
The following Motions and Documents were considered by the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment at its Wednesday, April 26, 2023 meeting:

Agenda Title: **Revised UAPPOL Student Input to the Evaluation of Teaching and Learning Procedure**

CARRIED MOTION:

THAT the Committee on the Learning Environment approve the proposed revisions to the UAPPOL Student Input to the Evaluation of Teaching and Learning, as set forth in Attachment 1 to take effect July 1, 2023.

FINAL Item 4.

Agenda Title: **FGSR Graduate Exam Committee Membership**

CARRIED MOTION:

THAT CLE recommend that GFC approve the changes to the Committee Membership policies for Graduate Examinations, as amended, for implementation as of September 1, 2023, and inclusion in the next Calendar.

FINAL Item 9.



ITEM NO. 4

Decision **Discussion** **Information**

ITEM OBJECTIVE: The proposal is before the committee to seek approval of the necessary revisions to the Student Input to the Evaluation of Teaching and Learning Procedure under the Teaching, Learning and Evaluation Policy suite.

DATE	April 26, 2023
TO	GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO	Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

MOTION: THAT the Committee on the Learning Environment approve the proposed revisions to the UAPPOL Student Input to the Evaluation of Teaching and Learning, as set forth in Attachment 1 to take effect July 1, 2023.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Overview

Along with the updating of the student survey questions there is a concurrent opportunity to revise and refresh the approaches to reporting the responses to the SPOT questions. CLE has the authority to make these changes, following appropriate consultations with the stakeholders, which has now been done. The Centre for Research in Applied Measurement and Evaluation (CRAME) in the Faculty of Education conducted a pilot in the Fall 2022. In the future, there may be other approaches that CLE may wish to explore bearing in mind that one of the purposes of these reports is instructors' annual reporting.

Relevant sections of the University of Alberta and the Association of the Academic Staff of the University of Alberta (AASUA) Collective Agreement must be considered for annual reporting purposes, and they have been considered in the development of the revised Procedure as set forth in Attachment 1.

There are two key uses for the results from the SPOT survey:

1. Formative*—for development as an instructor, and
2. Summative—for annual review processes (i.e., summary of the SPOT surveys shared with Chair/FEC).

**Formative results (in form of a data table) are generally available soon after grades are submitted*

The new SPOT questions are tied to two aspects of the Framework for Effective Teaching:

1. Course Design - constructive organization of course objectives, resources, assignments, and assessments
2. Instructional Practices - teaching preparation, methods, and approaches to facilitate learning

GOVERNANCE OUTLINE



ITEM NO. 4

Multifaceted evaluation of teaching is required for feedback about the remaining aspects of the Framework:

3. Expertise, Content and Outcomes - what students are expected to learn as well as the expertise that instructors require to facilitate this learning
4. Learning Environment - physical and virtual support systems
5. Reflection, Growth and Leadership

Timeline and Next Steps

- July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023 | **SPOT–USRI Qs** | Implementation and administration of **July 2022 Appendix A: Student Perspectives of Teaching (SPOT) Survey** (USRI Q's)
- July 1, 2023, onwards | **SPOT–6 Domains/18Q** | Implementation and administration of **Revised July 2023 Appendix A: Student Perspectives of Teaching (SPOT) Survey**
- Fall 2023 | FEC–SPOT (USRI Qs) | **current July 2022 Appendix A: Student Perspectives of Teaching (SPOT) Survey** results eligible for consideration at FECs
- Fall 2024 | FEC–SPOT (6D) | **Revised July 2023 Appendix A: Student Perspectives of Teaching (SPOT) Survey** results eligible for consideration at FECs

For the purposes of promotion and tenure, a combination of USRIs, SPOT (USRI Qs) and SPOT 6 domains will be used for a number of years.

The Office of the Provost along with members of Faculty Relations will continue to work closely with and inform key stakeholders on campus during this period of transition leading into implementation of the revised Procedure.

Legislation that is being relied upon

- Post-Secondary Learning Act
- GFC CLE Terms of Reference
- UAPPOL Teaching, Learning and Evaluation Policy
- UAPPOL Student Input to the Evaluation of Teaching and Learning Procedure
- UAPPOL Appendix A: Student Perspectives of Teaching (SPOT) Survey

Supporting Materials:

Attachments

1. [UAPPOL Student Input to the Evaluation of Teaching and Learning Procedure \(FINAL April 26, 2023\)](#)

Background information/relevant reference documents

1. [UAPPOL Student Input to the Evaluation of Teaching and Learning Procedure \(March 2022\)](#)
2. [CRAME SPOT Validation Summary \(January 2023\)](#)
3. [University of Alberta and the Association of the Academic Staff of the University of Alberta \(AASUA\) 2020 - 2024 Collective Agreement](#)

SCHEDULE A:

Engagement and Routing



Consultation and Stakeholder Participation / Approval Route

Those who are actively participating:

- GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
- Faculty Relations, Office of the Provost

Those who have been consulted:

- AASUA
- Instructors
- Statutory Deans' Council
- Chairs' Council
- Students' Union
- Graduate Students' Association
- Centre for Teaching and Learning

Approval Route:

GFC Committee on the Learning Environment - *for approval* - April 26, 2023

Supplementary Notes / Context:

FINAL April 26, 2023
Original Approval Date:
Effective Date: July 1, 2023
Parent Policy: Teaching, Learning and Evaluation Policy

Student Input to the Evaluation of Teaching and Learning Procedure

Office of Administrative Responsibility:	Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Approver:	Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)
Scope:	Compliance with this University policy extends to all Academic Staff and Colleagues and Support Staff as outlined and defined in Recruitment Policy (Appendix A and Appendix B: Definitions and Categories) in addition to visiting speakers, professor emeriti, and undergraduate and graduate students.

Overview

Evaluation of teaching and learning at the University of Alberta will be multifaceted. Evidence to support a multifaceted approach to the evaluation of teaching and learning will include input from students on **courses**, **instructors**, and the **learning environment** through surveys and commentary.

