1. Committee formation

Nomination of examining committee: When the student is expected to submit the PhD thesis, an examining committee is nominated by the supervisor in consultation with the Associate Chair of Graduate Studies of the department. The Nomination of the PhD Thesis Examining Committee form must be received by the Engineering Graduate Studies Office at least eight weeks before the date of the oral defence. The examining committee consists of:

a.) supervisor(s): the supervisor(s) must attend the defence in person
b.) internal: at least one university examiner from the candidate’s department
c.) internal-external: at least one university examiner from outside the candidate’s department
d.) external: an external examiner from outside the university

With the exception of the external, the examining committee should be the same as the original PhD comprehensive examination committee members. If there are any changes in the committee, supervisors are required to complete the Delegate or Replacement form and submit it to the EGSO with all signatures.

Appointment of an examining committee: The Nomination of the PhD Thesis Examining Committee form is sent to the Engineering Graduate Studies Office for approval by the Associate Dean of Engineering Graduate Studies. The proposed examining committee is evaluated and additional information may be requested.

The nomination form should be accompanied by a complete up-to-date curriculum vitae of the external examiner which should contain a publications list for at least the past six years and a list of current and previous supervised PhD students. This is provided by the supervisor. The supervisor will informally ensure that the proposed external examiner is willing to act and attend the defence in person, or in extenuating circumstances, will indicate the external is participating via electronic media on the Nomination form. No formal commitment will be made until the Associate Dean for Engineering Graduate Studies has authorized the appointment of the committee.

2. Initial contact with the external examiner

It may be advisable simply to ask a prospective external examiner if he/she is willing to assist in conducting this PhD examination, so that in the eventuality of rejection by the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, embarrassment may be avoided. When an external examiner has been approved by the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, the onus is on the supervisor(s) to keep the external examiner well informed about the examination date and time.

3. Qualifications of external examiners

   a. The examiner must be an expert and knowledgeable in the field of the thesis. The best evidence of this is an excellent record of publications (at least the past six years)
   b. The examiner should have knowledge of the supervision and examination of theses beyond their experience with their own thesis. Normally examiners currently employed outside universities should have suitable past supervisory experience, or a university adjunct appointment
   c. The examiner should be at arm’s length from the supervisor and student, to the extent that an unbiased examination would be seen to take place. The UW definition of arm’s length can be found on page 2 of the Nomination of the PhD Thesis Examining Committee form or the University of Waterloo Graduate Calendar.

It is expected that the external examiner and supervisor(s) attend the oral defence in person. The Engineering Graduate Studies Office must be notified of any request for absence. Participation through electronic media is limited to one member of the examining board.