

School of Library and Information Studies
University of Alberta

Procedures for Final Oral Examination
(MLIS & MLIS/Humanities Computing)

April 2017

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe procedure to be followed during the Master of Library and Information Studies (MLIS) and Master of Library and Information Studies/Humanities Computing Oral Final Examinations in the School of Library and Information Studies.

General Remarks about Oral Examinations

Oral examinations consist of three parts:

- a. 15 to 20 minutes seminar by the student, summarizing his/her thesis work
- b. a question period by the examiners
- c. a deliberation period

Duties of the Chair of the Examining Committee

The Chair is responsible for good conduct of the exam and for reporting the examination result to the School's graduate student services office. The Chair may or may not be one of the examiners. When not one of the examiners, the Chair will not ask questions to the candidate and will not take part in assessing the student. It is recommended that the Chair not be one of the examiners.

The following examination procedure should be followed:

- Before the exam starts, ensure that all examiners are present.
- Introduce the members of the examining committee and the student to one another.
- Declare the beginning of the exam. State the purpose of the exam. The chair may say:

“It is the purpose of this committee to conduct an oral examination designed to test the student's knowledge of the thesis subject and related fields”.

- Summarize the procedure (as described in the remainder of this document).
- Review the student's record and CV and ensure that all FGSR and SLIS degree requirements have been met. The student's file must be made available to the examining committee members for perusal.
- Ask the student to give a seminar presentation on the thesis work. Emphasize what the length of the presentation should be between 15 and 20 minutes. If necessary, give the student a warning and interrupt the seminar if the time limit is exceeded.
- Establish the order in which questions will be asked. Start with the external examiner (if the external is present during a Ph.D. final exam) and continue with the examiner from outside the School, School's representatives, supervisory committee member(s), and finally the supervisor(s).
- Start the first round of questions with the external examiner, ending with the supervisor(s). Allow about 10 to 15 minutes per examiner. Proceed with a second round of questions if necessary.
- Ask the examiners if they have any final questions or comments.
- Invite the student to make a final statement.
- Ask the candidate to leave the room and initiate the closed-door deliberation period.

The Outcome of the Examination

To decide the outcome of the examination, and in the same order used during the question period, ask each examiner to:

- (1) Provide his/her comments with respect to a) the oral defense, and b) the written thesis.
- (2) Ask each member of the committee if:
 - (i) the student should **pass** the examination.
 - (ii) the student should **pass subject to revisions**
 - (iii) the examination should be **adjourned**
 - (iv) the student should **fail** the examination

The circumstances in which these four possible outcomes should be used, as well as actions to follow in each case are outlined below:

Pass: All or all but one of the examiners must agree to an outcome of Pass. If the student passes the examination, the department should submit a completed [Thesis Approval/Program Completion form](#) to the FGSR. If one of the examiners fails the student, that examiner does not have to sign this form.

Pass subject to revisions: All or all but one of the examiners must agree to an outcome of Pass subject to revisions. The student has satisfactorily defended the thesis but the revisions to the thesis are sufficiently minor that it will not require a reconvening of the examining committee.

If the examining committee agrees to a "Pass subject to revisions" for the student, the chair of the examining committee must provide in writing, within five working days of the examination, to the Dean, FGSR, the graduate coordinator and the student:

- the reasons for this outcome,
- the details of the required revisions,
- the approval mechanism for meeting the requirement for revisions (e.g., approval of the examining committee chair or supervisor, or approval of the entire examining committee, or select members of the committee), and
- the supervision and assistance the student can expect to receive from committee members.

The student must make the revisions within six months of the date of the final examination. Once the required revisions have been made and approved, the department shall submit a completed [Thesis Approval/Program Completion form](#) to the FGSR indicating "pass subject to revisions". If one of the examiners fails the student that examiner does not have to sign the form. If the required revisions have not been made and approved by the end of the six months deadline, the outcome of the examination is a Fail.

Adjourned: An adjourned examination is one that has been abandoned officially. A majority of examiners must agree to an outcome of Adjourned. The final examination should be adjourned in the following situations:

- The revisions to the thesis are sufficiently substantial that it will require further research or experimentation or major reworking of sections, or if the committee is so dissatisfied with the general presentation of the thesis that it will require a reconvening of the examining committee. In such circumstances the committee cannot pass the student, and must adjourn the examination.
- The committee is dissatisfied with the student's oral presentation and defence of the thesis, even if the thesis itself is acceptable with or without minor revisions.
- Compelling, extraordinary circumstances such as a sudden medical emergency taking place during the examination.
- Discovery of possible offences under the Code of Student Behaviour after the examination has started.

If the examination is adjourned, the committee should:

- Specify in writing to the student, with as much precision as possible, the nature of the deficiencies and, in the case of revisions to the thesis, the extent of the revisions required. Where the oral defence is unsatisfactory, it may be necessary to arrange some discussion periods with the student prior to reconvening the examination.
- Decide upon a date to reconvene. If the date of the reconvened examination depends upon the completion of a research task or a series of discussions, it should be made clear which committee members will decide on the appropriate date to reconvene. This new examination must be held within six months of the initial examination.
- Make it clear to the student what will be required by way of approval before the examination is reconvened (e.g., approval of the committee chair or supervisor, approval of the entire committee, or of select members of the committee).
- Specify the supervision and assistance the student may expect from the committee members in meeting the necessary revisions.
- Advise the Dean, FGSR, in writing of the adjournment and the conditions.
- When the date is set for the adjourned final examination, the department will notify the FGSR. Normally a Pro Dean attends the examination.

Fail: All or all but one of the examiners must agree to an outcome of Fail. If the examination result is a Fail, no member of the examining committee signs the Thesis Approval/Completion form.

When the outcome is a Fail, the committee chair will provide the reasons for this decision to the department. The department will then provide this report, together with its recommendation for the student's program, to the Dean, FGSR, and to the student.

An Associate Dean, FGSR will normally arrange to meet with the student, the graduate coordinator, and others if needed, before acting upon any departmental recommendation that affects the student's academic standing.

Closing Remarks

When the committee has reached a verdict, re-admit the student and explain the decision of the committee.

- If a student has passed with minor revisions, ask the committee members if they wish to sign the bond paper acceptance sheets at this time or, if appropriate, if they wish to see the thesis after the modifications have been completed.
- The supervisor's signature is normally withheld pending completion of all corrections.
- The committee chair shall not sign, unless he/she is also one of the examiners.
- If the external examiner is present during the exam, he/she shall sign the thesis along with the other examiners.
- When the external examiner does not attend the exam, the external's name will be printed on the signature page, and the chair of the examining committee will initial the external's signature line.
- If more than one person attends the exam via teleconference, the School will find a signing authority for the second person.