

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

Officer(s) Responsible for Procedures: Vice-Provost (Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies)

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1. Preparing for the Thesis Examination

To fulfill the degree requirement of a thesis-based program, the thesis and the student's oral defense of the thesis must be assessed and approved by a Thesis Examination Board and must meet the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) requirements for the thesis. The examination of the thesis exposes a student's work to scholarly and expert criticism.

For the thesis timeline and an overview of submission dates, please visit [Thesis Timelines](#).

Thesis examinations will not be held on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation observed at Western.

Unless otherwise approved as part of program requirements, all non-thesis degree requirements must be completed before the student can submit the thesis for examination.

1.1 Request to SGPS for a Thesis Examination

When the supervisor(s) advises that the thesis is ready for examination, the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) is responsible for submitting the completed doctoral or master's thesis examination request form to SGPS for approval at least six working weeks for PhD, four working weeks for master's, before the proposed examination date.

Students with accessibility needs must ensure that Accessible Education is aware of the upcoming examination so that any accommodations are communicated to the program in advance of the examination. The Graduate Chair (or equivalent) is responsible for

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

ensuring that accessibility is provided to everyone attending the examination (i.e., equipment, furniture, space, must be accessible to those with visible and invisible disabilities).

In addition to identifying the thesis examination board members, the form must confirm whether the examination will be in-person or remote, provide details about the public presentation, indicate if the examination is open or closed, and indicate whether there is a confidentiality agreement to be signed, and/or if a delay of publication is requested. The form identifies whether the supervisor(s) has approved the thesis to go to examination.

SGPS approves the thesis examination board and the date of the examination. The date and time of the examination are confirmed via the formal invitation from SGPS.

1.2 In-Person and Remote Examinations

The thesis examination can be held either in-person or remotely.

At the time when a thesis examination is arranged, the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) determines with the supervisor(s) and the student whether the exam will be held in-person or remotely. All examinations must follow the procedures outlined in the Thesis Examination Guide.

In-Person Examinations

The student and supervisor(s) attend in-person. Normally, all thesis examiners participate in-person. With approval of the student and Graduate Chair (or equivalent), one examiner can participate remotely. Flexibility will be exercised for any Indigenous Elder and/or Knowledge Keeper who expresses an interest to join virtually. Please contact SGPS and Indigenous Student Services in these situations.

Remote Examinations

The student and supervisor(s) attend remotely. All thesis examiners participate remotely.

1.3 Public Presentations

PhD students are required to provide a public presentation on their thesis research, scholarship, and/or creative activity, normally within twenty-four hours before the thesis examination. Public presentations are optional for research Master's examinations. The graduate program sets the time and place for the presentations. SGPS announces the public presentation on its website. The presentation occurs in an open forum. The examiners normally attend the public presentation.

The type of-public presentation (in-person or remote) will normally match the type of examination (in-person or remote).

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

In-person public presentations can include remote attendance.

1.4 Open versus Closed Thesis Examination

The thesis examination is normally a closed event unless the student and program, by mutual agreement, request that the examination is open to the university community (e.g., faculty, academic colleagues, students). An exception will be granted for Indigenous students who may benefit from the physical presence and support of Indigenous Knowledge Keepers.

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

1.5 Confidentiality Agreement

If the student feels that the nature of the information contained in the work must remain confidential (e.g., concerns pending patents, community needs, Indigenous data sovereignty, etc.) for a specified period, a [confidentiality agreement](#) is required.

1.6 Delay of Publication

Note: please see Publication of the Thesis regarding the electronic publication of theses.

If a student needs to delay publication of their thesis (e.g., due to a pending patent, commercial application, community needs, or Indigenous data sovereignty) this must be identified on the thesis examination request form by indicating an automatic “delay of publication” for up to two years. This option will block the thesis from public access after successful examination and final submission. This process is available as part of the Scholarship@Western Electronic Thesis and Dissertation submission process. When the “delay of publication” expires, the student can be granted a one-year extension through a written request to the Thesis Coordinator.

Exceptionally, a student may request a six-year delay of publication by contacting an Associate Vice-Provost within SGPS. This request requires the approval of the Graduate Education Council Academic Policy Committee.

1.7 Supervisor Approval to go to Examination

Normally, the supervisor(s) confirms via the thesis examination request form that the thesis meets the scholarly standards of the degree and is ready to go to examination.

In those cases where the student chooses to submit a thesis for examination without the approval of the supervisor(s), the following processes are followed:

The student notifies the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) who then discusses the reasons with the student. The Graduate Chair (or equivalent) discusses with the supervisor(s) their reasons for not approving submission of the thesis. The Graduate Chair (or equivalent) ensures that the supervisory committee member(s) have also been consulted.

