



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY | Cumming School of Medicine

NEUTRAL CHAIR GUIDELINES

Prepared for:

Graduate Science Education

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Purpose

These Neutral Chair Guidelines provide consistency in the examination process across Graduate Science Education (GSE) programs and are to be used by the Neutral Chair during graduate science examinations. The guidelines outline the procedure for the different types of examinations that require a Neutral Chair and include requirements from FGS and GSE.

All Neutral Chairs are required to have either an associate or full professor status.

Neutral Chair Responsibilities

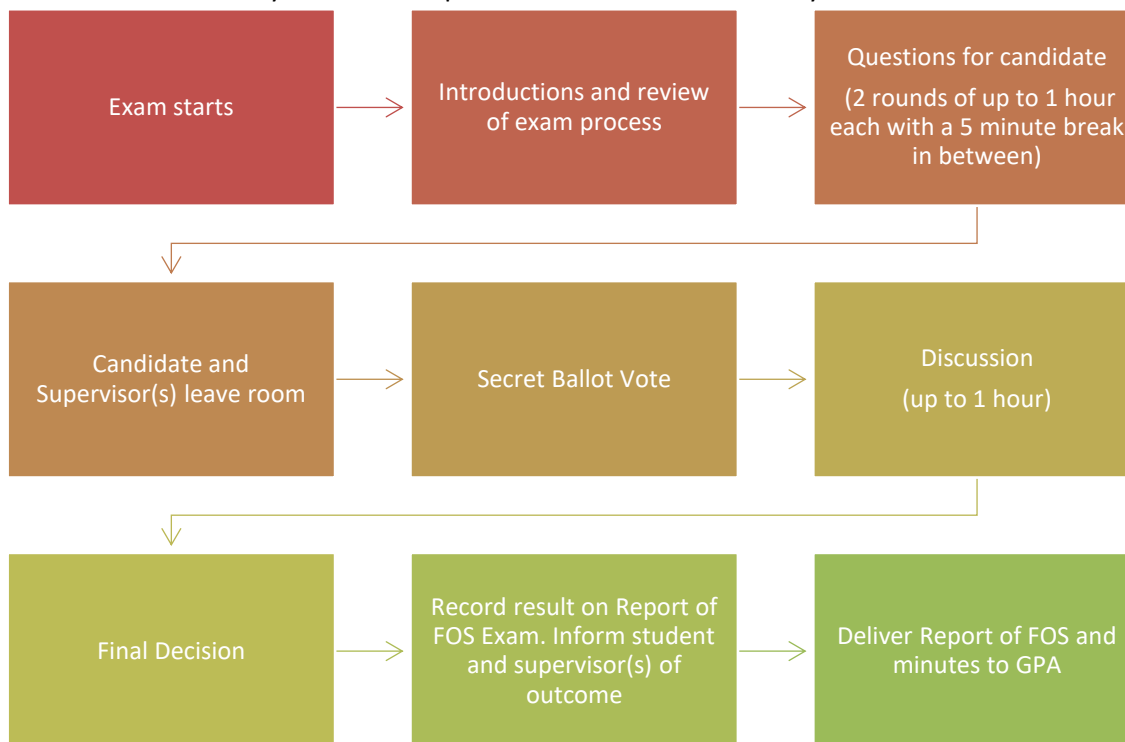
A Neutral Chair will be the chair for all official examinations of graduate students include the PhD Field of Study and Final Thesis Oral Defense Examinations. The responsibilities of a Neutral Chair include ensuring fairness during the examination, managing the time for exams, recording minutes of the exam, managing official documents, recording the result of the exam, and ensuring that the exam adheres to the rules and regulations of both the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) and GSE.

GSE Contact Information

Should you have any questions regarding these guidelines, please reach out to the program Graduate Program Administrator (GPA). Contact information for the GSE office is available [here](#).

PhD Field of Study Exam – Neutral Chair Instructions

Below is a visual summary of the entire process for a PhD Field of Study Exam.



Voting Outcomes for the PhD FOS Candidacy Exam, including CHS

Votes	Outcome	Re-Take Outcomes
Unanimous Pass	Pass	
1 Fail vote	Pass	
2 or more Fail votes	Fail	Required Withdrawal if the exam outcome is a fail twice. The exam committee, including the Neutral Chair, will be the same for the re-take examination.
Unanimous Fail	Fail	

Potential Outcomes for each component of the PhD FOS Candidacy Exam – Community Health Sciences (CHS) only

Written	Oral	Outcome	Re-Take Outcomes
Pass	Pass	Pass	Required Withdrawal if the exam outcome is a fail twice. The exam committee, including the Neutral Chair, will be the same for the re-take examination.
Pass	Fail	Re-take Oral only	
Fail	Pass	Re-take Written only	
Fail	Fail	Re-take both Written and Oral	

Role of the Neutral Chair

The role of the Neutral Chair is to ensure that the exam follows the process outlined in the [GSE Candidacy Policy](#) or [CHS Candidacy Policy](#), as applicable. As part of this role, the Neutral Chair will

1. Ensure questioning from examiners lasts no more than 2 hours.
2. Ensure the deliberations for the outcome last no more than 1 hour
3. Does not question student or offer opinions that would sway the examining committee
4. Reports result to the student, supervisor(s), and Graduate Program Administrator (GPA) who will forward the outcome to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.
5. Record minutes of the exam. These minutes
 - i. Can be handwritten or typed
 - ii. Include date and time of exam start, names of examiners, and start/end time of each examiner's questions
 - iii. Summarize the questioning of the student and any anomalies or challenges that occurred (detailed listing of the questions and responses is not necessary);
 - iv. Include the time the exam concluded and the time the deliberation concluded (a summary of deliberations is all that is necessary).
 - v. Are submitted to the program GPA with the other exam paperwork at the end of the exam. **In the case of a failed exam**, these minutes can be used by the Neutral Chair as a reference for writing their report to the Associate Dean, GSE.
6. If an examiner is participating virtually, record his/her vote, provided verbally at the conclusion of the exam. Further information regarding virtual exams is included in the **Virtual Exam Process** section of these guidelines.
7. Ensure examiners adhere to questioning guidelines:
 - a. The FOS exam is to be based on the broad field of knowledge required to carry out the research proposal as specified on the FOS Preparation Form, and not based on the proposal *per se*.
 - i. **For CHS FOS Oral Exams**, the Written Exam is understood to serve as the basis from which the Oral Exam shall proceed. However, written answers will not be directly re-evaluated in the Oral Examination. Although examiners are not limited to the written component in framing the questions asked, the concept map and reading lists will determine the scope of the material to be examined during the Oral Exam.
 - b. Questions from examiners must be clear and succinct
 - c. Examiners should only direct their questions to the candidate and not discuss with other examiners during the exam
 - d. If the student has understood the question and cannot answer, the examiner should pass to another question and not attempt to extract an answer by prolonged interrogation or by leading the candidate
8. Report the outcome of the exam to the student and supervisor(s) once deliberations have concluded.
9. Report the outcome of the exam, via the Report of Field of Study Exam, to the Graduate Program Administrator immediately following the conclusion of the exam

