

## Guidelines for the External Examiner

The University of Calgary invites an expert in the field of each doctoral candidate's research to review the thesis submission and take part in the thesis oral examination and subsequent recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Studies in order to ensure that the degree submissions from the University of Calgary are judged impartially according to the standards of doctoral degrees from other universities across Canada and around the world. The following guidelines have been written to help the External Examiner understand the examination process at the University of Calgary and the responsibilities of the External Examiner within that process.

### 1. Finding an External Examiner

Ordinarily, before any formal action transpires, someone from the graduate program contacts an expert in the field of the candidate's thesis research to find out if he or she would be prepared to read and comment upon the thesis and participate in the oral examination.

In order to ensure impartiality, the proposed Examiner must not be a close personal friend of the candidate's supervisor, have collaborated with the supervisor in the last five years, be closely related to the candidate, nor have worked with the candidate, and must not have been a supervisor in the candidate's graduate program for the last three years. If any of the criteria are not met, the proposed Examiner is not necessarily precluded from serving, but the graduate program must clearly explain the circumstances to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Once the graduate program is satisfied that the proposed Examiner conforms to the criteria, and the Examiner agrees to let his or her name go forward to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, the proposed Examiner must provide the graduate program with an up-to-date curriculum vitae.

### 2. Recommending an External Examiner to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

A minimum of **eight weeks** before the planned oral examination, the graduate program will recommend an External Examiner by completing a form entitled *Approval of External Examiner or Examiner*, and sending it to the Faculty of Graduate Studies with an up-to-date curriculum vitae for the recommended Examiner.

### 3. Formal Invitation from the Faculty of Graduate Studies

Upon approval, the Faculty of Graduate Studies will send a formal invitation to be External Examiner for the candidate's thesis, these *Guidelines*, an *Examiner's Report on Thesis* form and a *Travel Claim* form.

### 4. Travel Arrangements

The External Examiner is advised to consult with the Graduate Coordinator for the program, whose name and contact information is included in the formal invitation from the Faculty of Graduate Studies, about travel arrangements.

### 5. Receipt of Thesis

The candidate must send the External Examiner a **final, complete copy of the thesis** in time for the Examiner to receive it **at least three weeks** before the proposed oral examination.

*If the Examiner anticipates that it will take more than three weeks to review the thesis adequately, the Examiner should notify the graduate program at once. The graduate program may request permission from the Faculty of Graduate Studies to postpone the oral examination, and will notify the Examiner of new date.*

## 6. Problems?

**If problems or questions arise at any point, the Examiner should consult the Graduate Coordinator for the program. His or her name, telephone number, and e-mail address will be found on the letter of invitation from the Faculty of Graduate Studies.**

## 7. Examiner's Report

The External Examiner reviews the thesis and completes the *Examiner's Report*. Upon arrival at the examination, the original *Report* with the Examiner's signature must be given to the Chair of the examining committee for forwarding to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, where it will become part of the candidate's permanent record. The *Examiner's Report* is considered a confidential document and must not be shared with the candidate or the other examining committee members before the final decision of the examining committee.

## 8. Composition of the Examining Committee

The doctoral thesis oral examining committee consists of the candidate's supervisory committee and at least two other examiners. One of the members must be external to the student's graduate program and the other external to the University. The examining committee must have a minimum of five members.

## 9. Chair of the Examining Committee

Ordinarily the supervisor chairs the examining committee. However, another member of the examining committee or a neutral chair may chair the examination. A neutral chair is not a member of the examining committee and is non-voting.

## 10. Circumstances of the Examination

Each graduate program may choose to have open or closed final thesis oral examinations. The choice will be indicated on the *Notice of Thesis Oral Examination*.

**Closed Examination** – At a closed examination, no more than ten people may be in attendance. This number includes the examining committee, any other attendees approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies, the program head or designate, and the Dean of Graduate Studies or representative.