If the reason concerns an allegation of scholastic offence, then the appropriate procedures are followed according to the policy on Scholastic Discipline for Graduate Students

(https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf).

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

If the reason concerns intellectual property, then the appropriate procedures are followed according to MAPP Policy 7.16 – Intellectual Property (https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies_procedures/section7/mapp716.pdf).

If the reason concerns quality, the supervisor(s) must articulate to the student and Graduate Chair (or equivalent) the quality concerns. The Graduate Chair (or equivalent) discusses with the student their reasons for wanting to go forward without supervisor approval and apprises the student of other options. They clarify with the student (and the supervisor(s)) that going to examination without supervisor approval means that the supervisor(s) does not view the thesis as ready for examination. It is explained that the examiners will know that the supervisor(s) has not approved the thesis to go to examination. The student is then informed of the elevated risk of failure that is introduced when a student goes to examination without supervisor approval.

If the student still chooses to submit without supervisor approval:

The Graduate Chair (or equivalent) takes on the role of the supervisor in this process. This includes making the necessary arrangements for the examination, inviting the examiners, completing the Thesis Examination Request form, overseeing the student's progress and attending the exam in place of the supervisor.

The supervisor(s) does not attend the thesis examination or the public presentation. The integrity of the process requires that a strict arms-length relationship between the student, the supervisor(s) and the members of the examination board be maintained throughout the pre-examination period. The content or quality of the work must not be discussed among these people until the oral examination itself is underway.

Upon completion of the oral defense, and after the student has left the room, the thesis examination board is reminded by the examination Chair that the student has submitted without the approval of the supervisor(s). The Chair also reminds the committee to assess the oral examination and written thesis based on academic merit.

The supervisor(s) has the right to not be recognized as the supervisor on the published thesis.

1.8 The Thesis Examination Board

Tasks of the Thesis Examination Board Examiners are to:

- Determine if the thesis and the student meet the expectations for research, scholarship, and / or creative activity.
- Appraise the thesis for content - its underlying assumptions, methodology, findings, and scholarly significance of the findings. This should include evaluation of the thesis in terms of its organization and presentation.
- Evaluate the student's skill and knowledge in responding to questions and defending the thesis.
- Ensure authenticity of authorship.

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

1.9 Arm's-Length Requirement for the Examination Board

Arms-Length refers to choosing examiners who are sufficiently distant from the student and the supervisor(s) to impartially assess the thesis artifact, which includes being free from bias and from conflicts of interest in respect of the student, supervisor(s), and thesis artifact.

An examiner must not have been connected with the thesis research, scholarship, and/or creative activity in a significant way. The examiners should not have been associated with the student, outside of the usual contact in courses or other non-thesis activities within the University, nor be related to the student or supervisor(s).

The external examiner cannot be a co-author or co-investigator in the past six years with the supervisor(s) or student.

Faculty members who have served on a student's comprehensive/candidacy examination committee are eligible to serve as examiners on the student's thesis examination if the other conditions of being arm's length remain unchanged.

Other relationships that are not arms-length include:

- A sexual or otherwise intimate relationship (past or current).
- A spouse or partner (past or current).
- A close family member. (Some examples of close family members may extend beyond blood or marriage for example clan relationships in the Midewiwin Lodge or Long House). Such relationships should preclude involvement on the examination board.
- The involvement of an examiner with the student or supervisor in a professional capacity, such as:
 - a current or former or prospective business partner; or
 - having previous, current, or an agreement for future negotiations relating to employment or publications relating to the thesis.

This list, while not exhaustive, illustrates the nature of potential conflicts to be avoided.

The supervisor(s) and Graduate Chair (or equivalent) must take reasonable steps to avoid recommending an examiner whose relationship with the student or supervisor is not arms-length. Best practices include reviewing the potential examiner's CV, having the graduate committee members review the list of names nominated as examiners, conducting a literature search on potential examiner's publications. It is recommended that supervisors and programs avoid multiple use of the same examiners.

Individuals asked to examine a thesis artifact must reveal any relationship with the supervisor(s) or student that could undermine their impartiality.

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

1.10 The PhD Thesis Examination Board

Examiners:

- Every PhD examination board must have exactly four examiners. Every board must have:
 - One External Examiner
 - One University Examiner
 - Two Program Examiners
 - In lieu of one of the program examiners, one specialized knowledge examiner, or one Indigenous Knowledge Keeper examiner
- Every effort must be made to ensure that the examination board members reflect Western's commitment to equity, diversity inclusion, decolonization, and indigenization, and the positionality of the student.