Prior to Examination

At least two weeks prior to the exam, the Graduate Program Administrator (GPA) will email to the Neutral Chair:

1. Exam meeting information, including the name of the student, date, time, and where the exam will be held.
2. Applicable Candidacy policy (either the [GSE Candidacy Policy](#) or the [CHS Candidacy Policy](#))
3. Checklist for Chairing FOS exams
4. Notice of the Field of Study exam, which includes the full list of the examination committee members
5. Report of Field of Study exam, to be submitted to the GPA following the conclusion of the exam
6. Copy of Field of Study Preparation form, which outlines the topics for the exam
 - **For CHS FOS exams**, the Concept Map and Written Responses to the FOS questions will be forwarded in place of the Field of Study Preparation form
7. The contact information for the Associate Dean, GSE who can be contacted in the case of a procedural anomaly, such as an examiner failing to appear for the exam within 30 minutes of the start time.
8. **For virtual exams**, a Contingency form and backup phone numbers for all attending
9. **A Neutral Chair Script for Candidacy exams is available in Appendix A.**

You will also be included on the email to the examining committee, sent two weeks prior to the exam (**four weeks prior for CHS exams**) and again as a reminder one week before the exam.

Process for the Exam – Oral Field of Study Exam

The process below is to be used for in-person exams. For those exams where one or more attendees are attending virtually, please refer to the “**Virtual Exam Process**” section.

Conducting the Examination

The following occurs with the student and supervisor(s) present.

1. Welcome exam committee members and introduce examining committee and student.
2. Remind participants to turn off cell phones, pagers, and laptops.
3. All examiners must be present for every part of the exam process. If an examiner needs to leave the room once the exam has begun, the exam will stop until they return.
4. Field of Study exams are closed exams. Only those listed on the **Notice of PhD FOS Examination** are to be present. **Note:** The Dean of Graduate Studies (or representative) and Department Head (or designate) may attend without prior notice.
5. Students may bring their proposal to the exam.
6. **For CHS exams only – all examiners’ evaluation reports for the Written Component of the Field of Study exam must be submitted before the exam may begin.**
7. Supervisor and Co-supervisor are non-voting members and do not ask questions.
8. Questions to be based around the reading list and/or predetermined topics as outlined in the Field of Study Prep Form.
9. Questions are normally asked in two “rounds” of one (1) hour each, with a short break in between. This break should be considered part of the time for questions.
10. Normally questioning will begin with the examiner who is most external to the committee.
11. Examiner may “pass” if they have no further questions.
12. Time permitting, the neutral chair may welcome additional questions from the examination committee at the end of the examination.

13. Once examiners are satisfied that all their questions have been answered and/or the 2-hour time limit is up, the student and supervisor(s) are asked to leave the room by the Chair.

Post-Examination Discussion Process

The following occurs with the supervisor(s) and student absent.

1. Conduct a secret ballot vote to determine each examiner's recommendation. **Candidacy oral exam results are either Pass or Fail.**
 - a. **CHS FOS exams only** – All examiners must submit a vote on both the written and oral parts of the exam. Each component of the FOS (Written and Oral) will be evaluated independently.
2. The Neutral Chair summarizes the results of the votes verbally. No minutes are taken during the deliberation.
3. Begin discussion with external examiners.
 - a. The Neutral Chair should aid the discussion by ensuring the committee is focused and by summarizing any issues.
 - b. The Neutral Chair must NOT to participate in the discussion or give an opinion on the recommendation.
 - c. In determining the final recommendation, refer the committee back to the relevant FOS exam policy which includes the implications of a pass or fail vote. These are also summarized in the tables following this section.
4. If consensus on the recommendation is not reached, there are two possible outcomes:
 - a. If the outcome includes one negative vote, the committee recommendation will be Pass.
 - b. If the outcome includes two or more negative votes, the committee recommendation will be Fail.
5. The **Report of FOS Oral Examination** is then circulated to the committee members to indicate their final recommendation and initial. The Neutral Chair signs to acknowledge that all results have been received on the form.
6. Student and Supervisor are called back into the room by the Neutral Chair and provide the results of the exam. The Neutral Chair may choose to provide the results to the student and supervisor in private if the exam was not successful.
7. The Neutral Chair returns the **Report of FOS Oral Examination** to the Graduate Program Administrator immediately following the exam.
8. In the case of a Fail, the GPA will facilitate the collection of reports from all members of the examining committee, including the Neutral Chair, Supervisor, and Co-Supervisor. Instructions on this process will be emailed by the GPA to all involved once the GPA has received the results. Reports must be addressed to the Associate Dean, Graduate Science Education and must be emailed to the GPA within 5 working days of the exam.

Potential Outcomes for the PhD FOS Candidacy Exam

Voting outcomes for all programs, including CHS

Votes	Outcome	Re-Take Outcomes
Unanimous Pass	Pass	Required Withdrawal if the exam outcome is a failure twice.
1 Fail vote	Pass	
2 or more Fail votes	Fail	The exam committee, including the Neutral Chair, will be the same for the re-take examination.
Unanimous Fail	Fail	

Potential outcomes for each component of the PhD FOS Candidacy Exam (CHS only)

Written	Oral	Outcome	Re-Take Outcomes
Pass	Pass	Pass	Required Withdrawal if the same component is a failure twice.
Pass	Fail*	Re-take Oral only	
Fail*	Pass	Re-take Written only	
Fail*	Fail*	Re-take both Written and Oral	

****2 or more votes of "Fail" are required for an outcome of "Fail"***

Neutral Chair Checklist – Field of Study (FOS) Exams

Before the exam

Please note that the GPA will attend the beginning of the exam to set up the room and/or ensure virtual connections are stable. In the event of an unusual circumstance occurring during the exam, please contact the GPA immediately. In case of emergency, please follow University of Calgary emergency procedures.