Student input will be received through a standardized University survey approved by General Faculties Council that will be designed to obtain the students' perspectives on their experiences of teaching. Additional input may be received through customized surveys designed by the University, individual instructors, Departments, and/ or Faculties.

Purpose

The following establishes the procedures for the collection and appropriate dissemination of student input to the multifaceted evaluation of teaching and learning at the University.

PROCEDURE

1. Student contributions to the evaluation of teaching and learning at the University will be obtained through the following systems administered electronically by the University's Test Scoring & Questionnaire Services unit ([TSQS](#)):
 - a. The University course survey system, known as the Student Perspectives of Teaching ([SPOT](#)), that will be comprised of:
 - i. A set of standard questions as determined by the Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) and published in the Teaching and Learning Evaluation Policy (Appendix A) SPOT Questions; and,

- ii. For each **domain (Design; Utility of Course Resources; Graded Work; Course Delivery; Instructional Approach; Class Climate)**, a text field to allow students to provide focused, written comments to explain their selection.
 - b. Within the SPOT system, there will be a set of standard questions as determined by the CLE to obtain input from those students who have withdrawn from the course.
 - c. Within the SPOT system, Instructors, Departments and/or Faculties are strongly encouraged to supplement these standard questions with customized questions of their own choosing.
 - d. Utilizing the systems administered by TSQS, Instructors, Departments and/or Faculties may supplement the SPOT survey with additional surveys using questions designed or chosen from available TSQS option:
 - i. [Midterm Course and Instruction Feedback Survey](#) (midterm survey) that allows for customized forms seeking midterm course and instructional feedback from students; and/or,
 - ii. Additional customized surveys as appropriate.
2. The SPOT survey will use the following 5 response categories:
 - a. *I strongly disagree (SD);*
 - b. *I disagree (D);*
 - c. *I neither agree nor disagree (N);*
 - d. *I agree (A); and*
 - e. *I strongly agree (SA).*
3. The SPOT survey will be used each time that a course is offered, but will be modified in the following circumstances:
 - a. When there are multiple instructors;
 - b. When there are fewer than 10 registered students; or,
 - c. When there is an individual/independent nature such as independent study courses, special research projects, the culminating exercise for a program, music studios, etc.
4. Courses with multiple instructors will use a modified set of SPOT survey questions that will include:
 - a. One set of questions related to course design and instructional practice for the entire course; and,
 - b. One set of questions related to each instructor who has taught the equivalent of 20% or more of the course. If no instructor is responsible for at least 20% of the course, only entire course-related questions will be used on the survey.
5. Methods of obtaining student input for courses with fewer than 10 registered students may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. The use of surveys with non-scored questions, such as:
 - i. *Which aspects of the course do you like the best?*
 - ii. *Which aspects of the course do you like the least?*
 - iii. *How can I (the instructor) improve the teaching of this course?*
 - b. Combinations of several courses with fewer than 10 registered students taught by the same instructor and/or courses in one classroom but with multiple section numbers taught by the same instructor;
 - c. Interviews of students by the Chair or delegate; and,
 - d. Interviews of the instructor by the Chair or a delegate.
6. Subject to section 8 below, the anonymity of student responses in the SPOT survey is of fundamental importance in maintaining student confidentiality and encouraging the free expression of views in accordance with the University's [Statement on Freedom of Expression](#).
7. In order to maintain anonymity, TSQS ensures that:
 - a. Students cannot be identified through the survey methods unless they self-identify;
 - b. ID/usernames are not included on the survey results; and,

- c. Students must log in for verification that they have taken, partially taken or not taken some or all of the survey, and answers are completely separate from this verification.
8. Under normal circumstances, the anonymity of students will be protected. The SPOT and optional midterm and other surveys offer avenues of feedback, including that which may be critical of instructors. A potential feature of criticism may be comments that could be perceived as offensive and/or unjustified. Such comments would not justify a departure from the normal rules pertaining to confidentiality and anonymity.

However, the University has a parallel duty to protect the safety (physical or mental) of members of the University community. If a Department Chair, or Associate Dean, has concerns for the safety of instructors, staff or students, arising from statements that are part of SPOT or the optional survey responses, they will consult with the Dean of the Faculty. If the Dean believes that there is a valid concern for safety, they may recommend to the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) that the identity of the author of the statements be sought out and disclosed to the appropriate University officials. At any time during this process, the Chair or Dean may invoke:

- Procedures within the [Code of Student Behaviour](#) (the Code) and/or,
- The [Protocol for Urgent Cases of Disruptive, Threatening or Violent Conduct](#). (the Protocol)

On receiving such a request from a Dean, the Provost will follow the terms of the Code and/or the Protocol in determining whether there is: i.) reasonable cause to believe that the safety or security (including significant psychological harm) of persons may be threatened and ii.) that under existing University policies, the statements are grounds for disciplinary action and hence whether the confidentiality of SPOT or the optional survey responses should be breached and the provisions of the Code and/or the Protocol invoked.

If the identity of the author is disclosed, the Provost will notify the author of the statements. The Provost will also notify any individuals mentioned in the statements. Timelines will be determined following the assessment of the nature of the statements and the potential threat, immediate or otherwise, to the individuals involved.

9. Communications to inform and encourage completion of the SPOT survey, withdrawn students survey, and optional surveys will include statements as illustrated below:
 1. *YOUR VOICE MATTERS - For this survey to be as comprehensive as possible, the University of Alberta would appreciate receiving your input. The results are used as one component of a multi-faceted approach to the evaluation of teaching and learning, therefore, they contribute to your instructor's self-reflection and evaluation. They also help initiate change in curriculum and instruction.*
 2. *CIVILITY AND RESPECT - These are shared norms in our work and learning environment and we encourage a healthy exchange of ideas and perspectives. Feedback should be provided in a manner that reflects our commitment to collegiality and inclusivity, while acknowledging that we all have unique and particular needs within this environment.*
 3. *BIAS AWARENESS - Please be aware of biases that you may hold and make an effort to resist stereotypes about particular identities and groups of people (related to perceived race, gender, age, religion, ability, sexual orientation, and/or ethnicity of the instructor).*
 4. *WHAT WE WANT TO HEAR - Please provide specific feedback on your experience in the comment section as appropriate for each question. The most helpful feedback is actionable, thoughtful, and concrete. Focus on your experiences with assignments, textbooks, and other instructional materials and not on personal characteristics such as the course instructor's appearance or speaking style.*
 5. *ANONYMITY - The survey will be accessible only by CCID and students' anonymity will be protected. Summary results will be made available to instructors only after grades are finalized. If you are concerned about the anonymity of any typewritten comments, those may be provided directly to the Chair, Director or Dean noting the course number, section and*

name of the instructor. Please be aware, however, that the University may be required to intervene based upon assessment of potentially threatening or harmful comments.