1.11 The Master's Thesis Examination Board

Examiners:

- Every master's examination board must have exactly three examiners. Every board must have:
 - One University Examiner
 - Two Program Examiners
 - In lieu of one of the program examiners, one specialized knowledge examiner, or one Indigenous Knowledge Keeper examiner
- Every effort must be made to ensure that the examination board members reflect Western's commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization, and indigenization, and the positionality of the student.

1.12 Thesis Examination Board Roles

Chair	<p>The Chair is a non-voting member of the Thesis Examination Board.</p> <p>As the Vice-Provost's (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) representative, the Chair presides over the thesis examination and provides leadership to ensure that the established procedures are followed. It is not appropriate for the Chair to ask the student thesis-related questions during the examination period or comment on the merits of the thesis.</p> <p>Chair Duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ See Thesis Examination Guide.▪ Determines when a quorum exists.▪ Opens and closes the examination proceedings.▪ Sets the order of questioners and the length of the question periods.
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Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Monitors the length and conduct of the student's presentation (if appropriate).▪ If the external examiner is not present, determines which examiner will put the questions raised in the external examiner's report to the student (for PhD examinations only).▪ If requested by the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies), where the external examiner has submitted a negative report but is not present, provides copies of the external examiner's report to the examiners to assist in their deliberations (for PhD examinations only).▪ Deals with behaviour and/or discussion that interferes with the proper conduct of the examination.▪ Moderates in camera discussion on the merits of the thesis, the student's oral presentation and responses to questions, the external examiner's report (if applicable), and other relevant matters.▪ Calls for a vote and recommendation.▪ Recalls the student and advises them of the recommendations that are to be made to the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies).▪ Prepares a report to the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) of the examiners' assessment of the thesis and the student's oral performance. <p>Chair Qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Must have SGPS membership.▪ The Chair for a doctoral examination must not be a member of the student's program or the supervisor's home program.▪ Where possible students whose thesis focuses on Indigenous issues should <i>have a thesis examination Chair who has relevant Indigenous or cultural safety training or expertise</i> (e.g., 4 Seasons of Reconciliation online module).
Program Examiner	<p>This academic examiner is an expert in the thesis area, upholds the standards of the discipline and ensures the graduate degree level expectations and the learning outcomes for the thesis are met.</p> <p>No more than one program examiner may be from the student's supervisory committee.</p> <p>The student's supervisor cannot be a program examiner.</p> <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The program examiner must have Teaching/Advisory, Associate, Master's or Doctoral SGPS membership in the student's program.

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

	<p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ See Thesis Examination Guide.▪ Conducts and submits a preliminary evaluation of the thesis artifact no later than five business days before the examination date.▪ Attends the public presentation.▪ Attends the thesis examination and participates in questioning the student, evaluating the thesis and the student's defense of the thesis.▪ Contributes their decision in the final determination of the acceptability of the thesis and oral defense.▪ If the final determination is a pass conditional upon revisions, be willing to review and approve the revisions.▪ If needed, participates in a re-submission and/or a re-examination hearingmeeting.
University Examiner	<p>This academic examiner provides an interdisciplinary or other discipline perspective on the student's research, scholarship and/or creative activity. The university examiner is normally a faculty member of Western University or its Affiliated University Colleges whose primary appointment is not in the same department as the student's program.</p> <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The university examiner must have Teaching/Advisory, Associate, Master's or Doctoral SGPS membership and must be able to bring an interdisciplinary or other disciplinary perspective.▪ Must not have had any involvement in the development of the thesis nor interest in the outcome. <p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ See Thesis Examination Guide.▪ Conducts and submits a preliminary evaluation of the thesis artifact no later than five business days before the examination date.▪ Attends the public presentation.▪ Attends the thesis examination and participates in the questioning of the student, evaluating the thesis and the student's defense of the thesis.▪ Contributes their decision in the final determination of the acceptability of the thesis and oral defense.▪ If the final determination is a pass conditional upon revisions, be willing to review and approve the revisions.▪ If needed, participates in a re-submission and/or a re-examination hearingmeeting.