- At least two weeks before the exam, you will receive an email from the GPA which includes:
 - Exam meeting information
 - Applicable Candidacy policy (either the [GSE Candidacy Policy](#) or the [CHS Candidacy Policy](#))
 - Checklist for Chairing Field of Study Exams
 - Notice of the Field of Study Exam
 - Report of the Field of Study Exam
 - Copy of Field of Study Preparation form
 - **For CHS exams**, the Concept Map and Written Responses to the FOS questions will be sent in place of the FOS Preparation form
 - The contact information for the Associate Dean, GSE
 - For remote exams**, a Contingency form and backup phone numbers for all attending
- Review the applicable Candidacy policy for the exam procedures:
 - [GSE Candidacy Policy](#)
 - [CHS Candidacy Policy](#)

What to take to the exam

- Notice of the Field of Study Exam
- Report of the Field of Study exam
- Copy of Field of Study Preparation form
 - **For CHS exams**, the Concept Map and Written Responses to the FOS questions will take the place of the FOS Preparation form
- Copy of the relevant exam policy: [GSE Candidacy Policy](#) or the [CHS Candidacy Policy](#)
- Slips of paper for secret ballot votes
- Pens for whiteboard (backup)
- Notepad and pen
 - The Chair must record brief minutes for the exam in the event a report to the Associate Dean, GSE is required (see Neutral Chair Guidelines)
 - It is also the Chair's responsibility to convey decisions to the student
- Watch and/ or timer

At the exam

- Arrive 10 minutes early
- Introductions and reminder to turn off cell phones/pagers/laptops
- For CHS exams only** – Collect examiners' evaluations of the FOS written responses
- Explain procedure of exam:
 - Note that the supervisor(s) is a non-voting member of the committee and may not ask questions. They will leave the room with the student before the discussion begins
 - Examiner most external to the committee will start the questions, then the other examiner, then the supervisory committee members

- Exam normally lasts up to 2 hours
- Two rounds of questions. There may be time for additional questions at the end
- First round of questions:
 - Each examiner is given 15 minutes maximum
 - Avoid questioning directly related to the proposal as this has already been evaluated.
- If an examiner leaves the room, the clock stops until they return
- Offer a break after the first round of questions

Discussion

- Student and supervisor(s) leave
 - Advise them that they should speak to the GPA about where they can wait if they would like to stay in the GSE office. **Waiting in the reception area of the GSE/Family Medicine Office is not permitted** out of respect for the Family Medicine staff.
 - **For virtual exams, the student and supervisor(s) must leave the meeting. The Neutral Chair can contact them by email or phone when it is time to return.**
- Explain procedures
 - Secret ballot vote - provides frame of opinion to initiate discussion. **For virtual exams, votes may be collected through email to the Neutral Chair or by using the private chat function on Zoom.**
 - Collect votes
 - Discussion – goal is to reach a consensus recommendation; however unanimous decisions are not required - **it takes at least 2 negative votes to fail**
- Complete the Report of Field of Study Exam form
- Inform student and supervisor(s) of decision and provide a summary of the feedback from the examining committee
- Thank everyone and remind examiners about voter and discussion confidentiality
- Deliver reports to the program GPA immediately after the exam.

