

MA Thesis Oral Examinations – Guidelines for Students Ryerson Philosophy MA

Once your thesis is ready for examination, your supervisor will recommend a date and time for the defence, as well as an examining committee. This committee consists of your supervisor and two other examiners, who are typically other faculty members in the program. There are typically not external examiners for MA theses. The committee must receive your thesis **four weeks** before the examination date.

The Thesis defence typically takes 2-3 hours, and is open to anyone who wants to attend. The exam is run by the Chair of the Examining Committee (typically the Program Director), not your supervisor: questions about the exam should be directed to the Chair. The format of the exam is as follows:

- A brief presentation of the thesis work by the candidate (15-20 min maximum).
- Examiner's questions (and subsequently, audience questions, if any)
- Private deliberation of the examining committee
- Delivery of the committee's verdicts to the candidate and completion of the 'Report of the Oral Examining Committee' form (you receive a copy after the exam)

There are typically three rounds of questions, with each examiner getting 10-15 minutes per round. During questions from one examiner, the other examiners are not permitted to comment or join in discussion. The supervisor always goes last. After questioning is concluded, the committee will deliberate privately and vote on two things: (1) whether the oral examination receives 'pass' or 'fail'; and (2) whether the written thesis receives 'Accepted', 'Fail', or 'Major Revision'. A candidate must receive 'pass' and 'accepted' in order to satisfy the Thesis program requirement. The Chair does not vote.

You should expect that your examiners will provide you with a list of comments and/or corrections on the written thesis at the exam or immediately thereafter. Three verdicts on the written thesis are possible:

- **If the thesis receives a verdict of 'Accepted'**, your supervisor is responsible for making sure that appropriate changes/revisions are made.
- **If the thesis receives a verdict of 'Major Revision'**, the Chair of the Examining Committee must provide to you, in writing, detailed reasons for this verdict, and a list of necessary revisions within one week of the examination. The revised thesis must subsequently be reviewed by the Examining Committee: the possible verdicts are 'accepted' and 'fail'.
- **If the thesis receives a verdict of 'Fail'**, the Chair of the Examining Committee must provide to you, in writing, detailed reasons for this verdict within one week of the examination.

After the thesis has been successfully defended, the final version must be submitted to the Program Office in accordance with the Yeates School of Graduate Studies requirements: for these, see the document "Thesis, Dissertation and MRP Submission Requirements" (found on the YSGS website).

For more details about MA oral examinations, see the regulations in Ryerson Senate Policy 142, section 6.