6. **ABOUT THE RESULTS** - *The numerical SPOT Report for the standard questions listed below will be available to you as well as the Students' Union and the Graduate Students' Association for the sole purpose of providing information for future course selections.*
 7. **QUESTIONS** - *Should be addressed to students@ualberta.ca.*
 10. Access to the SPOT survey and the withdrawn students survey, along with any supplemental instructor and/or Department/Faculty questions will normally be available beginning two weeks prior to the last day of classes until 2 days past the last day of classes providing there are no final examinations scheduled in this 2-day period.
 11. The Instructor will:
 - a. provide at least 15 minutes of class time for completion of the SPOT survey during the 2-week period prior to the last day of classes, and:
 - b. Will not be present during the provided class time.
 12. Methods to increase the response rates of the SPOT survey may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. Internal communications from Deans, Chairs, and Directors to Instructors and students in addition to the University communications;
 - b. Instructors may include the completion of the SPOT survey as a course activity or objective;
 - c. Instructors may inform students of the formative nature of their perspectives on teaching by:
 - i. Discussing the importance of student input; and by
 - ii. Providing examples to students of how they have responded to previous student input.
 13. SPOT survey results are reported using an appropriate instrument as determined by CLE and in compliance with the Collective Agreement.
 14. The UASPOT Survey Report consists of one page generated for each course from which student surveys have been collected and is comprised of:
 - a. The text of each of the standard questions as determined by CLE; and
 - b. For each of the 6 domains, the number of student responses in each of the 5 response categories (SD, D, N, A, SA) and the number of responses in each category.
 15. The UASPOT Survey Report, the results from the standard questions, as well as the results for the Instructor/Department/Faculty supplemental questions, and student comments for all questions, will be provided to Instructors for their courses within 20 working days of course completion.
 16. The UASPOT Survey Report as well as the results from the Department/Faculty supplemental questions, and student comments for all questions, will be provided to Deans, Chairs and Directors within 20 working days of the course completion.
 17. The UASPOT Survey Report will be provided to students at least 10 days after the date that the Instructor has received their results.
 18. The UASPOT Survey Report will be provided to Faculty Evaluations Committees and Academic Teaching Staff Evaluation Committees for their consideration in the multifaceted evaluation of teaching.
- [Note that the previous table 15 has been removed and the information (work in progress) will be included within clauses 15-18 above]**
19. The UASPOT Survey Report will include the following statement:

Student surveys are an important part of providing feedback about their perspectives of teaching, but cannot be taken in isolation as a complete evaluation of a course or instructor. Factors outside of an instructor's control may influence the results. These factors include, but are not limited to:

- a. completion rate of the survey;
- b. class size, class level, the Faculty and program in which the course is developed, timing of the class, delivery mode, required versus optional course, accredited program requirements, practicum or clinical contexts, grade expectations, student GPA, age of both students and instructors; and,
- c. perceived race, gender, age, religion, ability, sexual orientation, and/or ethnicity of the instructor.

Small differences in results should not be considered meaningful. Results will be interpreted using the defined scale: Strongly Disagree (SD); Disagree (D); Neither Agree nor Disagree (N); Agree (A); and, Strongly Agree (SA).

DEFINITIONS

Definitions should be listed in the sequence they occur in the document (i.e. not alphabetical).

Any definitions listed in the following table apply to this document only with no implied or intended institution-wide use. [▲Top]	
Instructors	Includes Academic Faculty, Faculty Service Officers, Academic Teaching Staff and Excluded Academic Administrators, Academic Colleagues, Postdoctoral Fellows and Graduate Students.
Course	Includes undergraduate and graduate courses, laboratory courses, non-degree courses, seminars, clinical supervision courses, and reading or directed study courses.
Learning Environment	Physical and virtual support systems: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. suitability of physical and virtual environments and use of education technology; b. availability of teaching assistants, accessibility accommodations and other supports; and, c. scheduling of course meeting times and/or online module availability.

FORMS

Should a link fail, please contact uappol@ualberta.ca. [[▲Top](#)]

No Forms for this Procedure.

If this section is used, list hyperlinks to all forms for this procedure in alphabetical order.

RELATED LINKS

Should a link fail, please contact uappol@ualberta.ca. [[▲Top](#)]

List any related links in alphabetical order. Try to link to lead sites that will remain current (eg: the Government of Alberta's Queen's Printer main page).

Related Links for this Procedure are within the document.

**Governance Executive Summary
Action Item**

Agenda Title	FGSR Graduate Exam Committee Membership
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Motion

THAT CLE approve the changes to the Committee Membership Changes for Graduate Examinations, as amended, for implementation upon final approval and inclusion in the next Calendar.