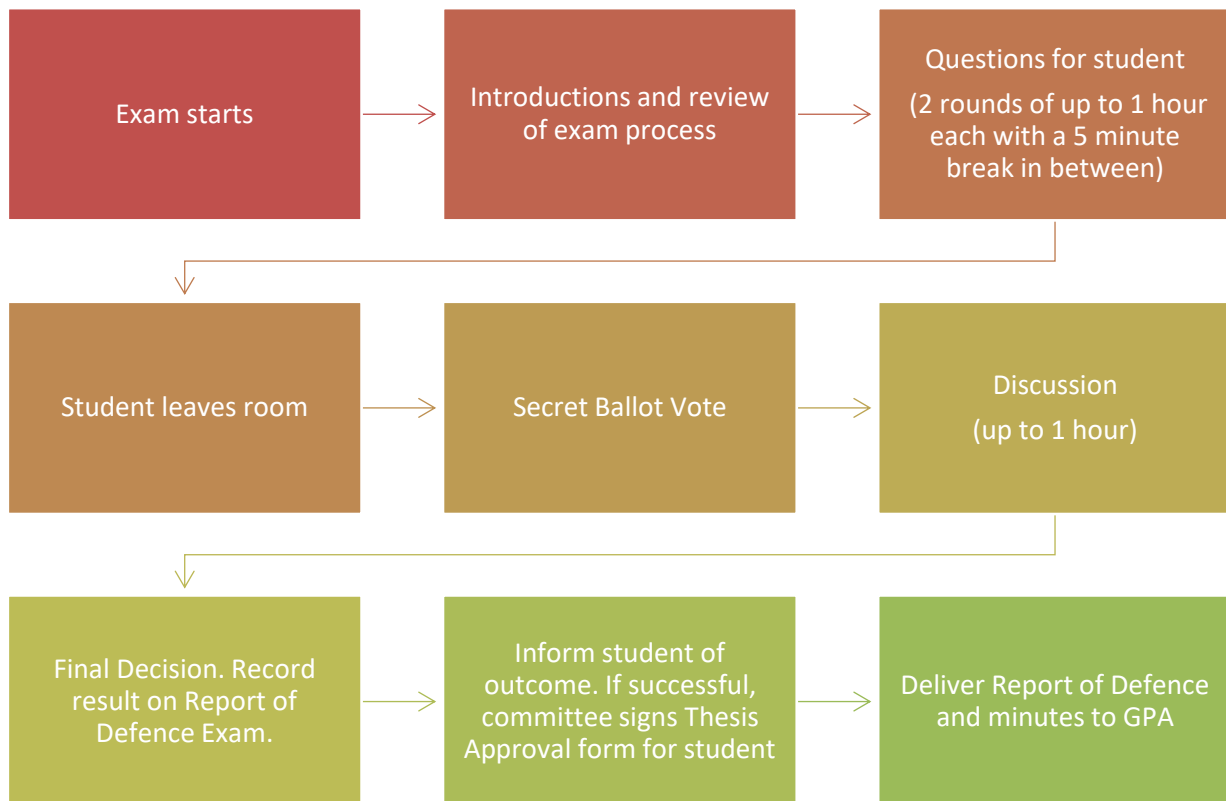
In the event of a Fail

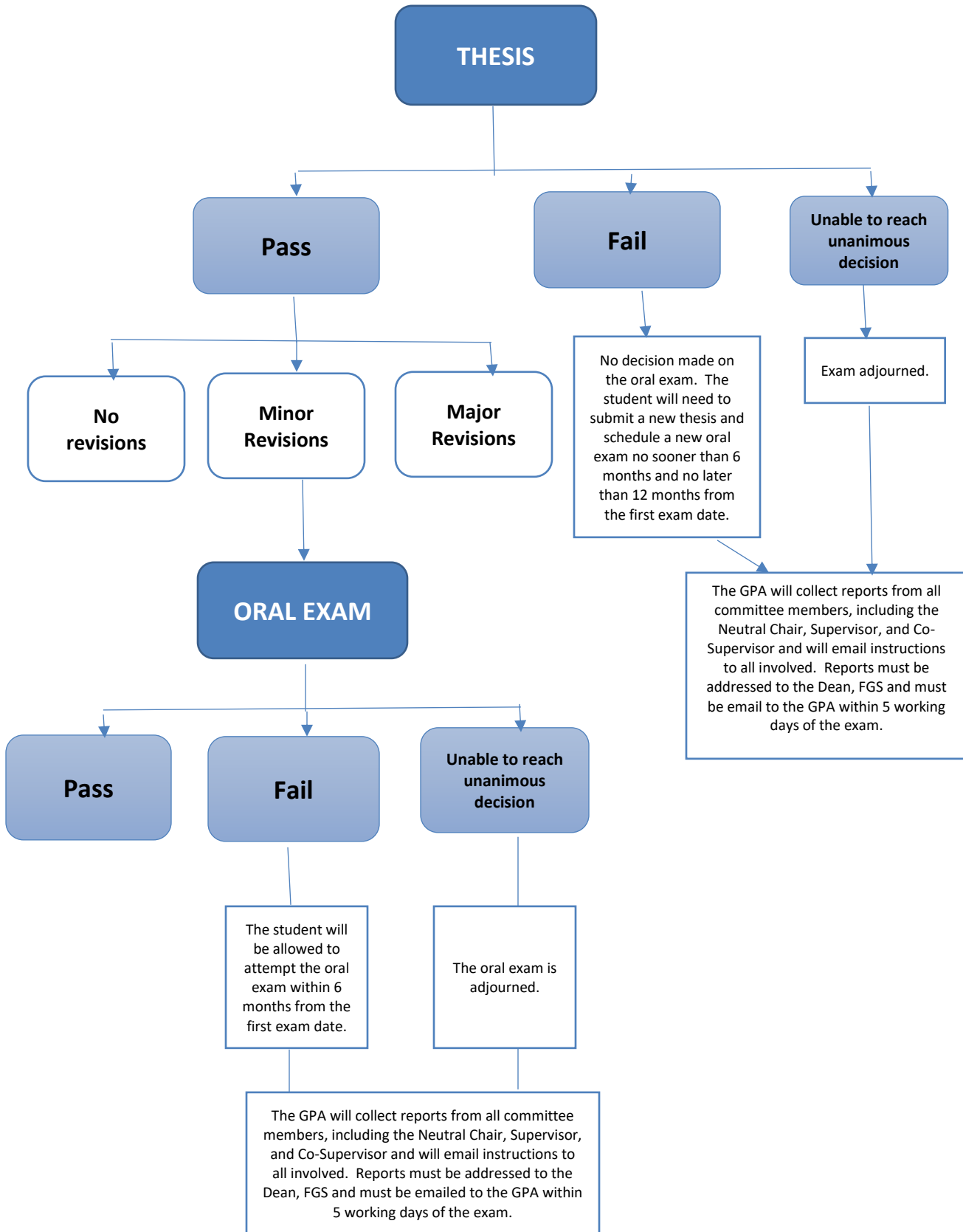
- Refer to the guidelines in the [GSE Candidacy Policy](#) or [CHS Candidacy Policy](#). In brief:
 - Retake within 2-6 months if first fail
 - Possibility to transfer to MSc program if first fail
 - In all cases, the chair, and all exam committee members including the supervisor(s), must send reports within 5 days to the GPA. Instructions about this process will be sent by the GPA immediately following the submission of the exam report.

Thesis Defence Exam

The process outlined below is for the current defence policy. If a student will be using an earlier defence policy (prior to 2014) the information regarding the process for the exam will be sent to you by the GPA.

Below is a visual summary of the entire process for a Thesis Defence Exam.





Role of the Neutral Chair

The role of the Neutral Chair is to ensure that the exam follows the process outlined in the [FGS Thesis Examination Policy](#). As part of this role, the Neutral Chair will

1. Ensure questioning from examiners lasts no more than 2 hours.
2. Ensure the deliberations for the outcome last no more than 1 hour
3. Not question the student or offer opinions that would sway the examining committee
4. Reports result to the student, supervisor(s), and Graduate Program Administrator (GPA) who will forward the outcome to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.
5. Record minutes of the exam. These minutes should be brief (one page or less), and:
 - i. Can be handwritten or typed
 - ii. Include date and time of exam start, names of examiners, and start/end time of each examiner's questions (a detailed listing of the questions and responses is not necessary);
 - iii. Summarize any anomalies or challenges that occurred
 - iv. Include the time the exam concluded and the time the deliberation concluded (a summary of deliberations is all that is necessary).
6. If an examiner is participating virtually, record his/her vote, provided verbally at the conclusion of the exam. Further information regarding virtual exams is included in the **Virtual Exam Process** section.
7. If an examiner is participating via distance, receives his/her **Examiner's Report on Thesis** prior to the exam and record his/her vote, provided verbally at the conclusion of the exam. Further information regarding virtual exams is included in the **Virtual Exam Process** section of these guidelines.
8. Ensure examiners adhere to questioning guidelines:
 - a. the questions must be relevant to the thesis document. (Section M.7.1 of the [FGS Thesis Exam policy](#))
 - b. Questions from examiners must be clear and succinct
 - c. Examiners should only direct their questions to the candidate and not discuss with other examiners during the exam
 - d. If the student has understood the question and cannot answer, the examiner should pass to another question and not attempt to extract an answer by prolonged interrogation or by leading the candidate
9. Report the outcome of the exam to the student once deliberations have concluded.
10. Record the result on the **Report of Final Master's /PhD Thesis Oral Examination** before examiners leave.
11. Submit the Report of Final Master's/PhD Thesis Oral Examination and the meeting minutes to the Graduate Program Administrator immediately following the conclusion of the exam. Remind the student to obtain all signatures on the **Thesis Approval Page**.

Prior to examination

At least three weeks prior to the exam, the GPA will send an email to the Neutral Chair which includes:

1. Exam meeting information, including the name of the student, date, time, and where the exam will be held.
2. A link to the [Faculty of Graduate Studies Defence guidelines](#)

3. Notice of Thesis Oral Examination, which includes the full list of the exam committee members
4. Final Report of Thesis Exam, to be submitted to the GPA following the conclusion of the exam
5. Blank Examiner's Report, in case an examiner fails to bring a completed report to the exam. **The exam cannot begin until all examiners' reports are submitted to the Neutral Chair.**
6. The contact information for the Faculty of Graduate Studies who can be contacted in the case of a procedural anomaly, such as an examiner failing to appear for the exam within 30 minutes of the start time.
7. **For virtual exams**, a Contingency form and backup phone numbers for all attending
8. **A Neutral Chair Script for Defence exams is available in Appendix B.**

You will also be included on the email to the examining committee, sent three weeks before the exam and again as a reminder one week before the exam.

Process for the Exam – Thesis Defence Exam

The process below is to be used for in-person exams. For those exams where one or more attendees are attending virtually, please refer to the “**Virtual Exam Process**” section.

Conducting the Examination

The following occurs with the student present.

1. Welcome exam committee members and introduce examining committee and student.
2. Remind participants to turn off cell phones, pagers, and laptops.
3. All examiners must be present for the entire exam process. If an examiner needs to leave the room, the clock stops until he/she returns. If the examiner is away for longer than 10 minutes, the exam will need to be re-scheduled.
4. All Thesis Oral Examinations are Open:
 - a. Only those listed on the **Notice of Oral Examination** can participate in the exam process.
 - b. Observers may be present, but they must not disrupt the exam. They may not vote nor ask questions.
 - c. Observers stay for the duration of the exam including the questioning of the student and are asked to leave before the discussion begins.

