

## ***GUIDELINES FOR THE ORAL EXAMINATION***

**Scheduling the Final Oral Examination:** Before a candidate will be permitted to schedule the oral examination, you and the School of Graduate Studies must be able to check “yes” for each of the following items:

- Form 1: the Application for Admission to Graduate Studies has been approved,
- Form 2: the Application for Admission to Candidacy has been approved,
- Form 3: the Graduate Research Paper/Thesis Proposal Approval has been approved,
- Form 4: the Application for Graduation has been approved,
- a copy of the preliminary curriculum vita (CV) has been submitted,
- Form 5: the Pre-Defense Signature approved,
- all residency requirements have been satisfied,
- a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher has been achieved,
- all "I" and "IP" grades have been changed to letter grades,
- the candidate has passed the required departmental/program written examination,
- one printed copy of the final research paper or thesis has been submitted,
- the departmental language requirement has been satisfied (M.A. in English only),
- the departmental written examination has been satisfied,
- the departmental competency requirement has been satisfied, and
- all necessary petitions (if required) have been approved.

Normally, a candidate must be within six (6) semester hours of graduating when scheduling the oral examination. The time, date, and location of the examination shall be determined by the candidate in consultation with the advisor.

**Please note: The student is responsible for initiating the scheduling process with their advisor and all committee members including the graduate faculty representative.** If the student will be graduating during the summer, contact committee members six to eight weeks in advance of the anticipated oral examination date. Additionally, do not schedule the oral examination during the last week of classes or during the final examination period if at all possible.

**Nature of the Final Oral Examination:** The oral examination typically focuses on the research topic. It generally consists of a presentation of this research topic, followed by a discussion during which the student is asked to expand, defend or explain the research and the findings.

The examination is to be scheduled for a minimum of one (1) hour and not more than two (2) hours.

Oral examinations are open to the university community. The examinations of the upcoming week are announced on the Faculty List Serve no later than Friday of the week prior to the examinations. At the discretion of the examination committee chair, visitors may ask the candidate questions regarding the topic. The evaluation of the examination by the committee is closed to the public.

**The Final Oral Examination Committee:** The oral examination committee must consist of at least three (3) members of the graduate faculty. A fourth member, a graduate faculty representative, is appointed by the Director, School of Graduate Studies. The Graduate Faculty Representative is responsible for monitoring the final oral to insure the examination is conducted in a manner consistent with the goals of the University's Graduate Program. The Graduate Faculty Representative is permitted to ask the candidate questions of a substantive nature, however, he/she does not have a vote in the final outcome. A majority vote is required for the determination of the examination outcome. It is the responsibility of the graduate faculty representative to provide the Graduate Studies Office with the signed examination outcome and evaluation.

Non-Departmental members of the graduate faculty may also be requested to participate in the examination process. All non-members of the graduate faculty (i.e., associate members of the graduate faculty and non-graduate faculty) shall be in addition to the four (4) member committee. The advisor serves as chair of the committee.

**Grading of the Final Comprehensive Oral Examination:** The examining committee has the option of assigning a pass, fail, or conditional recommendation. Appropriate observations and comments will be recorded on the Graduate Faculty Representative Final Oral Examination Committee Observations and Comments form which is provided directly to the graduate faculty representative from the Graduate Studies Office. The candidate will be rated in the following areas on a scale of 1 to 7 with 1 being lowest and 7 being highest on how well prepared the Master's candidate is on:

- a. Knowledge and skills necessary to conduct research in the disciplinary area.
- b. Ability to evaluate and apply other's research to issues in the disciplinary area.
- c. Ability to present results of one's own research orally to other scholars and the lay community.
- d. Ability to present results of one's own research in writing to other scholars and the lay community.

A candidate who does not pass or receives a conditional recommendation will have one additional opportunity to retake the oral examination. However, all conditions set forth by the committee must be satisfied prior to the scheduling of a second examination. Conditions may include: additional course work, thesis/research paper revisions, research, readings, special problems and projects. It is the responsibility of the candidate's advisor to notify the College Dean and Director, School of Graduate Studies when all conditions have been satisfied. All conditions stipulated by the oral committee will be provided to the College Dean and Director, School of Graduate Studies by the graduate faculty representative.

**The Thesis/Research Paper Requirement:** Candidates must provide each committee member and the Graduate Studies Office with a completed copy of the Pre-Defense Signature Form and a draft of the thesis/research paper at least three weeks in advance of the final oral examination. The committee and the College Dean representing the department reserve the right to request revisions in the final draft. All requested changes must be completed to the satisfaction of the committee chair and the College Dean prior to the candidate's approval for graduation. Once all requested revisions have been completed and approved and all necessary signatures secured, the candidate must submit two (2) approved manuscripts (thesis) or one (1) approved manuscript (research paper) to the Director, School of Graduate Studies.

**Curriculum Vita Sheet:** A degree candidate is to provide all members of the oral committee with a curriculum vita sheet. The vita sheet must also be provided to the Graduate Studies Office with the application for graduation form. The vita sheet must contain an exact listing of all courses the candidate has taken toward the fulfillment of the Master's degree requirements.

**Awarding the Degree:**

- Commencement: All candidates, who have satisfied graduation requirements, are invited to attend the annual Spring Commencement exercise.
- Diploma: Diplomas are normally mailed approximately two months following the graduation period.
- Graduation Periods: Commencement is scheduled once each year in May. However, a candidate may be graduated at four different times throughout the year. Graduation may occur in December, May, July, and August.
- Early Notification of the Receipt of a Degree: The Director, School of Graduate Studies will, upon request, send a certificate verifying graduation to an employer once all degree requirements have been satisfied.