

ARRANGEMENTS FOR PH.D. THESIS ORAL EXAMINATIONS

The Ph.D. Examination is conducted according to the requirements of the University Senate Graduate and Research Council.

IMPORTANT LINK FOR BOTH STUDENTS AND ADVISORS: <https://uwaterloo.ca/graduate-studies/current-students/thesis/phd-thesis-exam-regulations>. This link provides detailed descriptions of committee members, and restrictions on numbers of remote participants and adjunct committee members.

Academic deadlines can be found in the Graduate Calendar at <https://uwaterloo.ca/graduate-studies-academic-calendar/academic-deadlines-and-events>.

Student Duties:

1. The Student should refer to the Graduate Studies Office [Thesis](#) web site at for proper thesis formatting and post-defence electronic thesis submission instructions.
2. The student should provide the Assistant to the Associate Dean with an electronic copy of the thesis, and thesis abstract in Word, for defence (email to lmcconne@uwaterloo.ca).

The abstract should include the name of your department/school, and a list of your advisor and committee members.

3. The Student should confirm with the committee members whether they want hard or electronic copies of the thesis and provide a list to the Assistant to the Associate Dean in EV1 335, with the printed hard copies, or by email if no hard copies required. Provide at least one printed hard copy for the external examiner.

The examination is normally scheduled within 5 to 7 weeks after the thesis has been submitted, if all the procedures are followed.

4. Prior to defence the Student should [apply to graduate](#) for the next available Convocation, after the defence date, using Quest.

For detailed information regarding the completion of Ph.D. degree requirements, see the UW [Graduate Calendar](#).

Student Checklist

- refer to [Current Students](#) website, under Academics, for formatting and submission to UWSpace
- [apply to graduate](#) using Quest
- email Lori (lmcconne@uwaterloo.ca) pdf file of thesis and Word file of abstract, including department/school and committee members
- deliver hard copies of thesis to Lori (EV1 335) for those committee members who want them, plus one hard copy for the external examiner
- leave completed Intent to Graduate/Program Completion form with graduate coordinator

Advisor Duties:

1. The Advisor confirms that the student has met all University and ENV requirements.
2. The Advisor informs the student to submit their thesis to Lori McConnell as a pdf file via email or dropbox site or Sendit to lmcconne@uwaterloo.ca.
2. The Advisor ensures that the student's PhD Thesis Advisory Committee Approval form has been completed and the committee approved by the Faculty Graduate Studies Committee.
3. If the committee has changed since original approval, the Advisor must inform the Administrative Assistant of the student's department of these changes. A revised committee approval form will be required to be approved by the GSC.

4. The Advisor confirms with their department administrative assistant the up-to-date adjunct or cross-appointment status of any committee members. The advisor should also provide contact information for any non-UW adjunct committee members. Detailed information regarding doctoral thesis committee composition can be found on the [PhD thesis exam regulations](#) section of the GSO website.
5. The Advisor informs the Associate Dean Graduate Studies of the names of any of the committee members who intend to participate remotely. The University permits one remote participant. Please refer to the [PhD thesis exam regulations](#) section of the GSO website for a detailed explanation of the defence process.
6. At the time copies of the thesis are submitted to the Assistant to the Associate Dean Graduate Studies in EV1 335 (hard or electronic copy), the Advisor should provide the Associate Dean Graduate Studies (currently Simron Singh – simron.singh@uwaterloo.ca; please copy Lori McConnell - lmconne@uwaterloo.ca) with:
 - a) **three-four possible examination dates agreeable to the Committee and the student.** The suggested dates should be within a 6-7 week period following the submission of the thesis to give the external examiner time to read the thesis and to prepare an assessment of the thesis, which is due one week in advance of the defence. If this time requirement is not adhered to, the information will be returned and it will be necessary to select new examination dates. When considering PhD exam arrangements, keep in mind that external examiners are not always available during the summer months because of vacation, field work, etc.

PLEASE ENSURE THAT THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS KEEP ALL OF THE DATES PROVIDED FOR THE DEFENCE FREE IN OUTLOOK UNTIL THE DEFENCE HAS BEEN ARRANGED. It can sometimes take a week or two to put together an external examiner with a date/time.

- b) **five-six names (in consultation with the Committee), with accurate email addresses and telephone numbers, for the selection of the External Examiner.** Along with the list, there should be a brief biographical sketch for each of the possible External Examiners. If the Advisor will not be available for consultation during the scheduling of the examination, he/she should delegate a committee member to act on his/her behalf.

THE ADVISOR SHOULD NOT CONTACT THE PERSONS ON THIS LIST OF POTENTIAL EXTERNAL EXAMINERS, BUT MAY CHECK THEIR AVAILABILITY INDIRECTLY.

