



Ph.D. Oral Examination Procedures

Ph.D. Oral Defense Form:

Following the submission of the Ph.D. thesis, the Thesis Office will forward a Ph.D. Oral Defense Form to the Graduate Student Affairs Coordinator (GSAC). The supervisor and student will be notified and asked to nominate individuals who meet McGill criteria for internal and external examiners. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that nominated individuals have no apparent or potential conflicts of interest with the student and supervisor(s) as defined by McGill University.

Note the external examiner for the oral defense committee cannot be the same individual as the external examiner for the thesis. Because only GPS knows the identity of the external evaluator for the thesis, this means that no one listed as a potential external examiner can be contacted.

Supervisors(not students) should contact all potential examiners to ascertain their interest, availability and potential dates where all committee members are available. **The Thesis Office requires at least two weeks notice of the defense date.** Supervisors complete the Ph.D. oral defense form with complete contact information on each individual. This form must be given to the GSAC for approval by the School at least three weeks before the defense date. However, there is to be no further contact with nominated individuals about the oral defense until after the oral examination has occurred.

The student should provide all members of the oral defense committee with a copy of the submitted thesis. (The Thesis Office selects the Pro-Dean and provides that person with a copy of the thesis and the student's Graduate Studies File.)

The student must provide the GSAC with an updated CV which should include all publications, abstracts, awards, grant amounts and period covered, as well as any important information the student wishes to add to his/her profile. This profile will be forwarded to all committee members by the GSAC.

The GSAC will then submit the Ph.D. Oral Defense Form to the Thesis Office. All members except the Pro-Dean are formally invited by the School via email by the GSAC and provided with the student's CV and the Doctoral Examination Guidelines.

The Thesis Office will send the confidential official examiners' reports to the committee members and the GSAC.

For additional information, please contact the GSAC at (514) 398-5926.

McGILL GUIDELINES FOR DOCTORAL ORAL EXAMINATIONS

All the information regarding the guidelines for Doctoral Oral Examinations is found at the following: <http://www.mcgill.ca/gps/thesis/guidelines/oral-defence>. The following is a summary of the GPS procedures, along with specific information regarding the roles of the School and supervisor(s).

APPOINTMENT OF DOCTORAL ORAL DEFENSE COMMITTEES

When the candidate deposits the thesis in the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Office (GPS), an oral defense form is sent to the Graduate Secretary/Coordinator by GPS so that the School can work with the supervisor to set up the oral defense committee and notify the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Office as to its membership. Members of the Doctoral Oral Committee should normally hold a doctorate or equivalent. The oral committee consists of a Pro-Dean (appointed by the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Office) and 5-7 other members, including:

1. At least one person who is external to the unit in which the candidate is registered and who has not been involved in supervision of the candidate or as a co-author on any component of the thesis. (When the oral committee has six or seven members, at least two should be external to the department.)
2. The chair/director of the academic unit (or delegate)
3. The supervisor(s) and internal examiner will normally serve on the committee
4. Other member(s) of the unit

The committee should not include more than three people including the supervisor(s) who have been closely involved in the supervision of the candidate or as co-authors on any component of the thesis. When the committee includes three people closely involved with the thesis, then the committee should comprise seven (7) members plus the Pro-Dean.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Heads of academic units should be aware of situations which may affect the assessment of the work of Graduate Students, such as potential conflicts of interest or other situations where examiners may not be sufficiently at arm's length from the student. A student may be assessed unduly positively or negatively as a result of a relationship between examiners or committee members and the student or the supervisor.

It is particularly important to avoid potential conflicts of interest when nominating internal and external examiners for masters' and doctoral theses, as well as External Committee Members for the doctoral oral defense. Examples of potential conflicts of interest are given below.

Departmental contact with potential external examiners on the "Nomination of Examiners" form comprises a conflict of interest. If the department wishes to invite the external examiner to the doctoral oral defense, upon request of the Chair of the Department, the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Office will release the name of the external examiner only after all the evaluators' reports have been submitted with a passing grade to the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Office.

EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

As far as the examination of a student's thesis is concerned (internal examiner, external examiner, external

member of the doctoral oral defense committee), the individuals listed below might be considered to be in a conflict of interest. This list provides examples only and is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive. Chairs are ultimately responsible for informing themselves of relationships that the supervisor or student may have with an examiner or committee member and for determining whether a conflict of interest exists.

1. The supervisor may not be sufficiently at arm's length to assess the student's work realistically. An internal examiner should be appointed.
2. Anyone who has recently co-authored or otherwise collaborated with the supervisor or the student may be in a conflict of interest.
3. In the case of a thesis that consists of a collection of papers, a co-author of any component of such a thesis should not be chosen as an examiner for the thesis.
4. Recent former students of the supervisor (i.e., those who have graduated within the last 5 years).
5. The supervisor's former supervisor (for 5 years after graduation).
6. Anyone who has expressed an interest in having the candidate as a postdoctoral researcher (or equivalent) or who is in a unit where the student has an academic appointment (or an offer of one).
7. Persons with a personal or financial relationship to the student or the supervisor.
8. An academic staff member who left McGill University (for 5 years after leaving).

EXCEPTIONAL REQUESTS

Any requests for exceptions to normal procedures should be referred to the Associate Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (Room 400, James Administration Building).