Item

Action Requested	X Approval <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendation
Proposed by	Roger Epp, Interim Vice-Provost and Dean, FGSR
Presenter(s)	Micah True, Associate Dean, FGSR Roger Epp, Interim Vice-Provost and Dean, FGSR

Details

Office of Administrative Responsibility	Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
The Purpose of the Proposal is <i>(please be specific)</i>	The proposal is before the committee because FGSR is proposing changes to the Committee Membership policies for Graduate Examinations section of the calendar.
Executive Summary <i>(outline the specific item – and remember your audience)</i>	<p>These changes provide clarity and transparency for graduate supervisors, students, administrators, and faculty members on policies surrounding Graduate Exams, especially the membership and composition of examining committees.</p> <p>While the previous proposal (2021) included changes to processes (where responsibilities for certain tasks reside), this version includes only policy changes. It does not propose any change in relation to where responsibilities currently reside.</p> <p>The major proposed changes are outlined below, including how they differ from previous versions discussed in various forums over the last year and a half:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current examiner categories are more like attributes, and a single category often applies to more than one examiner whose roles in the exam are not the same. The proposed categories more clearly apply to specific roles in an exam, and include the addition of a Specialized Knowledge Examiner (ie. medical practitioners, Indigenous elders, industry experts). • Whereas the size of examining committees is currently defined by a fixed range, we propose defining it by roles: ex officio + a certain number of other examiners, depending on the kind of exam. This will reduce the occurrence of large examining committees, which pose a number of challenges to students and faculty members alike. Since the previous version, language has been added to permit the appointment of an external examiner for the candidacy exam when the supervisor deems it necessary. • The current calendar language about associations that preclude the selection of a person as External Examiner is vague, and FGSR

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	<p>receives many questions about this. In the interest of clarity and transparency, this proposal includes a list of associations that are currently considered disqualifying. Note that the word “normally” has been added since the previous version, to signal that it will be possible to request an exception in unusual circumstances.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The proposal includes the elimination of the role of external reader as an equivalent to the external examiner, but preserves the option for an examiner to participate in this fashion when attendance at the exam (whether in-person or virtual) is truly impossible. ● Currently the calendar says little about what happens when a negative report is received from the external examiner. The proposal includes a clear set of steps to follow in this situation that balance the student's right to defend their work with the importance of taking seriously the feedback of an external examiner. Since the previous version, language has been added to indicate that the Dean of FGSR can allow an exam to proceed despite a negative report from an external examiner. <p>Additional less major changes are also included in the calendar draft.</p>
Supplementary Notes and context	<i><This section is for use by University Governance only to outline governance process.></i>

Engagement and Routing (Include meeting dates)

<p>Consultation and Stakeholder Participation (parties who have seen the proposal and in what capacity)</p> <p><For information on the protocol see the Governance Resources section Student Participation Protocol></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Various bodies as part of a larger package of proposed changes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Working Group: (Meetings: Nov. 1, 2021; Nov. 22, 2021; Jan. 17, 2022) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Micah True (Chair - Associate Dean, FGSR) ■ Adam Gaudry (Native Studies) ■ Ana Sharma (FGSR) ■ Anita Green (Nursing - Graduate Advisor) ■ Craig Heinke (Physics) ■ Kylie Heales (Business - PhD Student) ■ Mark Simpson (English & Film Studies) ■ Morris Flynn (Mechanical Eng) ■ Sujata Persad (FoMD) ■ Trish Manns (Rehab Med) ○ GPST - February 28, 2022 ○ PRC - March 9, 2022 ○ PRC - April 6, 2022 (Discussion on process) ○ GEFAC - April 7, 2022 ○ FGSR Council - March 30, 2022 (Distributed, no discussion) ○ FGSR Council - April 27, 2022 (Discussion) ○ GEFAC- May 5, 2022 ○ PRC- May 11, 2022 ○ FGSR Council- May 25, 2022 (brief update, no discussion) ○ GSA council- June 20, 2022 ● In present form: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Associate Deans-Education of the three colleges - Jan. 9, 2023
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ College of Social Sciences and Humanities Associate Dean-Education and Associate Deans-Graduate of the Faculties within CSSH - Jan. 23, 2023. ○ College of Natural and Applied Sciences Associate Dean-Education, Associate Deans-Graduate of the Faculties within CNAS, and Associate Deans-Graduate of the standalone Faculties - Jan. 23, 2023. ○ College of Health Sciences Associate Dean-Education and Associate Deans-Graduate of the Faculties within CHS - Jan. 31, 2023. ○ Policy Review Committee - February 16, 2023 ○ Graduate Program Support Team - February 27, 2023 ○ FGSR Council - March 8, 2023 ○ CLE - March 29, 2023
Approval Route (Governance) (including meeting dates)	Approval Pathway: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Graduate Program Support Team - March 27, 2023 ● Policy Review Committee - April 6, 2023 ● FGSR Council: April 26, 2023 ● CLE - potential e-vote

Strategic Alignment

Alignment with <i>For the Public Good</i>	21. OBJECTIVE Encourage continuous improvement in administrative, governance, planning, and stewardship systems, procedures, and policies that enable students, faculty, staff, and the institution as a whole to achieve shared strategic goals.			
Alignment with Core Risk Area	Please note below the specific institutional risk(s) this proposal is addressing. <table border="1" data-bbox="492 1203 1503 1386" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Enrolment Management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Faculty and Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Funding and Resource Management <input type="checkbox"/> IT Services, Software and Hardware <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership and Change <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Infrastructure </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationship with Stakeholders <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reputation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research Enterprise <input type="checkbox"/> Safety <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Student Success </td> </tr> </table>		<input type="checkbox"/> Enrolment Management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Faculty and Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Funding and Resource Management <input type="checkbox"/> IT Services, Software and Hardware <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership and Change <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Infrastructure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationship with Stakeholders <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reputation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research Enterprise <input type="checkbox"/> Safety <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Student Success
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Legislative Compliance and jurisdiction	Post-Secondary Learning Act UofA Calendar General Faculties Council Faculty of Graduate Studies & Research			

Attachments:

1. FGSR Exam Changes: Exam_committee_membership_with minor amendments

Prepared by: Micah True (Associate Dean, FGSR) - ascdean4@ualberta.ca



2023-2024 University of Alberta Proposed Calendar
Graduate Program Changes:

