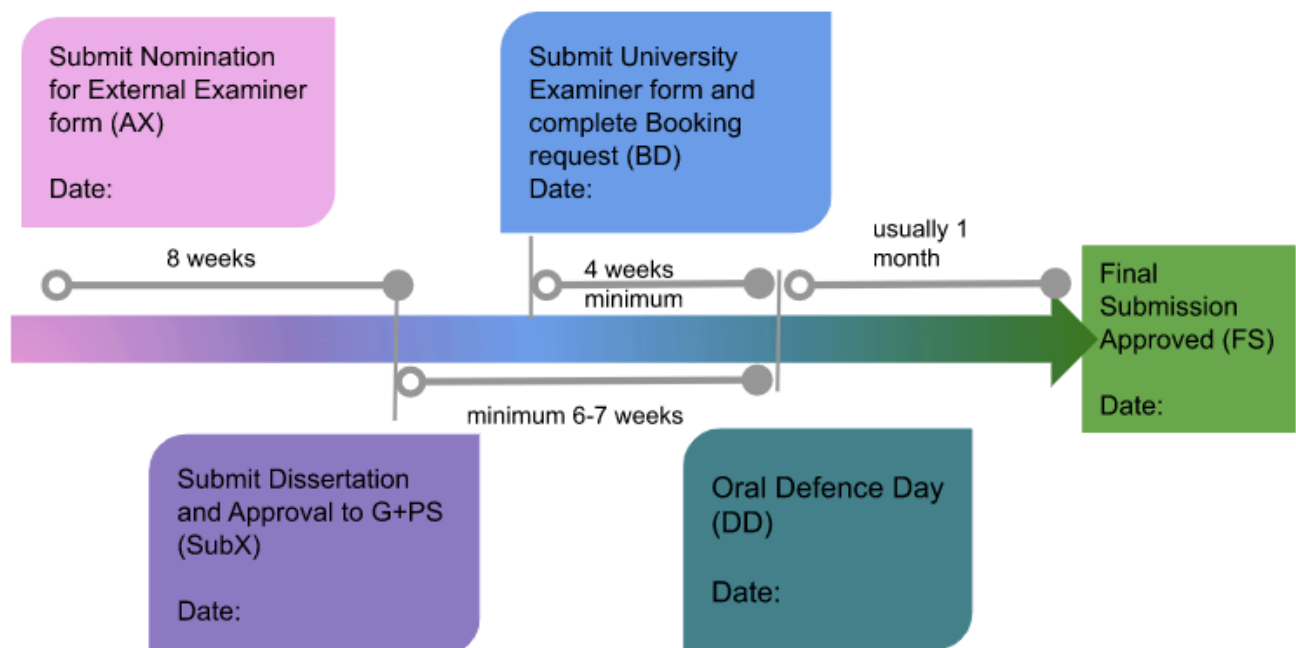




PLANNING YOUR DOCTORAL EXAMINATION

The entire Doctoral Examination process takes about 4 months. Detailed information on policy and procedure for the processes mentioned in this document can be found in the [Doctoral Exams Guide](#). Doctoral Exams staff also provide regular information workshops through [Graduate Pathways](#).

The major steps are **Nomination of the External Examiner**, **Submission of the Dissertation for External Examination**, the **Oral Defence** and **Final Submission to cIRcle**. They are outlined in the diagram below. Please see Key Dates below for notes and explanation.



KEY DATES

AX: Submission of the External Examiner Nomination Form. This form tells the Doc Exams Team that you are ready to start your exam process. It also sets up the next date Submission for External Examination (SuBX).

SubX: Submission for External Examination. The date you submit your dissertation and accompanying documentation to the G+PS Doctoral Exams Office so we can send it to the External examiner. Once we send your dissertation, we let you know the first possible day you can hold your defence (date DD). You can have a defence any time after that date on a day and time that works for all of your examining committee.

BD: The date you submit your booking form to secure a Defence Date (DD). You can do this as soon as we send the dissertation. You do **not** have to wait until we have the External Examiner report.

