University **of Manitoba** | Faculty of Graduate Studies

Guidelines for Ph.D. Oral Examinations

Updated Winter 2025 – In-Person, Hybrid, or Remote

General

Doctoral candidates must pass an oral examination of their thesis and matters relating thereto before they may obtain the Ph.D. degree. The examination will be conducted by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) or the Dean's designate chosen from among scholars of the University ("the Chair"). The examining committee will normally be comprised of the same members as that of the candidate's advisory committee, as well as an examiner external to the University of Manitoba. The doctoral student, advisor/co-advisor (if applicable), and all internal members of the examining committee must attend the examination unless otherwise approved by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The participation of the external examiner is strongly encouraged but is not mandatory.

Scheduling the Oral Examination

Departments/Units cannot proceed with scheduling the oral examination prior to receiving the approved internal and external examiner reports from the Faculty of Graduate Studies. It is the responsibility of the advisor and/or department/unit to contact the internal and external committee members to determine their availability and arrange a date for the examination.

The oral examination may be held in-person, remotely, or using a hybrid model. Any in-person participants must be hosted at either The University of Manitoba Fort Garry or Bannatyne campus or the St. Boniface Hospital Albrechtsen Research Centre, usually during regular business hours unless prior permission is granted by the Dean of FGS. It is the responsibility of the department/unit to provide the appropriate space and technology for their chosen delivery method(s) (i.e., room booking, ensuring that the chosen facilities meet minimum standards expected for a Ph.D. oral examination, determining the meeting platform to be used).

The advisor or department/unit must inform the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the following via the Ph.D. Oral Examination Scheduling Request Form **no later than two (2) weeks (10 working days) prior to the desired examination date:**

> ➢ The date and time of the examination (Central time);
> ➢ The method of delivery (i.e., in-person, remote, or hybrid);
> ➢ The location and/or virtual meeting platform to be used.
> ➢ Whether the external examiner and invited member (if applicable) will attend; and
> ➢ The name, department/unit and e-mail address of an eligible chair who has agreed to chair the defence and confirmed their availability for the intended date and time

An eligible chair must be secured before the examination details listed above may be submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. If the department/unit and/or advisor/co-

advisor encounter difficulties in securing a chair, they should contact the Faculty of Graduate Studies for assistance. The method of delivery (i.e., in-person, virtual, or hybrid) must be disclosed to prospective chairs. For hybrid examinations, chairs should attend in the same manner as the majority of examining committee attendance. Prospective chairs must:

- Be members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies (excluding nil-salaried adjunct appointments;
- Hold a rank of Assistant Professor or above; and
- **Not** hold an appointmentin any unit represented by the advisor and co-advisor.

Examination Requirements

DATE/TIME	Oral Examinations are normally held during regular business hours (i.e. Monday-Friday, between 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM CST)
LOCATION/PLATFORM	**Virtual Examinations:** Oral Examinations may be held using any virtual conferencing platform available to the department/unit. Note that IST will only provide support for Microsoft Teams, Cisco WebEx, and Zoom. The department/unit or primary advisor must host the "meeting." If connections are lost, the proceedings must be paused, and the host must contact the affected participants. The host is strongly encouraged to arrange a test call with the candidate and chair using the selected platform. **In-person and Hybrid Examinations:** All in-person and hybrid examinations must continue to adhere to the University's health and safety protocolsand internal guidelines for building access. The department/unit is responsible for providing the appropriate space and technology for their chosen delivery method (e.g., sufficient space for all in-person attendees and reliable technology to facilitate hybrid participation) and securing a chair.
ADVISOR(S), CANDI DATE, AND INTERNAL EXAMINING COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE	The candidate, advisor/co-advisor, and all internal committee members, including the knowledge expert (if applicable) are required to attend the examination

