MSc Program: Thesis Examination Guide

For the Chair & Committee of Examiners

Department of Surgery
Faculty of Graduate Studies
MSc Program
Thesis Examination Guide for the Chair & Committee of Examiners

Overview
The MSc oral examination is conducted to assess a student’s knowledge and understanding of research through a written thesis, oral presentation and discussion in an open forum. The examination should be completed within one month of distribution of the thesis.

Students may request guests and family members to attend, providing this information to the Administrator two weeks prior to their defence.

All members of the Committee of Examiners must be present at the examination:
- One external member (no academic appointment within the Department of Surgery)
- Two Internal members (must be members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and hold a primary appointment from within the Department of Surgery)
- Thesis Advisor/Co-Advisor

The Examination
The examination begins with introductions by the Chair of the Committee of Examiners and the student. The student is instructed to commence their 30-minute (maximum allotted time) formal presentation of the research for their master’s thesis. This is directly followed by the student responding to the first round of questions from the Committee of Examiners in the order of External member, Internal members and Advisor; followed by a second round from the Committee, if necessary; ending with the audience member questions as lead by the Chair.

Immediately following the question and discussion period, the Committee of Examiners meets in-camera to consider the outcome of the student’s written thesis and oral presentation.

Evaluation Procedure
The Committee of Examiners will consider both the written thesis and oral examination to determine the decisions of granting the MSc designation, including the procedure for approval of any revisions that are required to the written thesis before submission to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. After discussion each examiner is asked, in introduction order, to declare their decision on one of the following:

- **Acceptable**, without modification or with minor revisions
  - Advisor will review and approve all modification according to the instructions of the Committee of Examiners

- **Acceptable**, subject to modification and/or revisions
  - Committee of Examiners will review and approve all modifications

- **Not Acceptable**
The judgment of the Committee of Examiners shall be reported to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in the qualitative terms of approved or not approved on the Final Report form. Each examiner must indicate his/her opinion by his/her signature. If two or more examiners do not approve the thesis, then the student is deemed to have failed the defence.

At the end of the deliberation, the Chair invites the student to meet with the Committee and informs him/her of their decision.

In the case of a failure of the thesis at the Master’s level, a detailed written report will be prepared by the Chair of the Thesis Oral Defence Examination and submitted to the Graduate Chair and the Faculty of Graduate Studies who will make the report available to the student and his/her advisor/co-advisor.

A student will be required to withdraw when the thesis has been rejected twice at the stage where:
- The Committee of Examiners reports on the merits of the written thesis;
- The defence; or
- A combination of both stages

Following approval of the thesis and any revisions, the student prepares their submission to Graduate Studies by the deadlines stated for each graduation date set by the Faculty. If the student has any questions or requires assistance, they may contact the Department of Surgery Education Office or Faculty of Graduate Studies.

**Responsibility of the Chair**

Acting on behalf of the Department of Surgery Graduate Chair, the Chair of the Committee of Examiners is responsible for and expected to:

i. Moderate the defence examination; ensuring the examination is properly conducted with fairness and no intimidation.

ii. Exercise full control over the examination and does not participate directly in questioning the student during the examination.

iii. Assure the student is given reasonable opportunities to defend their thesis.

iv. Ensure the student, alone and not the advisor or any members of the Committee of Examiners, is defending their thesis.

v. Ensure all questions raised by the Committee of Examiners and audience members are addressed by the student during the question and discussion period.

vi. Chair the in-camera deliberation of the Committee of Examiners and inform the student.

vii. Submit the Final Report and Report of the Chair to the Department of Surgery Graduate Chair.

