

Role Description and Guidelines for Final Examination Chairs

- The exam chair is a non-voting member of the exam committee.
 - For Master's final exams the chair can also be an examiner.
- The exam chair can meet with the student prior to the final exam to review exam procedures if requested by either party.
- The role of the exam chair is to ensure that the exam is conducted in accordance with GPS and departmental rules and standards. They ensure that "fairness, balance and order" have been maintained and that the interest of the student is adequately protected.
- If Zoom is used for the final exam, ask the supervisor to set up the Zoom call and check access of examiners on the Zoom call prior to the start of the exam.
- The chair, in consultation with the exam committee, determines the order of questioning with the examiner most distant to the candidate's research area being the first and the supervisor being last. The student can be asked to leave the room while the order is being determined.
- While the student is out of the room, invite the supervisor to review the student's academic progress and note any special achievements.
- Generally, the arm's length examiner(s) (University/Specialized Knowledge/External Examiner) should be granted the most questioning time. This ensures that new and challenging questions are asked instead of questions already posed to develop the candidate and enhance the research.
- Examiners should avoid arguing among themselves and excluding the candidate. They should not lecture but should ask detailed questions about the thesis and occasional broad, disciplinary questions, testing for evidence of education, not just training. Typographical and stylistic errors should not take up examination time. The chair can direct examiners to identify typographical and stylistic errors in a marked up copy of the thesis to be shared with the student upon completion of the exam, and to focus on the thesis content.
- The exam chair moderates and directs the questioning and holds the examiners to the allotted time.
 - The length of questioning should not exceed 2 hours for master's exams and 3 hours for doctoral exams. The division of this time is based on the number of examiners and at the discretion of the chair.
- At the end of the exam, the chair acts as a neutral member to guide the committee through the process of reaching a decision.
- When the exam is over, the chair submits a report to the Grad Program Admin team (grad.ales@ualberta.ca) within 5 working days of the event with copies to the student and supervisor. The report should include comments on the quality of the seminar presentation and oral defense. The report should also include a statement about nominating the student for an outstanding thesis/research award if the committee feels that the student should be recognized by the faculty for their thesis work. For a PhD final exam, the chair forwards the external examiner's report to the student and their supervisor.
- The chair may ask questions if they feel that critical and pertinent questions have not been asked or addressed. The chair can also request the exam committee to refocus or redirect questions to address areas as appropriate.
- If the chair feels that the examiners are either too hard or too easy on the candidate, the chair can call a recess to discuss this with the other committee members in the absence of the candidate. Likewise, any examiner can ask for a recess and raise concerns of this nature with the chair and other committee members.

- If the chair or an examiner is unhappy with the resulting rigor, process, or outcome of the exam, they should inform their graduate coordinator immediately. The graduate coordinator will investigate the issue in question and take appropriate action.
- The exam chair will sign the thesis approval/program completion form on behalf of examiners attending remotely. The chair will also circulate the form and ensure signatures are handwritten or original electronic images.
- In case of emergency or if concerns arise during the exam:
 - Call the ALES Student Services front desk, 492-4933; or
 - Call Charlotte at 492-2873; or
 - Call Emma at 492-0271; or
 - If you can't reach anyone at the above numbers, call Andrea Riewe at GPS: 492-2816. She may not answer but the message goes directly to her email. Leave her a short message with your phone number so she can call you back.