Thesis and Dissertation Defense
Guidelines for Committee Members

The graduate faculty presumes that its members will exercise sound academic judgment in the conduct of all graduate examinations. The following instructions are guidelines to the conduct of an examination and specify the consequences of the balloting at the end of the examination.

1. **ATTENDANCE OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS**: Each member is expected to attend the entire examination. Those who cannot do so should ask the Thesis or Dissertation Committee Chair and the Dean of the Graduate School to appoint someone else. In no event shall the examination be held without a full complement of committee members. If at the time of the examination a committee member is absent, the student’s major advisor must notify the Graduate Dean and find a suitable replacement or cancel the examination. To verify that the replacement is a member of the Graduate Faculty, the advisor should call the Graduate Office, ext. 6552. If the absent member is the Graduate School representative, the advisor shall call the Graduate Office to request the immediate appointment of another representative.

2. **LENGTH OF THE EXAMINATION**: There is no time limit set by the Graduate School. However, at least two hours, but probably not more than three hours, should be scheduled for an examination. If questioning is not completed in a reasonable length of time, the examination may be adjourned until a later time, which is not to exceed three weeks duration from the scheduled examination date.

3. **COPIES OF THE THESIS OR DISSERTATION**: Each committee member shall have a copy to read at least seven working days prior to the examination. The oral examination is not to be held until the thesis or dissertation is in final draft (except for minor points brought out during the examination) as described in Guidelines For Preparing A Thesis or Dissertation. A vote to fail the candidate or adjourn the examination may be cast if the thesis or dissertation is incomplete or requires substantial rewriting.

4. **VOTING**: Committee members may discuss any topics concerning the candidate’s performance and qualification. However, committee members must cast their votes independently. A vote to pass, fail, or adjourn the examination to a later date may be cast. A candidate will pass the examination if all votes but one are to pass. A candidate will fail if there are two or more votes to fail, and the examination will be adjourned if there are two or more votes to adjourn. Two votes of fail override two votes to adjourn. One vote to fail...
and one vote to adjourn are not acceptable and an additional ballot or ballots must be cast. If the vote is to adjourn, the examination must reconvene within 3 weeks.

5. **GRADUATE FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE:**

- The Graduate Dean’s Representative will call the oral examination to order. The dean’s representative shall determine that the thesis or dissertation is in final draft form as required. In the event that the thesis or dissertation is found not to be in such form, the examination shall be adjourned and the Dean of the Graduate School notified immediately. It shall be the responsibility of the student and the advisor to bring the thesis or dissertation into a final presentable form according to the provision of the Guidelines for Preparing a Thesis or Dissertation.

- It will be the responsibility of the Dean’s Representative to see that the ground rules are discussed and understood by all present for the examination.

- Following this the major advisor assumes the chair and has the responsibility of presiding over the questioning of the candidate. Each member of the committee shall be given sufficient time and opportunity to question the candidate.

- After questioning of the candidate is complete, the Dean’s Representative shall resume the chair. The candidate is asked to leave the room. General discussion of the examination and the candidate’s performance should be allowed and encouraged before balloting.

- At the conclusion of the exam, each member of the committee will vote. The Dean’s Representative tallies the vote, announces the result, and executes the form titled Report of the Examination Committee and Dean’s Certificate.

- The candidate is informed of the results by the Committee Chair.

- The Dean’s Representative is responsible for delivery of the Dean’s Certificate to the Office of the Graduate School. **Under no circumstances shall the vote form be given to the student.**

6. **VISITORS:** Thesis and Dissertation defense meetings are open to the University community. Questions from visitors should be restricted to the thesis or dissertation or the clarification of prior answers and should not introduce new topics. Visitors’ questions should be addressed to the chair, who may use discretion in addressing them to the candidate. The length of time devoted to questioning of the candidate by visitors is at the discretion of the major advisor. Visitors should arrive before the examination begins and will be excused when the questioning of the candidate is complete.