

Procedure for Securing an External Thesis Examiner

(Note: for Master's thesis examination the "external examiner" can be internal or external to the unit or university.)

Henceforth, supervisors will be responsible for identifying and securing an external examiner for their students' theses (instead of providing three nominees to GPS as was formerly the case). This procedure has been put in place to give professors and their students more control over the choice of examiners and reduce the time of the examination process.. This document outlines the GPS-recommended process for contacting a potential external examiner.

About 2-4 weeks before the thesis is ready for initial submission, you should consult with your student and identify one or more potential examiners who are qualified to examine the thesis. Initial contact can be made by phone or email, as you deem most efficient. However, it is usually best to discuss by phone at some point. First, make sure the individual is able to review the thesis within the required timeline.

Conflict of Interest Checklist

If you know that the potential examiner's answer to any of the questions in the checklist below is "Yes," the examiner should not be contacted.

Otherwise, review the checklist when contacting the potential examiner and ensure that he/she does not answer "Yes" to any of the questions. (If you have any questions about this process, please contact GPS.)

- Have you co-authored or otherwise carried out research in collaboration with the student or the supervisor (within the last five years)? Yes or No
- Do you knowingly have a financial interest in an entity that could benefit from the thesis research? Yes or No
- Have you previously read the thesis, or parts of it, or evaluated the student's thesis research (e.g., as an advisor, as a supervisory committee member, evaluator for progress tracking)? Yes or No
- Have you previously examined or been examined by the student's supervisor (within the last five years), e.g., the former student or former supervisor of the student's supervisor? Yes or No
- Do you have a former or pending affiliation with the student's academic unit* (within the last five years); e.g., graduated from the same academic program or been offered an academic appointment in the unit*? Yes or No (examiners of doctoral theses only)
- Have you held an academic appointment at McGill within the last five years? Yes or No (examiners of doctoral theses only)
- Have you engaged in (or intend to engage in) discussions/negotiations with student or supervisor relating to future employment or supervision? Yes or No

- Do you have a personal or financial relationship to the student or the supervisor? Yes or No

Relationships that might appear to have a conflict of interest include:

- A past or present spouse or partner
- A close family member
- A past or present business partner

- Have you engaged in other activities that could be interpreted as conflict of interest? (please specify)

Talking Points when contacting the potential examiner:

1. Introduce yourself
2. Explain that you have a doctoral or master's student who will soon be completing his/her thesis, and that the McGill process requires the thesis to be examined by an external expert in the field.
3. The thesis examination requires a written assessment, but once that is fully completed, the external examiner's work is done.
4. Explain that for Doctoral students there is a two-tiered thesis examination process: the examination of the thesis and an oral defence. However, make it clear that the external examiner does not need to be present at the oral defence (unless required by the unit).
5. Explain when you expect the thesis to be ready for examination, and that the examiner is given 4 weeks to submit their assessment and that meeting this deadline is critical for the student's progress towards the degree. Would he/she be willing and able to undertake this task at the expected time?
6. If the topic is raised, McGill does not provide an honorarium for thesis reviews. (This may be a surprise with some examiners.)
7. Please explain that this time-consuming task is an important part of academic collegiality and we appreciate the time and energy that he/she will devote to it.
8. If the person agrees, explain that once the thesis is submitted, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies will contact him/her to arrange for mailing of the thesis and examination forms.

Note: throughout your interaction with the potential examiner, you should not discuss the quality of the student or thesis, since that could bias the review. If you are asked questions edging into these issues, you should explain that it is not considered appropriate for you to discuss them. It is, however, reasonable to send the thesis abstract to the potential examiner, so that he/she may better judge his/her ability to undertake the review.