	unless otherwise approved by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.
EXTERNAL EXAMINER ATTENDANCE	The attendance of the external examiner at the candidate's oral examination is encouraged. If the external examiner cannot participate electronically, they will be asked to provide questions in advance. These questions will be read to the candidate at the defence by the chair.
GUESTS/AUDIENCE	**Virtual and Hybrid Examinations:** Access to the oral examination should be restricted to ensure the security of the meeting (e.g. use a meeting password and/or a "waiting room" option, if available). Should the candidate and unit/advisor(s) wish to allow guests to attend (e.g. faculty members beyond the examining committee, candidates), they may do so by invitation only (i.e. the meeting invitation may not be shared publicly). Options include: ➢ Circulating the examination date/time and inviting prospective attendees to indicate their desire to attend to the designated contact (e.g. unit support staff, primary advisor). The unit would then share the meeting invitation or code only with those who have confirmed their desire to attend; or ➢ Inviting select guests individually and providing the meeting invitation or code when the invitation is accepted. The chat settings should be restricted by the host to ensure that participants and audience members are only able to send messages to the meeting host or chair. Settings may vary between platforms; consult the website of the platform being used for guidance. Links to commonly used platforms are provided later in this document.
RECORDING	Regardless of open or closed status, no recording will be permitted.
ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS	**Virtual Examinations:** The candidate and host should familiarize themselves with the platform and agree upon a

method for sharing their presentation (e.g. Powerpoint) in advance of the examination. The candidate may choose to send their presentation to the examining committee in advance of the examination to safeguard against technical difficulties.

Hybrid Examinations:

The host should attend in-person to facilitate the setup of required technology and monitor the chat in the meeting platform. The chair should attend in the same manner as the majority of examining committee attendance. Non-participatory guests attending virtually must have their microphones off when they are not speaking.

Preparation for the Oral Examination

The candidate must submit the following information via the Candidate CV/Biographical Information and Thesis Abstract Form **no later than two (2) weeks (10 working days) prior to the examination date:**

➢ Biographical data, if desired (e.g., birthplace);
➢ List of degrees obtained (Institution, Degree, Date);
➢ List of awards received;
➢ List of all publications and joint publications; and
➢ Thesis abstract (not to exceed 350 words).
➢ Additional brief biography (if desired)

Approximately one week prior to the oral examination, the Faculty of Graduate Studies will provide electronic copies of the following documents to the chair of the examination:

➢ "Chairing Ph.D. Oral Examinations" Guide, including:
  o Guidelines for Ph.D. Oral Examinations;
  o Sample Chair Script;
  o Candidate Bio, Thesis Title (as distributed), and Thesis Abstract;
  o Copies of all examiner reports, both internal and external;
  o The questions and expected answers, if provided, from the external examiner if not participating;
  o Instructions for submitting the Chair Report

The chair is encouraged to contact the candidate before the examination for preliminary introductions and to confirm the candidate's preferred name, name pronunciation, and pronouns.

Virtual Examinations

➢ The meeting must be hosted by the advisor or department/unit.
➢ The host of the meeting is responsible for sending the meeting link and/or login details to the committee members, candidate, chair, and guests (if applicable) in advance of the examination.
➢ The host will open the meeting 15 minutes before the scheduled start time to allow participants to join, test their microphones and prepare for the start of the exam.
  o If there are technical difficulties related to the platform within the first 15 minutes, an alternate platform should be used. The host is responsible for coordinating a new meeting using the new platform. Slide sharing, if applicable, should be taken into account when selecting a new platform. If the connectivity issues persist for an additional 15 minutes in the new platform, the examination must be postponed to an alternate time and date.

The primary advisor/department/unit must notify the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the issues immediately upon closure of the meeting.