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

Specialized Knowledge Examiner	<p>This non-academic examiner has knowledge, experience and expertise related to the research, scholarship, and/or creative activity and provides a community, industry, cultural, career, and/or applied perspective.</p> <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ This examiner does not need to hold membership in SGPS.▪ Must not have been involved in the development of the thesis nor have a material or financial interest in the outcome. <p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ See Thesis Examination Guide.▪ Conducts and submits a preliminary evaluation of the thesis artifact no later than five business days before the examination date.▪ Attends the public presentation.▪ Attends the thesis examination and participates in the questioning of the student, evaluating the thesis and the student's defense of the thesis.▪ Contributes their decision in the final determination of the acceptability of the thesis and oral defense.▪ If needed, participate in a re-submission and/or a re-examination hearing meeting.
Indigenous Knowledge Keeper Examiner	<p>The Indigenous Knowledge Keeper Examiner is a member of a recognized Indigenous community or organization with knowledge, experience, and expertise related to the research, scholarship, and/or creative activity.</p> <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ This Indigenous Knowledge Keeper Examiner does not need to hold membership in SGPS.▪ All Indigenous Knowledge Keeper Examiners are subject to the Indigenous Affirmation Policy to confirm Indigenous citizenship or membership. Consult with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives for more information and guidance. <p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ See Thesis Examination Guide.▪ Conducts and submits a preliminary evaluation of the thesis artifact no later than five business days before the examination date.▪ Attends the public presentation.▪ Attends the thesis examination and participates in the questioning of the student, evaluating the thesis and the student's defense of the thesis.

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contributes their decision in the final determination of the acceptability of the thesis and oral defense.• If needed, participates in a re-submission and/or a re-examination hearing meeting.
External Examiner (for PhD thesis examinations only)	<p>This academic examiner is a faculty member at another University and has an established reputation in the field of the thesis.</p> <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This examiner does not need to hold membership in SGPS. <p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• See Thesis Examination Guide• Conducts and submits a preliminary evaluation of the thesis artifact no later than five business days before the examination date.• Attends the public presentation.• Attends the thesis examination and participates in the questioning of the student, evaluating the thesis and the student's defense of the thesis.• Contributes their decision in the final determination of the acceptability of the thesis and oral defense.• If needed, participates in a re-submission and/or a re-examination hearing meeting.

1.13 The Student Submits the Thesis for Examination

Doctoral students must submit the thesis at least five working weeks before the approved date for the Thesis Examination. Master's students must submit the thesis at least three working weeks before the approved thesis examination date. This ensures adequate time for examiners to:

- Access the thesis via the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) Repository.
- Read the thesis and prepare their reports.
- Submit reports to SGPS through the ETD repository.

Once the thesis has been officially submitted for examination, it cannot be withdrawn except with the permission of the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies). The version which has been submitted to and circulated from the repository is the only version that the committee can examine. No other copies are to be circulated or examined.

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

2. The Examination of the Thesis and the Student

SGPS distributes to the examiners an electronic package via e-mail consisting of:

- A formal electronic invitation to examine the thesis and the student.
- The date, time, and location of the examination.
- Instructions on how to access the Scholarship@Western ETD repository.
- The thesis, in PDF format available through the Scholarship@Western ETD repository. Only this official version of the thesis may be examined.
- If appropriate, the option to request the thesis in a paper format through Graphic Services.
- Pertinent excerpts from the Thesis Examination Guide.
- The secure Thesis Examiner Report available through the Scholarship@Western ETD repository.
- For PhD exams, please visit the external examiners page for appropriate forms and information.

The examiners do their work in a two-stage process – Stage One: The Preliminary Evaluation of the thesis and Stage Two: The Thesis Examination.

The Thesis Examination may be postponed or cancelled if any step in the examination process is not completed on schedule (e.g., the student fails to submit the thesis for examination on schedule, or the examiners fail to submit preliminary evaluations on time) or if there is a credible allegation of a possible scholastic offence.

2.1 Stage 1: The Preliminary Evaluation of the Thesis

Each examiner must independently and without consultation complete the examiner's report and decide whether the thesis meets the scholarly standards for the discipline and degree.

There are two outcomes that the examiners may consider:

- **Acceptable with Revisions:** A work that requires some revisions may be deemed acceptable. Revisions include limited typographical or grammatical errors; errors in calculation, labels for tables, nomenclature, and bibliographic form; and the need for clarification of content.
- **Unacceptable:** A thesis deemed unacceptable may contain, for example, faulty conceptualization, inappropriate or faulty use of research methodology, misinterpretation or misuse of data, neglect of relevant material, illogical argument, unfounded conclusions, seriously flawed writing and presentation, and failure to engage the scholarly context.

The completed examiner reports are confidential to the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies). SGPS must receive the completed forms from all the examiners at least five working days before the date scheduled for the student's thesis

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

examination. If the preliminary evaluation is deemed acceptable, the examiner reports are shared with the supervisor(s) and student after the thesis examination.

