

MSc Thesis and Oral Examination (defence) procedure in EAS (Updated September 2006)

A master's thesis demonstrates scholarly research and knowledge of the principal works published on the subject of the thesis. A thesis should not exceed 150 pages of text (including appendices, tables, figures, and bibliography). Two writing formats are allowed: (1) dissertation format; and (2) paper format (see details at FGSR web site). The thesis is submitted to the examining committee at least three weeks before the oral examination.

The examination committee consists of the supervisory committee and a faculty member from another department at the University of Alberta. A faculty member from within the Department who is not a member of the examining committee chairs the examination. If this is not possible, then a member of the examining committee will chair the examination, but not the supervisor.

Persons other than the examiners, such as other graduate students, may attend the oral examination with the permission of the Dean or the chair of the examination committee. Note that:

- Permission must be obtained from the candidate and the chair of the examination.
- The persons may be present only when the candidate is in the room.
- They may not be present when the examination committee's decision is conveyed to the candidate.

A discussion by the committee without the student present follows the questioning. Each committee member states a decision. If all members except one agree, the final decision is that of the majority. If two or more dissenting votes are recorded, the matter is referred to FGSR. The chair recalls the candidate and informs them in the examination room of the decision. This is done with the committee present.

There are only four possible decisions.

Pass: The defence is satisfactory and no changes are required to the thesis. All examining committee members sign the thesis signature page.

Pass subject to revisions: The student has satisfactorily defended the thesis, and revision to the thesis are minor (e.g., spelling, missing references, minor editing). It is expected that the revisions will be submitted to FGSR by the deadline for the next convocation. The revisions are checked by the supervisor for the rest of the committee, who withholds signature until revisions are completed.

Adjourned: The examination is adjourned in the following situations:

- further research or experiments are needed
- required revisions of the thesis are substantial enough to reconvene the committee
- the general presentation of the thesis is unsatisfactory
- the defence is unsatisfactory, even if the thesis itself is acceptable (with revisions)
- an emergency situation occurs during the examination (e.g., medical).

When an examination is adjourned, the examination committee reconvenes at a later date. The committee chair follows the procedures outlined by FGSR concerning the date and conditions for reconvening the exam, and communicates these in writing to the student.

Fail: If the committee decides that the examination has been failed, the chair provides the reasons for the decision and the department's recommendation for the student's program to FGSR and to the student. FGSR meets with the candidate and with the department before making a decision, following the procedures outlined in the calendar (see also FGSR website).