CURRENT	PROPOSED
<p>The Role and Structure of Examining Committees</p> <p>Formal examining committees are required for thesis-based master's final examination, doctoral candidacy examinations, and doctoral final examinations. Members of these examining committees perform two functions: 1) they bring knowledge and expertise to the assessment of the thesis, and 2) they ensure that the University's expectations are met regarding the conduct of the examination, adherence to all relevant policies, and the suitability of the thesis for the degree.</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>Examiners</p> <p>Examiners are full voting members of the examining committee. All examiners must be either active in the general subject area of the student's research or bring relevant expertise to the assessment of the thesis.</p> <p>Categories of Examiners and Eligibility</p> <p>There are four types of examiners: ex-officio examiner, arm's length examiner, University of Alberta examiner and External examiner.</p>	<p>The Role and Structure of Examining Committees</p> <p>Formal examining committees are required for thesis-based master's final examination, doctoral candidacy examinations, and doctoral final examinations. Members of these examining committees perform two functions: 1) they bring knowledge and expertise to the assessment of the thesis, and 2) they ensure that the University's expectations are met regarding the conduct of the examination, adherence to all relevant policies, and the suitability of the thesis for the degree.</p> <p>The University of Alberta is committed to equity, diversity and inclusivity. To the extent possible, academic units should intentionally constitute examination committees that are diverse and inclusive.</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>Examiners</p> <p>Examiners are full voting members of the examining committee. All examiners must be either active in the general subject area of the student's research or bring relevant expertise to the assessment of the thesis.</p> <p>Categories of Examiners and Eligibility</p>

Ex-officio Examiners

The supervisor(s) and, ~~for doctoral students, the other members of the student's~~ supervisory committee are ex-officio members of the examining committee.

By definition, no individual can be both an ex-officio and **an arm's length** examiner on the same examining committee.

Arm's Length Examiners

An **arm's length** examiner is knowledgeable in the field and comes fresh to the examination. They must not be (or have been) a member of the supervisory committee, or have been connected with the thesis research in a **significant** way. The examiner should not have been associated with the student, outside of usual contact in courses or other non-thesis activities within the University, nor be related to the student or supervisor(s).

The arm's length examiners should not be a former supervisor or student of the supervisor(s).

Except in special circumstances (fully justified in writing to the Dean of the department's Faculty), **an arm's length** examiner should not be an active collaborator of the supervisor(s) (see **Conflict of Interest Guidelines** below).

Arm's length examiners who have served on a student's candidacy examination committee ~~do not lose their arm's length status as a result~~, and are eligible to serve as arm's length examiners on the student's doctoral final examination if the other conditions of being **arm's length** remain unchanged.

There are four types of examiners: ex-officio examiner, **university examiner**, **specialized knowledge examiner**, and **external examiner**.

Ex-officio Examiners

The supervisor(s) and supervisory committee **members** are ex-officio members of the examining committee.

By definition, no individual can be both an ex-officio and **any other kind of** examiner on the same examining committee.

University Examiner

A **university examiner** is **a member of the University of Alberta community who is** knowledgeable in the field and comes fresh to the examination. They must not be (or have been) a member of the supervisory committee, or have been connected with the thesis research in a **significant** way. The examiner should not have been associated with the student, outside of usual contact in courses or other non-thesis activities within the University, nor be related to the student or supervisor(s). **Eligible University of Alberta community members include current or retired Academic Staff members, Academic Colleagues, Postdoctoral Fellows, or Executive Members/Academic Administrators who will be appointed or re-appointed as Academic Faculty members on the conclusion of their term (current or retired categories A, B, C, D, and E, as defined in the [University of Alberta's Recruitment Policy \(Appendix A\)](#) Definition and Categories of Academic Staff and Colleagues)**

A university examiner should not be a former supervisor or student of the supervisor(s).

Except in special circumstances (fully justified in writing to the Dean of the department's Faculty), a **university examiner** should not be an active collaborator of the supervisor(s) (see **Conflict of Interest Guidelines** below).

University examiners who have served on a student's candidacy examination committee are eligible to serve on the student's doctoral final

<p>External Examiner</p> <p>An external examiner from outside the University of Alberta is required for doctoral thesis examinations.</p> <p>In addition to being an arm's length examiner this examiner must fulfill additional criteria as described under Final Doctoral Examination below.</p> <p>University of Alberta Examiners</p> <p>The University of Alberta examiner is a tenured, tenure-track, or retired University of Alberta faculty member, or Faculty Service Officer, (current or retired categories A1.1, A1.3, or current category C1.1, as defined in the University of Alberta's Recruitment Policy (Appendix A) Definition and Categories of Academic Staff and Colleagues).</p> <p>Conflict of Interest for Graduate Student Supervisory and Examination Committees</p>	<p>examination committee if the other conditions of being a university examiner remain unchanged.</p> <p>Specialized Knowledge Examiner</p> <p>A specialized knowledge examiner is a person who has knowledge or professional expertise that is relevant to the thesis research (such as a health practitioner or an Indigenous community member) and does not have a full-time academic appointment at a university that confers graduate degrees. A specialized knowledge examiner comes fresh to the examination. They must not be (or have been) a member of the supervisory committee, or have been connected with the thesis research in any way. The examiner should not have a close personal association with the student or the supervisor.</p> <p>Except in special circumstances (fully justified in writing to the Dean of the department's Faculty), a specialized knowledge examiner should not be an active collaborator of the supervisor(s) (see Conflict of Interest Guidelines below).</p> <p>External Examiner</p> <p>An external examiner from outside the University of Alberta is required for doctoral thesis examinations. An external examiner must not be (or have been) a member of the supervisory committee, or have been connected with the thesis research in any way. The examiner should not have any personal association with the student or the supervisor, including family and social relationships. This examiner must fulfill additional criteria as described under Final Doctoral Examination below.</p>
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The key relationships are:

- the supervisor to the student;
- the supervisor to the other committee members;
- the student to the committee members.

Conflict of interest in these relationships is defined by the [University of Alberta Code of Conduct Policy](#) & the [University of Alberta Conflict Policy – Conflict of Interest and Commitment and Institutional Conflict](#). Any personal or professional relationships that alter or affect this academic relationship may constitute a conflict of interest.

