

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.

If the request is approved, the Unit must provide GPS with the names of two potential new internal and/or external examiners. GPS will contact and secure the examiner. No contact between the Unit* and potential examiners is permitted.

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the failing judgment was not based on bias, error, or misrepresentation, the failure stands and the student will be withdrawn from the university.

Biased Reports

If 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 submit a written request to the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for a new examiner for the re-submitted thesis, documenting the bias, error, or serious misrepresentation. This request may be accompanied by a letter of support from the supervisor and/or Unit.

To consider the request, the Dean will convene (and chair) a standing challenge committee, composed of 2 members of Graduate Council and an appointed member of the student's disciplinary Faculty. This Committee will review the request at a meeting to which the student will be invited in order to present his/her case. Subsequently, the Committee will render a decision (in the absence of the student) as to whether bias, error or serious misrepresentation has been proven. The decision will be communicated to the student, with reasons, by the Dean of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies within one week of the Committee meeting.

If the request is approved, the Unit must provide GPS with the names of two potential new internal and/or external examiners. GPS will contact and secure the examiner. No contact between the Unit* and potential examiners is permitted. **Should the re-examination result in a second failure, the student will be withdrawn from the University. No further revisions will be considered.**

If bias is first alleged as a result of the review of the revised thesis (i.e., an allegation of bias is submitted with respect to the second examination process), the process described above will be followed. The decision of the Committee that reviews the request for a new examiner and/or the judgment of the new examiner will be final. No further revisions will be considered.

