

Excerpt from *Graduate Programs in Education Policies and Procedures* (see <http://www.uleth.ca/education/forms-and-guidelines>)

PART 7: THESIS EXAMINATION & ASSESSMENT

25. Thesis Oral Defence

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Conducting the Thesis Oral Defence

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The Thesis oral defence is two (2) hours in duration. The procedure for conducting the defence is as follows.

a) Introduction

The Chair calls the Thesis oral defence to order, and welcomes all in attendance. The Chair:

- States that this Thesis oral defence is a senior academic event in the School of Graduate Studies and is a formal examination before awarding the degree of Master of Education.
- Introduces the student.
- Asks the Thesis Examination Committee members to introduce themselves in the following order: (1) the External Examiner; (2) the members of the Thesis Examination Committee; and (3) the Thesis supervisor.
- States that all members of the Thesis Examination Committee have read the Thesis and have agreed that the Thesis is ready for defence.
- States that the student will present the essence of the Thesis.

b) Public Presentation

In a maximum of 20 minutes, the student summarizes the Thesis' major objectives, content, results, and conclusions.

c) Oral Defence

The Chair invites the examiners to pose their questions. Before the questioning begins, the Chair outlines the procedure for the oral defence. Comments and discussion not directly related to the questions must be saved for the post-defence meeting of the examiners. The Chair does not normally ask questions.

The order of questioning is: (1) External Examiner; (2) the members of the Thesis Examination Committee; and (3) Thesis supervisor.

After one (1) initial round of questions, the examiners may ask additional questions in a second round, and so on.

d) Making a Decision

After questioning is complete, the Chair excuses the student and the audience from the room so that the Thesis Examination Committee can meet in private. Both the oral and written components are assessed. When the student and audience have left:

The Chair outlines the two (2) options for the **oral component** of the Thesis oral defence for a decision:

1. **Pass:** The student's performance in the oral defence was successful.
2. **Defer:** The Thesis Examination Committee defers a decision because the student's performance in the oral defence was unsatisfactory. The student will be required to go through the Thesis oral defence process a second time (the student may retake one (1) time).

The Chair asks a committee member to make a motion that the decision for the oral component be: Pass or Defer.

Discussion regarding a decision occurs, and the Chair endeavours to facilitate consensus but does not vote. The Chair asks for a vote on the motion. Ideally the vote is unanimous, but the motion may pass with one (1) dissenting vote, provided this is not the vote of the External Examiner, or Thesis supervisor(s).

In the event that a failed Thesis oral defence represents the second attempt to defend the Thesis, the student must withdraw from the program, and the Thesis Examination Committee must provide a written justification for the decision to fail the Thesis oral defence.

The Chair outlines the five (5) options for the **thesis component** for a decision:

1. **Pass:** The Thesis is passed as submitted
2. **Pass with Minor Revisions:** The Thesis is passed on the condition that the student makes minor editorial revisions, to the satisfaction of the Thesis supervisor, or another as authorized by the Thesis Examination Committee.
3. **Pass with Major Revisions:** The Thesis requires substantial revisions that must be completed to the satisfaction of the entire Thesis Examination Committee.
4. **Defer:** The Thesis Examination Committee defers a decision until the student makes major changes to the Thesis. The student may be required to go through the Thesis oral defence process a second time.
5. **Fail:** The Thesis is failed and the student may retake the Thesis oral defence one (1) time.

The Chair asks a committee member to make a second motion that the decision for the written thesis component be: Pass, Pass with Minor Revisions, Pass with Major Revisions, Defer, or Fail. Discussion regarding a decision occurs, and the Chair endeavours to facilitate consensus but does not vote. The Chair asks for a vote on each motion. Ideally the vote is unanimous, but the motion may pass with one (1) dissenting vote, provided this is not the vote of the External Examiner, or Thesis supervisor(s).

When the decision has been made, the Thesis Examination Committee then discusses, if applicable, whether the student must retake the oral component, the nature of the required revisions to the Thesis, and how the student will complete them.

Students have the right to appeal the decision to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. The decision of the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies is final.

e) Informing the Student

After the Thesis Examination Committee has made their decision and finished their discussion, the Chair:

- Invites the student back into the room.
- Informs the student of the committee's decision.
- If necessary, tells the student of the Thesis revisions required, and the plan for the student to complete them.
- Reminds the student that the Thesis must be submitted via the e-thesis/project submission system when he or she receives notification from the Office of Graduate Studies and Research in Education.
- If the student passes, congratulates the student, and thanks the Thesis Examination Committee members.
- Adjourns the Thesis oral defence.

NOTE:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as Chair for this defence. It is greatly appreciated by the Faculty, the School of Graduate Studies and our students.