



# **FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION**

## Procedures & Guidelines (virtual defence)

### **Role of the Chair**

The Chair is responsible for:

- ensuring that the Candidate is treated fairly;
- ensuring that the Candidate is given reasonable opportunity to defend the thesis; and,
- ensuring that the proceedings follow approved regulations.

### **Quorum**

- A minimum of four (4) voting members of the Final Oral Examination Committee must be present.
- When a quorum is not present, the Chair may delay the examination (until quorum is achieved) or must postpone it to another date.

### **Visitors**

The only visitors permitted to attend are:

- The Candidate's one invited guest.
- TST faculty members and registered TST graduate (AD) students.

### **Recording**

- The unauthorized use of any form of device to audiotape, photograph, video-record, or otherwise reproduce the doctoral exam is prohibited.

## GETTING STARTED

All members are asked to connect to the Zoom meeting 10 minutes in advance of the defence.

If the Examiners, Candidate and/or Chair lose video connection, they should rejoin the meeting as quickly as possible.

If an examiner who is not the current questioner experiences a dropped connection or persistent audio difficulty, the current round of questioning continues. The examiner should note their problem through the chat function to the GCTS staff moderator or via telephone. The examiner can request a summary of the missed conversation at the next suitable opportunity.

If more than one remote examiner is experiencing a dropped connection or persistent audio connection difficulties, the exam can be paused while the issue is addressed.

If the entire online portion of the meeting is cancelled/dropped (e.g., the host's connection is severed), all participants should attempt to re-log into the meeting. The GCTS will send an email if the problem cannot be remedied immediately.

### **Before and during the defence, the GCTS staff moderator**

- trouble-shoots any connection issues,
- provides the examiners and candidate a phone number for which the moderator can be reached throughout the examination (normally 416.978.2441),
- monitors the proceedings for potential questions or technical issues, and will alert the Chair via the chat function, as necessary,
- moves the student and any guests in and out of the Zoom "waiting room" during the *in camera* sessions.

### **When it is time to begin the defence**

- The Chair greets everyone.
- The Chair asks that the examiners "mute" their connection throughout the defence when they are not speaking or questioning the Candidate.
- The Chair asks the Candidate to confirm that they are alone in a secure room. No audio or video recording is permitted by the Candidate, defence committee examiners or guests.

- The Chair asks all present to confirm that they have a (charged) telephone available should they need to dial into the defence due to connection issues.
- The Chair asks that all participants place their phones on mute and exit any messenger services.
- The Chair confirms how long Examiners will be available for the defence, should technical issues require that the defence exceed the normal two-hour length.
- The Chair notes that during the in-camera sessions, the student and any guests will be placed into the Zoom “waiting room” by the GCTS staff moderator.
- The Chair indicates that the examination has commenced.
- The Chair invites the Candidate and Examiners to introduce themselves.

## **1<sup>st</sup> IN CAMERA SESSION**

### ***In camera meeting***

The Chair asks the GCTS staff moderator to move the Candidate and any guests to the Zoom waiting room. The Examiners remain present for all *in camera* sessions.

The Chair confirms that the examination report(s) have been given to all Examiners (including the External), and, where necessary, allows time for the Examiners to read the report(s).

The Chair determines the order of questioning and length of time for each Examiner. The defence typically lasts two (2) hours.

### **Typical Order of Questioning**

1. Thesis Supervisor
2. External Examiner
3. Supervisory Committee / Internal Examiner
4. Supervisory Committee Examiner
5. SGS Examiner (conjoint ThD/PhD/DMin); *or* TST Examiner  
(non-conjoint PhD)

### **Time-Limits for Examiners**

Two rounds of questioning are typically held:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Round – up to 15 minutes per Examiner
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Round – up to 5 minutes per Examiner

External Examiners are customarily allowed additional time. Individual Examiners may choose to forfeit their allotted time in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round.

## PUBLIC EXAMINATION

### The Examination

- The Chair asks the GCTS staff moderator to re-admit the Candidate and guests back to the meeting.
- As part of the Thesis Supervisor's 1<sup>st</sup> round of questions, the Supervisor invites the Candidate to summarize the research and conclusions of the thesis orally, in no more that fifteen (15) minutes.
- Two rounds of questioning continue, in the agreed-upon order.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> IN CAMERA SESSION

### The Evaluation of the Thesis and Defence

At the conclusion of the two rounds of questioning, the Chair:

- Asks the GCTS staff moderator to move the Candidate and guests to the Zoom waiting room.