**Public Presentation** – A public presentation may precede a closed examination on the same day. Examiners are welcome to attend the public session but should refrain from asking questions or engaging in debate with the candidate. Public presentations are not considered part of the examination.

**Open Examination** – Open examinations are held with no public presentation on the same day. The audience is permitted to observe the opening summary and the questioning, but not to question or engage in debate with the candidate. Only examiners may question the candidate. After the questioning, the audience leaves and the examiners' discussion is held in private.

## 11. Conduct of the Oral Examination

The oral examination is a formal examination, not an informal discussion with the candidate.

No one other than an examiner (as identified on the *Notice of Thesis Oral Examination*) is allowed to question the candidate.

All examiners must be given an opportunity to question the candidate early in the examination, e.g., by rounds of questioning.

Ordinarily, the oral examination will not exceed two hours.

Examiner's editorial comments on the thesis should not be discussed at the oral examination. At

the end of the examination, each examiner should hand the candidate a list of any such comments for post-examination revisions to the thesis.

During the examination, the Chair, the examining committee and the candidate must be present at all times. If one of the above finds it necessary to leave the room for any reason, the discussion must be stopped until the person returns.

## 12. Suggested Examination Procedures

**Opening Summary** – It is common practice to ask the candidate to present a brief (a maximum of 15 minutes) summary of the thesis research and its significance.

**Background Questioning** – General background questioning, not relevant to the matter of the thesis, should be avoided during the early stages of the examination.

**Questions to the candidate** – Questions to the candidate should be clearly and succinctly phrased in order to minimize doubt in the candidate's mind as to what is being asked. The candidate should be given reasonable time to answer. If the candidate has understood the question but cannot answer, the examiner should pass to another question and not attempt to extract an answer by prolonged interrogation. The chair must guard against any tendency of the examiners to interact with each other instead of concentrating on the examination of the candidate.

An oral examination of a thesis should not become an exhaustive attempt to discuss the subject in detail, but rather a determination that the research in an individual thesis meets Faculty and disciplinary standards of original doctoral-level research.

## 13. Post-Examination Discussion

After the questioning of the candidate is over, the examining committee conducts an *in camera* discussion. Only the examining committee, the Dean or Dean's Representative and the Head of the graduate program or representative are allowed to be present.

During the post-examination discussion, the Chair and the examining committee must be present until consensus is reached or a "hung jury" is declared. If one of the above leaves before consensus is reached or a "hung jury" declared, the examination may be declared null and void.

*Straw Vote* – Before any discussion takes place, a "straw vote" is taken, with each examiner indicating which recommendation he or she favours. The Faculty of Graduate Studies recommends that the straw vote be collected by secret ballot. The straw vote provides the committee with a frame of opinion upon which a full discussion of the candidate's performance may be based.

After the straw vote, the examiners conduct a post-examination discussion in which the Head of the graduate program or designate and the Dean of Graduate Studies or Dean's Representative may participate, although they have no vote.

## 14. Recommendations

The *Thesis Oral Examination Recommendations* (attached) defines the official Faculty recommendations to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Thesis examinations must be judged to be either acceptable (pass) or unacceptable (fail) in respect of the thesis itself and in respect of the oral examination. Where the examination committee considers that both the thesis and the oral defence are acceptable (pass), it will select recommendation 1 or 2. These recommendations should be understood as differentiating the examinations results on the basis of the amount and/or substantive nature of the change which the committee has decided are necessary in order to bring the thesis to a fully acceptable level. Changes to a thesis in one of the acceptable categories may be more or less extensive, but must be limited to aspects of the presentation of the research (e.g., format, clarity, coherence, minor

additional data analysis and/or interpretation) and must not include alterations or additions to the underlying research itself. **If additional research or data collection is deemed to be necessary, the examination committee is bound not to make recommendations 1 or 2 to the Dean.**

If the thesis is judged to fall under recommendation 1 or 2, but the oral defence was considered unacceptable, the examining committee must forward a recommendation 3.

