

**HOWARD UNIVERSITY
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL**

**Procedures for Administering Final Oral Examinations for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree**

The final oral examination marks the culmination of many years of formal study and several months of intensive research on the part of the candidate. It represents the highest level of achievement in preparation for a career of active scholarship and research. This examination affords the candidate an opportunity to demonstrate the depth and breadth of his/her knowledge in a particular field of specialization, ability to conduct research and to present and defend the findings before a select delegation of researchers, specialists, and scholars. Therefore, it is expected that the final oral examination will be conducted in a dignified and scholarly manner befitting this important occasion and that the candidate's attire will be in keeping with the significance which the Graduate School attributes to the final oral examination.

A suggested format for conducting the final oral examination has been established and will be available for the chairperson of each committee. The committee chairperson is responsible for conducting each phase of the final oral examination equitably and with dispatch.

The Production of a Quality Dissertation

The dissertation must be thoroughly scrutinized by all members of the examining committee prior to submitting the document to the Graduate School for review and for scheduling a defense date. If the review reveals deficiencies in the document, they must be communicated to the committee chairperson and the candidate, and they must be corrected before submitting the formal request to defend.

Under no circumstances is a committee chairperson or the Director of Graduate Studies authorized to convene a final oral examination if any voting committee member has knowledge of plagiarism and that substantial modifications of a clerical, organizational, or substantive nature remain to be done. The passing of the final oral examination is taken to mean that no further work, beyond cosmetic changes to the dissertation, is to be demanded of the candidate.

The final examination is not intended as a review session for making last minute suggestions for changes and corrections to the dissertation. It is to be expected that there may be occasion for some modifications in the work as a result of the in depth probe of the candidate's knowledge of his/her research area by the committee, and it should be understood by the candidate that such modifications, as may be required, may be either major or minor and that they may or may not take a substantial length of time to effect. This statement, however, is not meant to encourage the committee to recommend major changes and corrections; a well-written dissertation should need only minor modifications that do not require any substantial length of time to be effected. Therefore, in order to protect and defend the prerogatives and authority of the examining committee, on the one hand, and the candidate, on the other, *it is incumbent upon both the candidate's major advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies to ensure that all dissertations which meet with their approval are of the highest quality before the committee convenes for the oral defense.* If following the oral examination, the dissertation still requires modifications which cannot be completed within the prescribed ten working days, the

modifications could be considered major and thus may require a repeat of the oral defense. All major modifications recommended by the examining committee must be given to the candidate in writing. Also, the plan for making the modifications, including the names of committee members who will be responsible for making certain that the desired changes are made, must be listed and communicated to the candidate. A copy of this plan must also be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School.

Examining Committee

All members of the official examining committee are to be appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School upon recommendation of the department. The examining committee is to be composed of a minimum of five members, a majority of whom should represent the major department. Examiners from the university must be members of the Graduate Faculty. One member should represent the minor or an allied department (if applicable), and one member, designated as the external examiner, must have academic and professional credentials comparable to those of Howard University Graduate Faculty. A *curriculum vitae* of the external examiner is to be submitted to the Graduate School along with the formal request to defend.

Five members present and with voting rights, including the committee and others specified above, will constitute a quorum.

Upon a favorable, unanimous vote of the examining committee (including the presiding chairperson) the candidate will be certified as having passed the final oral examination in defense of the dissertation.

The Dean of the Graduate School or his designated representative is a member *exofficio* of the doctoral examining committee and may be present during a dissertation defense to observe the defense proceedings, pose questions to the candidate, and to participate in the evaluation of the candidate's performance. He/she may not vote. Other members of the University community may attend the examination but may not take part in the proceedings unless invited by the chairperson of the examining committee.

Members of the examining committee are expected to remain on the committee until the final oral examination has been completed. A member who finds it necessary to withdraw from the committee must write a letter to the Dean of the Graduate School informing him of the same and asking to be relieved of his/her committee obligations, whereupon the Dean of the Graduate School, in consultation with the department, will appoint a replacement for that member.