DD: Defence Date (DD) - the big day! You need to book your defence at least 4 weeks in advance (date BD).

FS: Acceptance of submission to cIRcle. The final date in the process is the day your final dissertation is accepted into the UBC Library's electronic repository (cIRcle). Your program will be closed in the following few days, but FS date will be your official program end date.

WAYS TO PLAN YOUR DEFENCE TIMELINE

There are a number of ways to plan your timeline, depending on what's most important to you and the way you want to work towards the defence date.

Some people have a specific completion date in mind, based on a firm event like the end of semester, graduation ceremony or a postdoc start date. In those cases, you will need to work backwards from the desired completion date to figure out approximately when you need to defend, and then work back from there to find the most appropriate submission date, and then go 8 weeks further back to the point where you should be submitting your External Examiner Nomination Form. Suggested timelines for common completion dates are [posted on our website](#).

Similarly, if you want to plan your defence around a specific date, you will need to work backwards from that date to figure out when you need to submit your dissertation to the External Examiner.

Other people might find it more practical to time the process depending on when they are approaching the final draft being ready, rather than writing to a tight deadline.

In all cases, you will need to have your dissertation evaluated by an External Examiner, plan and hold your defence, and finally to complete your program by submitting the final version of your work to cIRcle after the defence.

Whichever approach you take, the Doctoral Exams Team will work with you to make sure your examination process goes as smoothly as possible.

SAMPLE TIMELINES

Here's an example timeline for a student who wants to complete their program by the end of the academic year on August 31.

April 10: Nomination of External Examiners form (AX) submitted.

June 11: Submission of Dissertation and accompanying approval to Doctoral Exams (SubX).

June 11: Dissertation sent to Examiner.

June 17: University Examiner form needing exception approval submitted, approved June 20.

June 26: Defence booking (BD) submitted; confirmed June 27.

July 9: External Examiner's report due.

August 1: Oral Defence (DD) held.

August 23: Submission to cIRcle; accepted August 26 (FS).

Here's an example timeline for a student heading for a completion in time to participate in the Spring Convocation ceremony. You will notice this timeline is slightly longer, this is mainly because of the winter break which adds 2-3 weeks.

November 30: Nomination of External Examiners form (AX) submitted.

January 31: Submission of Dissertation and accompanying approval to Doctoral Exams (SubX).

February 2: Dissertation sent to Examiner.

February 7: University Examiner form submitted and approved.

February 10: Defence booking (BD) submitted; confirmed February 15.

March 6: External Examiner's report due.

March 17: Oral Defence (DD) held.

April 14: Submission to cIRcle; accepted April 18 (FS)

DEADLINES AND WIGGLE ROOM

Many of the deadlines we are talking about in this document are somewhat soft. That is, being a day or two late won't make a huge difference. We won't ever "reject" your submission, but late submission can have implications that will affect your timeline, and if you have firm plans based on a completion date, you should do your best to stick to the timeline.

We ask for the **External Examiner form** 8 weeks before the submission date because finding an External Examiner can be unpredictable. We also find that busy faculty are more likely to say yes to an invitation that gives them time to plan. Late submission of this form can make it harder to find an examiner, which can cause delays.

The Nomination of External Examiner form asks for a specific date for your **submission deadline**. We use this date to give the examiner a time window that's about 2 weeks. If you submit within 2 weeks of your stated submission date, we'll count that as "on time".

If you submit **more than 2 weeks after** your submission date, we will need to reach out to your examiner to confirm their availability. If we need to renegotiate a timeline, this may add more time to the review period.

The **earliest possible date of defence** is calculated when we send your dissertation to the External Examiner. This date is based on the agreed review time (never less than 4 weeks), plus the time needed to receive and distribute the report. It includes a little cushion in case the report is late. It is not normally possible to make this date earlier.

Final submission deadlines are hard deadlines. If you choose to hold your defence later than the recommended date for a final submission deadline (eg close to the end of semester), you are reducing the amount of time you will have to make any recommended revisions. It might be possible for you to get the work done, but it may be difficult.

