



Master of Science in Population and Public Health Final Oral Examination Policies and Procedures

The Final Oral Examination (or Final Thesis Defense) is the final step of the SPPH MSc degree. The Final Oral Exam provides the student with the chance to present and defend their thesis work in a rigorous academic environment. The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies expects that any masters-level programs will create and uphold the standards, policies, and procedures for evaluation of master's theses. All SPPH MSc theses should be evaluated to uphold a consistent standard for the MSc Program. The following policies and procedures outline the process for Final Oral Exams at SPPH.

Scheduling the Final Oral Examination

In order to proceed to scheduling a Final Oral Exam, the student and the supervisor(s) should have the approval of the full Supervisory Committee. It is the joint responsibility of the student and the Supervisor (or Nominated Supervisor) to select an External Examiner and an Exam Chairperson and schedule the date, time, and location of the Final Oral Examination. Please see the following sections for eligibility requirements for the Examiner and the Chair.

The student and Supervisor (or Nominated Supervisor) are jointly responsible for submitting the MSc Thesis Defense Booking Form to the MSc Program. The form should be submitted a minimum of three weeks in advance of the defense date. Program staff are available to assist with room bookings at the SPPH building. If requested, program staff will also prepare and send a defense announcement.

Submission of the Thesis for External Examination

It is the joint responsibility of the student and Supervisor (or Nominated Supervisor) to ensure that the full Supervisory Committee approves the final version of the thesis for external examination. The External Examiner should receive the final version of the thesis a minimum of two weeks in advance of the Final Oral Exam. It is the joint responsibility of the student and Supervisor (or Nominated Supervisor) to ensure that the External Examiner receives the thesis. Common practice would be for the External Examiner to receive a PDF copy of the thesis via email from the student or supervisor(s). A copy of the thesis should also be provided to the Exam Chair if requested.

The External Examiner

The primary role of the External Examiner is to evaluate the quality and significance of the thesis and the performance of the student at the oral examination.

Eligibility Criteria & Term Length Requirements

1. The External Examiner should hold an academic appointment as a Full, Associate, Assistant, or Emeritus Professor at the School of Population and Public Health. Partner appointments are acceptable, as are faculty jointly appointed in the School of Population and Public Health and another department. Clinical and Adjunct Faculty are not eligible to serve as External Examiners.



2. The External Examiner should have expertise in a field related to the thesis research.
3. The External Examiner must not be or have been a member of the Supervisory Committee or connected with the thesis research in any way.
4. The External Examiner must 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).
5. The External Examiner should not be or have been research collaborators and/or coauthors with the Supervisor(s) within the past 6 years, regardless of whether the collaborations relate to the student's thesis research. Exceptions may be made in special circumstances, but require a full justification to be submitted to the MSc Program and approved by the MSc Program Director in writing.
6. The External Examiner is required to attend the Final Oral Exam in person.

Independence of Assessment

Examiners are expected to formulate an independent opinion of the student's work. The External Examiner must maintain an arm's length relationship with the student and supervisor(s) throughout the examination process. They must not discuss the student's research with the student or any member of the Supervisory Committee until the Final Oral Examination begins.

Responsibilities of the External Examiner

1. Represent their academic discipline(s) and/or area(s) of research
2. Scrutinize the thesis in preparation for the Final Oral Exam
3. Formulate an independent opinion of the work
4. Maintain arms-length requirements in advance of the defense date
5. Attend the Final Oral Exam
6. Question the student at the Final Oral Exam about the contents of the thesis and the student's relevant knowledge
7. Participate in the in-camera discussion and provide an opinion on the outcome of the defense
8. Maintain professional and respectful conduct throughout the exam process

The Exam Chair

The primary role of the chair is to represent SPPH and G+PS and act as a moderator for the defense proceedings, ensuring fairness and respectful conduct of all parties.

Eligibility Criteria

1. The Exam Chair should not be a member of the supervisory committee or the External Examiner.
2. The Exam Chair should hold a faculty appointment at UBC. The Exam Chair may hold an academic or other (clinical, adjunct) appointment, and may be appointed in any department, including SPPH or other departments and faculties at UBC. The MSc program encourages Clinical and Adjunct Faculty Members at SPPH to serve as Exam Chairpersons.
3. The Exam Chair is required to attend the Final Oral Exam in person.

Responsibilities of the Exam Chair



1. Confirm that Quorum is present in person at the Final Oral Exam. The Exam may not proceed if Quorum is not present. See below for more information about Quorum.
2. Establish the order in which examining committee members will question the student. The supervisor is normally called upon last.
3. Preside over the meeting in a fair and orderly manner. This includes: calling the meeting to order, making introductory announcements, introducing the student, calling upon examiners for questions, and ensuring appropriate conduct of the in-camera discussion. See below for further information on the structure of the Exam.
4. Ensure that the student addresses any questions raised during the question period.
5. Ensure the professional and respectful conduct of all parties during the exam.
6. Provide a brief report to the MSc Program on the Final Oral Exam. This can be done by filling out the MSc Final Oral Exam Chair's Report Form and sending to the MSc Program via email.