If additional research or data collection is deemed necessary, the thesis must be judged unacceptable (fail), and a recommendation 4A or 4B forwarded.

Unanimous decisions are required for all recommendations. The vote of each committee member and the committee recommendation, as recorded on the *Report of Final Examination*, must be identical. If the recorded final recommendations are not identical, “lack of unanimity” must be declared and the Dean of Graduate Studies informed immediately (see below). The committee recommendation must be reported to the Dean of Graduate Studies on the official *Report of Final Examination* form within one working day of the examination.

The chair must inform the student of the outcome of the examination immediately following the decision of the examination committee.

#### **15. Lack of Unanimity**

Because unanimous decisions are required for all recommendations, if the examiners fail to reach unanimity, the Chair must immediately adjourn the meeting, record “Hung Jury” on the *Report of Final Examination* form, and immediately inform the Dean of Graduate Studies. Within one working day, each examiner must provide the Dean with a written post-examination report detailing the reasons for the assessment made by that examiner. In addition, the Chair must submit a written assessment of the examination. All reports must be copied to the Head of the graduate program.

#### **16. Approval Page Signatures**

After the examining committee has decided which recommendation to forward, depending upon the recommendation examiners may sign the approval pages, following the guidelines given in *Thesis Oral Examination Recommendations* (attached).

#### **17. Filing of the Examiner’s Reports**

After the examination, the original of each *Examiner’s Report* is forwarded to the Faculty of Graduate Studies to be kept on the candidate’s file as part of the permanent student record. The graduate program keeps a copy of each *Examiner’s Report* in order to make it available to the candidate **after** the examination.

