

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR M.A. THESIS DEFENCES IN THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (APRIL 2011)**

The University Senate has established rules for the conduct of thesis defences in Section III.14.8.4 of the Faculty Handbook, and in the Faculty of Graduate Studies Manual. The purpose of the policies and procedures set out below is to supplement these Senate rules. In the event of conflict between rules of the University Senate and the policies and procedures set out below, the former will take precedence. It is important to understand that it can take several months to schedule a defence after the final version of the thesis has been submitted. All participants will do as much as possible to expedite the process, but identifying and obtaining the agreement of examining committee members, allowing them time to read the thesis, and finding a suitable date for the defence can take a considerable amount of time. Students needing to graduate by a certain date must take this into account.

1. When the candidate and Thesis Supervisor agree that the thesis is ready for examination, the Thesis Supervisor will notify the Graduate Program Director.
2. If the candidate and the Thesis Supervisory Committee do not agree on the suitability of the thesis for examination, the candidate has the right to appeal to the Faculty of Social Sciences Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research.
3. The unit's Graduate Program Director, in consultation with the candidate and the Thesis Supervisor, will prepare a list of potential external examiners for submission to the Faculty of Social Sciences Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research.
4. The Faculty of Social Sciences Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research will select up to three or four s external examiner from the ranked list submitted.
5. The external examiner must be someone who is sufficiently knowledgeable in the field to be able to assess the work adequately. The external examiner must be a person, normally external to Brock, who has not participated previously in the thesis project and will be principally responsible for provision of an independent and objective evaluation of the academic quality of the thesis. The external examiner would normally be an associate or full professor and a member of the faculty of graduate studies at her or his university, or eligible for membership in the faculty of graduate studies if her or his university does not have such a faculty. In special cases, the external examiner does not have to have a university appointment, but he or she must have an understanding of the academic environment that would allow her or him to evaluate the quality of a thesis.
6. The unit's Graduate Program Director will contact the approved external examiner informally to determine available dates for a thesis defence.
7. The unit's Graduate Program Director will be responsible for scheduling the thesis defence on a date suitable for the candidate and all members of the examining committee.
8. The Graduate Program Director will also reserve a room suitable for the defence.
9. The Faculty of Social Sciences Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research or designate will act as chair of the examining committee/thesis defence.
10. The examining committee will consist of
  - \* the Faculty of Social Sciences Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research (or designate) who acts as chair of the examining committee/ thesis defence.
  - \* the External Examiner
  - \* the Graduate Program Director (or designate) if specified in the departmental/program rules

- \* the Thesis Supervisor
- \* other members of the supervisory committee as determined by the Graduate Program Director of the unit.

11. The unit's Graduate Program Director will notify the Faculty of Social Sciences Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research when a defense date has been set. The Associate Dean should normally receive this notification four weeks before the date of the defense.

12. *The Associate Dean* Graduate Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences will then send a formal letter of invitation to the external examiner and arrange to either chair the examination committee/thesis defence or obtain a designate for acting as chair of the examination committee/thesis defense.

13. The candidate will be advised of the names of the examining committee members at least seven days prior to the date of the examination.

14. The unit's Graduate Program Director will be responsible for ensuring that the external examiner and all other members of the examining committee receive a paper copy of the thesis, normally four weeks prior to the date of the defense.

15. The Faculty of Social Sciences Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research (or designate) who chairs the examining committee/ thesis defence, the external examiner, and the Thesis Supervisor will attend the defence. (The external may choose to participate in the defence via teleconferencing). In rare circumstances, a member of the supervisory committee may be unable to attend the thesis defence, and may instead submit to the chair of the examining committee/thesis defence questions to be posed to the candidate.

16. The unit's Graduate Program Director should publicize the date of the thesis defence by notifying relevant university publications and posting notices in appropriate areas.

17. The external examiner must write a letter to the Faculty of Social Sciences Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research at least one week before the scheduled date of the thesis defence stating whether the examiner feels that the thesis is of sufficient quality to be ready for examination. The letter will be made available to the candidate and the Thesis Supervisor before the defence takes place. If this letter is not received at least one week before the scheduled date of the thesis defence, the defence might not take place as scheduled.

