least 3 years





# Selecting an External Examiner

- Your Supervisor/Grad Program submits Nominations for External Examiner form
  - Approximately 8 weeks prior to planned dissertation submission date
- **WE** begin the invitation process
  - **Do NOT contact potential nominees in advance**
- We cite the submission date provided on the form
- We notify you & your supervisor once an External Examiner is confirmed



# Tips for a Smoother Examination

- Do **NOT** contact your External Examiner nominees
  - This may result in their disqualification
- Don't be hasty
  - Do not submit your External Examiner nominations if you are not reasonably 8 weeks from submitting the dissertation

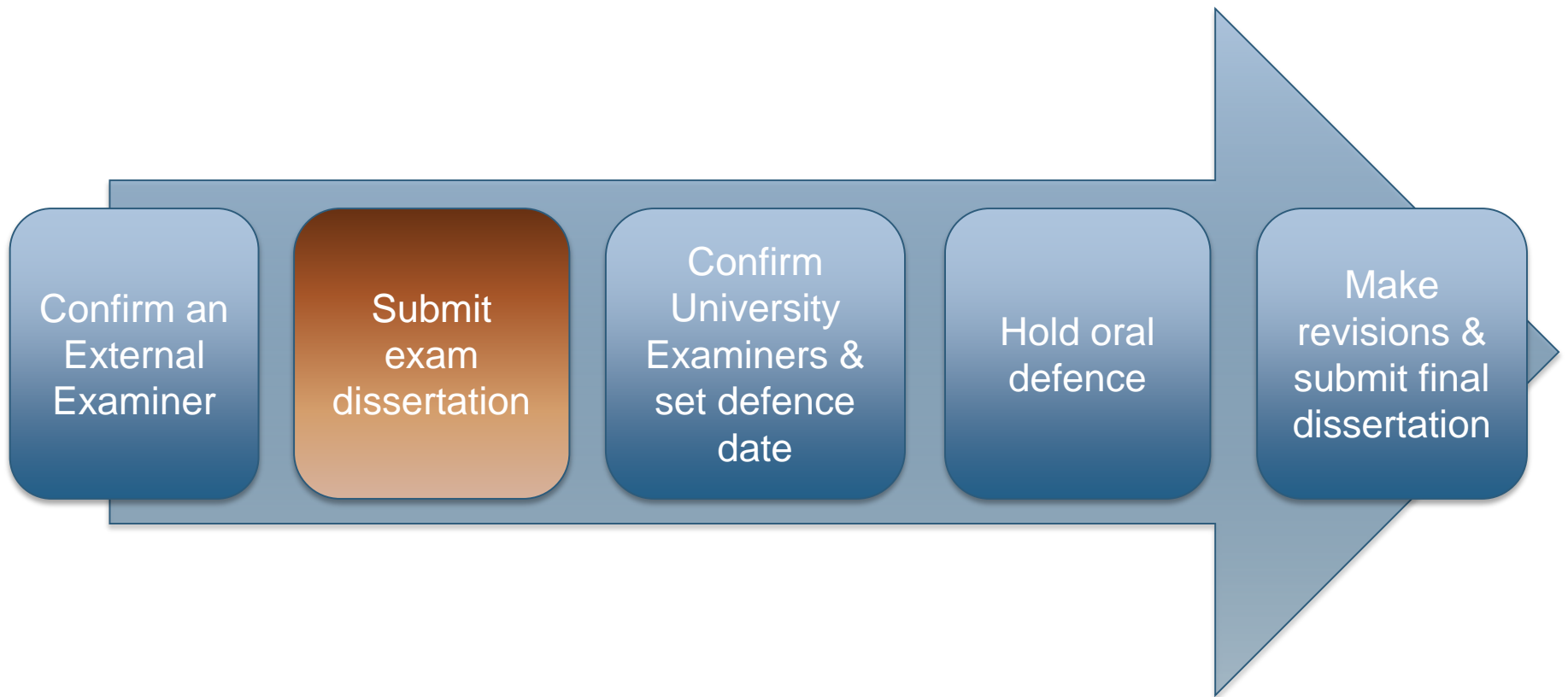


# Tips for a Smoother Examination

- If you know there will be a significant delay, let us know
  - This allows us to communicate such changes to the External Examiner and avoids unnecessary delays when you're ready for examination
  - Your external examination & defence may be delayed if you do not notify us of a change to your submission date in advance