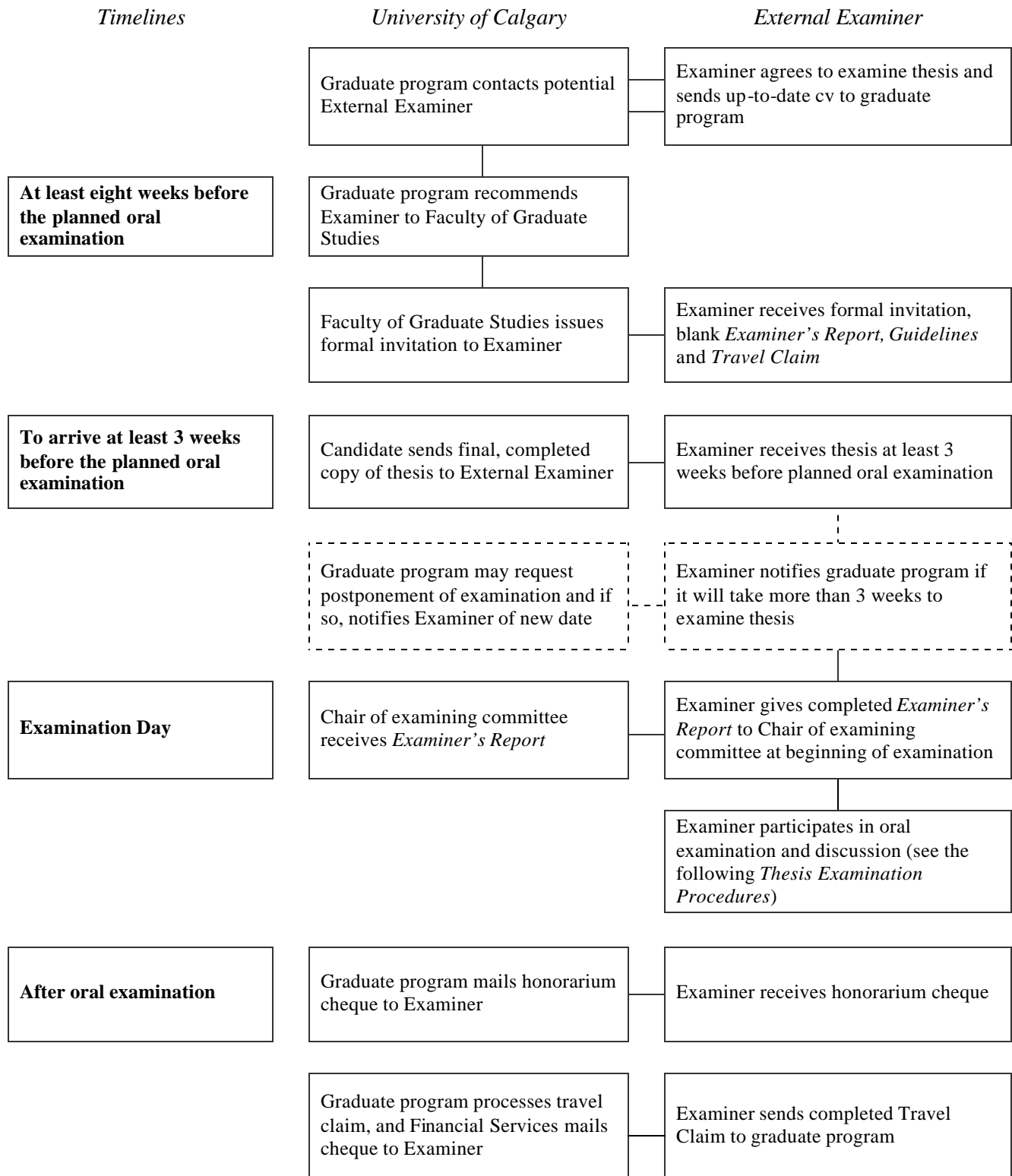
#### **18. Honorarium**

When the *Notice of Thesis Oral Examination* is received, the Faculty of Graduate Studies orders an honorarium cheque, which the graduate program presents to the External Examiner after the examination.

