Faculty of Health Sciences
PhD Thesis Defence Guidelines & Checklist

Together, the Senior Supervisor and Student are responsible for completing the tasks listed in this checklist.

**Anticipated Defence Date: ________________**

*Please fill out all dates below to help the Student and Senior Supervisor stay on track!*

**A. Pre-Defence Preparation**

1. **Complete timeline to the thesis defence. (6 – 8 months in advance of defence date.)** The Student should have completed the research for the thesis and should have a clear understanding of the structure and the content of the thesis. The writing of the thesis should be in progress.

   a) A document describing the essential features of the thesis, including introduction, hypotheses, methods, results, data analysis, conclusions and significance, should be submitted to the Senior Supervisor, who, on approving the thesis’s readiness, will circulate it to the Supervisory Committee. At this point, the Supervisory Committee meeting to approve the student’s Readiness to Defend Doctoral Thesis should be planned.

   b) The Student and the Senior Supervisor should meet to identify an Internal Examiner and an External Examiner for the thesis defence. The Senior Supervisor is responsible for inviting these examiners to participate on the Thesis Examining Committee. The Student and the Senior Supervisor should also inquire if any members of the Examining Committee will attend the thesis defence at a distance.

   c) The Internal Examiner will normally be a member of the faculty at the university or a person suitably qualified, who is not a member of the Student’s Supervisory Committee. The External Examiner will normally be a suitably qualified person in the Student’s area of research and will be not be a faculty member at the university. The Student should avoid all contact with both the Internal Examiner and External Examiner to preserve the integrity of the thesis defence.

   d) The Student, Senior Supervisor and Supervisory Committee will determine if sensitive or classified information will be covered by the thesis, and if so, then the Student on behalf of the Supervisory Committee, will communicate any anticipated or known restrictions on their research to the Office of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Fellows (OGSPF).

**Date: __________________**

2. Complete the Composition of the Examining Committee. *(Due 12 weeks in advance of defence date.)*

Date: _____________________

a) Note the Student must register in: **HSCI 998-6, Thesis Preparation and Defence** during the semester when the thesis will be defended.

b) Schedule a meeting with the Supervisory Committee to approve the Student’s Readiness to Defend. Approval of the thesis by the Supervisory Committee indicates that the student should now finish writing the thesis. (NOTE: there is a 4-week period for completing the thesis, between submitting the Readiness to Defend the Doctoral Thesis form and submitting the thesis.)

c) In consultation with the Student, and on behalf of the Supervisory Committee, the Senior Supervisor will recommend to the Chair of the MSc/PhD Graduate Programs Committee (**MPC**) the date, location and time of the thesis examination, an Internal Examiner and an External Examiner for the Examining Committee.

d) The Senior Supervisor will also determine and schedule the attendance of any Examining Committee members from a distance. (The Student, the Senior Supervisor and the Internal Examiner must attend in person). Normally, a maximum of two Examining Committee members may attend from a distance, one of whom may be the External Examiner.

e) Submit the **Readiness to Defend Doctoral Thesis** form to the MSc/PhD Graduate Programs Assistant with the final title of the thesis, date, time, location and signatures of the Supervisory Committee confirming the thesis is ready for examination. Also state if any members of the Examining Committee will attend from a distance.

f) The Senior Supervisor will complete a **Distance Attendance form** (if applicable) and submit the form to the MSc/PhD Graduate Program Assistant.

g) The forms will be reviewed by the Chair of the MPC, and will be approved based on the location of the thesis defence and the availability of FHS IT support (if required for the attendance of Examining Committee members from a distance).

h) Following SFU’s Graduate General Regulation 1.9.3, and on behalf of the FHS Graduate Studies Committee, the Chair of the MPC will select a Chair for the Examination Committee, with assistance from the MSc/PhD Graduate Program Assistant.
3. Approval of Examining Committee for a Doctoral Student Form (Due 8 weeks in advance of defence date.)

Date: ______________________

a) Submit the Approval of Examining Committee for a Doctoral Student form to the MSc/PhD Graduate Program Assistant and include the abstract of the thesis, ethics approval letter(s) (if applicable) and the CV of the Internal Examiner (if external to SFU) and the CV of the External Examiner. Please note that the maximum word count for the abstract of the thesis is 350 words.

http://www.sfu.ca/dean-gradstudies/current/forms.html

b) If a change in the Supervisory Committee is required, the Senior Supervisor, in consultation with the Student, must complete the Change of Supervisory Committee form and submit it to the MSc/PhD Graduate Programs Assistant along with the Approval of Examining Committee for a Doctoral Student form. It is responsibility of the Senior Supervisor to notify Supervisory Committee members of their addition to or removal from the Supervisory Committee.

c) After approval by the MPC chair, the MSc/PhD Graduate Program Assistant will forward the Approval of Examining Committee for a Doctoral Student form, including supporting documents (and Change of Supervisory Committee form, if applicable), to the OGSPF.

d) At the same time the Student will email a PDF of the doctoral thesis to the MSc/PhD Graduate Program Assistant. The PDF of the doctoral thesis will then be forwarded to the OGSPF and will distribute the thesis electronically to the Examination Committee.

e) For reference, it is recommended to have the thesis on a thumb drive or a printed copy to take to the thesis defence.

4. Chair's Package (5 business days in advance of the defence date.)

Date: ______________________

a) The MSc/PhD Graduate Programs Assistant will assemble a Chair's package for the day of the defence. It will include instructions for the Chair, the Approval Page for the thesis (minimum of 2), Examination Results form, Recommendation of Award of Degree form, and copies of the abstract to be distributed at the thesis defence.
B. **Post Defence Preparation**

1. **After a Successful Defence:**
   - a) Visit the SFU Library website for information on submission of the thesis to the library. [http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/writing/thesis/submission/online-registration](http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/writing/thesis/submission/online-registration)
   - b) If there are revisions of the thesis required by the Examination Committee, the Student must have his/her Senior Supervisor sign a **Supervisor Revision Memo form** (if applicable) written to the Assistant for Theses, Library, stating that the Senior Supervisor certifies that all the required revisions and corrections have been made.
   - c) Provide a signed copy of the **Supervisor Revision Memo** (if applicable) to the MSc/PhD Graduate Program Assistant; the original will be attached to the **Recommendation of Award of Degree form** and sent to the OGSPF.
   - d) For further assistance with thesis format and submission questions, contact Amber Saundry, Assistant for Theses, email theses@sfu.ca Tel: 778.782-4747 (cannot return long distance calls).

   *Congratulations & Best Wishes!*

**Overview List of Forms and Documents**

- [ ] Readiness to Defend Doctoral Thesis form – Due 12 weeks in advance of the defence date
- [ ] Distance Attendance form – Due 12 weeks in advance of the defence date (if applicable)
- [ ] Approval of Examining Committee for a Doctoral Student form – Due 8 weeks in advance of the defence date
- [ ] Change of Supervisory Committee form (if applicable) – Due 8 weeks in advance of the defence date
- [ ] Approval Page (2 copies)
- [ ] Supervisor Revision Memo (if applicable)