

Final Steps to PhD Thesis Submission and Defense (Revised March 20, 2018)

As you put the final touches on your thesis, you and your supervisor will be discussing an appropriate examination board, which will include: two departmental examiners (only one of whom is on your supervisory committee), one university examiner (from another department at Western), and one external examiner from outside Western. Normally the supervisor contacts prospective examiners and canvasses their availability for possible exam dates. Once you have all agreed upon a thesis exam date, then you must count back from that date to ensure that you meet SGPS timelines.

Please note that the thesis must follow the format specified in the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies' [Thesis Regulation Guide](#). PhD theses are normally no longer than 350 pages in length. Your thesis supervisor will be able to provide with you guidance on what would be considered a sufficient contribution of knowledge to merit a PhD degree. Thesis formatting can be quite time-consuming, so please leave yourself enough time for this step. Some additional tips on thesis formatting:

- If you are in a collaborative program, this should be indicated on the title page (see instructions in the SGPS [Thesis Regulation Guide](#).)
- If you required ethics approval for your research, please ensure that the approval form is appended to the thesis. (No signatures showing and adjust size to match margins and print a page number.)
- When inserting your CV in the thesis, there should NOT be any personal information listed (such as address, phone, etc.)

No later than SIX weeks prior to the examination:

You will need to submit a **Doctoral Thesis Examination Request form**. (Forms are available on the SGPS website: http://www.grad.uwo.ca/current_students/thesis/forms.html). To complete this form, you will need to know your thesis title, the names and contact information for your examiners, and the date and time of your examination. **NEW in June 2017:** The following signatures are now required on this form: Candidate, Graduate Assistant, Supervisor and Graduate Chair. Please submit the completed form to the graduate office (SSC 3324) for approval, and then it will be forwarded to SGPS for you. Please submit the form to the graduate office (SSC 3324) for approval, and then it will be forwarded for you to SGPS. Note that for doctoral examinations, SGPS will arrange for an exam chair from another graduate program.

Once your Board form has been submitted, you can 'Apply to Graduate' through the Student Centre: <http://student.uwo.ca/>.

If there are ANY changes to the Examination Board Form (including changing the title of thesis) after it has been submitted, please inform the graduate office immediately.

No later than FIVE weeks prior to the examination:

Doctoral candidates must submit their thesis to SGPS at least five weeks before the examination date. [Follow the SGPS instructions for submission of your thesis.](#)

Once you have uploaded your thesis, SGPS will provide information to the examiners about how to access the thesis. If examiners wish a printed copy then they can request it online and SGPS will provide it.

If a **Confidentiality form** (*optional*) is required, please let the graduate office know.

3.1.3 Confidentiality Agreement

If the candidate feels that the nature of the information contained in the thesis must remain confidential (e.g., concerns pending patents, company research, etc.) for a specified period of time, a confidentiality agreement is required.

No later than five working days before the examination:

Your examiners must submit online their review and preliminary approval of the thesis. A majority of examiners must agree that the thesis is ready for defense.

Once notification of the preliminary approval of the thesis for examination is received, then you can post notices of your public lecture. You should make up a poster to advertise the public lecture including your name, a photo relevant to your research, the title of the thesis, and the date, time and location of your lecture. Have 20 copies made. Post them one week before the lecture around the department and by each of the two main elevators on all floors of Social Science building.

On the day of your defense:

The public lecture room will be booked 30 minutes earlier than the lecture start time so that you can set up your presentation. For your lecture, you should plan to speak for no more than 45 minutes, leaving 15 minutes for questions.

When you arrive at your thesis examination, you can expect the following:

1. After everyone is introduced, you will be asked to leave. While you are out of the room, the examiners will agree on the order of questioning and the number of rounds of questions. It is common to have a first round of 15 or 20 minutes per examiner (that time includes the student's responses to the questions), and then a second shorter round of 5 or 10 minutes per examiner. PhD exams often take around 2.5 hours.
2. You will be invited back in, and the examiners will begin their first round of questions. Between rounds you can request a short break if you need one.
3. When the two rounds of questions are over, you will be asked to leave again; this time the discussion will take a bit longer. While you are out of the room: your supervisor will have a chance to comment briefly on the thesis; the examiners will engage in a discussion of the defense, including an evaluation of: the thesis content, the thesis form, and the oral defense of the thesis; the examiners will submit their evaluation to the chair who will announce the results of the defense to the examining committee. If your examiners request any revisions, notes will be taken about what is required before final thesis submission.
4. It is common for the examining board to ask the student to make some revisions. Depending on the extent of the revisions, one of your committee members may withhold their signature from the Certificate of Examination Form ("signature page") until revisions to your thesis are completed. If this happens, please make sure to return this form to the graduate office, where it will be held for signature and then forwarded to SGPS.
5. You will be invited back into the room to hear the results of the exam and you will be given SGPS's instructions on the final steps to complete your program.

After your thesis examination: You will have up to **six weeks** (or by end of term, **whichever comes earlier**) to make any revisions and then submit the final version of your thesis online.