18. On the day of the examination, the Thesis Supervisor will bring 1 copy of the "Report of Graduate Thesis Examination Board," 1 copy of the "Certificate of Approval," and 1 copy of the "Statement of Major Modifications" forms to the examining room and ensure that the room is arranged in a suitable fashion.

19. The defence is open to anyone who wishes to attend, but only the candidate and members of the examining committee may participate in questioning.

20. At the beginning of the defence, the chair of the examination committee/ thesis defence will describe the rules to be followed and ensure that the candidate and all members of the examining committee are familiar with those rules.

21. The examination will begin with the candidate making a presentation of about twenty minutes.

22. After the candidate's presentation, the members of the examining committee can pose questions to the candidate based on the thesis. The order of questioning will be: external

examiner, other members of the examining committee as agreed before the defence. The Thesis Supervisor will go last. The chair of the examining committee/ thesis defence may pose questions at any time. In the first round of questioning, each questioner will have a maximum of fifteen minutes .

23. There can be a second and subsequent rounds of questions. The order of questioning and timing of questions at this stage is at the discretion of the chair of the examining committee/ thesis defence.

24. When the questioning process is complete, the candidate and anyone else in the room who is not a member of the examining committee shall be excused.

25. The chair of the examining committee/ thesis defense will lead a discussion to determine the acceptability of the thesis.

26. The committee will have the following options: 1) Thesis satisfactory and accepted as submitted. (This will be the determination even if there are minor typographical errors that must be corrected.) 2) Thesis accepted after minor corrections or modifications. (This will normally involve rewriting of small sections of the thesis.) 3) Thesis accepted conditionally upon completion of major modifications as outlined on attached sheet. (The examining committee will not normally meet again. The revisions must be completed to the satisfaction of either the Thesis Supervisor or a sub-committee of the examining committee, as decided by the full examining committee.) 4) Decision deferred until i) completion of major modifications as outlined on attached sheet and ii) in a new and satisfactory defence. 5) Thesis unsatisfactory and not acceptable.

Acceptance of the thesis will require acceptance by two-thirds of the members of the examining committee and must include acceptance by the external examiner. If revisions are necessary, the examining committee will specify the nature of the revisions and the date by which the revised, typed thesis is to be submitted and approved. This date will normally be within three months of the examination, or within six months if additional research is required.

27. Grading System. The thesis does not receive a numerical grade. The options open to the examining committee are Pass or Fail. The criteria for these grades are specified in the *Faculty Handbook* as follows: 1) Normally, if all but one member of the committee agree on a decision, the decision shall be that of the majority, except when the single dissenting vote is that of the external examiner. If this happens, it must be reported to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who in consultation with the Faculty of Social Sciences Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research will determine an appropriate course of action.

2) A fail grade will be awarded if two or more committee members find the thesis unacceptable or if the External Examiner does not approve the thesis.

28. Appeals relating to the procedures followed in a thesis examination, or to the grade assigned, shall be considered by the Senate Committee on Graduate Studies.

29. The Thesis Supervisor will notify the candidate of the results as soon as possible after the examining committee's deliberations have been completed.

30. The chair of the examining committee/ thesis defense is responsible to ensure that all the "Report of Graduate Thesis Examination Board," "Certificate of Approval," and "Statement of Major Modifications" forms are signed by all members of the examining committee and returned to the unit's Graduate Program Director.

31. If the external examiner has participated by videoconference, the Graduate Program Director is responsible for ensuring that a follow-up email confirming that the external has given approval for the chair of the thesis defence to sign the thesis approval form is sent and received.

Approved at a meeting of the Chairs and Directors of the Faculty of Social Sciences, September 16, 2003. Amended November 29, 2004. *Revised August 14, 2008 /caf*  
Amended November 17, 2010,  
Further Revisions April 2011.