Note: The Dean of Graduate Studies (or representative) and Department Head (or designate) may attend without prior notice

5. Collect **Examiners' Reports on Thesis** from all examination committee members.
 - a. **These reports must remain confidential. The examination process cannot begin until all examiners have submitted their report.**
 - b. If a problem arises, the Neutral Chair has an additional blank copy that can be completed by the examiner before the exam begins.
 - c. **Before collecting the Examiner's Reports**, remind the examiners to sign the form and check the **yes/no boxes** (lower right corner) to indicate whether the thesis should be nominated for an award.
6. Outline the examination process
7. The thesis oral examination may be preceded by a separate public seminar. If no public seminar preceded the examination, the student may choose to give a brief (15 minute) presentation summarizing the thesis in addition to the two-hour examination time. This process may vary from program to program, the Neutral Chair should confirm the specific program's process in advance.

8. The Supervisor(s) may ask questions and is a voting member of the committee.
9. Questions are normally asked in two “rounds” of one (1) hour each, with a five-to-ten-minute break in between.
 - a. During the first round, examiners must ask questions that pertain directly to the thesis (intro, method, results, discussion)
 - b. The second round may include these types of questions as well as more general questions that may include application or practice and are related to the thesis.
10. Normally questioning will begin with the examiner who is most external to the committee.
11. Examiner may “pass” if they have no further questions.
12. Time permitting, the neutral chair may welcome additional questions from the examination committee at the end of the examination
13. Once examiners are satisfied that all their questions have been answered and/or the 2-hour time limit is up, the student is asked to leave the room by the Neutral Chair.

Post Examination Discussion Process

The following occurs with the student absent.

1. Conduct a secret ballot vote to determine each examiner’s recommendation. **Defence exam results are either Pass or Fail.**
2. The Neutral Chair summarizes the results of the votes.
3. Begin discussion with external examiners.
 - a. The Neutral Chair should aid the discussion by ensuring the committee is focused and by summarizing any issues.
 - b. The Neutral Chair must NOT to participate in the discussion or give an opinion on the recommendation.
 - c. Examiners’ editorial comments on the thesis should not be discussed at the oral examination. It is recommended that each examiner give the student a list of any such comments for post-- examination final thesis revisions.
 - d. In determining the final recommendation, refer the committee back to the [Faculty of Graduate Studies Defence policy](#), which includes the implications of a pass or fail vote. These are also summarized in the tables following this section.
 - e. **If consensus on the recommendation is not reached, the meeting must be adjourned immediately, and the *Final Report of Thesis Exam* submitted to the program GPA.**
4. The ***Final Report of Thesis Exam*** is then circulated to the committee members to indicate their final recommendation and initial. The Neutral Chair signs to acknowledge that all results have been received on the form.
5. The Student is called back in and provided the results of the exam. The Neutral Chair may provide the results to the student and supervisor in private if the exam was not successful.
6. The Student circulates the ***Thesis Approval Form*** for signature.
 - a. Who signs off depends on committee’s decision on revisions and who will be responsible for reading the revised thesis, as outlined in the [FGS Thesis Exam Guidelines](#)
 - b. All signatures should be collected on one form.
7. The Neutral Chair returns the ***Final Report of Thesis Exam*** and the meeting minutes to the GPA immediately following the exam.
8. In the case of a Fail or a Failure to Reach a Unanimous Decision, the GPA will facilitate the

collection of reports from all members of the examining committee, including the Neutral Chair, Supervisor, and Co-Supervisor. Instructions on this process will be emailed by the GPA to all involved once the GPA has received the results. Reports must be addressed to the Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and must be emailed to the GPA within 5 working days of the exam.

Potential Outcomes for the Defence Exam

Examiners will vote on both the written thesis and oral exam. The results of the written thesis will be discussed first.

Decision on Written Thesis	Outcome*
Unanimous Pass, no revisions	Thesis must be submitted to FGS within 5 days of the exam. All examiners sign the Thesis Approval Form
Unanimous Pass, minor revisions	Thesis must be submitted to FGS within 1 month of the exam. Supervisor withholds signature on Thesis Approval Form until required changes are made.
Unanimous Pass, major revisions	Thesis must be submitted to FGS within 6 months of the exam. Supervisor and one or more examiners withhold signature on Thesis Approval Form until required changes are made.
Unanimous Fail	Student is permitted one re-take within 6-12 months of the exam. No decision is made on the oral exam. The GPA will collect reports from all committee members, including the Neutral Chair, Supervisor, and Co-Supervisor and will email instructions to all involved. Reports must be addressed to the Dean, FGS and must be email to the GPA within 5 working days of the exam.
Failure to reach unanimous decision	Meeting adjourned and report given to GPA. The outcome will be decided by the Dean of Graduate Studies

Decision on Oral Exam	Outcome
Unanimous Pass	Pass
Unanimous Fail	If a unanimous fail was reached on the oral examination and the thesis was a pass, the oral component must be re-taken within 6 months of the exam. The GPA will collect reports from all committee members, including the Neutral Chair, Supervisor, and Co-Supervisor and will email instructions to all involved. Reports must be addressed to the Dean, FGS and must be email to the GPA within 5 working days of the exam.
Failure to reach unanimous decision	Meeting adjourned and report given to GPA. The GPA will collect reports from all committee members, including the Neutral Chair, Supervisor, and Co-Supervisor and will email instructions to all involved. Reports must be addressed to the Dean, FGS and must be email to the GPA within 5 working days of the exam.

**Deadlines for submission of thesis to FGS are stringent. A program extension request must be submitted to FGS if the student does not meet this deadline.*

Neutral Chair Checklist – Thesis Exams

Before the exam

Please note that the GPA will attend the beginning of the exam to set up the room and/or ensure virtual connections are stable. In the event of an unusual circumstance occurring during the exam, please contact the GPA immediately. In case of emergency, please follow University of Calgary emergency procedures.