If the Thesis is Deemed Acceptable

A majority of the examiners must deem that the thesis is acceptable to allow the thesis examination to proceed. In the case of a tie, the external examiner's vote will break the tie. An examiner's preliminary judgment of acceptability is provisional. It does not preclude the examiner changing their judgment and finding the thesis unacceptable at the thesis examination.

If the Thesis Content is Deemed Unacceptable

A thesis deemed unacceptable by a majority of the examiners at the preliminary evaluation stage of the thesis examination process is referred to a Re-submission **Hearing**Meeting.

SGPS cancels the thesis examination. The Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) (for PhD exams) or Graduate Chair or equivalent (for Master's exams) appoints a Re-submission **Hearing**Meeting committee. The examiner reports are not shared with the supervisor(s) and student.

Composition of the Doctoral Re-submission **Hearing**Meeting Committee

Chair: Associate Vice-Provost (or designate)

Where possible students whose thesis focuses on Indigenous issues should have a *Thesis Examination Chair who has relevant Indigenous or cultural safety training or expertise* (e.g.,4 Seasons of Reconciliation online module).

Graduate Chair (or equivalent)

Examiners (external examiner is optional)

In attendance: Supervisor(s)

Composition of the Master's Re-submission **Hearing**Meeting Committee

Chair: Graduate Chair (or equivalent)

Where possible students whose thesis focuses on Indigenous issues should have a *Thesis Examination Chair who has relevant Indigenous or cultural safety training or expertise* (e.g.,4 Seasons of Reconciliation online module).

Examiners

In attendance: Supervisor(s)

Role and Responsibilities of the Chair

The Chair is a non-voting member of the re-submission **hearing**meeting committee with the following responsibilities:

- Ensures that the responsibilities of the re-submission **hearing**meeting committee are met.
- Moderates the in-camera discussion.
- Provides the Graduate Chair (or equivalent), student and supervisor(s) written notification of the committee's decisions and list of recommended revisions.
- Chairs the subsequent thesis examination.

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

Responsibilities of the Examiners:

- Determine whether the student should be provided the opportunity to revise the thesis to bring it to the acceptable scholarly standard for examination.

If the student is provided another opportunity to revise the thesis, the examiners:

- Establish a date by which the revisions should be completed, normally no earlier than 12 weeks for PhD and six weeks for master's, after the date of the originally scheduled examination.
- Participate in committee discussion that results in agreed upon revisions to strengthen the thesis.
- Serve on the re-examination board, and in this capacity, assess the re-submitted thesis.

If the student is not provided the opportunity to revise the thesis:

- The outcome of the examination is a failure.
- The student has the opportunity to appeal the decision ([Graduate Student Academic Appeals](#))

Normally the same examiners continue to serve on the examination board, and in this capacity, assess the resubmitted thesis.

Role and Responsibilities of the Supervisor(s):

The supervisor(s) attends the Re-submission ~~hearing~~ meeting as a resource to the committee to assist their deliberations. They do not actively participate in the deliberations.

Responsibilities of the Student:

If determined by the examiners, the student shall revise the thesis based on the re-submission ~~hearing~~ meeting committee's feedback and resubmit the thesis for examination.

Whether or not the re-submitted thesis is found acceptable by the examination board, the student proceeds to the thesis examination.

2.2 Stage Two: The Thesis Examination

The Chair presides over the thesis examination:

To open proceedings, the Chair introduces all present.

- The student, the supervisor(s), the thesis examination board members must attend the thesis examination.
- For PhD examinations, SGPS normally requires that the external examiner attend either in-person or remotely; however, the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) may waive the presence of the external examiner for

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

extenuating circumstances. If unable to attend, the external examiner must submit questions to be put to the student by the other examiners.

- Any member of SGPS may attend as a visitor by having a written request to attend approved by the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies). The Chair will refuse attendance to all others.

During the examination, the supervisor(s), examiners and the student are asked to refrain from using electronic devices (cell phones, smart watches) for purposes other than the examination (with the exception of emergencies or for medical use).

The Chair then asks the student (and visitors) to leave the room so that the examiners can decide on the following:

- the order in which examiners are to question the student;
- the number of rounds of questioning desired (usually two);
- the time limit for each of the examiners' questioning periods (typically 15-20 minutes in the first round and 5-10 minutes in the second round); and
- for PhD examinations, who will ask the questions submitted by the external examiner if they are not present.

