PhD Dissertation Examination Procedural Guide

Every PhD student must: 1) successfully complete a Candidacy Examination; 2) successfully complete four (4) required course credits; and 3) take a pass/fail Dissertation Examination no later than 6 years after initial registration in the PhD program. Under the revised Doctoral Supervisory Committee (DSC) process, the separate Preliminary Dissertation Examination is replaced by a Research Completion DSC meeting and dissertation review for students following the revised pathway. Eligible continuing students may remain under the existing Preliminary Examination procedure, as outlined below.

Students are required to obtain research approval from TMU's Research Ethics Board (REB). Please see the following link for further information: https://www.torontomu.ca/research/resources/ethics.

Research Completion and Dissertation Review

Students following the revised DSC process will arrange a Special DSC meeting to establish Research Completion, normally approximately 6–8 months before the anticipated final PhD Dissertation Examination. This meeting is separate from the regular annual progress review and is intended to assess whether the student's research is sufficiently complete to proceed toward final dissertation preparation and examination. The student will present the research completed, the current status of the dissertation, and a plan for completion. At this stage, more than 90% of the research and more than 50% of the dissertation writing should be complete.

The DSC determines in advance whether a special-meeting report is required and its contents. Under the DSC process, required reports are circulated at least two weeks before the meeting. Special DSC meetings may be longer than the normal one-hour meetings.

After the Research Completion meeting, the student completes the dissertation and circulates it to the DSC for review. Members have at least two weeks to review the dissertation and provide feedback; the student makes any required revisions, and the DSC may review those revisions. The dissertation review process will generally take approximately 2–4 weeks, although additional time may be required depending on the extent of revisions. A separate Preliminary Dissertation Examination is not required under this pathway. Once the DSC is satisfied that the dissertation is ready for external examination, arrangements for the final defense proceed under university procedures.

Transitional Arrangements for Existing PhD Students

The revised Doctoral Supervisory Committee (DSC) process applies to all PhD students, regardless of their date of admission or stage of study. All students are required to establish a DSC and participate in annual supervisory committee meetings. However, transitional dissertation examination arrangements for continuing students will depend on their anticipated final examination date.

1. **Students who began their PhD studies in Fall 2026 or later, and continuing students who were less than 12 months into their studies as of Fall 2026**

These students will follow the revised DSC process, including the Research Completion meeting, dissertation review by the DSC, and final PhD Dissertation Examination. A separate Preliminary Dissertation Examination will not be required.

2. **Continuing students who were at least 12 months into their PhD studies as of Fall 2026**

These students must establish their DSC by the end of December 2026 and hold their initial DSC meeting by the end of February 2027. Following this initial meeting, students will participate in annual DSC meetings during the regular December meeting period (following the Fall examination period).

The dissertation examination procedure will depend on the student's anticipated final examination date:

- **Final examination expected before September 2027**: Students will normally follow the existing procedure, including the Preliminary Dissertation Examination followed by the final PhD Dissertation Examination. However, students may elect to follow the revised DSC process instead.

- **Final examination expected in September 2027 or later**: Students will follow the revised DSC process, including a Research Completion DSC meeting, dissertation review by the committee, and the final PhD Dissertation Examination. A separate Preliminary Dissertation Examination will not be required.

Students following the existing Preliminary Dissertation Examination procedure will continue to participate in regular DSC meetings, during which the committee may identify research concerns or recommendations to be addressed before the Preliminary Examination. However, these students are not required to undergo a separate Research Completion DSC meeting or dissertation review under the revised process, as the Preliminary Dissertation Examination serves as the formal assessment of readiness to proceed to the final Dissertation Examination.

Students should consult their supervisor and the Graduate Program Office to confirm which examination pathway applies to their circumstances.

Final Dissertation Examination – Committee and External Examiner Nomination, and Exam Scheduling

Following DSC clearance to proceed under the revised pathway, or successful completion of the Preliminary Dissertation Examination and approval of the internal evaluation under the existing pathway, the supervisor must submit a Dissertation Examining Committee Nomination Form and an External Examiner Nomination Form to the Graduate Program Administrator at least 7 weeks (35 business days) before the anticipated final examination. The Graduate Program Administrator will then liaise with YSGPS regarding the required reviews and approvals. The supervisor and student are responsible for arranging an examination Chair.

The Dean of the Yeates School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies will evaluate the examination committee and CV of the potential external examiner. Once approved, the student must email a .pdf of their dissertation along with a PhD Dissertation Oral Examination Scheduling Request Form to the Graduate Program Administrator no later than 6 weeks (30 business days) prior to the exam. Once the external examiner appointment is approved, the Graduate Program Administrator will then email a copy of the dissertation to the external examiner to evaluate; a copy is also forwarded to the exam Chair once a favourable appraisal is received from the external examiner. The supervisor and student must distribute copies of the dissertation to the rest of the examining committee at least 6 weeks (30 business days) prior to the exam. The external examiner will be asked to return a written report and approval to proceed no later than 2 weeks (14 business days) prior to the examination. The written report will be given to the Chair of the Examining Committee, the Supervisor, and the PhD candidate.

An *examining committee must be formed that consists of the following:

Examination Chair: 1
Supervisor and any co-supervisors: 1
External Examiner: 1
YSGPS Faculty – Outside Program: 1
YSGPS Faculty – Within Program: 2

The Ph.D. Exam will consist of:

- A 20 minute public presentation of the research.
- A brief 10 minutes of public questions and answers.
- A closed questioning period by the Examining Committee.
- A final closed deliberation of the candidate's dissertation defense.

Following a successful oral exam, the student must revise the dissertation in accordance with the requirements of the examining committee and YSGPS regulations. The student should e-mail an electronic .pdf of their dissertation to their Graduate Program Administrator well in advance of the final deadline so as to ensure the format meets YSGPS and Toronto Metropolitan University academic publication standards.

Upon completion of all required corrections and/or revisions to the dissertation, the student's supervisor (with the student's co-supervisors copied) must inform the Graduate Program Administrator via e-mail that the dissertation has been corrected/revised as required by the Exam Committee and is ready for submission to the program/YSGPS. Please contact the Graduate Program Administrator (aerograd@torontomu.ca) for further instructions.

The copies of the dissertation will be allocated as follows: 1) A .pdf electronic copy, and; 2) a National Library Form (NLC) (https://www.torontomu.ca/content/dam/graduate/student-guide/academic-matters/forms/Updated-TMU-NLC-Form.pdf) must be submitted.

Please see the YSGPS website dissertation/dissertation submission info: https://www.torontomu.ca/graduate/student-guide/thesis-exams-graduation/dissertation-thesis/

*Any additional committee members over the minimum requires the written consent of the student.