External Examiner

The external examiner must be a recognized authority in the area of research and scholarship treated in the doctoral dissertation to be defended. His/her academic and professional credentials must be comparable to those of Howard University Graduate Faculty. His/her role on the examining committee is that of an impartial and disinterested examiner and arbiter. He/she must not have had any interaction with the candidate or with the candidate's research or investigation prior to receipt of the completed dissertation. Specialists in the area of the dissertation research who have been involved in any way with the dissertation or advisement thereof are not eligible to serve as an external examiner. Parking permits for external examiners are available in the University's Office of Parking and Shuttle Operations. Directors of Graduate Study should request a parking permit well in advance of the date of the examination.

Chairperson of the Committee

The Director of Graduate Studies of the department in which the candidate is enrolled is responsible for planning and executing all facets of the final oral examination. He/she may serve as chairperson of the examining committee and may preside at the oral defense provided he/she is *not* the candidate's major advisor. *Under no circumstances should the candidate's major advisor or the external examiner chair the final oral examination.*

Scheduling and Locus of the Examination

The request for scheduling an oral examination must be submitted by the department to the Dean of the Graduate School within the timeframe specified by the Graduate School. Included in the request should be the full name and department of each proposed committee member, *complete name and mailing address* of the external examiner, and the designation of the committee chairperson. The Dean of the Graduate School will assume responsibility for scheduling the final oral examination, informing the examiners of the time and location of the examination, and publishing an announcement of the defense. The candidate's major advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies have the responsibility of ensuring that all dissertations are of the highest quality prior to their approval and prior to making the request to schedule the final oral examination. One copy of the dissertation *in its final form* must accompany the request.

All final oral examinations will be held in the Graduate School building, Annex III, 4th and College Streets, N.W., Washington D.C. unless other arrangements are made in advance through the Dean of the Graduate School. If the Director of Graduate Studies would like to schedule a defense in a location away from the Graduate School building, a written request must accompany the formal request to defend. The Director of Graduate Studies will serve as ex officio and must be present for any defense session that is scheduled at a location other than the Graduate School building. **These alternate sites must be located on the main campus and must have suitable space and equipment.**

Forms for Certification

Six forms must be used in completing the process of administering the Ph.D. final oral examination. They are labeled GS-EA-1 through GS-EA-6 and can be downloaded from the Graduate School website – www.gs.howard.edu.

To initiate the formal request for the final oral defense the candidate must submit **Forms GS-EA 1 through GS-EA-4**, the **Turnitin.com Originality Report**, and the curriculum vitae for the external examiner. A **final copy** of the dissertation must accompany the requests. Oral defense examinations will be scheduled only after dissertations have been checked thoroughly and approved by the Office of Educational and Research Affairs.

GS-EA-1 consists of the biographical data of the candidate.

GS-EA-2 consists of the dissertation summary.

GS-EA-3 consists of a certification of the fact that all work on the dissertation has been completed and that the dissertation is ready to be defended. A synopsis of the dissertation research (typed as a part of GS-EA-2) must accompany this form. The form and the synopsis

must be submitted with the request for scheduling the oral examination. Once submitted, both become the joint property of the department and the Graduate School.

GS-EA-4 certifies that the dissertation meets the standards of the Graduate School. The outside examiner is not required to sign this form.

Forms GS-EA-5 and GS-EA-6 are signed if the candidate successfully passes the defense. **The forms must be submitted to the Graduate School not later than 10 business days after the final defense.**

GS-EA-5 certifies that the candidate successfully defended the dissertation and that the dissertation is complete and in acceptable form. This form must be signed by all voting members of the examining committee.

GS-EA-6 certifies that the candidate has fulfilled all departmental requirements for the doctoral degree. This form must be signed by the chairperson of the department.

When each candidate submits the Forms GS-EA-5 and GS-EA-6, he/she will receive an email that provides the instructions for uploading the final dissertation to Proquest. All candidates who have successfully defended the dissertation must upload the final document to UMI Dissertation Publishing – <http://www.etsadmin.com/howard>.

Failure of the Final Oral Examination

Any candidate who fails the final oral examination may be given a second oral examination, provided the second oral examination does not come earlier than two months (60 days) from the date of the first oral examination. Application for a second oral examination must be approved by the department in which the candidate is specializing. Any student who fails the examination for a second time will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program. A student dismissed for this reason will not be readmitted to the Graduate School.