

## Conflict of Interest Checklist: External Examiner

- 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)

# Examination of Theses Guidelines

## Evaluation of the Written Thesis

Examiners are asked to evaluate a thesis according to a number of criteria (as listed on the thesis report form), and to provide additional comments. The evaluations and comments provide useful feedback to the student and to the University.

Examiners are asked to provide an overall judgement of 'pass' or 'fail' ( Dean's Honour List awards to doctoral and master's students are no longer offered).

Examiners of a **doctoral thesis** are asked to provide:

### **If the overall judgement is 'PASS':**

1. Comments explaining the evaluation of the thesis including recommendations for minor revisions to be included in the final thesis;
2. A list of questions to be asked at the oral examination (External or other examiner who will not be at the oral defence).

### **If the judgement is 'FAIL'** (Note: at least one of the criteria evaluated must be graded unsatisfactory):

1. Comments explaining the evaluation including a detailed description of the shortcomings of the thesis requiring minor or major revisions;
2. On a separate page, itemized substantive issues that the examiner expects the student to address for the written thesis to receive a passing grade upon re-examination. The thesis will proceed to the oral defence only after a successful re-examination.

Examiners of a **Master's thesis** are asked to provide:

### **If the overall judgement is 'PASS':**

Comments explaining the evaluation including recommendations for improvement to be included in the final thesis.

### **If the judgement is 'FAIL'** (Note: at least one of the criteria evaluated must be graded unsatisfactory):

1. Comments explaining the evaluation including a detailed description of the shortcomings of the thesis requiring minor or major revision;
2. On a separate page, itemized substantive issues that the examiner expects the student to address for the thesis to receive a passing grade upon re-examination.

### **Pass**

If the thesis meets the general criteria for the degree sought (see above), as well as those listed on the examiner's report form, it should be awarded a 'pass', even if changes are recommended. A 'pass' should be awarded unless recommendations for revision require new study or experimentation or major revisions to the thesis stylistic or editorial changes, are not normally considered to be major, but if the quality of the presentation is poor and extensive rewriting is required, the thesis may be failed). Examiners are asked to

identify these changes clearly in their reports.

The supervisor or another designated person will ensure that the student corrects the thesis and it appropriately reflects the examiners' suggestions for revisions prior to the final deposition. In the case of a pass, the identity of the External Examiner will be released after the examination process is complete.

### **Fail**

If the thesis does not fulfill the above conditions and cannot be passed without substantive changes, it should be designated as a 'fail' and its shortcomings indicated in detail. If the written thesis is failed, it must be rated unsatisfactory in at least one of the review categories. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** If the thesis receives a judgement of 'fail' by either Internal or External Examiner, the student will not be able to graduate (master's student) or to proceed to the oral defence (doctoral student) (see also Thesis Failures). The candidate will normally revise and resubmit the thesis for re-assessment (usually within 6-18 months), usually by the same Examiner. The identity of the External Examiner is not released unless a passing grade has been given, in the case of a doctoral thesis, after the oral defence (see section Objectivity and Confidentiality). The Thesis Office will contact the initial examiner if and when review of the revised thesis is required to ascertain availability. In rare cases, a revised thesis may be sent to a new examiner if the first examiner is not available to serve, or the Dean (or Associate Dean) of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies is provided with convincing evidence of bias in the first evaluation. Regardless, a second failure will result in withdrawal of the student from the University unless the decision is reversed through a "challenge". The candidate may challenge any evaluation, and if the challenge is approved by the Thesis Challenge Sub-Committee of the Council of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, the thesis would be sent unchanged to two new examiners for a final verdict. Both examiners would have to pass the thesis. See below Thesis Failures.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The candidate will normally revise and resubmit the thesis for re-assessment, usually by the same examiner. The Thesis Office will contact the initial examiner if and when review of the revised thesis is required to ascertain availability.

### **Plagiarism**

In cases where plagiarism is suspected, the examiner is instructed to return the thesis and report the suspected plagiarism, citing sources of the original. In cases where plagiarism in the thesis is charged, thesis examination does not proceed and the case is investigated through University disciplinary process (see Section: Plagiarism).

Revised 22 June, 2011