# Major Steps in Doctoral Exam



# Submitting for Examination

1. Have your dissertation formatting approved by Thesis Team at G+PS
2. Arrange to have the Graduate Program Approval Memo signed & submitted
3. Email a PDF copy of your dissertation
4. Submit a printed, bound copy of your dissertation (if required)



# Submitting for Examination

- Submit all required documents to G+PS
- **BREATHE!**
- Wait for confirmation email with details about booking your oral defence





# Tips for a Smoother Examination

- Take time to thoroughly proofread your dissertation
  - This document represents you as a professional academic
- Do not have your dissertation bound until after your formatting has been approved

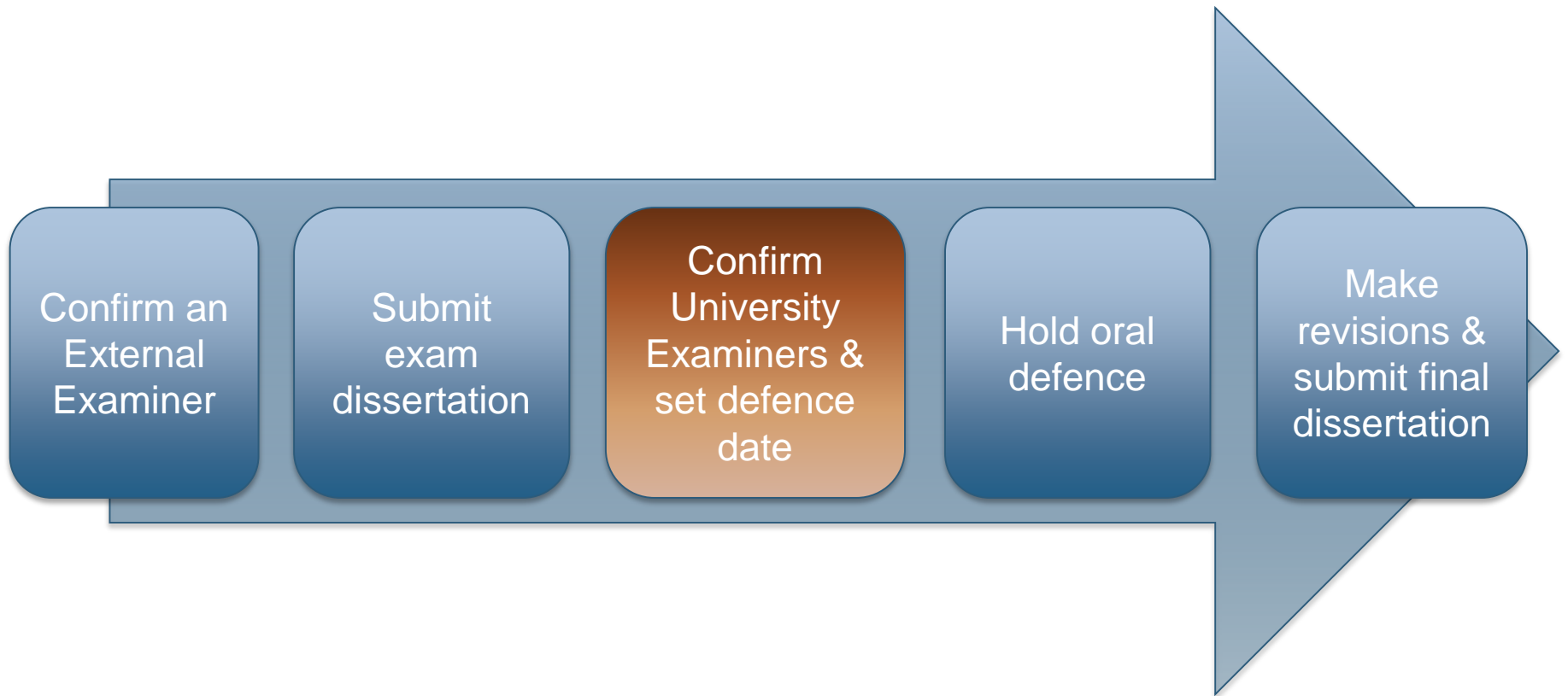


# Tips for a Smoother Examination

- Your examination cannot begin until all required documents are received
- Contact your Graduate Program Staff to arrange the Graduate Program Approval Memo well in advance



