

"Oral Exams in Medical Physics: A Student-centered Shift in Graduate Training"

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Purpose: Our university's Medical Physics M.Sc. prepares students for Canadian board certification through written and oral assessments. Despite the additional time and effort involved, oral exams remain part of the curriculum due to their perceived educational value. However, formal student feedback and comparative data from other programs are lacking. This study evaluates the benefits, student experience, and efficiency of oral exams in Medical Physics graduate education to address whether they should be *fostered and retained*.

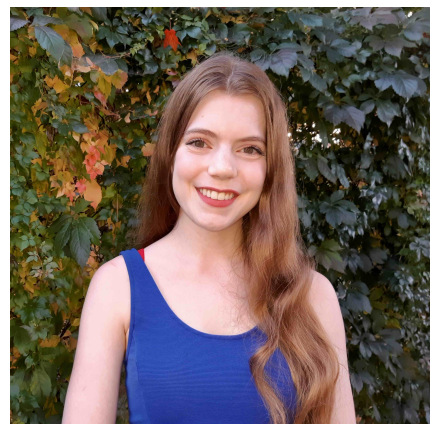
Methods: A three-component study was designed to evaluate graduate student experience and the effectiveness of oral exams. The components were: first, an *anonymous* retrospective institutional survey of current students as well as alumni who graduated between 1990 and 2025 assessing: *stress, language barriers, perceived effectiveness, and professional relevance*; second, an examination of the implementation of oral examinations across Canadian Medical Physics programs through a brief four-question survey sent to program directors; and finally, an exploration of whether national-level students in other Medical Physics graduate programs would like to benefit from oral exams. This third component of the research is presently under investigation.

Results: Preliminary institutional survey data were obtained from 40 alumni respondents (1990–2025). 70% said this was their first oral examination at university. All respondents stated that the oral exam added additional stress, and 55% stated that they ***definitely or to some extent enhanced*** their learning of the course material by doing the oral exam compared to the written exam only. Our preliminary results indicate that most respondents believed the oral exams helped them prepare for their professional pathway. Despite these preliminary results, according to our second component, only 4 out of 13 Canadian CAMPEP-accredited programs use oral exams in their coursework.

Conclusions: Oral exams, when supportive, fair, and feasible, improve communication skills valued by students. Our findings will guide instructors in designing educational evaluations thoughtfully.



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