



Oral Defence Proceedings – Pro-Dean guidelines

This document outlines the following:

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- The Specific Responsibilities of the Pro-Dean
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The Role of the Pro-Dean

As Pro-Dean, you are not present in an evaluative role and are not a voting member of the committee. You serve as representative of the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and chair the oral defence. Your primary responsibilities are to ensure that:

- The thesis meets the [format requirements](#) of the University.
- The defence is carried out with fairness to the student and with respect for the academic standards of the University.
- As a moderator of the proceedings, that exchanges between the committee members and the student are conducted in a productive and mutually respectful manner.
- The Oral Defence provides an opportunity for thorough assessment of the student's ability to meet the criteria required for a doctoral degree.

In the event that the thesis or defence is judged not to meet the requirements for fulfillment of the degree and another defence is warranted, it is expected that you will be asked to participate.

Your service is greatly appreciated. In this role, you are playing a vital role in the graduate community.

The Specific Responsibilities of the Pro-Dean

Prior to the oral defence

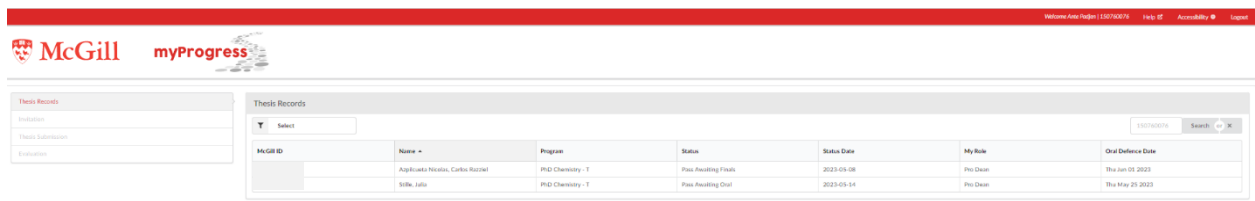
Prior to the defence, Pro-Deans must access myThesis to:

- Review the oral defence event details, the thesis documents, and the reports
- Download the oral defence certificate

The four (4) steps are highlighted below. If you have any concerns, please contact the Thesis Office prior to the oral defence.

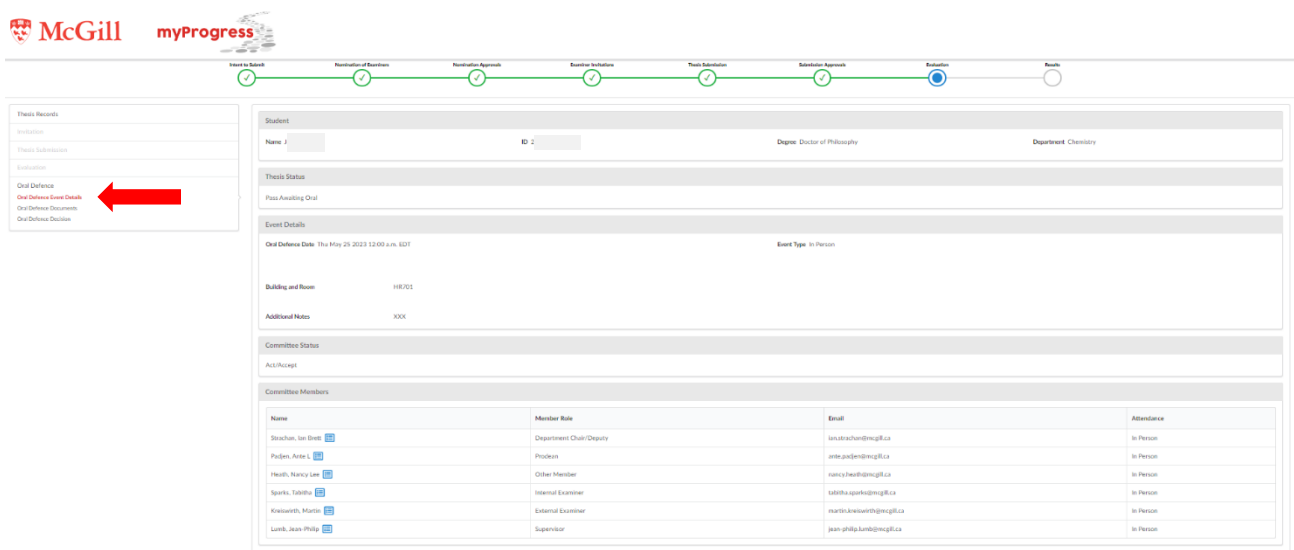
Step 1: Access myThesis through the link provided in the myThesis notification you received. Enter your *mcgill.ca* login credentials (email and password). If you encounter issues, see this [IT support page](#).