# Major Steps in Doctoral Exam



# Composition of the Examining Committee

- Examination Chair (G+PS responsibility)
- 2 or 3 Supervisory Committee Members (including Research Supervisor)
- 2 G+PS approved University Examiners
- External Examiner (not required at the defence but welcome)



# University Examiner Eligibility

- Two UBC-Vancouver faculty members required
- Expertise in a field closely related to your dissertation research
- Normally Full, Associate or Emeritus Professors who have a formal affiliation with a graduate program
  - Not Assistant, Adjunct, Clinical



# University Examiner Eligibility

- Both must be at arm's length from you and your Research Supervisor
  - No present or former members of your supervisory committee
  - Not connected with thesis research in any way
  - Normally no co-authored papers or research collaborations with Candidate or Supervisor
- At least one must be from **outside** your Graduate Program and your Supervisor's Department





# Selecting University Examiners

- University Examiners must be approved by G+PS
  - Submit signed Approval of University Examiners form at least 4 weeks before defence date
- Consent of the proposed University Examiners must be confirmed by your Research Supervisor or Graduate Program prior to submission of form



# Setting the Oral Defence Date

- Check the availability of the entire examining committee
- Find 2-3 dates that work for everyone (if possible)
- Submit a defence booking request using our online form **at least 4 weeks in advance**
- Once we confirm the date, consider it final



# Informing the Committee

- You and your Research Supervisor communicate the oral defence details to the examining committee (except Chair)
  - Date, time, and location
- You and your Research Supervisor distribute copies of the dissertation to all examining committee members (except Chair)
- G+PS will communicate defence details to Chair and provide PDF copy of dissertation



# Prepare Your Exam Programme

- Use the template provided on our website
- Ensure that all information is correct (check spelling!)
- Observe maximum abstract length (350 words)
- Submit this to us at least 4 weeks before your defence date



# Optional: Practice Session

- If feasible, book a practice session in your exam room to familiarize yourself with the room, the equipment, etc.
- Practice sessions can only be booked with less than 4 weeks notice



# Exam Reminder Email

- G+PS will send a reminder email to your committee one week before your defence
  - Will include:
    - External Examiner's report
    - Examination Programme
    - Chair Report form template
- External Examiner's report is confidential until at/after oral defence – you will not be copied on this email



