

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.)

About 2-4 weeks before the thesis is ready for initial submission, the supervisor should consult with his/her student and identify one or more potential examiners who are qualified to examine the thesis.

Once the potential examiner is decided upon, an academic from the Unit*, according to internal procedures, must determine the willingness of the examiners to serve prior to submission of the "Nomination of Examiners and Thesis Submission Form."

Initial contact can be made by phone or email, as deemed most efficient. However, it is usually best to discuss by phone at some point. First, the person contacting the examiner should make sure the individual is able to review the thesis within the required timeline.

Conflict of Interest Checklist

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

Otherwise, whoever contacts the potential examiner must review the checklist below and ensure that he/she does not answer "Yes" to any of the questions. (If there are 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 a doctoral or master's student 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 the thesis is expected to be ready for examination, and that the examiner is given 4 weeks to submit his/her assessment and, furthermore, 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 surprising to some examiners.)
7. Please explain that this time-consuming task is an important part of academic collegiality and McGill appreciates 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 the interaction with the potential examiner, the academic responsible for making contact should not discuss the quality of the student or thesis, since that could bias the review. If the contact persons is asked questions edging into these issues, he/she should explain that it is not appropriate for him/her 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.