Quorum & Participation in the Final Oral Examination

Quorum requires that a minimum of three faculty members (in addition to the Exam Chair) are present in person for the defense. Quorum includes:

1. the Supervisor (or Nominated Supervisor)
2. the External Examiner
3. one member of the Supervisory Committee (this member must also be an Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor of the School, or an Associate Member of the School)
4. the Exam Chair

There are usually a minimum of five faculty members present at the Final Oral Exam: the Supervisor, two members of the Supervisory Committee, the External Examiner, and the Exam Chair. Additional committee members are welcomed and encouraged to attend whenever possible. It is the joint responsibility of the student and Supervisor (or Nominated Supervisor) to ensure that all members of the Examination Committee are confirmed to attend the final oral exam. Only those individuals physically present in the examination room can be counted for quorum.

Structure of the Final Oral Defense

1. Exam Chair determines if Quorum is present. If Quorum is not present, the defense cannot proceed.
2. Exam Chair determines the order in which the Exam Committee will ask questions to the students.
3. Exam Chair calls the meeting to order and makes the following announcements:
 - a. Announce that the meeting has been called for the public examination of [student's name] for the degree of Master of Science in Population and Public Health.
 - b. Ask all present to turn off mobile phones, alarms, etc., for the duration of the defense. Recording of the defense is not normally permitted.
 - c. Announce that no latecomers will be admitted, and that any member of the audience who leaves the examination room will not be permitted to re-enter. (Exam Chair should ensure that the door is closed. In lengthy sessions, the chair may allow a brief recess after the student's presentation or during the question period.)
4. Exam Chair invites the student to present a synopsis of the thesis research. (The presentation should last between 20 and 30 minutes. The student may speak from notes and use audio-visual



equipment, but must not read the synopsis. The Exam Chair should enforce time limits, and the presentation should not be interrupted by questions.)

5. Exam Chair calls upon each member of the Examining Committee in turn to ask questions to the student. Exam Chair may exercise discretion in managing the question period and intervene if the questioning or behavior becomes inappropriate or interferes with the proper conduct of the exam. Ensure that each examiner is limited to approximately 5 minutes to allow time for all questions. All relevant questions should be put to the student.
6. Exam Chair calls for questions from the audience.
7. Exam Chair calls for final questions from the Examining Committee. If necessary, ask the student to address or clarify any points not adequately covered previously.
8. Exam Chair asks the student and all persons not on the examining committee to leave the room.
9. Exam Chair facilitates the in-camera discussion. The discussion should focus on the student's performance in presenting the synopsis, in responding to questions, and in defending the work.
10. Exam Chair calls the student back into the room and, in the presence of the Examining Committee, informs the student of the outcome.
11. Exam Chair notifies the MSc Program on the outcome of the defense and any circumstances that warrant follow-up by filling out and submitting via email the MSc Final Oral Exam Chair's Report Form. This form should be submitted within one week of the Examination date.

Evaluating the Thesis and the Final Oral Examination

Responsibilities of the Examining Committee Members

1. Represent their academic discipline(s) and/or area(s) of research
2. Scrutinize the thesis in preparation for the Final Oral Exam
3. Formulate an independent opinion of the work
4. Question the student at the Final Oral Exam about the contents of the thesis and the student's relevant knowledge
5. Participate in the in-camera discussion and provide an opinion on the outcome of the Final Oral Exam

Final Outcome

The evaluation criteria for the committee are based on the student's performance in presenting the synopsis, in responding to questions, and in defending the work. The Examining Committee should reach a consensus on an appropriate category for the thesis based on the following:

- Category 1 – Minor revision that is typographical or editorial in nature. Requires final approval by the Supervisor (or Nominated Supervisor) only.
- Category 2 – Substantive revision affecting the content of the thesis. Requires final approval by the Supervisor (or Nominated Supervisor) and the Supervisory Committee.
- Category 3 – The thesis is unsatisfactory in its current form. Major rewriting and rethinking are required to produce a satisfactory thesis. Requires final approval by the Supervisor (or Nominated Supervisor), the Supervisory Committee, and the External Examiner.

If it is agreed that the thesis has met approval of the Examining Committee (Category 1 or Category 2), a Master's Thesis Approval Form should be signed by the appropriate Examining Committee members.



Post-Final Oral Examination Procedures

After the completion of the Final Oral Exam, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the Master's Thesis Approval Form is signed by the appropriate Examining Committee Members. If revisions are required, the Supervisor (or Nominated Supervisor) will not sign the form. Revisions should be completed within four weeks from the date of the Final Oral Exam. When the revisions are made, the supervisor will confirm that the revisions are acceptable and add their signature to the Thesis Approval Form.

The student must submit the Thesis Approval Form and the Thesis Coversheet to the MSc Program. If necessary, the student should also include the Request for Embargo Form. The MSc Program will confirm that the forms are correct and then send them to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. The student is responsible for completing the remaining steps to ensure that the thesis is submitted for review to G+PS. UBC uses the cIRcle platform to publish and archive thesis and dissertations.

UBC and G+PS have strict deadlines for program completion and graduation. Students should ensure that they are leaving sufficient time to make revisions, complete forms, and upload thesis documents in order to meet any desired deadlines.