The examination board members each have a link to an electronic Thesis Examination Evaluation form. The Chair advises the examiners that their evaluations on the acceptability of the thesis should be made independent of the assessment made in the preliminary evaluation of the thesis.

The Chair invites the student (and visitors) back into the room.

The Examination Begins

The Chair explains to the student the sequence of events (e.g., two rounds of questioning, the order of questioning).

For master's examinations, the student may briefly present the thesis (10-15 minutes is appropriate).

The examiners question the student in the agreed-upon order, with the Chair holding them to the agreed-upon time limit. The supervisor(s) may not question the student and may not interject during questioning.

When the questioning has finished, the Chair asks the student and visitors, but not the supervisor(s), to leave the room.

Allegation of Academic Misconduct During the Examination

It is expected that evidence supporting an allegation of academic misconduct would be identified at the preliminary evaluation stage and conveyed to SGPS at that time. However, if during, or at the conclusion of the examination, the student's supervisor, the

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

Chair or any member of the examining committee expresses the view that there is a *prima facie* case for alleging that a material portion of the thesis has been plagiarized, or that there is other evidence of academic misconduct, the Chair shall submit the matter (together with any supporting materials) to SGPS for investigation. Where this occurs, the Chair shall, without informing the student of the identity of the person making the relevant allegation, inform the student that an allegation of academic misconduct has been made. The Chair shall also inform the student that an investigation into the matter will be conducted. The evaluation of the thesis is paused pending the results of the investigation.

The Thesis Examination Board Deliberates and Renders a Decision

The Chair invites the supervisor(s) to comment on the thesis and aspects of the oral defense.

In rare cases where the thesis has been submitted without the supervisor(s)'s approval, the examiners are reminded that the student has submitted without the approval of the supervisor. The Chair reminds the committee to assess the oral defence and the thesis on academic merit.

At the Chair's invitation, the examiners alone discuss the thesis and the oral defense.

The Chair instructs the examiners that there are three outcomes available to them:

- **Pass** - This indicates that the thesis is acceptable as it stands. Minor changes may be made before final submission.

Examples of such changes might include minor typographical, grammatical, or formatting errors. Normally such changes should be completed within 1-2 weeks.

- **Pass conditional upon revisions to thesis** - This indicates that required revisions must be reviewed and approved by a member(s) of the examining committee prior to publication.

Examples of required revisions may include extensive typographical or grammatical errors; errors in calculation; the need for clarification or addition of content in order to meet requisite scholarly standards; some additions, deletions, or editing of text; further analysis, or discussion of some data. Normally such revisions should be completed within six weeks after the examination.

- **Unacceptable** - This indicates that the thesis cannot be submitted as it stands and would require extensive revision to reach the acceptable standard. A thesis found unacceptable proceeds to the re-submission ~~hearing~~ meeting process.

A thesis judged unacceptable may contain, for example, faulty conceptualization, inappropriate or faulty use of research methodology, misinterpretation or misuse of data, neglect of relevant material, illogical argument, unfounded conclusions,

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

seriously flawed writing and presentation, or failure to engage the scholarly context.

The Chair instructs the examiners that there are two outcomes for the oral defense that the examiners may consider:

- **Acceptable**
- **Unacceptable**

For the oral defense, the examiners must determine if the student's responses to questions and general level of scholarly knowledge meet the standard for the doctoral or master's degree and are consistent with the contents of the thesis.

The examiners vote on the acceptability of the thesis and the oral defense by completing their electronic Thesis Examination Evaluation form.

These forms are confidential, only to be seen and recorded at the examination by the Chair.

The Chair reviews the completed forms and tallies the results.

The Chair announces the results of the vote on the acceptability of the thesis and of the oral defense and asks if further discussion is needed. In rare instances, the Chair may allow examiners to change their votes.

If a majority of the examiners find that the thesis content is a pass and the oral defense is acceptable, the student passes the thesis examination.

If a majority of the examiners find that the thesis content is pass conditional upon revision and the oral defense is pass, the student has not yet passed the thesis examination. Upon successful acceptance of the required revisions by a designated examiner(s), the student passes the thesis examination.

For doctoral thesis examinations, if the examiners' decisions are equally split (2/2) between acceptable and unacceptable on any one of the thesis content and/or the oral defense, then the vote is weighted in favour of the external examiner's decision.

Once the results are tallied and any required discussion has concluded, the Chair pronounces the Thesis Examination Board's decision.

The Thesis Examination is Successful

On the "Thesis Examination - Chair Report," the Chair reports the thesis examination board's decision for the thesis examination.