- 3 weeks before the exam, you will receive an email from the GPA which includes:
 - Exam meeting information
 - A link to the [Faculty of Graduate Studies \(FGS\) Thesis Exam Guidelines](#)
 - Notice of Thesis Oral Examination
 - Final Report of Thesis Exam
 - Blank Examiner's Report
 - Contact information for the Faculty of Graduate Studies, in case of a procedural anomaly that requires the Dean's approval (such as an examiner arriving late)
- Review the GSE Neutral Chair Guidelines Binder and the [FGS Thesis Exam Guidelines](#)

What to take to the exam

- Notice of Thesis Oral Examination exam
- Blank Thesis Examiner's Report form
 - If an examiner does not bring one, have them hand-write a brief report on the blank form and sign it. The exam should not proceed without a report from each examiner.
- Final Report of Thesis Exam
- Copy of [FGS Thesis Exam Guidelines](#)
- Blank slips of paper to use for secret ballots
- Pens for whiteboard (backup)
- Notepad and pen
 - The Chair must record brief minutes for the exam in the event that a report to the Dean is required (see Neutral Chair Guidelines).
 - It is also the Chair's responsibility to convey decisions, and provide a brief summary of required revisions to the student
- Watch and/ or timer

At the exam

- Arrive 5 minutes early
- Introductions and reminder to turn off cell phones/pagers/laptops
- Collect thesis reports from examiners
- If applicable**, student presentation (optional if no public seminar given), no more than 15 minutes.
- Explain procedure of exam:
 - Note that supervisor is a full voting member of thesis examination committee. Most supervisors opt not to ask questions but check with them. Sometimes they elect to ask a follow-up question at the end of a round.
 - External examiner usually starts the questions, then the internal examiner, then the supervisory committee members
 - Exam normally lasts up to 2 hours
 - Two rounds of questions. There may be time for additional questions at the end
 - First round of questions:

- each examiner is given 15 minutes maximum
- avoid general background questioning that is not directly relevant to the thesis
- If an examiner leaves the room the exam must stop until they return. All examiners must be present for each part of the exam process in its entirety
- Offer a break after the first round of questions.

Post-Examination Discussion

- Student leaves
 - Advise the student that they should speak to the GPA about where they can wait if they would like to stay in the GSE office. **Waiting in the reception area of the GSE/Family Medicine Office is not permitted** out of respect for the Family Medicine staff.
 - **For virtual exams** – the student must leave the meeting. The Neutral Chair can contact them by email or phone when it is time to return.
- Explain procedure:
 - Secret ballot vote - provides frame of opinion to initiate discussion. **For virtual exams, votes may be collected through email to the Neutral Chair or by using the private chat function on Zoom.**
 - Supervisor(s) also votes
 - Collect votes.
 - Discussion – goal is to reach a consensus recommendation
- Discuss revisions
- Complete the Report of Exam form
- Inform student of decision
- Remind the student to get the signatures needed for their Thesis Approval Form
 - The student should have this ready and all signatures should be collected on the same form.
 - Who signs off depends on committee’s decision on revisions and who will be responsible for reading the revised thesis, as outlined in the [FGS Thesis Exam Guidelines](#)
- Thank everyone and remind examiners about voter and discussion confidentiality.
- Deliver reports and minutes to the program GPA immediately following the exam.

In the event of a Fail on either oral or thesis

- Refer to [FGS Thesis Exam Guidelines](#). In brief:
 - Thesis pass, Oral fail – retake within 6 months
 - Thesis fail (regardless of oral) – retake within 6-12 months.
 - In the event of a hung jury – no further discussion, adjourn the exam, FGS Dean makes final decision
 - In all cases, the chair and all exam committee members must send reports within 5 days. Instructions about this process will be sent by the GPA immediately following the submission of the exam report.

Virtual Exam Process

In the case where one or more examiners will be attending virtually, the platform to be used for the exam is Zoom. You will be notified in advance if an examiner will be attending virtually as part of the Neutral Chair email sent two weeks/4 weeks ahead of the exam (Candidacy FOS exams/ CHS FOS exams) or three weeks ahead of the exam (Defence Exams). The GPA will create the meeting link and will forward the connection information (both link and phone number) in an email to the examining committee, student, supervisor, and neutral chair no later than one week before the exam.

The GPA will offer the student the opportunity to check their connection, practice sharing their screen for the presentation (if applicable), practice using the Zoom whiteboard, and test their microphone and camera before the exam. Neutral Chairs are welcome to be part of this session as well, as a chance to meet the student and answer any questions about the exam process ahead of time.

In general, the process for the exam will be the same as an in-person exam, with the following differences:

1. The GPA will open the zoom link 30 minutes prior to the start time of the exam. **All participants should log into the exam 15 minutes prior to the start time.** If all participants have not logged in 15 minutes after the official start time, the GPA will contact the Associate Dean, GSE immediately for a decision on whether the examination can proceed or must be re-scheduled.
2. All examining committee members attending remotely must forward an email to the Neutral Chair with their vote. The Neutral Chair will forward all votes to the Graduate Program Administrator at the end of the exam.
3. The Neutral Chair will be the host of the Zoom meeting, which allows them to turn participants' microphones and cameras on and off, allows participants to share screens, and gives the neutral chair the ability to eject any unauthorized participants if necessary.
4. If the student is attending virtually, they must remain on camera for the entire duration of the exam. Exam committee members may turn off their cameras to help stabilize the connection but are encouraged to be on camera when asking questions.
5. If any participant has an issue with computer connectivity to Zoom, then simultaneous connection via the supplied meeting phone number is possible. This phone number is sent by the GPA as part of the email to the examining committee one week before the exam.
6. At the end of the questioning portion of the exam, the student and supervisor(s) will be asked to leave the meeting room completely. With this, the student and supervisor(s) will be unable to see or hear any of the committee's discussion. **If the student and/or supervisor(s) are attending virtually, you will need to arrange ahead of time whether you will contact them via phone or email to let them know when they can return to the meeting.**
7. During the discussion, the examining committee must provide a secret ballot vote. **The Neutral Chair must indicate whether remote attendees' votes are to be sent via email or by use of the private chat feature in Zoom.** Note that the votes are considered anonymous, so results should be summarized by the Neutral Chair. Note that there needs to be a separate recommendation for both the written thesis and on the oral defence performance.

Appendix A – Script for Oral Field of Study Examination Procedure

DATE:

STUDENT:

LOCATION:

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

Supervisor:

Neutral Chair:

My name is ____, and I will be the Neutral Chair presiding over the oral examination today.

I respectfully acknowledge that the University of Calgary is located on the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III.

At this time, I'd like to remind everyone to switch all devices to 'silent'.

For virtual exams only:

Please keep your microphone muted at all times unless you are asking questions.

It is __AM/PM Calgary time and we will now begin the examination. Thank you to everyone for being present today for the Oral Field of Study Examination of __. As Neutral Chair, I will be taking procedural notes of the meeting events.

(Videoconferencing was in place to ensure the Committee situated in Calgary could interface with the distant site where (distant examiners/supervisor/student) were present. There were no technical difficulties throughout the duration of the examination. We verified at the outset that all members could be heard clearly and loudly for all participants.)

CHS Field of Study Exams only:

Thank you to all examiners for preparing and submitting your assessment to me of the written answers on the official *Examiner's Assessment of Field of Study Written form*.

No one other than the members of your examination committee will be allowed to question you. I will do my best to ensure that all examiners are given an opportunity to question you and we will do this through rounds of questioning. We will begin with Dr._____, then move to Dr._____, Dr._____, and Dr._____. A reminder that your supervisor(s), Dr._____, is not permitted to ask questions.

You each will get about *(one hour divided by number of examiners)* for the first round and then about *(50 minutes divided by number of examiners)* for the second round. There will be 10 minutes at the end in case we run-over or if anyone would like to ask additional questions.

