



Institute of Medical Science UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

PhD Departmental Examination – Chair Guidelines

The Examination Chair (appointed by IMS Office) *runs the examination proceedings, “keeping the peace”* and representing the IMS and SGS administration and conducting the examination according to the rules of procedure (see below). *S/he protects the student’s interests*, ensures that all examiners needed for voting quorum are present (otherwise the examination will be CANCELLED), instructs those present as to their duties, instructs the Supervisor to carefully document items for revision and modification, discusses and finalizes the results, and reports the outcome to the IMS Graduate Coordinator. The Examination Chair DOES NOT need to review the thesis in advance and does not vote.

Departmental Oral Examination Rules of Procedure

Before the presentation

- The Exam Chair collects the Examination File from the IMS Office or by arrangement with the IMS program assistant.
- The Chair introduces the members and the candidate and ensures that all examiners are present. If members are missing, the Chair advises the IMS Office at 416-978-6696 and discusses action to be taken. The examination may be cancelled if voting quorum is not achieved.
- The Chair instructs the Supervisor of his/her responsibility to carefully document items for revision and modification (if necessary) during the examination.
- The Chair asks the student to leave the room.
- The Chair advises the examiners whether the student has completed degree course requirements and inquires whether there are any major concerns about the upcoming examination.
- The Internal Examiner presents his/her appraisal. Discussion may follow reading of the appraisal.
- The Supervisor is provided with a copy of the appraisal.

Presentation by Candidate

- The student is invited back into the room to give a 20-minute (uninterrupted) presentation. This is a strict time limit. A slide, PowerPoint or overhead presentation usually accompanies the presentation.

Question Period

- Following the presentation, questions are posed to the student. These are presented in two rounds, with 10 minutes allotted to each examiner per round.
- The Chair allows only one Examiner at a time to ask questions (discussion by Examiners among themselves will only detract from the 10 minute time period) and should intervene if another examiner, or the Supervisor, starts to join in the discussion.
- Order of questions is usually: Internal Examiner, Examiners, Committee Members, and Supervisor.



Institute of Medical Science UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

- The Chair should keep informal notes about the content of questions that may lead to proposal revisions for reference during the analysis of defense.
- Following questioning, the student is again asked to leave the room.

Committee discusses the Examination and Votes

The Chair asks the following specific questions of the examiners. All the examiners must address the questions.

Is the written thesis acceptable?

- a) With no modifications
- b) With minor or organizational corrections (typos, change in format, additional information, no new data or new interpretation of data required)
- c) With minor modifications (rewrite part of the proposal, addition of new experimental data and/or completely new interpretation of data)
- d) Not acceptable

Was the Oral Defense:

- a) Excellent
- b) Very good
- c) Acceptable
- d) Not acceptable

In the case that a consensus about the recommendations is not reached, the Chair must ask for a vote on each question. More than one negative vote (or abstention) causes the examination to be adjourned. The Chair does not vote.

If minor modifications are required, the Chair appoints a Modifications Subcommittee (see “After the Departmental Oral Examination”, below).

The student is invited into the room and the Chair advises the student about the outcome of the examination.

A clear statement about who will review the revised thesis is given to student and supervisor and the defense is adjourned.

After the Departmental Oral Examination

The Exam Chair returns the file to the IMS Office in person or by return envelope to Program Assistant, Institute of Medical Science, rm.2374, 1 King’s College Circle.

If minor or organization corrections are recommended...

- Student consults with supervisor and Program Advisory Committee members about changes
- Supervisor writes to IMS office (pa.medscience@utoronto.ca) to confirm completion of revisions within 4 weeks of the examination and before a Final Oral Examination can be booked.



Institute of Medical Science UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

If minor modifications are recommended...

- Examination Chair will appoint a subcommittee
 - Includes the Internal Examiner and 2 Examiners
 - Subcommittee Chair should not be the Supervisor
- Student consults with Subcommittee members about changes, revises thesis and submits it to the subcommittee.
- Subcommittee Chair writes to IMS office (pa.medscience@utoronto.ca) to confirm completion of revisions within 3 months of the examination and before a Final Oral Examination can be booked.

A repeat departmental oral exam is absolutely required if:

- The student does not pass the oral defense/exam. This may occur when a vote is required (i.e., examiners disagree about the recommendations) and there is a negative outcome.
- The thesis requires very major modifications that must be defended.
- The student is allowed only one repeat Departmental Oral Examination.