When you see the page below, click on the row with the name of the student:



McGill ID	Name	Program	Status	Status Date	My Role	Oral Defence Date
	Aguiar de Nóbrega, Carlos Rozal	PhD Chemistry - T	Pass Awaiting Final	2023-09-08	Pho Dean	The Jan 01 2023
	Siffré, Julia	PhD Chemistry - T	Pass Awaiting Oral	2023-05-14	Pho Dean	The May 25 2023

Step 2: Once you are in the student's record, access the "Oral Defence Event Details" tab to see information such as oral defence committee members, date of defence, and location and/or Zoom link.



Student
Name: [Redacted] ID: [Redacted] Degree: Doctor of Philosophy Department: Chemistry

Thesis Status
Pass Awaiting Oral

Event Details
Oral Defence Date: Thu May 25 2023 12:00 a.m. EDT Event Type: In Person

Building and Room HIR/CI

Additional Notes XXX

Committee Status
All Accept

Committee Members

Name	Member Role	Email	Attendance
Strachan, Ian Brett	Department Chair/Deputy	ianstrachan@mcgill.ca	In Person
Peders, Antje L.	Proctor	antje.p@mcgill.ca	In Person
Heath, Nancy Lee	Other Member	nancy.heath@mcgill.ca	In Person
Spreth, Tadhuis	Internal Examiner	tadspreth@mcgill.ca	In Person
Krauswerth, Martin	External Examiner	martin.krauswerth@mcgill.ca	In Person
Lumb, Jean Phily	Supervisor	jean.phily.lumb@mcgill.ca	In Person



Step 3: Access the “Oral Defence Documents” tab to review and download the thesis, thesis checklist, and reports.

The screenshot shows the myProgress portal interface. At the top, there is a progress bar with seven stages: Thesis Status, Notification of Examiners, Notification Approved, Examiners Invited, Final Submission, Submission Approved, and **Oral Defence** (highlighted with a blue circle). Below the progress bar, the main content area is divided into several sections: Student Information (Name, ID, Degree: Doctor of Philosophy, Department: Chemistry), Thesis Status (Post Awarding Oral), Contribution Status (Ack/Access), Thesis Files (a table with columns for File Name, Type, and Upload Date), and Evaluators (a list of names and statuses). On the left side, there is a navigation menu with the following items: Thesis Records, Thesis Submission, Evaluation, Oral Defence, Oral Defence Event Details, **Oral Defence Documents** (highlighted with a red arrow), and Oral Defence Decision.

You must verify that the thesis includes the following [components](#):

- a) a table of contents;
- b) a brief abstract in both English and French;
- c) a general introduction, including a statement of rationale and objectives of the research, as well as a comprehensive review of the literature (in addition to that covered in the introduction to each paper in the case of a [manuscript-based thesis](#));
- d) for manuscript-based theses: transition/connecting texts between chapters;
- e) explicit statements of the contributions (if any) to the research, which must be in the acknowledgments or preface of a standard format thesis, or in a specific section of the preface entitled “Contribution of Authors,” in the case of a manuscript-based thesis, where contributions of others must be acknowledged;
- f) A comprehensive scholarly discussion of all the findings; and
- g) A final conclusion and summary.

Please note: Formatting criteria should be met for manuscript-based theses, specifically pertaining to the inclusion of bridging text and literature and discussion of findings sections.

Traditional theses must include all thesis components, but their structure may vary based on **disciplinary norms**. If you are not familiar with disciplinary norms for the student's thesis and require clarification, please contact the Chair of the oral defence committee (representative of the Academic Unit).