The Chair then:

- reminds Examiners that the examination covers both the Thesis and the Candidate's oral defence.
- outlines the evaluation policies and voting procedures (*see next sections*).

## THE FINAL EVALUATION DECISIONS

The Final Oral Examination Committee must make **one** of five decisions about the Thesis and oral defence:

- (1) ACCEPTABLE IN ITS PRESENT FORM.** The Candidate passes with no conditions. The thesis is entirely acceptable as submitted, and the typescript is entirely free of typographical and stylistic errors, or so very nearly free that the Candidate can be entrusted with producing the library copy without further oversight.
- (2) ACCEPTABLE WITH EDITORIAL CORRECTIONS.** The Candidate passes with editorial corrections to the thesis being required (such as typographical errors, errors in punctuation, or problems in style). The corrections are to be completed within one month to the satisfaction of the Supervisor (i.e., the expertise of the Supervisor alone is sufficient to approve all corrections).
- (3) ACCEPTABLE WITH MINOR REVISIONS.** The Candidate passes with minor revisions to the thesis being required that are more than changes in style and less than major changes in the thesis (e.g., clarification of textual material or the qualification of research findings or conclusions). These are to be completed within three months to the unanimous satisfaction of a sub-committee of three examiners selected by and from the members of the examination committee. If they do not give their unanimous approval, the final oral examination must be reconvened within twelve months of the date of the original examination.
- (4) ADJOURNMENT.** Major (substantive) modifications are required to the thesis, and the examination is adjourned for no longer than one year. The same examiners (insofar as possible) will then be reconvened, and the revised thesis re-examined within one year of the first examination.
- (5) FAILURE.** The Thesis and Examination fails.

## VOTING RULES

### **Straw Poll – Informal Voting**

The Chair then solicits feedback on the thesis and its oral defence, following the same order as the questioning, according to the possible decisions (*see previous section*).

### **Rules for determining the outcome in a Final Oral Examination**

- Decisions (1), (2), (3) require either a unanimous vote of those present (and constituting a quorum for the examination) or not more than one negative vote or abstention.
- If the committee is unable to reach decision on (1) or (2) or (3) with either a unanimous vote or with not more than one negative vote or abstention, Adjournment is mandatory, unless a majority of those present vote in favour of (5).

### **Thesis corrections or modifications**

- In the event of Acceptable with Editorial Corrections, the Supervisor provides the Candidate with a written list of all the corrections required by the Examiners.
- In the event of Acceptable with Minor Revisions or Adjournment, the Supervisor provides the Candidate with a written summary list of the modifications to be required.
- The Candidate is given the examination report(s) at the end of the examination (*see the envelope in the Final Oral Examination Binder*). In some cases, the Candidate will already have received the examination report(s).

*(For Reconvened Exams Only)*

### **Rules for determining the outcome in a Reconvened Oral Examination**

- In the case of an adjourned or re-convened oral examination, the only three allowable votes are: (1) Acceptable in its Present Form; (2) Acceptable with Editorial Corrections; and (5) Failure.
- The Candidate passes if the decision of (1) or (2) is unanimous or if there is not more than one negative vote or abstention. The committee may not vote to adjourn and re-examine a re-examined thesis.

## EXAMINATION DOCUMENTATION

### Examiners' Ballots

- The Chair asks each Examiner to complete and submit a signed voting ballot indicating his/her evaluation of the thesis and oral examination to [gcts.office@utoronto.ca](mailto:gcts.office@utoronto.ca). Examiners who are unable to use the ballot may certify their vote via email.
- The External Examiner does not need to submit a ballot. The Chair simply attests the External Examiner's vote on the Chair Summary Report form.

### Chair's *Testamur*

- At the conclusion of the defence, the Chair shall complete two forms testifying to the result of the thesis examination (the Chair Summary Report and the Final Oral Exam Report) sent in the *Chairing Documents* email) and send them (or scans/photographs) by email to [gcts.office@utoronto.ca](mailto:gcts.office@utoronto.ca).

## OUTCOME PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED

### Report of Evaluation

The Chair then invites the Candidate and visitors to return and reports the outcome of the committee's deliberations.

**The examination is considered finished.**

## POST DEFENCE

Following the defence, the Chair or GCTS staff moderator may inquire if the student wishes to have a group photo taken. The student and all examiners who wish to participate will be asked to verbally confirm their permission to have their photo posted to TST social media.

In some cases, it may be possible for the Zoom meeting to be continued should the examiners and student wish to converse further. Such a continuation will not be moderated by GCTS staff.

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