**Procedures to be followed by the Chair**

*Prior to the start of the examination:*
- Audio-visual aids are confirmed with the student and are in working order.
- Advise the student the process of the examination and presentation guidelines (allotted time, question/answer, deliberation).
- Ensure all examiners are present, seated together and understand the process of the examination.
At the start of the examination:

- Welcome everyone to the student’s oral defence as part of the student’s examination.
- Establish the order in which the Committee of Examiners will question the student through introductions of each member. Note: The External member should be introduced first, followed by the Internal members from the Department of Surgery and finally the student’s Advisor/Co-Advisor.
- Introduce guests or special visitors, if identified by student.
- Instruct all who are present that all cell phones, pagers and alarms must be turned off for the duration of the examination.
- Announce:
  - This examination is a senior/graduate academic event in the Department of Surgery and follows the guidelines and regulations of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. It is the formal examination of this student prior to awarding the academic degree of Master of Science at the University of Manitoba. This examination will take approximately two (2) hours.
  - If any audience member does not wish to stay for the full round of questions following the student’s presentation I ask that they exit the room before the question period begins.
  - The examination will now begin for (student’s name).

- The presentation should last a maximum of 30 minutes. This time must be strictly adhered to (a timer is provided) and should not be interrupted by questions.
- Notify the student of the remaining time: 3-minutes, 1-minute and End of Presentation (signs are provided).
- Announce:
  - A reminder to audience members who wish to not stay for the full round of questions, I ask that you please exit the room before the examination begins. On behalf of the Department of Surgery and our graduate student, I would like to thank you for your support and attendance to this presentation.

- Manage the question period – inviting each member of the Committee of Examiners in turn (external, internal, advisor) to question the candidate. Exercise discretion in managing the question period to ensure proper conduct of the exam. (Note: each examiner may have at least 20 minutes each to question the student).
- Ensure the External examiner is provided ample time to question the student.
- Invite questions from the audience.
- Call for final questions from the Committee of Examiners and, if necessary, ask the student to address or clarify any points they felt were not adequately covered during the question period.
- Instruct the student and all audience members to leave the room for the Committee of Examiners to begin their deliberation.
- Moderate the in-camera deliberations of the Committee of Examiners following the Evaluation Procedure outlined on page one.
The Committee should arrive at a decision to make an overall recommendation to the Faculty of Graduate Studies based on:

- **Written Thesis**: Discuss the overall merits of the thesis, taking into account the external examiner’s report and the assessment of the Committee of Examiners (including the question and discussion period) from their pre-review.

- **Oral Presentation**: Discuss the student’s performance of their presentation, how they responded to the questions and in defending their research. It should be agreed upon that the student’s performance is considered at the standard of excellence expected of the graduate student level at the University of Manitoba.

If the Committee of Examiners is in agreement there are revisions to be made to the written thesis, the Chair requests the External and Internal Committee members submit these to the student’s Advisor who must formulate a plan with the student to complete before submission to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and in accordance to the Faculty’s graduation deadlines.

Ensure the Faculty of Graduate Studies Master’s Thesis/Practicum Final Report form is completed and signed by all members once the decision is reached. This form must be returned to the Research Administrator for the Department of Surgery Research Office.

Invite the student and, in the presence of the Committee of Examiners, inform the student of the recommendation made by the members of the Committee. It is important to note that the final decision for degree designation is the responsibility of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Ensure the student is aware of and understands the procedures for submission of the thesis and accompanying forms to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. If they have any questions or require assistance they may contact the Department of Surgery Education Office or the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Complete the MSc Oral Examination Chair Report *(form provided electronically prior to examination from the Department of Surgery Education Office)* and submit to the Department of Surgery Graduate Chair within one week of the examination.

**Responsibility of the Committee of Examiners**

On behalf of the Master of Science Program in the Department of Surgery, the members of the Committee of Examiners exercise the authority to conduct an examination as consideration for the designation of an MSc degree. The responsibilities and expectations are to:

1. Receive and review the thesis prior to the oral examination in preparation for the student’s defence.
2. Be prepared to provide any revisions that must be made by the student prior to submission to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.
3. Prepare questions to exam the student at the oral examination regarding the content and implications of their research.
4. Provide an independent assessment whether the student’s written thesis and oral presentation meets the standards of a graduate degree at the University of Manitoba.
5. Participate in the *in-camera* deliberations and be prepared to vote if both the written thesis and oral presentation are acceptable for a recommendation of the graduate degree designation of Master of Science.