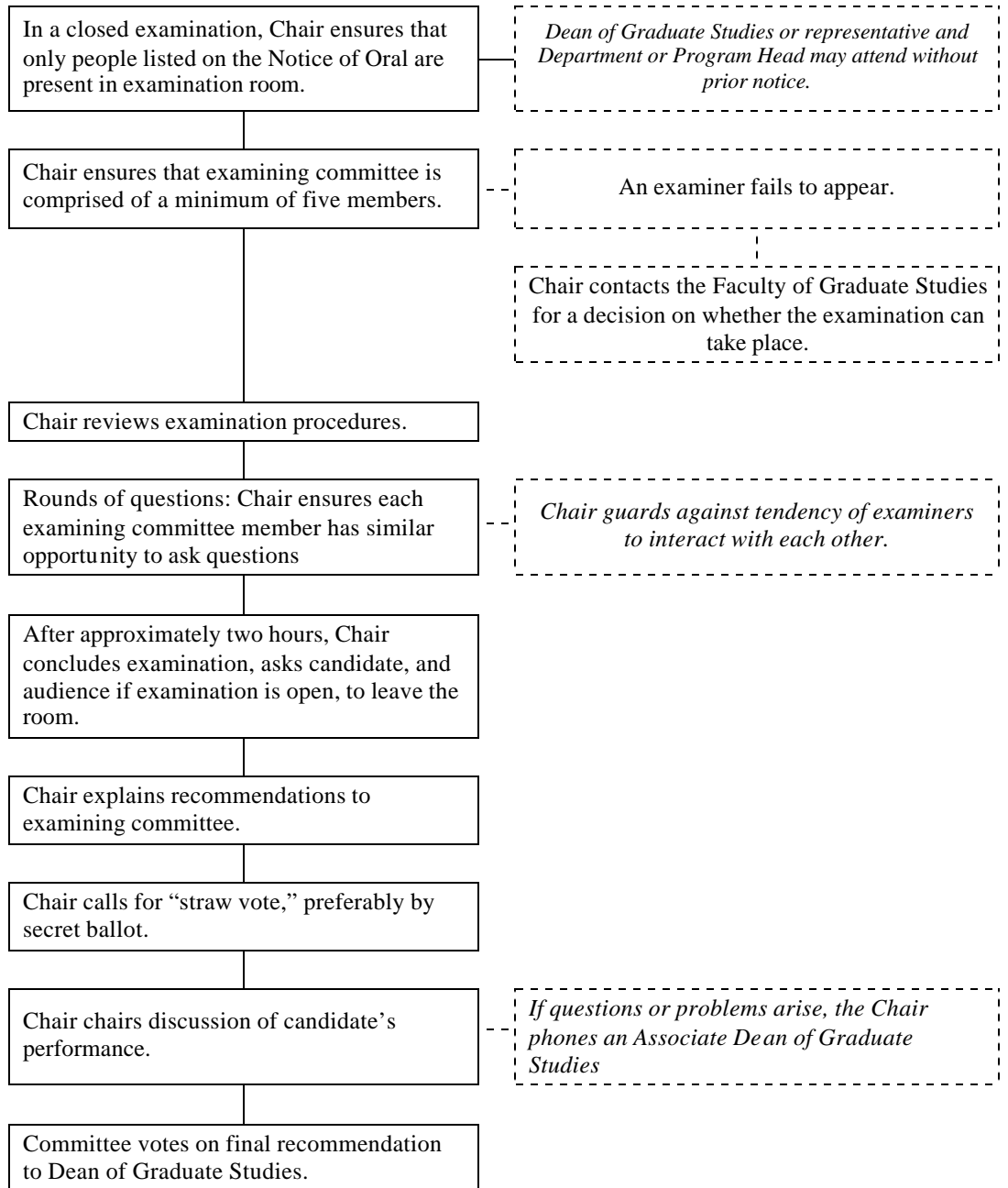
#### **19. Travel Expenses**

The External Examiner should submit travel expenses on a University of Calgary *Travel Claim* form to the graduate program for reimbursement.

## External Examiner's Part in the Thesis Examination Process



## Thesis Examination Procedures



If questions or problems arise, the Chair phones an Associate Dean of Graduate Studies

Committee votes on final recommendation to Dean of Graduate Studies.

**Pass – Recommendation 1/ 2**

**Fail – Recommendation 3/4**

**Lack of Unanimity**

On *Report of Thesis Oral Examination*, each member indicates “1” or “2” and initials recommendation.

On *Report of Thesis Oral Examination*, each member indicates “3” “4A” or “4B” and initials recommendation.

The Chair instructs each examiner to submit a report detailing the reasons for his or her assessment of the candidate to the Dean of Graduate Studies, with a copy to the program’s Graduate Coordinator, within 24 hours of the examination.

On the *Report*, the Chair indicates the committee recommendation, which must be identical to the individual recommendations, or “lack of unanimity” must be declared.

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The Chair adjourns the examination discussion and immediately brings the matter to the attention of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Chair informs student of committee decision.

Chair instructs each committee member to submit a written appraisal of the overall performance of the candidate to the Dean of Graduate Studies, with a copy to the program’s Graduate Coordinator, within five working days of the examination.

Chair ensures that FGS receives the *Report* within 24 hours of examination.

Chair informs student of committee decision.

Chair ensures that FGS receives the *Report* within 24 hours of examination.

Chair submits a report on the conduct of the examination that includes an appraisal of the overall examination performance of the candidate to the Dean of Graduate Studies, with a copy to the program’s Graduate Coordinator, within five working days of the examination.

The Dean consults with the Head of the program and those present at the examination.

Within seven days of receiving reports from the examining committee and the Chair, the Dean makes a decision and communicates it to all involved.

