



Inter-University Doctoral Program in Educational Studies

# IDAC Guide for Chairing a PhD Defence

This document is based on the defence guidelines created by the Division of Research and Graduate Studies, Acadia University.

### The Examining Committee:

The Examining Committee normally will consist of the following four or five members:

- 1) External Examiner
- 2) Committee Member
- 3) Committee Member
- 4) Supervisor (s)

A Chair is appointed by the University to preside over the Examination.\*

All members of the Examining Committee are expected to have read the thesis.

#### Role of Chair

The role of Chair is to preside over the examination to ensure that the examination is conducted following proper University procedures. The Chair is expected to ensure that:

- the candidate is treated fairly throughout the examination;
- has ample opportunity to defend the dissertation; and,
- that the candidate, alone, defends the dissertation.

The Chair has the authority to intervene in the event of inappropriate conduct.

#### Procedures to be followed when acting as Chair of an oral examination:

##### In the absence of the candidate, the Chair will:

- confirm that members of the Examining Committee have read the dissertation and are prepared to participate in the examination;
- review the procedure to be followed; and, determine an order of questioning.

#### **Candidate's presentation and question period (open to the public)**

##### The Chair will:

- state the Territorial Acknowledgement used by the home institution.
- introduce the candidate, self as Chair, and members of the Examining Committee; and,
- invite the candidate to present the dissertation in a MAXIMUM of 20 minutes; and,
- invite the Examining Committee, beginning with the External Examiner, to engage the candidate in rounds of questioning. Once committee members are satisfied that sufficient opportunity has been given to assess the candidate's defence, guests, and public present are invited to ask questions of the candidate.

## Deliberation of the Examining Committee (closed to the public)

In a private session immediately following the presentation and question period, the Chair will:

- invite the Examining Committee to discuss the dissertation and defence;
- review the voting procedure with the Examining Committee;
- invite the Committee to determine the acceptability of the dissertation by majority vote; and,
- according to one of the following four assessments:

1. *Unconditional pass*

The External Examiner and members of the Supervisory Committee, including the Dissertation Supervisor, sign a Dissertation Defence Assessment form (Appendix 1). The candidate can submit the Dissertation, according to the home institution's guidelines, without revision.

2. *Conditional pass with minor revision*

The External Examiner and members of the Supervisory Committee, excluding the Dissertation Supervisor, sign the Dissertation Defence Assessment form (Appendix 1). The candidate is required to complete minor revisions that do not necessitate substantial alteration of the content, argument, or implications of the thesis. Once revisions have been completed, the candidate can submit the Dissertation, according to the home institution's guidelines. The dissertation Supervisor will be entrusted to oversee the completion of these revisions and will withhold her/his signature from the Dissertation Defence Assessment form until the revisions identified at the defence are satisfactorily completed. The candidate must normally complete all revisions within one month of the defence.

3. *Conditional pass with major revision*

The External Examiner signs the Dissertation Defence Assessment form (Appendix 1), but Supervisory Committee members and Dissertation Supervisor do not. The candidate is required to complete major revisions that include alteration of the content, argument, or implications of the thesis. Once revisions have been completed, the candidate can submit the Dissertation, according to the home institution's guidelines. The Supervisory Committee will be entrusted to oversee the completion of these revisions and will withhold their signatures from the Dissertation Defence Assessment form until the revisions identified at the defence are finished. The candidate must complete all revisions within one month of the Dissertation defence.

4. *Fail*

The External Examiner and Supervisory Committee do not sign the Dissertation Defence Assessment form (Appendix 1) accepting the thesis. The candidate is required to withdraw from the PhD program and is not permitted to resubmit the dissertation for approval.

The candidate will be informed of the outcome immediately following the Committee's decision.

The Chair will then return Assessment Form and any other relevant materials to the IDAC Office and to the appropriate office of the home institution.

Appendix 1

**Inter-University PhD in Educational Studies  
Dissertation Defence Assessment Form**

The members of the PhD Dissertation Supervisory Committee agree that:

(Student's name): \_\_\_\_\_ (Student #) \_\_\_\_\_

PhD Dissertation entitled: \_\_\_\_\_

receives the following assessment<sup>1</sup> on this date:

- Unconditional Pass.** Candidate can submit dissertation without revisions.
- Conditional Pass with Minor Revisions.** Revisions do not require substantial alteration of the content, argument and/or implications of the thesis. All revisions must be completed within one month of the dissertation defence date (specify re-submission date):
- Conditional Pass with Major Revisions.** Revisions require substantial alteration of the content, argument and/or implications of the thesis. All revisions must be completed within one month of the dissertation defence date (specify re-submission date: \_\_\_\_\_).
- Fail.** Candidate is required to withdraw from the PhD program and is not permitted to resubmit the dissertation for approval.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Dissertation Supervisor      Signature      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Committee Member      Signature      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Committee Member      Signature      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Committee Member      Signature      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of External Examiner      Signature      Date

<sup>1</sup> In a private session immediately following the presentation and question period, the Supervisory Committee and External Examiner will decide on the acceptability of the dissertation. Candidates will be informed about the outcome of the dissertation defence immediately following the committee decision, on the same day.