Final submission deadlines are for the **acceptance** of the work, not submission. That final process can take a few days, so you need to plan for that.

EXAM CHECKLIST

This is a checklist of steps that will need to be completed in the course of your doctoral examination. It's not an exhaustive list, but it covers the essentials. You can download a more detailed editable version in docx format if you want to make a more personalized version.

This list is divided into sections based on the timeline on page 1.

AT LEAST 8 WEEKS BEFORE SUBMISSION OF THE DISSERTATION DOCUMENT TO G+PS DOCTORAL EXAMS OFFICE

- ☐ Discuss your program's pre-submission requirements with your supervisor. You may need to plan a departmental defence before you can set your submission date.
- ☐ Discuss potential External Examiners with your supervisor/s.
- ☐ Check with your committee about timelines for reading a final draft of your work and providing feedback.
- ☐ Set a target date for submission to the External Examiner.
- ☐ Fill in the Nomination of External Examiner form with your supervisor.
- ☐ Submit the External Examiner form for signature by your Graduate Advisor.

FROM 8 WEEKS PRIOR TO SUBMISSION OF THE DISSERTATION DOCUMENT TO G+PS DOCTORAL EXAMS OFFICE:

- ☐ Work on and complete your final draft.
- ☐ Meet any outstanding program requirements (eg departmental defence) for submission to External Examiner.
- ☐ *If you are not going to make the submission date, you may want to let us know now.*
- ☐ Connect with your Supervisor regarding committee approval.
- ☐ Submit Graduate Program Approval memo to your program for signature by your Graduate Advisor.
- ☐ Talk to your supervisor about inviting the External Examiner to the defence (they may have already done so).
- ☐ With your committee, decide which supervisory committee members will serve on your Examining committee (minimum of 2, maximum of 3, including your supervisor).
- ☐ With your supervisor, discuss the appointment of the University examiners. This is the time to check the University Examiners' eligibility and connect with Doctoral Exams office to request any exceptions if they are needed.

SUBMIT YOUR DISSERTATION TO G+PS DOCTORAL EXAMS OFFICE:

- ☐ Submit your work to G+PS Doctoral Exams Office.

AFTER SUBMISSION OF THE DISSERTATION DOCUMENT TO G+PS DOCTORAL EXAMS OFFICE:

- ☐ Note the earliest date of defence (from the email).
- ☐ Provide supervisory committee members with the version of the dissertation that was submitted to G+PS.
- ☐ University Examiners have been invited (usually by supervisor) and have agreed to serve.
- ☐ In consultation with the entire Examining Committee, decide if the defence will be in-person, online via Zoom, or hybrid. (Zoom meetings will be booked later by Doctoral Exams Team.)
- ☐ Find at least one (but preferably 2 or 3) possible defence dates that work for the entire Examining Committee.

AT LEAST 4 WEEKS BEFORE YOUR DEFENCE DATE:

- ☐ Fill in the University Examiner Approval Form with your supervisor.
- ☐ Submit your University Examiner Approval Form to your program for signature by the Graduate Advisor.
- ☐ Fill in the Online Defence Booking form (you or your supervisor can do this).

FROM 4 WEEKS PRIOR TO DEFENCE AND DEFENCE DAY:

- ☐ Make a practice plan.
- ☐ Book a practice session in the exam space, if desired.
- ☐ Pick an outfit.
- ☐ Invite the audience members you want to have at your defence.

AFTER THE DEFENCE:

- ☐ Meet with your supervisor to discuss any required revisions requested by the examining committee.
- ☐ Complete your revisions.
- ☐ Submit your Doctoral Dissertation Approval Form and Thesis Cover Sheet to your program.
- ☐ Create your cIRcle account.
- ☐ Follow the instructions for submission to cIRcle.
- ☐ Respond to any emails about final submission.

**NEED HELP?**

Email the Doctoral Exams team: graduate.doctoral@ubc.ca

[Doctoral Exams Guide](#)

[Doctoral Deadlines for the current Academic Year](#)

[Doctoral Exams Forms](#)