Though revisions are not required following a pass, examiners may suggest minor changes that would be beneficial, and the student is encouraged to complete such

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

changes before final submission. The Chair is encouraged to list such changes on the Chair Report.

The Chair communicates the positive decision to the student. (See Communicating the Decision of the Thesis Examination to the Student.)

The Thesis Examination is Conditionally Successful

On the "Thesis Examination - Chair Report," the Chair:

- With the assistance of the examiners, provides a detailed list of the specific revisions as agreed upon by a majority of the examiners. The Chair's Report will be made available to the designated examiner(s), the student, and the supervisor(s), who will normally continue to support the student through the revision process.
- With the help of the examining committee, determines which examiner(s) will review the revised thesis. The designated examiner(s) withhold their approval until the required revisions have been made. All the examiners may receive a copy of the revised thesis to review.

After the examination, the supervisor(s) must meet with the student to ensure that they understand the revisions required by the thesis examination board and oversee the required revisions.

The Thesis Examination is Unsuccessful

The Chair completes the "Thesis Examination - Chair Report." In consultation with the examiners, the Chair states (on the Chair report) why the thesis and/or the oral defense was unacceptable.

Unless a previous re-examination **hearing** meeting has occurred, a thesis deemed unacceptable by a majority of examiners (regardless of whether the oral defense is deemed acceptable) is referred to a Re-examination **Hearing** Meeting. The Chair of the previous examination is excused from further involvement.

When this occurs, the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) (for PhD exams) or the Graduate Chair (for master's exams) appoints a Re-examination **Hearing** Meeting Committee.

Composition of the Doctoral Re-examination **Hearing** Meeting Committee

Chair: Associate Vice-Provost (or designate)

Where possible students whose thesis focuses on Indigenous issues should have a *Thesis Examination Chair who has relevant Indigenous or cultural safety training or expertise* (e.g., 4 Seasons of Reconciliation online module).

Graduate Chair (or equivalent)

Examiners (external examiner is optional)

In attendance: Supervisor(s)

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

Composition of the Master's Re-examination **Hearing** Meeting Committee

Chair: Graduate Chair (or equivalent)

Where possible students whose thesis focuses on Indigenous issues should have a *Thesis Examination Chair who has relevant Indigenous or cultural safety training or expertise* (e.g., 4 Seasons of Reconciliation online module).

Examiners (external examiner is optional)

In attendance: Supervisor(s)

Role and Responsibilities of Chair:

The Chair is a non-voting member of the Re-examination **Hearing** Meeting committee with the following responsibilities:

- Ensures that the responsibilities of the committee are met.
- Moderates the in-camera discussion.
- Provides the Graduate Chair (or equivalent), supervisor(s), and the student written notification of the committee's decisions and a list of recommended revisions.
- Chairs the subsequent thesis examination.

Responsibilities of the Examiners:

- Determine whether the student should be provided the opportunity to revise the thesis to bring it to the acceptable scholarly standard for re-examination.
- Establish a date by which the revisions should be completed, normally no earlier than 12 weeks for PhD and six weeks for master's, after the date of the originally scheduled examination.
- Participate in committee discussion that results in agreed upon revisions to strengthen the thesis.
- Serve on the re-examination board, and in this capacity, assess the re-submitted thesis.

If the student is not provided the opportunity to revise the thesis:

- The outcome of the examination is a failure.
- The student has the opportunity to appeal the decision ([Graduate Student Academic Appeals](#)).

Normally the same examiners assess the resubmitted thesis.

Role and Responsibilities of the Supervisor(s):

The supervisor(s) attends the Re-examination **Hearing** Meeting as a resource to the committee to assist their deliberations. They do not actively participate in the deliberations of the committee.

Responsibilities of the Student

If determined by the examiners, the student shall revise the thesis based on the examiners' feedback and re-submit the thesis for re-examination.

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

Whether or not the re-submitted thesis is found acceptable by the examination board, the student proceeds to the final thesis examination.

Where only the oral defense is Unsuccessful:

The Chair completes the "Thesis Examination - Chair Report." In consultation with the examiners, the Chair states why the oral defense was unacceptable.

A thesis examination deemed unacceptable by the examination board on the oral defense alone is referred to a Re-examination **Hearing** **Meeting** Committee. The Chair of the previous examination is excused from further involvement.

The Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) (for PhD exams) or the Graduate Chair (for master's exams) appoints a Re-examination **Hearing** **Meeting** Committee.