In the event that a conflict of interest ~~between the supervisor and another committee member on a supervisory or examination committee~~ cannot be avoided:

- the conflict must be openly disclosed to the student, in writing, by the **department**;
- the student must be informed of their right to consent to the committee member or not. The student must also be advised that they can discuss their choices with an Associate Dean, FGSR, once the disclosure is made;
- if the student does not consent, it would be the responsibility of the proposed committee member to recuse themselves and the student would have the right to continue working with the original supervisor and a different committee member without suffering any form of negative treatment and/or behaviour (e.g. intimidation, bullying, harassment) as a result of the decision;
- the disclosure of the relationship and consent of the student must be recorded in writing and filed with the **department** and with the FGSR;
- the conflict of interest must be disclosed on the annual UofA Conflict of Interest and Commitment form by the parties involved; and
- the student may rescind their consent later in their program, ~~but not after the final~~

Conflict of Interest for Graduate Student Supervisory and Examination Committees

The key relationships are:

- the supervisor to the student;
- the supervisor to the other committee members;
- the student to the committee members;
- **the committee members to each other.**

Conflict of interest in these relationships is defined by the [University of Alberta Code of Conduct Policy](#) & the [University of Alberta Conflict Policy – Conflict of Interest and Commitment and Institutional Conflict](#). Any personal or professional relationships that alter or affect this academic relationship may constitute a conflict of interest.

In the event that a conflict of interest cannot be avoided:

- the conflict must be openly disclosed to the student, in writing, by the **department**;
- the student must be informed of their right to consent to the committee member or not. The student must also be advised that they can discuss their choices with an Associate Dean, FGSR, once the disclosure is made;
- if the student does not consent, it would be the responsibility of the proposed committee member to recuse themselves and the student would have the right to continue working with the original supervisor and a different committee member without suffering any form of negative treatment and/or behaviour (e.g. intimidation, bullying, harassment) as a result of the decision;
- the disclosure of the relationship and consent of the student must be recorded in

~~submission of the thesis to the supervisory committee for examination, if the measures put in place to manage the conflict of interest change or are perceived to no longer be effective. The student would indicate this change in writing to the department and the FGSR.~~

Size and Composition of Examining Committees

For all examination committees, at least half of the examiners must have a degree equivalent to or higher than the degree being examined.

For all examination committees, at least half of the examiners must ~~fulfill the criteria as a University of Alberta examiner as tenured, tenure-track, or retired University of Alberta faculty members, or Faculty Service Officers (see above under Categories of Examiners and Eligibility).~~

Master's Thesis Examination Committee

- ~~The minimum size of a master's final examining committee is three examiners. The maximum size is five examiners.~~
- ~~The ex-officio members of the committee are the supervisor(s) and the supervisory committee members if there is a committee.~~
- ~~There must be one arm's length examiner.~~

writing and filed with the department and with the FGSR;

- the conflict of interest must be disclosed on the annual UofA Conflict of Interest and Commitment form by the parties involved; and
- the student may rescind their consent later in their program **if the measures put in place to manage the conflict of interest change or are perceived to no longer be effective. In this case,** the student would indicate this change in writing to the department and the FGSR.
- No changes to committee membership can be made** after the final submission of the thesis to the supervisory committee for examination.

Size and Composition of Examining Committees

For all examination committees, at least half of the examiners must have a degree equivalent to or higher than the degree being examined.

For all examination committees, at least half of the examiners must **be current or retired Academic Staff members, Academic Colleagues, Postdoctoral Fellows, or Executive Members/Academic Administrators** who will be appointed or re-appointed as Academic Faculty members on the conclusion of their term (current or retired categories A, B, C, D, and E, as defined in the [University of Alberta's Recruitment Policy \(Appendix A\)](#) Definition and Categories of Academic Staff and Colleagues).

Master's Thesis Examination Committee

Where there is a supervisor only, the examining committee is the supervisor and two university examiners or one university examiner and one specialized knowledge examiner.

Where there is a supervisory committee, the examining committee is the ex-officio examiners

- At least half of the examiners must hold a master's degree or higher (see above).
- ~~At least half of the examiners must fulfill the criteria of University of Alberta examiner (see above)~~
- The chair is not the supervisor. The chair is a faculty member in the student's home department or with experience chairing master's examinations. The FGSR recommends that committee chairs not be examiners except in extenuating circumstances where any conflict of interest in this role be managed transparently for the student.

The authority for the appointment of final examining committees rests with the Dean of the department's Faculty [unless delegated to the department].

Doctoral Candidacy Examination Committee

- ~~The minimum size of a doctoral candidacy committee is five examiners. The maximum size is seven examiners.~~
- ~~The ex officio members of the committee are the supervisor(s) and the supervisory committee members.~~
- ~~There must be two arm's length examiners.~~

and one university examiner or one specialized knowledge examiner.

- At least half of the examiners must hold a master's degree or higher (see above).
- The chair is not the supervisor. The chair is a faculty member in the student's home department or with experience chairing master's examinations. The FGSR recommends that committee chairs not be examiners except in extenuating circumstances where any conflict of interest in this role be managed transparently for the student.

The authority for the appointment of final examining committees rests with the Dean of the department's Faculty [unless delegated to the department].

Doctoral Candidacy Examination Committee

The examining committee consists of the ex-officio examiners and either one university examiner or one specialized knowledge examiner.

When deemed necessary by the supervisor, one additional university examiner or specialized knowledge examiner may be appointed to the examining committee. In such cases, the examining committee consists of the ex-officio examiners and either two university examiners or one university examiner and one specialized knowledge examiner.

- At least half ~~or more~~ of the examiners must hold a doctoral degree ~~or higher~~ (see above).
- ~~At least half of the examiners must fulfill the criteria of University of Alberta examiner (see above)~~
- The chair is not an examiner. The chair is a faculty member in the student's home department or with experience chairing doctoral examinations

The authority for the appointment of doctoral candidacy examining committees rests with the department.