Step 4: Access the "Oral Defence Decision" Tab to view and download the certificate for the defence. The Certificate of Oral Defence is a fillable form. For defences held online, your digital signature is acceptable, in addition to copies of email confirmations from committee members. For defences with full or partial in-person components, please print and ask for committee members' wet signatures at the defence.

Sample certificate



Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
James Administration Building
845, Sherbrooke Street West, Room 400
theses.gps@mcgill.ca

Décanat des études supérieures et postdoctorales
Pavillon James de l'administration
845, rue Sherbrooke Ouest, bureau 400
theses.gps@mcgill.ca

Oral Defence Certificate

Student: Juli [redacted] ID: [redacted]

Program: PhD Chemistry - T

Date of defence: Thu May 25 2023

The candidate is certified to the Committee as having fulfilled all required courses. The language proficiency test required was NIL.

Committee Members
Department Chair/Deputy: Ian Brett Strachan
Supervisor: Jean-Philip Lumb
Internal Examiner: Tabitha Sparks
Other Member: Nancy Lee Heath
External Examiner: Martin Kreiswirth
Prodean: Ante L. Padjen

Signatures
Department Chair/Deputy
Supervisor
Internal Examiner
Other Member
External Examiner
Prodean

OVERALL DECISION

The oral defence committee has considered the student's academic record, the examiners' reports, the student's submitted thesis, and the student's oral defence presentation. The overall decision for partial fulfillment of the doctoral degree is indicated below.

PASSED [checkbox]

NOT PASSED (specify below) [checkbox]

Thesis not passed [checkbox]

Oral defence not passed [checkbox]

Thesis and oral defence not passed [checkbox]



At the defence

In the pre-defence session (private)

- a) Ensure audiences and the student have left the room prior to starting the pre-defence session – only the Pro-Dean and Committee members should remain. If the defence is remote or hybrid, a committee member – the Chair or Supervisor, most likely – are responsible for hosting the meeting on Zoom and placing the student in the virtual Waiting Room for the Pre-Defence meeting.
- b) Once the student and audience have left, verify that all committee members are present (remotely and in-person).
- c) Obtain confirmation from the Supervisor that all program requirements have been fulfilled.
- d) Establish the order in which the committee members will ask questions at the Defence, the approximate time for each examiner to ask questions, and who will ask questions raised in the external examiner's written report. Please take into account the norms of the Unit.
- e) Determine the process for a second round of questioning, and whether or not questions from the audience will be invited.

Contact GPS immediately if:

- Any irregularities are determined at the pre-defence. If a member of the oral defence committee has judged there to be plagiarism in the thesis, contact the Thesis unit immediately and postpone the Defence.
- A committee member is absent.
- The student defending remotely was disconnected. A reasonable attempt to reestablish a failed connection can be made, at the discretion of the Pro-Dean. If the orderly progression of the Defence is affected, you should suspend the Defence immediately and inform the Thesis Office to make alternative arrangements at a later date.

GPS Thesis contact: thesis.gps@mcgill.ca

In the open (public) session

Immediately after the pre-defence meeting, the committee moves into open session.

- a) Welcome the student and audience (if applicable).
- b) Introduce the student and invite them to summarize the thesis (approximately 20 minutes).
- c) Monitor the question period from the committee members according to the order established in the pre-defence meeting (approximately 60-90 minutes). You may ask a question(s) at your own discretion, usually briefly and at the conclusion of the question period.
- d) Invite questions from the audience if this is common to Unit practices.
 - If there is misconduct or disruptive behavior, you may request that an audience member exit the defence.

During the deliberation (private)

- a) Ask the student and audience to withdraw for the committee's private session. If the defence is



remote or hybrid, a committee member – the Chair or Supervisor, most likely – are responsible for placing the student and audience (if applicable) in the virtual Waiting Room during the private session.

- b) The committee is to determine if:
 1. the thesis meets the academic standards necessary for partial fulfillment of the PhD; and
 2. the student effectively communicated a level of knowledge and understanding supporting the thesis and commensurate with that of the PhD degree in the oral defence.

It is highly desirable that the committee reach a consensus. If a consensus is not reached, you must call for a formal vote of all members of the committee. You are not a voting member. The decision will be made by a simple majority. These deliberations should be as prompt as possible, but in no case take longer than 60 minutes. As Pro-Dean, you have final authority over academic decisions taken during the Oral Defence.