Composition of the Doctoral Re-examination **Hearing** **Meeting** Committee

Chair: Associate Vice-Provost (or designate)

Where possible students whose thesis focuses on Indigenous issues should *have a Thesis Examination Chair who has relevant Indigenous or cultural safety training or expertise* (e.g., 4 Seasons of Reconciliation online module).

Graduate Chair (or equivalent)

Examiners (external examiner is optional)

In attendance: Supervisor(s)

Composition of the Master's Re-examination **Hearing** **Meeting** Committee

Chair: Graduate Chair (or equivalent)

Where possible students whose thesis focuses on Indigenous issues should *have a Thesis Examination Chair who has relevant Indigenous or cultural safety training or expertise* (e.g., 4 Seasons of Reconciliation online module).

Graduate Chair (or equivalent)

Examiners (external examiner is optional)

In attendance: Supervisor(s)

Role and Responsibilities of Chair:

The Chair is a non-voting member of the Re-examination **Hearing** **Meeting** committee with the following responsibilities:

- Ensures that the responsibilities of the committee are met.
- Moderates the in-camera discussion.
- Provides the Graduate Chair (or designate), supervisor(s), and the student written notification of the committee's decisions and suggested revisions.
- Chairs the subsequent thesis examination.
- Explains at the outset of the second oral defense that the student is defending their original thesis.

Role and Responsibilities of the Examiners:

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

- Determine whether the student should be given the opportunity to orally defend the thesis a final time.
- If a student is provided the opportunity to orally defend the thesis a final time, the examiners:
 - Establish a date for the oral defense, normally within six weeks of the date of examination (PhD and master's).
 - Participate in committee discussion that results in feedback to improve the oral defense.
- If the student is not provided the opportunity to orally defend the thesis a final time:
 - The outcome of the examination is a failure.
 - The student has the opportunity to appeal the decision ([Graduate Student Academic Appeals](#)).

Normally the same examiners re-assess the oral defense of the thesis.

Role and Responsibilities of the Supervisor(s):

The supervisor(s) attends the Re-examination **Hearing** **Meeting** as a resource to the committee to assist their deliberations. They do not actively participate in the deliberations of the committee.

Responsibility of the Student:

If determined by the examiners, the student shall take into account the Re-examination **Hearing** **Meeting** committee's feedback as they prepare for the oral defense.

The student proceeds to the thesis examination, where the oral defense is assessed a final time. The student defends their original thesis.

The Thesis Examination Board's decision is final.

If the oral defense is acceptable, within six weeks of the second oral defense, the student shall revise the thesis based on the examiners' feedback (as part of their pass, or conditional pass decision on content), and then resubmit the thesis.

To meet the thesis requirement of the PhD or master's degree, both the thesis and the oral defense must be deemed acceptable by a majority of examiners.

Communicating the Decision of the Thesis Examination to the Student

When the Chair and the examiners have completed the documentation, the Chair invites only the student back into the room and informs them of the result, including whether a re-examination **hearing** **meeting** will occur.

Following the Thesis Examination

The Chair of the examination submits all forms to SGPS. When an examination is successful, SGPS will share the content of the thesis evaluations with the student and the supervisor.

Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission

Final Submission of the Thesis

When the student has completed any changes recommended by the examiners, the student must submit the final copy of their work via digital submission through the Scholarship@Western Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository.

The student accesses their original submission within the repository and submits a revised copy of their work.

Once the thesis is published, the student has officially completed the thesis requirement for their degree. Subject to approval by the University Senate, the student's name is placed on the convocation list.

Publication of the Thesis

Given the research and education mandate of Canada's publicly funded universities, it is expected that the results of this research will be made publicly available.

The University requires that successful graduate theses be made available through the Western Library's Scholarship@Western portal. The thesis will be published electronically at the conclusion of the degree process, and will be available globally via the internet.

At the same time, the University recognizes that the student is the author of the thesis and retains copyright and control interests in the material.

Students should be conscious of the implications of electronic publication in the digital context: material is accessible to any interested party, academic and non-academic. The thesis should also be understood to be permanently available – once published electronically, it can be withdrawn from Scholarship@Western, but digital copies will inevitably persist. Students engaging in thesis preparation and research should be mindful of electronic publication and availability as an endpoint of their work.

Supervisors, equally, have a responsibility to be acquainted with the implications of electronic publication, and advise their students accordingly.

In certain cases, a “delay of publication” may be appropriate. See Section 1.6 above.

Upon final approved submission, the work is published to the Scholarship@Western ETD repository, pending any requests for a delay of publication. This repository is publicly accessible, permitting free access to the work. The repository transmits regular reports via e-mail to the author on how often the work is accessed.