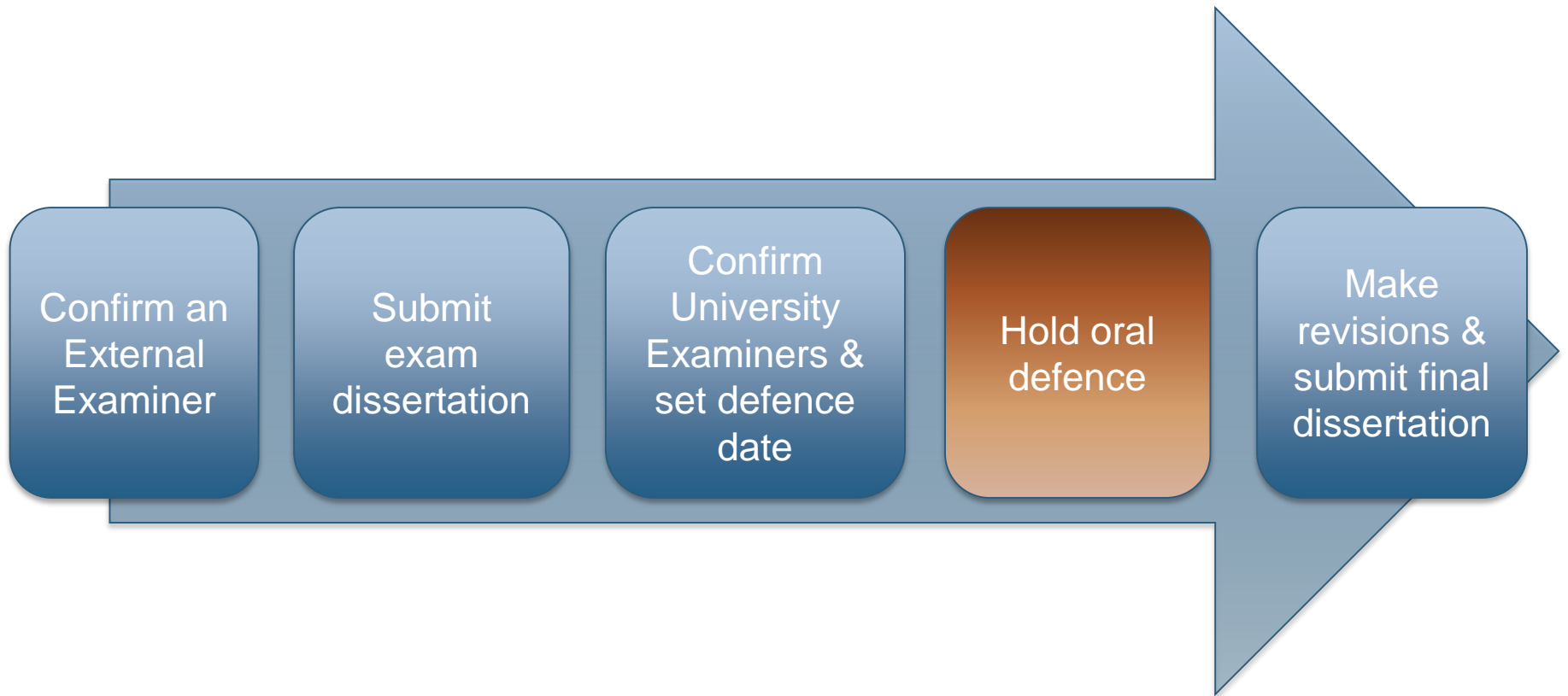


# Tips for a Smoother Examination

- Do not book a defence date without consensus from your committee
- Do not make assumptions about exceptions to eligibility criteria
  - If you're unsure, check with us first



# Major Steps in Doctoral Exam



# Defend!

- Showcase your research and wow the committee with your expertise
  - Plan to arrive 30 minutes early to get set up
  - Bring your own laptop
    - Let us know in advance if you will require one of ours
  - If you wish to bring refreshments for your committee, you will need to clean up after the defence



# Defence Day

- Quorum must be met, which means the following must be present, **in person**:
  - Doctoral Candidate (that's you!)
  - Examination Chair
  - 2 members of the Supervisory Committee
  - 2 approved University Examiners
- This is a public event
- No one can be admitted to the room once the exam has begun