We will now begin with questions to the student. Please remember that your questions should be relevant to the subject matter of the Field of Study preparation form **(For CHS – Concept Map and Written Answers)** and should be clearly and succinctly phrased to minimize doubt in the student’s mind as to what (s)he is being asked.

The examination will not last longer than 2 hours. At about ___AM/PM I will ask you and your supervisor(s) to withdraw from the room. Before any discussion of your performance, I will ask that each examiner identify, through secret ballot, which recommendation (pass or fail) he or she favors. I will then chair a post- examination discussion of your performance. After the final vote, each examiner must record their recommendation on the official *Report of Field of Study Examination* form, which I will then submit to the program GPA.

I will then invite you back into the room and will share the outcome of the examination and the vote of the examination committee with you.

Please remember that your examiners will do their best to present their questions in a clear and succinct form. They will give you reasonable time to answer, and if you have not understood the question, then don’t hesitate to ask your examiner to rephrase the question. I hope that you have a hard or electronic copy of the (thesis/research proposal) at hand. I would ask that the Examiners provide a reference to the page # or Figure/Table # where appropriate so that (Student’s Name) and the other Examiners can easily view the materials in question.

Please also feel free to use the whiteboard to illustrate any aspects of your answer.

Do you have any questions about the examination procedure? Great. Let’s begin.

(At the end of the first round of questions – Record Time):

We have now completed the first round of questions. __. Let’s take a short 5 minute break. Please be ready to continue at _____(time).

Now in this final round of questions, I ask that you keep your questions to within *(remaining time divided by number of examiners)* or five minutes.

(At the end of the next round of questions – Record Time):

To all of you, thank you for your questions, and to you _____(the student), thank you for your responses. I will now ask you and your supervisor(s) to leave the room until the examination

committee has reached a final decision. Please don't go too far. (*Student and Supervisor(s) leave the room*)

Before any discussion of Student's performance, I ask that you each identify, by secret ballot, whether you favor recommending a pass or fail on the oral exam.

As a point of reference, let me remind you of the Recommendations for Field of Study exams.

For all programs, except CHS:

Success on the Oral Examination involves the student:

- Will have an in-depth understanding of the topics related to their core field of research
- Will have a strong foundational knowledge in their field

For CHS Oral Field of Study:

Success on the Oral Examination involves the student:

- demonstrating knowledge of and appropriate use of the literature from the approved reading list;
- understanding the major debates, controversies and relationships identified in the relevant literature;
- assessing and critically appraising the relevant literature with respect to specific issues and themes, as well as exercising critical judgment, including an understanding of strengths and weaknesses of various points of view;
- producing answers that are coherent, internally consistent and supported by the relevant literature;
- articulating one's position as a developing scholar in relation to the evidence presented.

Voting Outcomes for all Programs, including CHS

Votes	Outcome	Re-Take Outcomes
Unanimous Pass	Pass	Required Withdrawal if the exam outcome is a failure twice. The exam committee, including the Neutral Chair, will be the same for the re-take examination.
1 Fail vote	Pass	
2 or more Fail votes	Fail	
Unanimous Fail	Fail	

Potential Outcomes for the PhD FOS Candidacy Exam (CHS only)

Written	Oral	Outcome	Re-Take Outcomes
Pass	Pass	Pass	Required Withdrawal if the same component is a failure twice.
Pass	Fail*	Re-take Oral only	
Fail*	Pass	Re-take Written only	
Fail*	Fail*	Re-take both Written and Oral	

****2 or more votes of "Fail" are required for an outcome of "Fail"***

I ask that you work very hard to reach a unanimous recommendation if possible. Unanimity is not required – if 1 fail vote is recorded, the candidate will still pass.

In the event of a failed examination, 2 votes of fail, or an examination in which there were procedural irregularities, we will need to submit reports within 5 days.

I will now ask you to identify, **by secret ballot**, which of the 2 general recommendations (**PASS or FAIL**) you favor for both the **written (CHS only)** and oral part of the examination.

Now I invite you to a full discussion of the student's performance.

Thank you for your discussion. I will now record the final recommendation.

I will now invite the student back in the room so I can explain the decision to him/her.

_____ [Student's name], your oral examination committee has made its decision. They have recommended a _____ **[decision]**.

Congratulations!

Appendix B – Script for Defence Examination Procedure

DATE:

STUDENT:

LOCATION:

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

Supervisor:

Neutral Chair:

My name is ____, and I will be the Neutral Chair presiding over the oral examination today.

I respectfully acknowledge that the University of Calgary is located on the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III.

At this time, I'd like to remind everyone to switch all devices to 'silent'.

For virtual exams only:

Please keep your microphone muted at all times unless you are asking questions.

It is __AM/PM Calgary time and we will now begin the examination. Thank you to everyone for being present today for the Thesis Oral Examination of _____. As Neutral Chair, I will be taking procedural notes of the meeting events.

(Videoconferencing was in place to ensure the Committee situated in Calgary could interface with the distant site where (distant examiners/supervisor/student) were present. There were no technical difficulties throughout the duration of the examination. We verified at the outset that all members could be heard clearly and loudly for all participants.)

Thank you to all examiners for preparing and submitting your assessment to me of the thesis on the official *Examiner's Report on Thesis form*.

My name is ____, and I will be the Neutral Chair presiding over the oral examination today.

_____ [*student's name*], your examining committee has now had an opportunity to evaluate the written component of your thesis, and today you will be provided the opportunity to defend what you've written, as well as respond to other questions that the committee deems relevant in further assessing you in your thesis research.

To ensure the Examination proceeds in an efficient manner, I have taken the liberty of assigning the order of questioning among the examiners. The external examiner, in this case (Dr. External Examiner's Name), is normally afforded the opportunity to lead the questioning. We will then proceed with questions from Drs. (Examiner Names).

Before we begin the questioning portion of the thesis defence, I would like to point out that the Supervisor (and co-supervisors, if any) may ask questions of (Student's name). Do you expect to ask questions of the student during the exam? (Usually the supervisors will defer to the end of the exam). Regardless, I will reserve some time at the end of the questioning so that you may have opportunity to do so.

You each will get about (*one hour divided by number of examiners*) for the first round and then about (*50 minutes divided by number of examiners*) for the second round. There will be 10 minutes at the end in case we run-over or if anyone would like to ask additional questions.

For MSc Defence exams only:

It is common practice to ask the student to present a brief (maximum of 15 minutes) summary of the thesis research and its significance. I invite you to present your opening summary now.

(Example of how to record presentation in minutes: Student made their slide presentation within _____ minutes to the Committee.)

Thank you____ for your summary of the significance of your thesis research.

We will now begin with questions to the student. Please remember that your questions should be relevant to the subject matter of the thesis and should be clearly and succinctly phrased to minimize doubt in the student's mind as to what (s)he is being asked.