Hybrid Examinations

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- The virtual component of the examination must be hosted by the advisor or department/unit.
- The host of the meeting is responsible for sending the meeting link and/or login details to the participants and/or non-participatory attendees who indicate their desire to attend remotely.
- The host should attend in-person to facilitate the setup of required technology and monitor the chat in the meeting platform.
- The host will open the meeting 15 minutes before the scheduled start time to allow participants to join, test their microphones and prepare for the start of the exam.
    - If there are technical difficulties related to the platform within the first 15 minutes, an alternate platform should be used. The host is responsible for coordinating a new meeting using the new platform. Slide sharing, if applicable, should be taken into account when selecting a new platform. If the connectivity issues persist for an additional 15 minutes in the new platform, the examination must be postponed to an alternate time and date. The primary advisor/department/unit must notify the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the issues immediately upon closure of the meeting.

The Oral Examination

Chair Responsibilities

The chair of the oral examination bears an important responsibility; a thorough examination of the thesis serves as the University's guarantee that the standards of the Ph.D. are met. To this end, the procedures for the conduct of the examination must be **consistent and strictly followed.**

The chair is responsible for:

- Recording attendance of the examining committee
    - **Note:** All internal examiners including the knowledge expert (if applicable) must attend unless otherwise approved by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. If any of the expected members of the examining committee are absent, the chair must seek approval for the examination to proceed from the Faculty of Graduate Studies;
- Ensuring that the examination follows the procedure detailed below in a professional and collegial manner;

- Monitoring the examining committee's deliberations and conducting a vote to determine the result of the examination;
- Informing the candidate of the result of the examination and outlining the post-examination procedures for both the candidate and the examining committee; and
- Completing and submitting the Chair Report Form to the Faculty of Graduate Studies immediately following the examination.

Order of Proceedings

The Order of Proceedings for the Ph.D. Oral Examination is as follows:

1. Welcome
2. Introduction of the Candidate and Examiners
3. Order of Proceedings
4. Candidate's Presentation
5. Examiner Question Period
6. Guest Member(s) and Audience Question Period (Time Permitting)
7. Examining Committee Deliberations
8. Inform the Candidate of the Result and Post-Examination Procedures

Welcome

1. Traditional Territories Acknowledgement (at the discretion of the student and their Advisor(s))

    Before the examination begins, chairs are encouraged to ask the student and their Advisor(s) if they wish to open the examination by sharing a Traditional Territories Acknowledgement. The University of Manitoba's general acknowledgement, along with current guidance and resources (including pronunciation guides), can be found on the UM Traditional Territories Acknowledgements webpage.

2. The chair must welcome all those in attendance to the examination and state the following:

    > The Ph.D. Oral Examination is a formal examination and is the senior academic event in the Faculty of Graduate Studies. A successful examination is required for awarding the Doctor of Philosophy degree, which is the highest academic degree awarded by the University of Manitoba.

3. Introduction of the Candidate and Examiners

The chair must:

- Introduce the candidate;
- Introduce each member of the examining committee in the following order:

- External examiner. In addition to stating the examiner's name, institution, and department, the chair should indicate whether the examiner will be participating in the examination. In the event that the examiner is absent, the chair should indicate if they will ask questions on the absent examiner's behalf;
- Internal examiners, including the knowledge expert (if applicable);
- Advisor (and co-advisor, if applicable);
- Invited member (if applicable); and
➤ State that the written thesis has been reviewed by all members of the examining committee.

Order of Proceedings

The chair must provide an overview to all in attendance of the procedures to be used for the conduct of the examination as follows:

➤ The candidate will give a 20 to 25-minute presentation of the major objectives, content, results, and conclusions of their thesis. The candidate's ability to present the thesis clearly and concisely is an essential part of the examination process.
➤ At the conclusion of the candidate's presentation, the examiners will each be initially allowed approximately 20 minutes to pose questions in the following order:
  - External examiner (or chair on the external examiner's behalf)
  - Internal examiners and knowledge expert (if applicable)
  - Advisor (and co-Advisor, if applicable).
➤ A second round of questions *may* be offered to the examining committee if time permits.
➤ The invited member (if applicable) and audience will be invited to ask questions if time permits.
➤ Once the question periods are completed, the candidate, audience, and invited member (if applicable) will be asked to leave the room/virtual meeting. The examining committee will discuss the candidate's performance and determine the outcome of the oral examination.
➤ The candidate will be invited to return once the examining committee reaches a decision.