- c) **a statement on any potential conflict of interest or an indication that there is no conflict of interest.**

Advisor Checklist

- confirm with graduate coordinator that student has met all degree requirements
- inform student to submit thesis electronically to lmconne@uwaterloo.ca (email, drop box, sendit)
- confirm that student's committee is accurate and approved by GSC
- confirm status of adjunct committee members; provide contact information for adjuncts
- confirm status of cross-appointed committee members
- inform Associate Dean of committee members who intend to participate remotely; review [thesis exam regulations](#); **keep in mind that, if a committee member participates remotely, this option is then not available to the external examiner**
- provide Associate Dean with 3 – 4 possible dates at least 6 weeks in advance of earliest possible date
- book all committee members on all dates in Outlook
- provide Associate Dean with 5 – 6 names for external examiner
- include statement of any potential conflict of interest or indication that there is none (see [thesis exam regulations](#) for definitions of conflicts of interest)

Associate Dean Duties:

1. The Associate Dean, Graduate Studies, will appoint the Internal/External committee member, if this has not already been done, and the External Examiner.

2. The Associate Dean, Graduate Studies, will select the External Examiner from the information provided by the Advisor at the time the thesis is submitted for defence.

Administrative Assistant to the Associate Dean Duties:

The Administrative Assistant will receive the thesis copies, electronic and paper, find a room for the defence, prepare the defence paper work, and distribute the thesis copies and defence notices as required by the Faculty. The Administrative Assistant will inform the defence Chair of any committee members participating remotely. The Administrative Assistant will inform the GSO and the Chair of any committee member who will be absent from the defence. Any questions regarding the defence should be directed to lmcconne@uwaterloo.ca, EV1 335.

Committee Members:

Committee Members are expected to be present at the oral examination. If a committee member is participating remotely, a written report on the thesis and questions for the candidate are to be submitted to the Assistant to the Associate Dean one week in advance of the defence.

Absent Committee Members

- In the case of an unanticipated, last-minute emergency absence of a committee member, the defence can proceed as long as the absent member is not the supervisor or the external examiner and as long as the following committee members are available to present their votes:
 - Supervisor
 - External examiner
 - Two other members of the committee
- Exceptions may be approved by the Faculty Associate Dean, Graduate Studies
- Should a tie vote arise, the decision should be deferred and referred to the Associate Provost, Graduate Studies. The Associate Provost will consult with the Faculty Associate Deans, Graduate and will make the final determination.
- Eliminated delegates. If a committee member (other than the external examiner or supervisor) is unable to attend the defence:
 - Determine if the member can attend by electronic means (teleconference or videoconference)
 - If this is not possible, then a new committee member should be found by the supervisor.
- In the case of a last-minute absence of one or more examining committee members:
 - As long as the supervisor (or at least one co-supervisor), the external examiner, and two other members are available to present their vote (in person or via remote participation, according to the rules of remote participation), the exam can proceed as long as the candidate and supervisor agree to go ahead
- If a co-supervisor is unable to participate in the defence, the other co-supervisor(s) can act in their place (represent their fractional vote).
- When co-supervision is required because one member does not have ADDS status or is adjunct, etc, the UW member with ADDS status must be the one participating, unless approved by the Faculty Associate Dean, Graduate Studies.

Defence Process:

The defence is conducted by the Chair of the defence, who is selected by the Graduate Studies Office – from the GSPA website, [thesis defence, procedural guidelines](#):

“The thesis defence is an oral examination of the student by the student's PhD Thesis Examining Committee, chaired by an impartial faculty member with ADDs status from outside the candidate's department. Any member of the university may attend.

The Chair is responsible for the proper conduct of the examination. Candidates first present their thesis orally with whatever aids are required to make an effective presentation. This presentation should be limited to no more than thirty minutes with the focus being on the main contributions and conclusions of the work.

The presentation is followed by questioning. The Chair will give priority to questions from members of the PhD Thesis Examining Committee and any member of the university who has submitted written questions in advance. The oral

examination should be structured in such a way that a period is set aside at the end of the examination for questions from non-Committee members. If the chair of the PhD Thesis Examining Committee is unsure of the appropriateness or relevance of a question, they should ask the members of the Committee whether any of them wishes to have the candidate answer the question, thus in effect making the question posed one which would be authorized by a member of the Committee.

The Chair, with agreement of the Examining Committee, will decide when to conclude the questioning. The candidate and audience will be asked to leave the room and the Examining Committee will deliberate in a closed session. The Graduate Officer, Departmental Chair, Faculty Associate Dean, Graduate Studies and Associate Provost, Graduate Studies may attend the closed session. Once a [decision](#) is made, the candidate is invited back into the room and informed by the Chair of the Committee's decision. The Chair will provide a report to the Associate Provost, Graduate Studies on the conduct of the examination, any issues or problems that arose, and the decision of the Examining Committee.

Recording of the thesis defence is not allowed, nor is the use of cell phones, cameras or any other recording devices unless used for the purposes of the examination presentation.”

Simron Singh
Associate Dean Graduate Studies, Faculty of Environment

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