

**DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS**  
**PROCEDURES FOR THE DEPARTMENTAL ORAL EXAMINATION**

**(Revised May 2023)**

Each Ph.D. student must complete a departmental oral examination before their Ph.D. defence. There are two options, and the student's supervisory committee must approve the choice. The first option is an "internal defence," and the second option is a research-level seminar talk. The procedures for each are described below.

**Internal defence:**

1. The departmental oral examination will normally be held at least one week before the thesis is submitted to the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. The date for the departmental oral examination will be set by the student and the examining committee.
2. The student must provide a draft copy of the proposed thesis to the examining committee at least one week before the departmental oral examination.
3. The examining committee for the departmental oral examination shall consist of the student's supervisor and two other full-time faculty members of the department chosen by the student's supervisory committee. Members of the supervisory committee may serve on the examining committee, and members of the examining committee (except the supervisor) are not precluded from being members of the examining board for the official defence.
4. The departmental oral examination will be preceded by a public lecture in which the student gives a talk on the content of the proposed thesis.
5. After the lecture and public question period, the audience is asked to leave and the examining committee meets privately with the student to ask additional questions. Questions asked of the student shall be primarily concerned with the content of the thesis, although questions of a more general nature relating to the field of specialization may be asked.
6. After the examination, the examining committee (in closed session) shall decide by majority vote whether the student has passed or failed the departmental oral examination. The student shall be informed of the decision as soon as possible.
7. In the event that the student passes the departmental oral examination, but members of the committee have constructive criticisms to offer regarding matters in the thesis, they should arrange to communicate these comments to the student (or the supervisor) after the examination.
8. In the event that the student fails the departmental oral examination, a meeting will be arranged between the student, their supervisory committee, the graduate chair, and at the discretion of the student, a third-party faculty member who will serve as an advocate for the student. At the meeting, those present will decide on the goals that need to be accomplished by the student to complete this milestone.

**Research-level seminar talk:**

1. The student will give a public seminar talk, lasting at least 45 minutes, in a research-level seminar within the department. It should occur at least one week before the thesis is submitted to the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, and at most six months before the expected submission date. The date of the talk will be set by the student and the supervisory committee.
2. The seminar talk will describe the student's original research related to the planned content for the thesis.
3. The supervisory committee must attend, and will decide whether the student has achieved the milestone.
4. In the event that the student fails the departmental oral examination, a meeting will be arranged between the student, their supervisory committee, the graduate chair, and at the discretion of the student, a third-party faculty member who will serve as an advocate for the student. At the meeting, those present will decide on the goals that need to be accomplished by the student to complete this milestone.