For virtual and hybrid examinations, the chair must also state the following:

➤ All remote audience members must keep their microphone off for the duration of the examination. If time permits questions from the audience, members may turn their microphone on only when speaking;
➤ All participants and attendees may only use the chat function to communicate technical difficulties to the meeting host, or to indicate that they would like to pose a question during the appropriate time.

Professionalism and collegiality are expected of all participants and attendees. Any who behave inappropriately will be removed from the meeting.

In addition, note that:

➢ In no case should the questioning exceed two hours;
➢ The chair must remain neutral, and consequently is not permitted to pose any questions of their own; and
➢ The examiners should keep comments and discussions on the subject matter of the thesis to a minimum, unless they are essential to the questions being posed. Otherwise, such comments and discussions should occur only during the examiners' deliberations.

Candidate's Presentation

The candidate will give a 20 to 25-minute presentation of the major objectives, content, results, and conclusions of their thesis. The candidate's ability to present the thesis clearly and concisely is an essential part of the examination process.

Examiner Question Period

At the conclusion of the candidate's presentation and before the questioning period, the chair should allow sufficient time for those audience members who wish to leave the session to do so.

The chair may also offer a reminder that each examiner, including the knowledge expert (if applicable) has 20 minutes available to ask questions but that additional questions may be asked in a second round of questioning if time permits.

Invited Member and Audience Question Period (Time Permitting)

Once questioning from the committee is completed and if time permits, the invited member may be allowed to ask a question or two. Following this, and again if time permits, audience members may be given an opportunity to ask questions.

Deliberations

Once all questioning is completed, the chair should thank the candidate, audience, and invited member for their participation and ask them to leave the room/virtual meeting. If the candidate is participating virtually, they should be directed to closely monitor their University email account for a notification to re-join the meeting; otherwise, they should be directed to wait outside of the room until the chair invites them to return.

The decision of the examining committee will be based both on the content of the thesis and on the candidate's ability to defend it. The performance of the candidate at the oral examination may reveal problems of comprehension or explanation, and the examining committee may require revisions be made to the written thesis to address these problems prior to granting final approval.

When only the chair and examining committee remain, the chair must:

➢ Survey the committee as follows:
  o Ask each examiner, in sequence, to comment on the candidate's performance;
  o Ask each examiner, in sequence, whether, in their view, the candidate passed or failed the oral examination; and
➢ Conduct a vote, wherein each examiner must vote in favour of assigning either a pass or fail grade for the oral examination. Co-advisors share one vote. Invited members do not vote.
  o "Pass"
    ▪ A Pass grade indicates that the candidate has satisfactorily presented the thesis rationale, methodology, findings, and conclusions to the general satisfaction of the examining committee. Notwithstanding this, stylistic, grammatical, and content revisions to the thesis may be required.
    ▪ The examination is passed if the external examiner and internal examiners (including the advisor/co-advisor) vote in favour of assigning a pass grade with no more than one (1) internal examiner voting in favour of a fail grade.
    ▪ The chair must establish with the examiners any required revisions, and the procedure to be used for approval of the revised thesis. Normally, the advisor/co-advisor is charged with ensuring that any revisions are satisfactorily completed. Under some circumstances, the entire examining committee may wish to ensure any required revisions are completed satisfactorily.
  o "Fail"
    ▪ A Fail grade indicates that the candidate has not adequately presented the thesis rationale, methodology, findings, and/or conclusions, or satisfactorily responded to questions posed related to the thesis. Failure may also arise because of defects in conception, methodology, or context.
    ▪ The examination is failed if:

- The external examiner votes that the candidate has failed the examination (regardless of the votes of the internal committee members); or
- More than one internal examiner votes that the candidate has failed the examination (regardless of the vote of the external examiner).