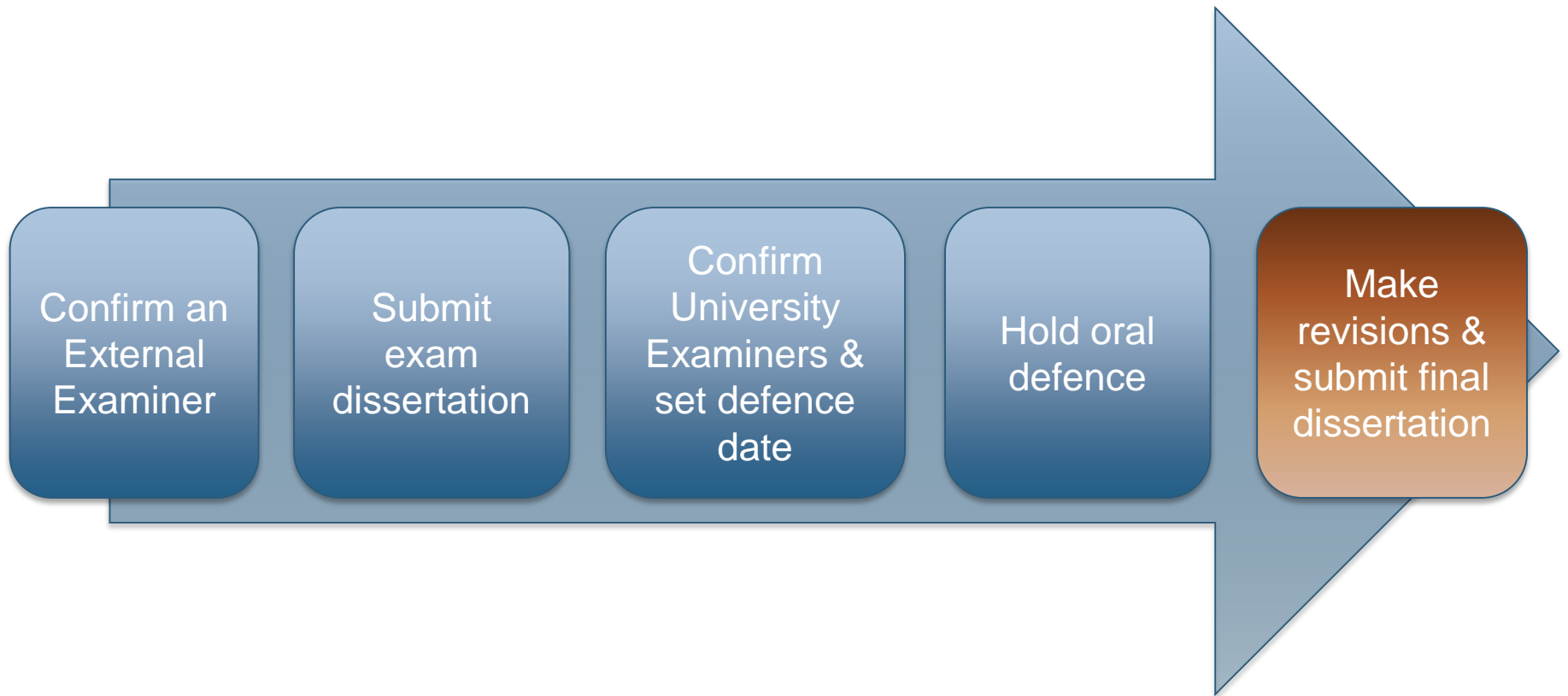
# Structure of Defence

- You present
  - Maximum 30 minutes
  - Not to be read
- Examining Committee asks you questions
  - Including questions from External Examiner
- Audience members are invited to ask questions
- Examining Committee holds *in-camera* discussion
- Chair conveys the committee's recommendations to you

*Usually lasts 2 – 2.5 hours*



# Major Steps in Doctoral Exam



# Final Revisions

- The Examination Chair will notify you of:
  - The Committee's recommendations to G+PS
  - What (if any) revisions are required for final approval
  - Which Committee Members will sign off on your final revisions
- Normally, you will be granted 1 month from the defence date to complete revisions and final submission process



# Submit the Final Dissertation

- The final dissertation and associated forms and approvals are submitted to the Thesis team at G+PS
- Online submission to cIRcle is required
- See the website for further details, including deadlines





# Bravo! Graduation

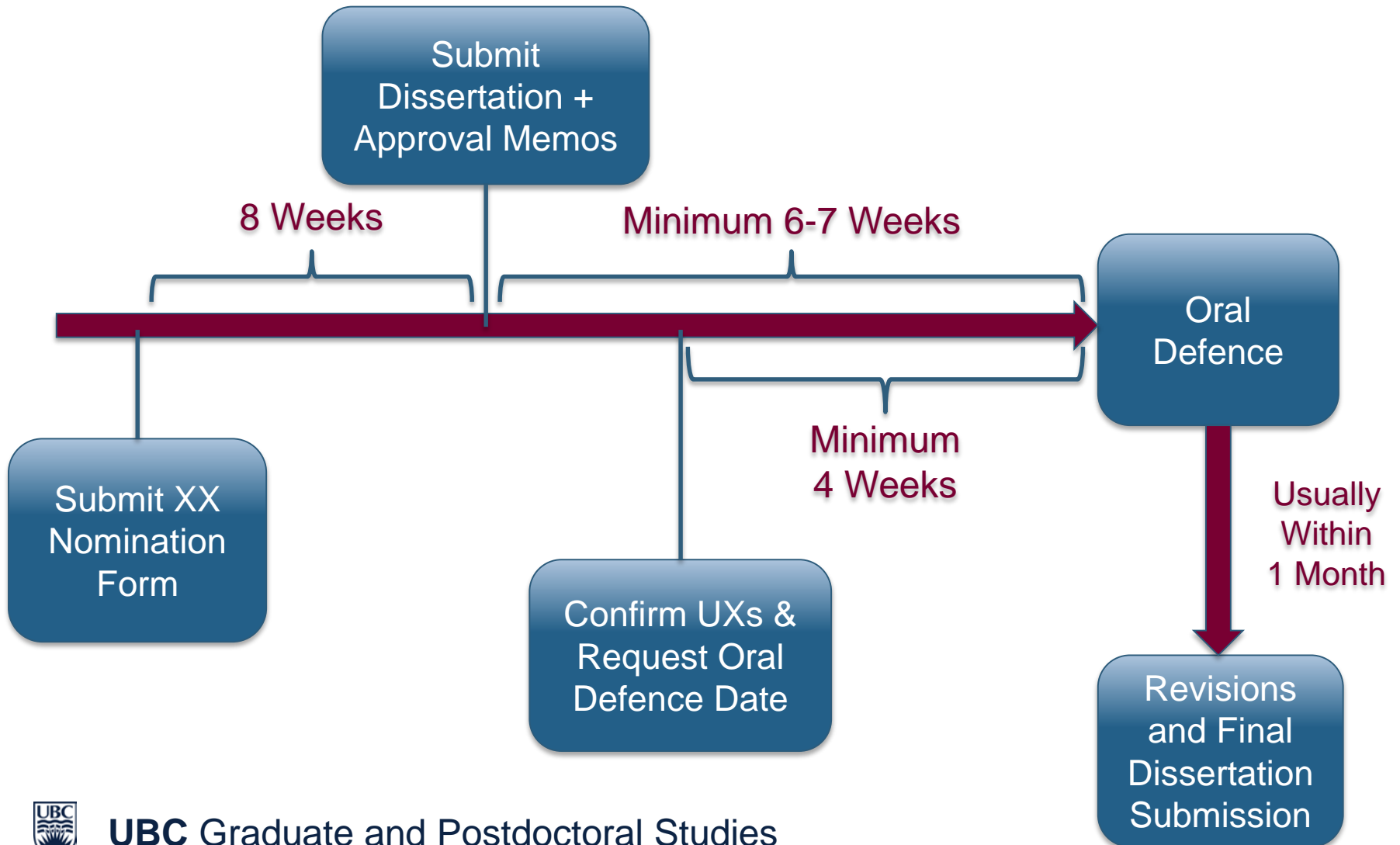
- In order to graduate you **MUST** apply for graduation
- Program End Date (when G+PS confirms your final submission) is **NOT** actually graduation
- *A Letter of Program Completion* can be issued once your final submission is confirmed



