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## THESIS GUIDELINES

### Section 4.1:

#### 4.1 General Information

- A Master's thesis must be examined by a single academic specialist
- A Doctoral thesis must be evaluated by two examiners - one internal and one external.
- Supervisors may not serve as examiners of Master's or Doctoral theses.
- For Doctoral theses, following the successful (written) examination, there is an Oral Thesis Defence.

Examiners are asked to evaluate the thesis according to a number of criteria as indicated in the grid in the thesis examination form. Examiners provide an overall judgment of 'passed' or 'not passed', assessing whether or not the thesis fulfills the requirement for the degree, even if minor changes are recommended.

A 'pass' should be awarded unless the revisions required are major, such as:

- The need for a new study, experimentation, or significant additional research or reformulation.
- Stylistic or editorial changes are not normally considered to be major revisions, but if the quality of the presentation is so poor that extensive rewriting is required, the thesis should not be passed. Examiners are asked to identify such changes required clearly in their reports.

### Section 7:

#### 7 Thesis examination failures

If one or both of the examiners decided that the thesis does not meet the requirements for the degree (**NOT PASSED** designated on the examination report), a Master's student will not graduate and a Doctoral student will not proceed to the Oral Defence. The student, however, has the option to "revise and resubmit" a thesis that has **not passed**.

In cases where plagiarism in the thesis is alleged, the thesis examination process does not proceed any further and the case is investigated through University disciplinary processes.

### Section 7.1:

#### 7.1 Revise and resubmit

A student whose thesis has **not passed** the examination may choose to revise and resubmit the thesis. To do so, he/she must contact GPS within 6 weeks of the notification of the thesis failure indicating the intention to revise and resubmit the thesis, including a supporting letter from the supervisor(s) confirming that he/she will maintain supervisory oversight for the revision, co-signed by the head of the Unit\*.

Once the revise and resubmit process has been approved, the revised thesis must be resubmitted to GPS no later than 1 year from the notification of approval. GPS will normally send the revised thesis to the original examiner who will determine if the revised thesis has now met the requirements for the degree (i.e. has been revised to address the issues raised in the examiner's report).

If the original examiner is not willing or available to serve, the Unit\* must provide GPS with the names of two potential examiners (internal or external, depending on who failed the thesis). GPS will contact and secure the examiner. Once the names have been submitted to GPS, no contact between the Unit\* or student and

potential examiners is permitted. This new examiner will be provided with the original failing report and asked to determine if the revised thesis has addressed the issues raised by the original examiner's report and has met the requirements for the degree.

The following are also required for resubmission of the revised thesis:

- A new submission form;
- A new checklist;
- New library waiver forms;
- Two copies of a letter to the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies describing the changes that have been made. (This letter will be submitted to the examiner as part of the re-examination process);
- Two copies of the original failed thesis (marked as "first submission");
- Two copies of the revised thesis, one for the re-examination and one for Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (marked "revised" on the label);
- Current registration of the student.

If the student does not contact GPS requesting to revise and resubmit the thesis within the designated time period or, once approved to revise the thesis, does not re-submit the revised thesis by the deadline, the **failure** of the thesis examination will stand and the student will be withdrawn from the university.

For Master's students, if the revised thesis is passed, he/she will have fulfilled that requirement for the degree. For Doctoral students, if the revised thesis is passed, he/she will proceed to the Oral Defence. (The Oral Defence committee will only receive the thesis that has been passed and nothing concerning the revise and submit process).

Should the re-examination result in a second **failure**, the student will be withdrawn from the University unless he/she feels there is evidence of bias, error, or serious misrepresentation on the part of the examiner.

#### **Section 7.2: 7.2 Challenge of a thesis examination failure**

When a thesis has been **failed** and the student feels that the **failure** is not based on the academic or scholarly quality of the thesis itself, but rather that the judgment of failure is determined by bias, error, or serious misrepresentation on the part of the examiner, he/she may challenge the **failure**.

To do so, the student must request a challenge of the **failure** to GPS within 6 weeks of its notification, including a detailed letter explaining the reasons he/she believes that the judgment of **failure** is based on the examiner's bias, error, or serious misrepresentation. The student's letter must also include a statement that he/she is fully aware of the serious consequences of a negative outcome of the challenge (see below), and must be accompanied by a supporting letter from the Unit.\* Scientific or scholarly disagreement as to whether or not the thesis meets the academic qualifications for the degree is not a basis for a challenge.