A pass or fail decision must be made. No other decision is permitted.

Inform the Candidate of the Result and Post-Examination Procedures

Once the deliberations are over, the chair must either email the candidate to inform them to re-join the meeting using the original meeting invitation link or invite them to re-enter the room. The chair shall inform the candidate of the results of the examination, the nature of revisions (if any), and the procedure to be used for approval of the revisions. The candidate should be congratulated (if appropriate) and members of the examining committee thanked.

Finally, the chair must inform all participants of their post-examination responsibilities as follows:

- ➢ The chair shall:
  - o Communicate the result of the examination, record individual examining committee member votes (Pass/Fail), nature of revisions (if any) and the name(s) of those responsible for overseeing the revisions, the appropriateness of facilities and equipment (e.g.: technological platforms, audio/visual hardware), the attendance of the examining committee to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies via the Chair Report Form.
- ➢ If the examination receives a "Pass" grade
  - o The advisor/co-advisor (if applicable) shall:
    - ▪ Ensure that any required revisions to the thesis have been approved according to the agreed upon procedure;
  - o The candidate shall:
    - ▪ Revise the thesis as required by the examining committee and follow the agreed upon approval procedure;
    - ▪ Upload a digital (pdf) version of the final thesis to the MSpace website once all required revisions have been made and approved.
- ➢ If the examination receives a "Fail" grade
  - o All examining committee members who indicated a failed outcome must submit a written, detailed justification for their decision to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies within one week of the oral examination. A copy of these

reports will be provided to the candidate by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies;

- In the case of a first failure of the oral examination, the candidate may be permitted to undergo a second oral examination (contingent on support from the candidate's department/unit). In such a case:
    - The department/unit Head shall convene a meeting of the internal members of the examining committee and the advisor/co-advisor (if applicable) to determine how to bring the thesis to an acceptable scholarly standard and/or prepare for the second oral examination. This may involve additional scholarly work which the department/unit Head will describe, in writing, to the advisor/co-advisor, candidate, and Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies;
    - In some circumstances, the candidate may revise the written thesis. The revised thesis accompanied by a detailed summary of the revisions made will be provided to the examination committee prior to the second oral examination. The revised written thesis shall not be re-examined; however, revisions can be recommended at the oral examination;
    - Support of the candidate's advisor, co-advisor, advisory committee, and department/unit is required prior to the second examination. This support must be communicated to the Faculty of Graduate Studies by way of a newly completed Approval to Proceed to Examination Form, accompanied by a detailed summary of the changes made to improve the thesis (if applicable) via the Ph.D. Thesis Submission Form on the Graduate Studies Hub
    - Candidates whose thesis is failed twice at the written review and/or oral examination stage will normally be withdrawn from the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the notation on the student record will be "Required to withdraw".

How to Address Extenuating Circumstances

In the event that the proceedings are unable to proceed as outlined in the previous section, the following procedures must be followed. Deviation from these procedures may result in the nullification of the examination results.

If the chair does not join the examination

➢ The proceedings cannot begin until the chair is present. If they do not join after 10 minutes:
  - o Contact the Faculty of Graduate Studies Student Program Assistant (SPA) via phone and/or email immediately. Unsure of who you should contact? Staff and their portfolios are available on the [FGS Website](). If the SPA is unavailable contact FGS Front Reception (204-474-9377).
  - o An Associate Dean may be able to chair the proceedings; if this is not possible, the examination must be re-scheduled.

If the Advisor/Co-Advisor or a Member of the Examining Committee does not join the examination without prior approval from the Faculty of Graduate Studies

➢ The proceedings cannot begin until the missing individual is present. All efforts must be made to contact the missing individual. If the individual does not join after 10 minutes:
  - o Contact the Faculty of Graduate Studies Student Program Assistant (SPA) via phone and/or email immediately. Unsure of who you should contact? Staff and their portfolios are available on the [FGS Website](). If the SPA is unavailable contact FGS Front Reception (204-474-9377).
  - o The Associate Dean will determine if the proceedings are permitted to continue in the absence of the missing individual. In some circumstances (e.g., if the absent individual is the Advisor/Co-Advisor), the examination will need to be re-scheduled.
  - o The circumstances (and remedy, if applicable) must be detailed on the Chair Report Form.

