

## **Examination Procedures**

1. The committee chair should ensure that the candidate has met all of the examiners and then should request that the candidate leave the examining room so that specific procedural matters can be discussed.
2. When the candidate is not present, the committee chair should outline the examination procedures that are normally followed, as described below. Any changes that are proposed by the committee chair or other examiners should be agreed upon at this point. The committee should be sensitive to the candidate's expectations about the procedures.

## **Order**

The order in which examiners ask questions should be established. Typically, the examiner who is least familiar with the candidate's past work (usually the external examiner) is given the option of asking the first set of questions, and the examiner who is most familiar (the supervisor) is the last to ask questions. In some cases the supervisor may choose to ask no questions.

## **Time per Examiner**

Each committee member should be allocated a maximum of 15-20 minutes to examine the candidate on the first round of questions, and a subsequent round may be initiated by the committee chair if any of the examiners so desire. The committee chair must be prepared to monitor the time taken by each examiner and to enforce gently the limits to which the examiners have agreed. On the second round of questions, each examiner is allowed as much time as required to make an evaluation of the candidate's performance. No limit on the total time of the examination is to be established, but the committee chair and other committee members are expected to be sensitive to the candidate's level of fatigue and whether prolonged questioning is useful. In extreme cases, the examination can be continued at another time.

## **Examinations**

Oral Examinations normally last between 1.5 and 2.5 hours. The committee chair or the candidate may request a brief break at any point in the proceedings. Format. Normally, the time allocated to each examiner is intended to be used primarily by that examiner. Other examiners may ask brief questions of clarification during that period, but extensive questioning by other examiners usually is inappropriate. The committee chair is responsible for determining that each examiner has an appropriate amount of time for questioning.

## **Judgments**

The committee chair should remind the examiners briefly about the judgments they will be called upon to make at the end of the examination.

3. Before the candidate re-joins the examiners, the supervisor should describe, as appropriate, the candidate's (a) academic and employment record, (b) current research activity and history of research productivity (e.g., publications and presentations), (c) record of scholarships and awards, and any other background information that might be useful for the other examiners.

4. The committee chair should invite the candidate to join the examiners at the table and inform the candidate about the order in which examiners will ask questions and about any other pertinent procedural details. The committee chair also should ask the candidate whether he or she has any questions about procedures.

5. Normally the candidate begins by providing a brief (5-15 minutes) overview of his or her research area or project. (This step may be omitted for the PhD defense when all of the examiners have been present at a preceding public presentation.) Questioning commences immediately thereafter, with the committee chair inviting each examiner to participate in turn. The committee chair should ensure that the candidate has ample opportunity to respond to each question.

6. When all the examiners have agreed that they have completed their questioning, the committee chair should ask the candidate whether he or she has any brief, closing comments. When the candidate and examiners are finished, the committee chair should ask the candidate to leave the room until the committee has reached a decision.

7. After adjudication, the candidate should be invited back into the room and informed of the committee's decision. In the case of revisions or additional work, the supervisor typically provides details at a later time. The supervisor also is responsible for describing to the student the factors that influenced the committee's decision.

8. If signatures of committee members are required, they should be obtained at the end of the meeting.