Doctoral Thesis Examination Committee

- ~~The minimum size of a doctoral final examining committee is five examiners. The maximum size is seven examiners.~~
- ~~The ex officio members of the committee are the supervisor(s) and the supervisory committee members.~~
- ~~There must be two arm's length examiners, one of whom must be a reader or examiner external to the University~~
- At least half of the examiners must hold a doctoral degree or higher (see above).
- ~~At least half of the examiners must fulfill the criteria of University of Alberta examiner (see above)~~
- The chair is not an examiner. The chair is a faculty member in the student's home

The examining committee does not normally include an external examiner. However, when deemed necessary by the supervisor, an external examiner may be appointed to the committee. In this case, the external examiner replaces a university examiner or a specialized knowledge examiner.

- At least half of the examiners must hold a doctoral degree (see above).
- The chair is not an examiner. The chair is a faculty member in the student's home department or with experience chairing doctoral examinations

The authority for the appointment of doctoral candidacy examining committees rests with the department.

Doctoral Thesis Examination Committee

The examining committee consists of the ex-officio examiners, one external examiner, and either one university examiner or one specialized knowledge examiner.

- At least half of the examiners must hold a doctoral degree or higher (see above).

department or with experience chairing doctoral examinations.

The authority for the appointment of final examining committees rests with the Dean of the department's Faculty [unless delegated to the department]

[...]

Conduct of Thesis and Candidacy Examinations

[...]

- The student **may** be asked to leave the room while the order of examiners is determined, and the student's academic record is reviewed by the supervisor for the committee. Typically the order of examiners is the External if applicable, the **arm's length** examiners, the supervisory committee members, and then the supervisor. The Examiners may seek clarification at this time regarding exam procedures.

[...]

Final Doctoral Examination

[...]

Inviting the External Examiner ~~or Reader~~: Every Final Doctoral Examining Committee must have an External **i.e., an arm's length** examiner from outside the University of Alberta. **The term External Examiner refers to an External who attends the examination, whereas the term**

- The chair is not an examiner. The chair is a faculty member in the student's home department or with experience chairing doctoral examinations.

The authority for the appointment of final examining committees rests with the Dean of the department's Faculty [unless delegated to the department].

[...]

Conduct of Thesis and Candidacy Examinations

[...]

- The student **may** be asked to leave the room while the order of examiners is determined, and the student's academic record is reviewed by the supervisor for the committee. Typically the order of examiners is the External if applicable, the **university and/or specialized knowledge** examiners, the supervisory committee members, and then the supervisor. The Examiners may seek clarification at this time regarding exam procedures.

[...]

Final Doctoral Examination

[...]

Inviting the External Examiner: Every Final Doctoral Examining Committee must have an external examiner from outside the University of Alberta.

~~External Reader refers to an External who provides a written evaluation of the thesis and questions to be asked during the examination. External Readers are deemed to be in attendance at the examination.~~

It is the responsibility of the department to recommend an ~~External Examiner or Reader~~ and to submit the name to the Dean of the department's Faculty for approval. Normally, ~~this should be done~~ at least two months in advance of the examination date. The submission must follow the procedures established by the Dean of the department's Faculty.

The ~~External~~:

- Will be a recognized authority in the specific field of research of the student's thesis;
- Will be experienced in ~~evaluating doctoral area work~~; and
- Must be in a position to review the thesis objectively and to provide a critical analysis of the work and the presentation.

It is essential that the ~~External~~ not have an association with the student, the supervisor, or the department ~~within the last six years~~ as this could hinder objective analysis. ~~For example, a proposed External who has within the last six years been associated with the student as a research~~

It is the responsibility of the student's department to recommend an ~~external examiner~~ and to submit the name to the Dean of the department's Faculty for approval. ~~The supervisor may contact potential examiners to ascertain their availability and willingness to participate, but must have no further contact with the external examiner after the thesis has been distributed to the examining committee (see above). Any messages received after distribution of the thesis should be referred to the Graduate Coordinator.~~

Normally, ~~the external examiner should be submitted for approval~~ at least two months in advance of the examination date. The submission must follow the procedures established by the Dean of the department's Faculty.

The ~~external examiner~~:

- ~~Will be a tenure-track, tenured, or retired faculty member of a university that confers graduate degrees;~~
- Will be a recognized authority in the specific field of research of the student's thesis;
- Will be experienced in ~~supervising doctoral students to completion~~; and
- Must be in a position to review the thesis objectively and to provide a critical analysis of the work and the presentation.

It is essential that the ~~external examiner~~ not have an association with the student, the supervisor, or

~~collaborator or coauthor would not be eligible. Also, a proposed External must not have had an association within the last six years with the doctoral student's supervisor (as a former student, supervisor, or close collaborator, for instance).~~

the department as this could hinder objective analysis.

Associations that normally will preclude participation as an external examiner include:

- Having co-authored or performed collaborative research with the student or the supervisor within the preceding six years;
- Having overseen an edited volume that includes the work of the student or supervisor, or having published work in an edited volume overseen by the student or supervisor within the preceding six years;
- Having a financial interest in an entity that could benefit from the thesis research;
- Having read or evaluated the thesis, in whole or in part, prior to appointment as external examiner;
- Having examined or been examined by the student's supervisor within the preceding six years;
- Having engaged in discussions/negotiations with the student or the supervisor related to future employment or supervision, or intending to do so;
- Having a personal or financial relationship with the student or the supervisor that could appear to result in a conflict of interest (for example, past or present domestic or romantic partnerships, family relationships, and past or present business partnerships);

Under normal circumstances ~~the same person~~ will not be used as an External at the University of Alberta if ~~that External~~ has served in the same

capacity in the same department at this University within the preceding two years; this does not preclude ~~an External serving~~ in another department.

Once the External has been approved an official letter of invitation is issued to the External by the ~~department~~.

Approval of the Doctoral Final Examining Committee:

The department will recommend the names of all members of the final examining committee and forward them to the Dean of the department's Faculty, if decanal approval is required, following the procedures established by their Faculty.