## THESIS ORAL EXAMINATION RECOMMENDATIONS

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THESIS ACCEPTABLE</b></p> <p>Transcript Entry: Pass</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Thesis acceptable, with or without minor revisions; oral defence acceptable</b></p> <p><i>All members of the examining committee sign the approval pages EXCEPT THE SUPERVISOR, who will sign after ensuring the necessary revisions have been made. As a general guide, if the committee does not feel that thesis revisions can be completed within a two-week time frame, it should consider Recommendation 2.</i></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THESIS REQUIRES RE-SUBMISSION</b></p> <p>Transcript Entry: Pass</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Underlying research judged to be sound, but thesis in need of recasting, addition of illustrative material or limited additional data; oral defence acceptable</b></p> <p><i>NONE* of the committee members sign approval pages until the revised document has been returned for the committee's final approval (no additional oral defence). As a general guide, if the committee does not feel that thesis revisions can be completed within a six-week time frame, it should consider Recommendation 4A.</i></p> <p><i>*In practice, recommendation 2 is often used in a situation where different members of the committee take on specific responsibilities for ensuring that a particular part of the thesis is revised as required. In these circumstances, the normal practice is for those with such responsibilities not to sign the approval page until the revisions have been made, while other members not so involved may sign immediately after the examination.</i></p>	<p><b>ORAL DEFENCE ACCEPTABLE</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THESIS ACCEPTABLE</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Thesis acceptable (must be recommendation 1 or 2). Oral defence unacceptable</b></p> <p><i>Within five working days, each examiner must provide the Dean of Graduate Studies with a written post-examination report detailing the reasons for the assessment made by that examiner. In addition, the chair must submit a written assessment of the examination. All reports must be copied to the Graduate Coordinator and the Program Head.</i></p> <p><i>Second attempt at oral defence no sooner than two months and no later than six months after the date of the initial examination. A second recommendation 3 is a recommendation that the candidate be required to withdraw from the Faculty of Graduate Studies.</i></p>	<p><b>ORAL DEFENCE UNACCEPTABLE</b></p> <p>Transcript Entry: Fail</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THESIS UNACCEPTABLE</b></p> <p>Transcript Entry: Fail</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Recommendation 4A</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Thesis does not meet minimum standards, but committee considers that further research and/or revision may bring it to an acceptable standard</b></p> <p><i>Within five working days, each examiner must provide the Dean of Graduate Studies with a written post-examination report detailing the reasons for the assessment made by that examiner. In addition, the chair must submit a written assessment of the examination. All reports must be copied to the Graduate Coordinator and the Program Head.</i></p> <p><i>Re-submission of thesis and re-take of oral defence no sooner than six months and no later than twelve months after the original defence.</i></p>	<p><b>ORAL EXAMINATION RE-TAKE</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THESIS UNACCEPTABLE</b></p> <p>Transcript Entry: Fail</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Recommendation 4B</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Thesis does not meet minimum standards and committee considers that no reasonable amount of additional research or revision is likely to bring it to an acceptable standard</b></p> <p><i>Within five working days, each examiner must provide the Dean of Graduate Studies with a written post-examination report detailing the reasons for the assessment made by that examiner. In addition, the chair must submit a written assessment of the examination. All reports must be copied to the Graduate Coordinator and the Program Head.</i></p> <p><i>Committee recommends that the candidate be required to withdraw from the Faculty of Graduate Studies.</i></p>	<p><b>CLEAR FAIL</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>HJ (Hung Jury) LACK OF UNANIMITY</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hung Jury</b></p> <p><i>Unanimous decisions are required for all recommendations. Should the examiners fail to achieve unanimity, the chairperson must adjourn the meeting, record "HJ" (Hung Jury) on the Report of Final Examination form, and immediately inform the Dean of Graduate Studies. Within five working days, each examiner must provide the Dean with a written post-examination report detailing the reasons for the assessment made by that examiner. In addition, the chairperson must submit a written assessment of the examination. All reports must be copied to the Graduate Coordinator and the Program Head.</i></p>	<p><b>DEAN'S ACTION</b></p>

Approved by Faculty of Graduate Studies Council, Meeting #324, 22 May 2002