

## **SGS Regulations on Thesis Outcomes for Master's and Doctoral Oral Defenses**

The outcome of the oral thesis examination is based on the acceptability of both the thesis and the defence of the thesis at the oral thesis examination. The purpose of the oral thesis examination is to ascertain that the student is able to adequately present and defend the thesis and its underlying assumptions, methodology, results and conclusions in a manner consistent with the degree being sought.

At the oral thesis examination the examining committee will reach one of the 3 decisions listed below and record it on the "Thesis Examination Results" form. The 3 decisions are *Passed*, *Referred* or *Failed*.

i. *Passed* - A thesis is passed if it is acceptable in its present form or pending minor revisions, and its defence at the oral thesis examination was satisfactory. A thesis may be passed if no substantive changes are required. Changes in the form of corrections of typographical or grammatical errors, minor modifications to the thesis, editorial revisions to improve clarity and revisions to clarify results, findings or conclusions, or the like, may be recommended with a thesis classified as passed. A list of the required revisions must be provided by the Chair to the student and the supervisor and the completion of the revisions must be certified to the School of Graduate Studies by the thesis supervisor or other designated person.

ii. *Referred* - A thesis is referred if it is not acceptable in its present form or pending minor revisions, but could be acceptable pending major revisions. For example, a thesis will be referred if it requires substantive changes such as rewriting a chapter, reinterpretation, reanalysis or recalculation of data or findings, or additional research in order to attain acceptable standards of coherence and integrity in argument and presentation. The committee may decide to reconvene the examining committee and hold another oral thesis examination of the revised thesis.

The examining committee may also use the referred category if it determines that the oral thesis examination itself, either separate from or in conjunction with the written thesis, is unsatisfactory. This means that the student did not adequately present and defend the thesis and its underlying assumptions, methodology, results and conclusions in a manner consistent with the degree being sought. In such cases, a second oral thesis examination must be held, and the committee must then return a decision of either "passed" or "failed".

In all cases of referral, the nature of the revisions and/or additional work, and/or the deficiencies associated with the oral thesis examination, must be specified in writing by the Chair to avoid dispute or ambiguity. When outlining the revisions and/or additional work required, and/or the holding of a second oral thesis examination, the Chair must be as specific as possible. These comments will be passed on to the candidate in a letter from the School of Graduate Studies as revisions and/or improvements that must be met for the thesis to be reconsidered.

Any outlined revisions must be certified by the Chair or delegate as having been completed satisfactorily. Usually, this certification is delegated to at least two members of the Committee. In all cases of referral, the examining committee continues to exist until it has agreed that the thesis outcome is either passed or failed.

## NOTES ON THE "REFERRED" CATEGORY

1. If the committee returns two or more votes for referred it may hold another examination after the candidate has carried out further research and/or rewritten the thesis, but normally not more than one year later.

2. Candidates have up to twelve months to complete revisions to their thesis but should be encouraged to do so as soon as possible. In cases where the thesis has to be re-submitted to the examining committee, and/or a second oral thesis examination has to be held, this has to be done no later than twelve months from the date of the first oral examination.

3. A thesis that has been defended by oral thesis examination can be submitted once more only in revised form. A candidate whose thesis and/or defence of the thesis at the second oral examination, does not satisfy the examining committee on the second submission will be failed (see iii. Failed, below. See also [Withdrawal on Academic Grounds](#)).

iii Failed: Failure can occur in 2 ways:

1. A thesis is failed if the document is unacceptable to the discipline even with substantive revisions. If the committee returns two or more votes of Failed on the basis of the document, this means that the committee recommends that the student be required to withdraw on academic grounds.

2. Failure may also result from an unacceptable second oral thesis examination, where the student was manifestly unable to adequately present and defend the thesis and its underlying assumptions, methodology, results and conclusions in a manner consistent with the degree being sought. A decision of Failed on the basis of the second oral thesis examination requires agreement by the majority (more than half) of the examining committee.

The student will be notified of the result immediately by the Chair of the committee and the decision confirmed in writing by the School of Graduate Studies.