The examination will not last longer than 2 hours. At about ___AM/PM I will ask you to withdraw from the room. Before any discussion of your performance, I will ask that each examiner identify, through secret ballot, which recommendation (pass or fail) he or she favors. I will then chair a post- examination discussion of your performance. After the final vote, each examiner must record their recommendation on the official Faculty of Graduate Studies *Report of Final Thesis Oral Examination* form, which I will then submit to the program GPA.

I will then invite you back into the room and will share the outcome of the examination and the vote of the examination committee with you.

Please remember that your examiners will do their best to present their questions in a clear and succinct form. They will give you reasonable time to answer, and if you have not understood the question, then don't hesitate to ask your examiner to rephrase the question. I hope that you have a hard or electronic copy of the (thesis/research proposal) at hand. I would ask that the Examiners provide a reference to the page # or Figure/Table # where appropriate so that (Student's Name) and the other Examiners can easily view the materials in question.

Please also feel free to use the whiteboard to illustrate any aspects of your answer.

Do you have any questions about the examination procedure? Great. Let's begin.

(At the end of the first round of questions – Record Time):

We have now completed the first round of questions. __. Let's take a short 5 minute break. Please be ready to continue at _____(time).

Now in this final round of questions, I ask that you keep your questions to within (*remaining time divided by number of examiners*) or 5 minutes.

(At the end of the next round of questions – Record Time):

To all of you, thank you for your questions, and to you _____(*the student*), thank you for your responses. I will now ask you to leave the room until the examination committee has reached a final decision. Please don't go too far. (*Student leaves room*)

Before any discussion of Student's performance, I ask that you each identify, by secret ballot, whether you favor recommending a pass or fail on each of the thesis and the oral defence. Just as a point of reference, let me remind you of the Thesis Oral Examination Recommendations. Thesis examinations must be judged to be either acceptable or unacceptable with respect to the thesis itself and, with respect to the oral defence, if the defence is judged acceptable.

The result of today's exam must be a Committee Recommendation on Thesis and Oral Defense as follows:

Thesis:

- Pass with no revisions. Student is required to submit thesis to FGS within 5 days
- Pass with minor revisions. Student is required to submit thesis to FGS within 1 month
- Pass with major revisions. Student is required to submit thesis to FGS within 6 months
- Fail of thesis. No further voting or discussion
- Failure to reach unanimous decision. No further voting or discussion

Oral Defense

- Pass
- Fail
- Failure to reach unanimous decision

I ask that you work very hard to reach a unanimous recommendation. According to the current Handbook, unanimous decisions are required for BOTH the thesis and the oral defence. If you are unable to achieve unanimity regarding one or both components, there must be no further discussion regarding that component of the examination, and I must immediately inform the Dean of "lack of unanimity". The final decision will then be at the discretion of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

If the unanimous final decision is that the thesis conforms to the requirements for a thesis, then the entire examination committee will sign the signature page, except the Supervisor, who will sign after reviewing and approving any necessary minor corrections on behalf of the committee.

In the event of a failed examination, an examination resulting in a lack of unanimity (hung jury), or an examination in which there were procedural irregularities, I will submit a report within 24 hours.

Okay, so now I will ask you to identify, by secret ballot, which of the 2 general recommendations (**PASS or FAIL**) you favor for both the thesis and oral part of the examination.

Now I invite you to a full discussion of the student's performance.

Thank you for your discussion. I will now re-read the potential recommendations aloud. *[Read from the Handbook.]*

I will now invite the student back in the room so I can explain the decision to him/her.

_____ [Student's name], your thesis oral examination committee has made its decision. They have recommended a _____ **[decision]**. You will need to submit your final thesis to the Faculty of Graduate Studies within **[timeline indicated on Report of Exam]**. Please make sure that you get the required signatures on your Thesis Approval form.

Congratulations!

If consensus is not reached ...the Neutral Chair may say:

It is clear to me that consensus has not or cannot be reached. You have all had an opportunity to discuss and share your assessments. In the event of an examination resulting in a lack of unanimity, no further discussion will be had. As neutral chair I will immediately inform the GPA of “lack of unanimity” and the final decision will be at the Dean of Graduate Studies’ discretion. We will all be asked to submit a written report. Your decision as an examination committee is a **Hung Jury**. Your final recommendations will be recorded on the official Final Thesis Oral Examination form for the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

I will now invite the student back in the room so I can explain the decision to him/her.

_____[Student’s name], your thesis oral examination committee has made its decision. They were unable to reach unanimity and thus the recommendation I will be presenting is that of a **Hung Jury** to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The Dean will be informed and the Exam Committee, as well as myself, will send a report within 5 working days; the Faculty of Graduate Studies Dean will then make the final decision. On behalf of the examining committee, thank you for your work and participation in today’s examination. On behalf of __[Student’s name] and Dr. _____[Supervisor’s name], thank you for agreeing to serve on _____[Student’s name] examining committee.

Appendix C – Exam Minutes Template

Student Name:

Date of Exam:

Type of Exam (circle one): Field of Study MSc Defense PhD Defense

Names of Examiners:

Exam Start Time:

If exam started late, please briefly explain situation and who was contacted for assistance, along with any rulings (if needed) from the Associate Dean, GSE (Field of Study exam) or an Associate Dean, FGS (defenses):

Was a presentation given by the student (circle one)? Yes No

Question period – Round 1

List each examiner’s name below, along with the start and end times that they questioned the student).

Name	Start Time	End Time

List any anomalies during Round 1 here:

Start time of break:

End time of break:

Question period – Round 2

List each examiner’s name below, along with the start and end times that they questioned the student).

Name	Start Time	End Time

List any anomalies during Round 2 here:

Time student (and supervisor(s) if applicable) left the exam room:

Deliberation

Start time:

End Time:

Summary of deliberations:

List any anomalies here:

Time student (and supervisor(s) if applicable) returned to exam room:

Time exam concluded:

Appendix D – Pronunciation Guide for Land Acknowledgement

From <https://www.ucalgary.ca/people/darin-flynn/territorial-acknowledgment-pronunciation-guide>



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

Territorial Acknowledgment

*Note: Text in parentheses is optional. Text in **bold** is sufficient for a basic acknowledgment*

(Welcome to the University of Calgary)

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta

which includes

- the Blackfoot Confederacy

“six-ih-GAH”

“bee-GAH-nee”

“GUY-nah”

“soot-IN-uh”

comprising the Siksiká, Piikáni, and Káínai First Nations

- the Tsúūt’ínà First Nation

“nuh-KOH-duh”

- and the Stoney Nakoda

“CHIN-ih-kee”

“BEARS
paw”

“WESS-lee”

“STOH-nee”

including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations

“MAY-tee”

The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III.

(I would also like to note that the University of Calgary is situated on land adjacent to where the Bow River meets the Elbow River, and that the traditional Blackfoot name of this place is Mohkínsstsis, which we now call the City of Calgary.)

“mohk-KIN-stiss”