If the proceedings are interrupted (e.g., by a fire alarm, power outage, lost internet connection)

➢ The proceedings must be paused and appropriate measures taken (e.g., evacuation of the room if necessary) until the interruption has passed. If the interruption lasts longer than 15 minutes:
  - o Contact the Faculty of Graduate Studies Student Program Assistant (SPA) via phone and/or email immediately. Unsure of who you should contact?

Staff and their portfolios are available on the [FGS Website](). If the SPA is unavailable contact FGS Front Reception (204-474-9377).

- o The proceedings may be permitted to continue from the point of interruption if, and only if:
    - All participants are available to stay beyond the scheduled end of the examination;
    - The candidate is comfortable proceeding from the point of interruption.

Tips for Virtual and Hybrid Oral Examinations

Chair or Host

➢ If there are bandwidth issues you may want to have the audience stop their video;

➢ Use the chat feature to communicate with committee members in order to avoid interrupting the presenter if quality issues arise; and

➢ Ensure that you are familiar with the platform prior to the oral examination.

Candidate

➢ If possible, use a headset to speak;

➢ Test streaming quality at the same time of day as the scheduled examination;

➢ Have your computer close to your wifi router, or use wired Ethernet for better quality video;

➢ Make sure to look at the camera and speak slowly and clearly; and

➢ Consider whether others will be connected to the same network during your examination.

Examining Committee

➢ Ensure that you are comfortable using the features of the meeting platform (e.g. how to turn video on/off, mute/unmute, use the chat feature);

➢ If bandwidth is not an issue, use video. Live faces provide a sense of having an actual audience, and you can provide positive encouragement via facial responses such as head nods, smiling, etc.;

➢ If you encounter bandwidth issues when asking questions, turn off your video to ensure that your audio is transmitted clearly; and

➢ Be positive and encouraging. While you can still ask probing questions, do so in a supportive way focused on helping the candidate.

All Participants

➢ Keep your microphone muted when you are not speaking to ensure high quality audio experiences for all attendees;

➢ Minimize background distractions before joining the meeting (i.e. mute cellphone, remove pets and children from the room, inform cohabitants that you are not to be disturbed, turn off TV/radio, etc.);

➢ **Oral Examinations may not be recorded for any purpose**;

➢ Don't forget to celebrate after the candidate passes! Applause, send congratulations, and virtual high fives will be appreciated by the candidate; and

➢ A guide for signing pdf documents can be found at the following link: http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/nursing/media/How_to_Sign_a_PDF_Online.pdf.

Platform Tutorials

Links to tutorials for the most commonly used videoconferencing platforms are provided below. Please consider the following when preparing for the examination:

> ➢ The University of Manitoba's Information Services and Technology (IST) Service Desk will only provide support for Cisco WebEx, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom;
> ➢ Ensure that your device meets the minimum technical requirements of the examination platform prior to the examination date.

Cisco WebEx	https://help.webex.com/en-us/8bzter/Cisco-Webex-Meetings-Video-Tutorials
Microsoft Teams	https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/microsoft-teams-video-training-4f108e54-240b-4351-8084-b1089f0d21d7
Zoom*	https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-video-tutorials
BlueJeans	https://support.bluejeans.com/s/topic/0TO2R000000kaifWAA/videos
Skype	https://support.skype.com/en/faq/fa11098/how-do-i-get-started-with-skype
Google Meet	https://support.google.com/a/users/answer/9282720?hl=en

*Effective September 2021, UM Zoom is available for unlimited use for anyone with a University of Manitoba email address. Details for claiming and merging accounts are available on the UM Zoom webpage.