

Oral Examination/Defense

An oral examination is required in defense of the dissertation/thesis. The examination is concerned primarily with the dissertation/thesis or research project but may include such other information in the major field as is pertinent. The Oral Defense is undertaken by the candidate's Dissertation/Thesis Committee and an Outside Chairperson who represents the Office of Graduate Studies. The Ph.D. oral exam committee is comprised of a minimum of three and a maximum of seven voting members. The Master's committee is comprised of a minimum of two and a maximum of five voting members.

In general, all members of the committee should hold Doctorate degrees, have research records appropriate to the student's proposed research area of specialization, and be tenured or tenure-track professors at DU. Exceptions can be made in that clinical professors, research professors, adjunct faculty members, post-doctoral appointees, professors from other institutions, or other qualified persons including someone without a Doctorate but with other appropriate qualifications, can serve as members. These exceptions must be supported by a strong rationale, have the support of the student's unit, and be approved by the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and Research.*

The oral examination must be held at least three weeks before the end of the term in which the degree is to be granted. All members of the oral examination committee must receive a copy of the candidate's dissertation/thesis at least two weeks prior to the scheduled examination.

**College of Education: After a review of their curriculum vitae, the College of Education Appointments, Tenure, and Promotion Committee will forward their support for certain adjunct faculty to the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and Research for approval as eligible to serve on specific dissertation committees.*

Scheduling and Verification of the Oral Examination

Arrangements for appointing the examining committee and for the date and time of the oral examination must be made by the student with the college, school or departmental advisor. Students must submit a completed *Schedule of Oral Exam Form* to the Office of Graduate Studies and their academic unit no later than three weeks prior to the date of the examination. On the form, the candidate will designate the Dissertation/Thesis Chairperson/Advisor, Outside Chairperson, and all other members of the oral examination committee. After the form has been submitted, Graduate Studies will verify that all members of the Oral Exam Committee meet the minimum requirements.

Outside Chairperson

As a representative of the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and Research, the Outside Chair of the Oral Examination Committee must be a tenured faculty member at the University of Denver from a different program, department, or discipline than that of the candidate. The role of the Outside Chair is to provide a broader perspective within the examination process. The Outside Chairperson is expected to have read the dissertation/thesis prior to the examination and to participate in the examination as his/her academic expertise permits, but he/she does not vote on the recommendation of the committee.

Conducting the Exam

The Outside Chair will preside over and manage the exam process. He or she is responsible for making certain that the examination is conducted in a professional manner and that the student has a fair opportunity to defend his/her dissertation/thesis. The Outside Chair is expected to provide opportunities for each voting member of the Examination Committee to participate in the examination and to assure that the examination is of high quality while remaining within proper limits of inquiry.

Interested faculty members and, in accordance with departmental policy, currently enrolled graduate students may also attend an oral examination. After the Oral Examination Committee has conducted the essential examination of the candidate, questions may be asked by others present if within the pertinence, propriety and quality as determined by the Examination Committee.

When the examination is completed, the Outside Chair will request that the candidate and all other persons not on the examination committee leave the room, and will call for a motion to pass or fail the candidate. A recommendation to pass can have no more than one negative vote from members of the committee. If the motion is a recommendation to pass, the committee must then agree on the conditions of the recommendation as follows:

- **Pass with no revisions** is interpreted to mean that only grammatical, labeling or numbering changes are required. Only a limited number of sentence additions or deletions should be necessary.
- **Pass with minor revisions** indicates that the candidate will be required to reorganize portions of the manuscript and change some of the content.
- **Pass with major revisions** implies that a complete chapter or chapters must be rewritten, additional tables will be required and interpreted, or the general format must be changed. Responsibility for seeing that needed revisions are made usually rests with the dissertation/thesis advisor, but if major changes are indicated, committee members may also request an opportunity for their approval before final submission.

A recommendation to fail indicates that the dissertation/thesis content is not of acceptable quality or that the candidate cannot defend the research. A candidate who fails the oral examination may petition the Oral Examination Committee for a maximum of one re-examination. If granted, the re-examination will need to be scheduled through the Office of Graduate Studies and must occur within the normal timelines. However, in most cases, failing the Oral Exam results in the rejection of the student's dissertation/thesis and a new or related study will usually need to be undertaken.

The *Result of Oral Examination Form* must be signed by all committee members and returned immediately to the Office of Graduate Studies. All signatures must be original. Faxed, photocopied, or electronic signatures will not be accepted.