

Defence Chairing List

Thanks for agreeing to chair the defence! This started as a checklist but is now more of a flow chart. If the exam result is anything other than PSD on things, it might get interesting. Email me and I can send you more info and sample email texts

Pre defence

1) I like to start the defence early and talk to the student, so they know how things happen:

Introductions

20 min talk for MSc (I usually give 20-25 min)

Questions from audience

First block of defence questions

BREAK – 5 to 10 min

Second block of questions

*I add a break so that the student doesn't have to ask. It's me asking

*Usually by then everyone needs a Bio Break.

2) Bring in committee as they arrive.

Put student in waiting room

3) talk to committee

-ask committee if they've read the document (if no, have problem)

- ask committee if the thesis is defensible

- optional: ask committee if there are any issues with the thesis (i.e. surprises)

-decide on order of questions: least related to work, then committee member(s), then supervisor

Tell them the amount of time per block: ~12 min first round (I tell them at the 10- or 11-min mark by zoom chat); ~8-10 min second round (warning at 7)

4) TALK:

Bring in audience + candidate

Candidate shares slides, Chair gives general introduction (who I am, ask people to keep mics off)

Introduce candidate (usually the supervisor; sometimes not though...)

Let candidate know they're nearing end of block at 20 min.

Never had to cut anyone off, but I would (gently) at 25 min.

5) Ask if there are questions from the audience

Give a couple minutes of time to think, put up zoom hand.

6) Immediately go to Defence. They are open to the public; candidate can't ask for closed defence unless it's previously approved by YSGS & Dean.

- outline order of questions & round length
- mention break (ask candidate if they want 5 or 10 min)

7) ROUND 1:

10 to 15 min for MSc (usually 12 is good upper end)
~15 min for PhD (longer for external is ok)

8) BREAK- candidate can ask for shorter (5 min break), but usually everyone needs the break at that point

9) ROUND 2:

8-10 min for MSc
10-12 min for PhD

10) ask if there are any lingering questions from each member of committee, in order

11) DELIBERATIONS

- tell people you're going to put them into waiting room while committee deliberates (but you'll bring them all back at the end if they want to stay)
- put candidate and audience in waiting room

-ask committee if they want a general chat or consider the 3 exam questions in order

-share "Report of Examining Committee" form on screen

Q1- Oral exam choices are PSD/Defer/FLD

- Defer means we all get back together again later , rare
- FLD is serious, major issues would be present, really rare

Most cases is PSD, even if not a perfect event ☺

Q2- Thesis choices are PSD/Defer/FLD

-PSD can include minor revisions. Examiners send comments to student and supervisor. Supervisor responsible for implementing changes

- Defer- means a full rewrite and re-evaluation at a later date; rare
- Fail – you should have heard about this at the start; really rare

Q3 – Gold medal award- this varies with the committee

Generally, PhD students win it.

Need high grades and several publications

BUT- if MSc student is exceptional, it might be a nice thing to nominate.

There is no block to the number of nominations from committees; *we can only send one forward, but it's nice to nominate an exceptional student even if they don't get through*

CHAIR SIGNS THE FORM. Chair tells committee that they will email all this form. Members need to either sign this form and send to all , OR, can reply all to email confirming results

-once decided, ask if supervisor wants to tell candidate results

-bring in candidate only- tell the news. You can also tell them that edits will be send to them by examiners (if not already) and that the supervisor is responsible for seeing they are done.

-round of congratulations

-bring in audience- supervisor again can tell everyone the news.

* not sure what would happen if it were a deferral; hopefully this doesn't happen

12) EMAIL THE COMMITTEE & STUDENT the results

send an email to all of the following:

The student,

All committee members

The supervisor

Sarah Kovacs

The GPD (ssabatinos@ryerson.ca)

* You can usually find the emails in your Google calendar invite, then add Kovacs and GPD ☺

* Include the PDF of report of examining committee form

A sample email is on the next page if you'd like to use/modify

SUBJECT: Defence Results – Student Name

EMAIL:

Dear Ms/Mr [Last name student] and colleagues

I am delighted to inform you that **Student Name has passed his/her MSc defence**. The results of the decision are here:

- 1) Oral defence – (unanimous) **PASS**
- 2) Written thesis – (unanimous) **PASS**. The committee requested minor revisions to be made, and that Dr {Supervisor} will be responsible for ensuring that they are applied to the final thesis document. Specific comments from the examiners will be sent by email directly to Dr {Supervisor} and Ms/Mr {Student}.
- 3) The unanimous decision of the MSc defence is **PASSED**

(OPTIONAL: Recognizing the quality of the thesis and Mr Mercer's excellent research and academics, all committee members recommended Mr Mercer for the Governor General's Gold Medal Award- congratulations!)

All committee members are requested to review the attached document, and the statements above. Instead of signing the form, committee members are requested to confirm their agreement with these statements, and the defence outcome, in an email reply to all at your earliest convenience.

Congratulations [student first name]!! Best of luck in the next steps of your scientific career!

Best wishes,
Sarah