Outcomes of the Oral Defence:	
PASSED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the committee feels that the thesis and the responses to questions raised in the defence meet appropriate academic standards for the granting of the PhD degree, the student will be judged to have passed the defence. • If the committee determines that minor revisions (i.e., stylistic or editorial changes) are necessary for the thesis to fulfill the academic standards necessary for partial fulfillment of the degree, the Pro-Dean must delegate one member of the committee, usually the supervisor, to ensure that the student carries out the required changes.
NOT PASSED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the committee determines that the thesis or oral defence does not meet appropriate academic standards for the PhD and would require, for example, major revisions to the text and/or additional study, it must decide between the following three "Not Passed" outcomes: <p>Thesis not passed: The oral defence is satisfactory but the <i>thesis</i> does not meet PhD degree standards. If this is the first "Not Passed" outcome, the student is allowed to submit a revised version of the thesis within six (6) months to the oral defence committee who will then evaluate the revised thesis without another oral defence.</p> <p>Oral defence not passed: The thesis is satisfactory but the <i>oral defence</i> does not meet PhD degree standards. If this is the first "Not Passed" outcome, the student is allowed to conduct another oral defence within six (6) months without the submission of a revised thesis.</p> <p>Thesis and oral defence not passed: Both the <i>thesis and oral defence</i> do not meet PhD degree standards. If this is the first "Not Passed" outcome, the student is allowed to submit a revised</p>



	<p>version of the thesis within six (6) months to the oral defence committee, who will then evaluate the revised thesis and conduct another oral defence.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> If the student has a previous "Not Passed" decision on an initial thesis or Certificate of Oral Defence, a second "Not Passed" decision will result in withdrawal from the University.</p>
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- c) Ensure that the committee's decision ("Passed" or one of three "Not Passed" outcomes) is clearly indicated on the Certificate of Oral Defence.
 - In case of disagreement, advise the dissenting member of the committee to write a letter to the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies explaining the reasons for disagreement with the majority decision of the committee.
 - If the committee judged that either the thesis or the defence (or both) did not meet the standards for the degree (one of three "Not Passed" outcomes):
 - Facilitate discussion on the rationale for the "Not Passed" outcome.
 - Request that the committee members send you their comments by email within 7 days.
- d) The supervisor will have been forwarded a copy of the examiners' reports. Please remind the supervisor to give the reports to the student.
- e) End the private session.
- f) Convey the decision to the student: Passed or Not Passed.
 - If not passed, inform student verbally of the overall decision of the defence:
 - 1) The oral defence was passed, however the committee decided that the thesis requires major revisions, or
 - 2) The thesis was passed, however the committee decided that another oral defence must be held, or
 - 3) Both the thesis and oral defence did not pass: the thesis will require major revisions and another oral defence must be held.

After the oral defence

As Pro-Dean, you must submit the signed Oral Defence Certificate and confirm the Pass or Not Passed decision via myThesis. If you encounter issues, contact thesis.gps@mcgill.ca.

For in-person defences: The Oral Defence Certificate should be signed by all members of the Committee at the defence.

For a fully remote or hybrid defence, signatures confirming the final Committee decision will be in the form of email confirmation from each Committee member to the Pro-Dean indicating the overall committee decision ("Passed" or one of three "Not Passed" outcomes).

You must sign the Oral Defence Certificate on behalf of the Committee, based on their email confirmations. The Committee email confirmations that you received should be sent to thesis.gps@mcgill.ca, or they can be uploaded directly to myThesis.