Whether or not the challenge of the failure will be accepted is determined by a hearing carried out by the Thesis Challenge Sub-Committee of the Council of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, made up of:

- Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (Chair)
- Three standing members nominated from the membership of the Council of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

- One academic member who is nominated by the Dean of the Student's Faculty (but not from the student's department, if the Faculty has departments)

A challenge will seldom be heard unless the thesis has been **failed** after the revise and resubmit process.

If the Challenge Sub-committee determines that the **failing** judgment was based on bias, error, or misrepresentation, the thesis will be re-examined.

The process for the re-examination is as follows:

The Unit\* must provide GPS with the names of four potential external examiners. GPS will contact and secure two of these to examine the thesis. Once the names of the potential examiners are submitted to GPS, no contact between the Unit\* and examiners is permitted.

GPS will send the thesis (unrevised from the original judgment) to the two examiners. Should either **fail** the thesis, the thesis will have been judged not to have met the requirements for the degree and the student will be withdrawn from the university.

If the Challenge Sub-committee determines that the **failing** judgment was not based on bias, error, or misrepresentation, the failure stands and the student will be withdrawn from the university.

### **Section 7.3: 7.3 Oral Defence **Failure****

If the Oral Defence Committee determines that the thesis or the defence was inadequate or that the thesis requires major revisions, the student will be required either:

- 1) To resubmit a revised version of the thesis to the Oral Defence Committee who will then evaluate the revised thesis without another Oral Defence, or
- 2) To conduct another defence without the submission of a revised thesis, or
- 3) Both.

Within a week of the Oral Defence, the Pro-Dean will inform the student in writing of the **failure** and subsequent actions to be taken. This letter will:

- Summarize the reasons for the **failure**;
- Indicate changes to the thesis stipulated by the Committee members;
- State the deadline for resubmission of the revised thesis, if required (up to six months);
- State the deadline for reconvening the Oral Defence, if required;
- Outline any other actions, and
- Delegate a member of the Committee, usually the supervisor, to ensure that the student carries out the required changes to the written thesis and/or complies with the other stipulations.

\* Unit refers to a department or a school or an institute or a division, in the case of Experimental Medicine.

\*\*Head refers to chair of the Academic Unit\* or delegate (such as Graduate Program Director/Associate Director). Names of delegate(s) should be submitted to the Director, Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs.

## DOCTORAL REPORT

McGILL UNIVERSITY  
Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

NAME OF STUDENT:

DEGREE / UNIT:

DRAFT

Use the following scale: **EXCELLENT, VERY GOOD, GOOD, SATISFACTORY, or UNSATISFACTORY**  
(Choose one grade for each category)

Criteria	Excellent Top 10%	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
1. Evidence of originality and creativity					
2. Resourcefulness, alertness to significance of findings					
3. Diligence, care, technical skill in the research					
4. Usefulness of the results to other workers in the field; value as a contribution to knowledge					
5. Grasp of subject, powers of criticism and general adequacy in review of previous work					
6. Quality of presentation (coherence, lucidity, grammar, style, freedom from typographical errors)					

7. OVERALL JUDGEMENT (check one)

PASS ☐ or ~~FAIL~~ ☐

8. If the overall judgement is 'PASS' please provide:

NOT PASS

- Comments explaining your evaluation of the thesis including recommendations for minor revisions to be included in the final thesis. (See Examination of Thesis Guidelines)
- A list of questions to be asked at the oral examination. (NOTE: only for External Examiners)
- Should this thesis be considered for a prestigious provincial or national award? (check one) YES ☐ NO ☐

→ If the judgement is ~~FAIL~~ 'NOT PASS', at least one of the criteria above must be graded unsatisfactory. (Note: the thesis does not proceed to the Oral Defence unless a revised thesis has been submitted for re-examination and has passed - See Examination of Thesis Guidelines).

Please provide:

- Comments explaining your evaluation of the thesis, including a detailed description of the shortcomings that have informed your decision that it does not meet the requirements of a passing thesis.
- An itemized list of the substantive issues that you expect the student to address for the written thesis to receive a passing grade upon re-examination and proceed to the oral defence. Please refer to appended instructions for examiners.

In order not to jeopardize the student's anticipated graduation timeline (and potential associated costs), please send your report as soon as possible to the THESIS OFFICE by fax at 514-398-6283 or by mail to McGill University, James Administration Bldg., Room 400, 845 Sherbrooke St. W., Montreal, QC, Canada H3A 2T5  
Tel. No.: 514-398-3990

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_