# Examination Timeline Planning



# Examination Timeline Overview



# Tools for Planning

- The best way to prepare for a smooth exam is to plan ahead and communicate clearly with your committee and G+PS
  - Our [Doctoral Examinations Planning Tool and Checklist](#) can assist you!
- Deadlines for common end dates are posted on our [website](#)



# Tips for a Smoother Examination

- Do not plan on the barest minimum timeframe without accepting the risk that something could go wrong
  - We cannot accelerate the process for candidates who have delays



# Tips for a Smoother Examination

- If you are absolutely counting on a particular end date or graduation date then ensure your documents are submitted on or before the deadlines
- If possible, try to submit at least a day or two before the deadline
  - Dissertations are sent out in the order they are received...and we receive a LOT on deadline days



# Managing Administrative Responsibilities

Yours, Your Supervisor's, Ours



# What Are You Responsible For?

- Ensuring all required documents are received by G+PS and that the information they contain is correct
- Having the content of your dissertation approved by your committee
- Having the formatting of your dissertation approved by G+PS
- Completing & submitting your examination programme
- Bringing a laptop to your defence
- Getting permission from the committee if you would like to record the presentation portion of your defence
- Leaving your exam room as you found it
- Applying for graduation and notifying Thesis Team when you have uploaded your final dissertation to cIRcle





# What Is Your Supervisor Responsible For?

- Nominating External and University Examiners who meet eligibility and arm's length requirements
- Ensuring your dissertation is ready for external exam
- Getting commitment from University Examiners in advance of submitting nominations
- Ensuring the University Examiners receive a copy of the dissertation
- Confirming the commitment of all members of the examining committee for the date and time of the oral defence
- Providing a paper copy of the dissertation to the Chair, if requested



# What Is G+PS Responsible For?

- Communicating with the External Examiner
- Transmitting the dissertation to the External Examiner
- Receiving the External Examiner's report
- Approving all examiner nominees
- Inviting and confirming an Exam Chair
- Transmitting an electronic copy of the dissertation to the Chair
- Sending an email reminder to your Examining Committee one week before your defence



# Be the Captain of Your Own Ship!

- It's your degree and your life, not your Supervisor's, not your Graduate Program Staff person's
- If vital parts of the process are not attended to, you could be more than a little inconvenienced
- We assist over 500 candidates a year; we cannot micromanage you



# We're Here To Help!



## Doctoral Exam Guide

[www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-doctoral-examination](http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-doctoral-examination)

Questions?

[graduate.doctoral@ubc.ca](mailto:graduate.doctoral@ubc.ca)





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