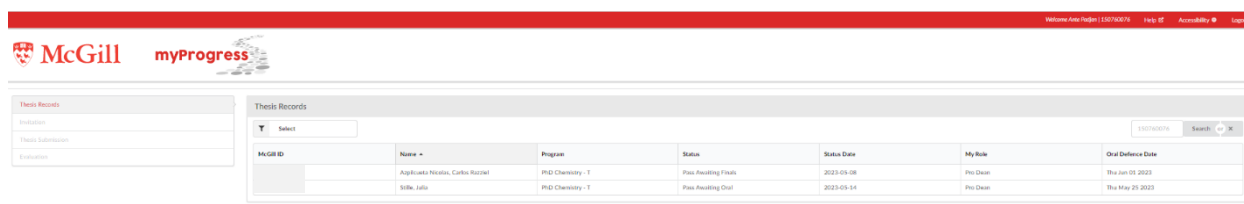
If the decision was "Not Passed":

- The Pro-Dean should send the Certificate of Oral Defence immediately after the defence, informing the Thesis Office of the failure.
- Within a week, the Pro-Dean should submit a report summarizing the committee members' required revisions directly to the student, copying the Thesis Office and the supervisor.

To submit the Certificate and Decision in myThesis:

Step 1: Access myThesis through the link provided in the myThesis notification you received. Enter your *mcgill.ca* login credentials (email and password). If you encounter issues, see this [IT support page](#).

When you see the page below, click on the name of the student:



McGill ID	Name	Program	Status	Status Date	My Role	Oral Defence Date
	Ashlynn Nizalin, Carlos Nazari	PhD Chemistry - T	Pass Pending Final	2023-09-08	PhD Dean	Thu Jun 01 2023
	Silke, Julia	PhD Chemistry - T	Pass Pending Oral	2023-09-14	PhD Dean	Thu May 25 2023



Step 2: Access the “Oral Defence Decision” Tab. Enter the decision. Upload the signed certificate; as the image below reflects, you upload the PDF, select File Type (Oral Defence Certificate), and Submit. You can opt to upload email confirmations here – in this case, select “Supplemental File Type” for any file that is not the Certificate.

Once these steps are taken, click Submit at the bottom of the page.

The screenshot shows a multi-step form for 'Oral Defence Decision'. At the top, a progress bar indicates the current step. The form includes sections for 'Student' information, 'Thesis Status', 'Oral Defence Decision' (with a 'Submit Oral Defence Certificate Template' button), 'Recommendation' (with a 'Select One' dropdown), 'File Name' and 'Type' fields, and a 'Declaration of Compliance' section. Red arrows point to the 'Upload File' button, the 'Submit Oral Defence Decision' button, and the 'Submit' button at the bottom right.

Click on the radio button to confirm the decision

Upload the signed Certificate.

Submit

The dialog box is titled 'Upload Oral Defence Certificate Files'. It contains instructions: 'The oral defence certificate must be one PDF file. Supplemental files may also be uploaded here'. Below this is a dashed box for file uploads with the text 'Drag and drop some files here, or click to select file'. A file named 'oral-defence-certificate.pdf' is shown with a 'File Type' dropdown set to 'Oral Defence Certificate' and a 'Remove' button. A green 'Submit' button is at the bottom right.

If you encounter issues, please contact thesis.gps@mcgill.ca

Thank you for your valuable contribution to graduate studies!



Appendix

FAQs

Does the Pro-Dean manage Zoom?

No. A member of the Oral Defence Committee will be the Zoom host. It is usually the Chair or the supervisor. The student and committee should have their videos on. The student should have their audio activated throughout the defence as well; you and the committee members should mute when appropriate. In exceptional cases where a committee member is experiencing bandwidth issues, they can be allowed to turn their camera off.

Are audiences allowed on Zoom?

We recommend a maximum of 5 audience members in the Zoom defence, to ensure that the Zoom hosting remains manageable and reduce the risk of affecting the integrity of the defence.

Should more audience members be requested, the student can either:

Hold an in-person or hybrid defence, or select an audience member who would be physically present in a room on campus, projecting their screen to a room for peers and faculty members who wish to watch the defence.

What should I do if a thesis does not appear to satisfy one or more required components?

We recommend you verify the thesis components sufficiently in advance of the oral defence. All theses must contain or conform to [requirements](#) presented on the GPS website. Note that the structure of mandatory components may vary based on disciplinary norms. If you are unfamiliar with such norms for a student's thesis, please contact the Chair of the oral defence committee for clarification. For instance, the literature review may be spread across individual thesis sections, or a bridging text may be called an 'interlude'.

If after speaking to the Chair you still have concerns about missing components, please contact the Thesis Office prior to the defence.