~~External Readers: Do not attend the examination. Instead, the External Reader is asked in the letter of invitation to prepare a written report consisting of:~~

- ~~● an evaluation of the scope, structure, methodology, and findings of the thesis,~~
- ~~● a list of minor errors (if any), and~~
- ~~● either a list of clear, direct, contextualized questions to be posed to the candidate during the examination, or a brief written commentary of the thesis which can be read to the candidate for response during the examination.~~

~~The External Reader must include a statement that the thesis falls into one of the following two categories:~~

- ~~● **Acceptable with minor or no revisions:** In this case, the External Reader submits the report to the Graduate Coordinator at least one week before the examination. If the External Reader considers the thesis to be~~

- Having a former (within the preceding six years) or pending affiliation with the student's department;
- Having had an academic appointment at the University of Alberta within the preceding six years.

Under normal circumstances ~~an individual~~ will not be used as an external ~~examiner~~ at the University of Alberta if ~~they have~~ served in the same capacity in the same department at this University within the preceding two years; this does not preclude ~~service~~ in another department.

Once the External has been approved an official letter of invitation is issued to the External by the department.

Approval of the Doctoral Final Examining Committee:

The department will recommend the names of all members of the final examining committee and forward them to the Dean of the department's Faculty, if decanal approval is required, following the procedures established by their Faculty.

~~of a calibre worthy of consideration for an award, the External Reader comments on this in the written evaluation; or~~

- ~~● **Unacceptable without major revisions:** In this case, the External Reader contacts the Dean of the FGSR immediately by email as the examination may need to be postponed.~~

~~The questions or commentary will be made available to the student for the first time during the examination and the committee will evaluate the student's answers as part of the examination.~~

External Examiners: ~~Attend the examination in person.~~ In the letter of invitation, the External Examiner is requested to prepare and send to the Graduate Coordinator, at least one week in advance of the examination, an evaluation of the thesis placing it ~~temporarily~~ in one of the following categories:

- the thesis is acceptable with minor or no revisions,
- the External Examiner wishes to reserve judgment until after the examination, or
- the thesis is unacceptable without major revisions.

In ~~the first two~~ cases, the External Examiner is asked to provide a ~~brief~~ written commentary (approximately two to three pages) on the structure, methodology, quality, significance and findings of the thesis for the reference of both the student and supervisor.

~~The commentary should not be given to the student prior to the examination.~~

External Examiners: In the letter of invitation, the external examiner is requested to prepare and send to Graduate Coordinator, at least one week in advance of the examination, an evaluation of the thesis placing it in one of the following categories:

- the thesis is acceptable with minor or no revisions,
- the external examiner wishes to reserve judgment until after the examination, or
- the thesis is unacceptable without major revisions.

In **all** cases, the external examiner is asked to provide a written commentary (approximately two to three pages) on the structure, methodology, quality, significance, and findings of the thesis for the reference of both the student and supervisor.

If the thesis is judged by the External Examiner to fall into the "Unacceptable" category, then the External Examiner is asked to contact the Dean of the FGSR immediately, since the final examination may need to be postponed.

If the thesis is acceptable with minor or no revisions or if the external examiner wishes to reserve judgment, then the examination will proceed. The external examiner's evaluation must be shared with the student and the supervisor, but only after the examination.

If the external examiner finds the thesis unacceptable without major revisions, then the external examiner is asked to contact the Dean of the FGSR immediately. The examination will normally be postponed, but it may proceed at the discretion of the Dean of the FGSR. If the examination is postponed, then the external examiner's commentary will be shared with the student and the supervisor. The thesis may be resubmitted exactly once, within six months. In this case, the external examiner who wrote the initial report on the thesis will participate in the examination, but a second report will not be required. The thesis examination will be scheduled upon preliminary acceptance of the revised thesis by the supervisor and supervisory committee members (see Preliminary Acceptance of the Thesis, above).

Inability of an External Examiner to Attend

Although it is expected that the external examiner will attend the examination either in person or via videoconference, this requirement may be waived in extraordinary circumstances in which medical, technological, or geographical circumstances make attendance impossible. Such cases are subject to approval through the normal process for establishing committee membership. In such cases, the external examiner will be considered to be in attendance at the examination.

In addition to the required content specified above, the written commentary of an external examiner who has been excused from attendance will include either a list of clear, direct, contextualized questions to be posed to the candidate during the

<p>The Examination: The examining committee should conduct a final examination, based largely on the thesis.</p> <p>The graduate coordinator should ensure that the chair of the examining committee, the student, and all examiners have a final copy of the thesis at the examination.</p> <p>The student should make a brief presentation about the thesis.</p> <p>The most time should be allotted to the arm's length examiners, including the External Examiner, while the least time is allocated to the supervisor(s).</p> <p>No final decision should be made without each examiner having given an opinion.</p>	<p>examination, or a brief written commentary on the thesis which can be read to the candidate. In either case, the Chair of the examination will read the external examiner's submission aloud during the examination, but will not participate in assessing the student's response.</p> <p>The written commentary of an external examiner who has been excused from attendance must place the thesis in one of the following two categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Acceptable with minor or no revisions: In this case, the external examiner submits the report to the department at least one week before the examination and the examination may proceed; or ● Unacceptable without major revisions: In this case, the external examiner contacts the Dean of the FGSR immediately by email. The examination will be postponed and the external examiner's commentary will be shared with the student and the supervisor. The thesis may be resubmitted exactly once, within six months. In this case, the external examiner who wrote the initial report on the thesis will participate in the examination, but a second report will not be required. The thesis examination will be scheduled upon preliminary acceptance of the revised thesis by the supervisor (see Preliminary Acceptance of the Thesis, above). <p>The Examination: The examining committee should conduct a final examination, based largely on the thesis.</p> <p>The graduate coordinator should ensure that the chair of the examining committee, the student, and</p>
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	<p>all examiners have a final copy of the thesis at the examination.</p> <p>The student should make a brief presentation about the thesis.</p> <p>The most time should be allotted to the external, university, and specialized knowledge examiners, while the least time is allocated to the supervisor(s).</p> <p>No final decision should be made without each examiner having given an opinion.</p>
<p>Justification:</p> <p>Approved by:</p>	