

## Checklist and Timeline for the PhD Thesis Preparation and Defence

*Note: also see the document called Guidelines for Setting a PhD Final Oral Exam for the specific regulations; it is available on this webpage:*

<https://eeb.utoronto.ca/education/graduate/graduate-handbook/>

Scroll down to the relevant section

Note: for Fall 2021, all PhD defences will be online.

*For information about formatting your thesis, the SGS thesis template, regulations, and other aspects of completing your program, see this webpage:*

<https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/academic-progress/program-completion/>

**Well in advance of the proposed defence date**, find out whether the supervisor and the member of supervisory committee who will **sign off on the thesis** (indicating that it is ready to go forward to the defence) want to read the whole thesis when a complete draft is ready and/or chapter by chapter as they are done (note: if the student has two co-supervisors and they both sign off on the thesis, a regular member of the supervisory committee does not need to sign the form). Keep those who will sign off on your thesis informed of your anticipated finishing date so they have time to read the thesis, suggest changes, read it again if necessary, and then sign the thesis assessment form. You need to submit this signed form **at least 7 weeks** before the defence to the EEB grad office. The form is available at the link at the top of this page.

The student and supervisor should discuss possible externals with the supervisory committee. The supervisor has to find an external that is available for the proposed date(s) and is willing to serve as the external--either in person, by phone, or by teleconferencing/Skype/Zoom—and see both the exit seminar and sit on the exam. Allow quite a lot of time to find an external—people can take 3-5 days (or more) to get back to you and some choices may be unable to attend on the proposed days. The supervisor should fill out the form for **approval of the external** (the external must be approved by EEB and SGS), sign it and give it to the Graduate Office ([gradadmin.eeb@utoronto.ca](mailto:gradadmin.eeb@utoronto.ca)), along with the information described below, **at least 8 weeks** prior to the exam date. The external can be pre-approved; that is, you can do this more than 8 weeks before the proposed defence date(s)). See the information and form here: <https://eeb.utoronto.ca/education/graduate/graduate-handbook/>  
Scroll down to the relevant section under PhD Defence

Some funding (\$500) is available from SGS, via the department, to cover travel expenses for externals. If the external gives a seminar on the St. George campus, then some additional funding may be available, depending on whether they give the seminar in the regular Friday seminar series during the Fall/Winter terms and on the distance that they will travel to visit U of T. The external and supervisor will receive information from the Grad Office about how to submit a reimbursement request for the external's travel costs 6 weeks before the defence and, again, a few days before the defence.

To approve the external, the EEB Graduate Office and SGS require a website and/or a CV that indicate whether the external is a full or associate professor and also lists the names of PhD student(s) who have completed their degrees under his/her supervision; publications and funded grants should also be listed. The supervisor may email the potential examiner, say that they are being considered for nomination as an external examiner, and ask that they please send their CV if the information is not available on the web. When the supervisor (not the student!) invites the external, please tell them that an appraisal report will be due two weeks before the exam and the proposed timing of the exam. The student must have no contact at all with the external during this process or within the 8 weeks before the exam.

Make sure the student has copyright permission for each of their published paper(s) from each of the journals, so that the paper(s) can be included in the thesis. To do this, contact the journal and keep a record of the email that you receive from them. Indicate in the thesis that you have received permission.

**The Final Oral Exam (FOE) committee** must have at least 5 members (the EEB Grad Office will not approve a committee with fewer than 5 members) and no more than 6 members. The supervisor(s) and student should discuss potential external examiners and other exam committee members between/amongst themselves and with the student's supervisory committee. See the [Guidelines for Setting a PhD Final Oral Exam](#) document for information about examiners zooming/Skyping/phoning into the defence. There are two models for the examining committee:

**Model 1 (updated version of the 'Traditional' Model):**

- The examining committee is comprised of an external examiner; the supervisor/co-supervisor(s); one or two members of the supervisory committee; and one other professor from EEB or a related department
- Note: with this model, if either the external or the 'internal external' (i.e. the member of the exam committee who was not on the supervisory committee) is unable to attend the defence, SGS will cancel the defence and it will have to be rescheduled. Therefore, we recommend that you find a second EEB faculty member, who is not on the supervisory committee, who will fill in if either the external or the 'internal external' is unable to participate in the defence (phoning in counts as participating). Please ask the backup person to reserve the times to read your thesis, watch your seminar, and participate in your defence in case your external or the internal external cannot attend. Do not list this 'backup' person on your exam Booking form. *If you need to use this backup person on your defence, contact **Angelique Plata** ([sgs.vdeanea@utoronto.ca](mailto:sgs.vdeanea@utoronto.ca)) **immediately and ask for permission to make this replacement.***

**Model 2:**

- The examining committee is comprised of an external examiner; the supervisor/co-supervisor(s); one member of the supervisory committee; and two other professors from EEB or a related department
- Note: this means that, normally, the student and supervisor will select only one of the

two supervisory committee members to sit on the final exam. If two members of the supervisory committee (not including the supervisor/co-supervisor(s)) wish to sit on the exam and vote, that is fine as long as the number of members of the exam committee does not exceed six. Supervisory committee members who are not formally on the exam committee may be invited to attend the exam but they may not vote and they may well decline the invitation to attend.

The exam Chair is a faculty member, chosen by SGS; this person is not an examiner.

Select a specific date and time for the defence—this date must be **at least 7 weeks** after you give **the booking form** with this information to EEB Grad Office ([gradadmin.eeb@utoronto.ca](mailto:gradadmin.eeb@utoronto.ca)) (Kitty). The standard times for SGS defences are 10am and 2pm, but you may request a different time. The student or supervisor should poll all of the exam committee members, except the external (the supervisor must contact the external) and find a date that works for everyone. Ask all of the exam committee members to hold that date (or set of dates) until it is approved by SGS. The EEB final oral exam (FOE) booking form is available here: <https://eeb.utoronto.ca/education/graduate/graduate-handbook/> Scroll down to the relevant section under PhD Defence

If the student has not yet given their **Exit seminar**, decide whether to have it on the same day as the defence or before the defence. See the details of the two options in the EEB Graduate Student Handbook (available on an EEB Grad Office webpage).

If the student will give the seminar on the day of the defence, include the time and location of the exit seminar on the booking form; when you are setting the time of the defence, allow at least 45 minutes for your seminar, then 10-15 minutes for questions, and at least 15-30 min. for a break and to move between rooms/buildings if necessary. Defences start on the hour unless you specifically name another time (e.g. 2:15); please do not be late for the defence, the SGS-appointed Chair will be ready to start the defence at the specified time.

The student must send the EEB Graduate Office (Kitty ([gradadmin.eeb@utoronto.ca](mailto:gradadmin.eeb@utoronto.ca))) their **thesis abstract at least 6 weeks** before the defence. Please also send an updated CV to the EEB Graduate Office.

The supervisor must ask the external examiner, more than 6 weeks before the exam, if they would like a pdf of the thesis, a hardcopy (single or double sided) of the thesis, or both. If they want a hard copy, then the student must give **one HARD copy of the thesis** to the EEB Graduate Office (Kitty) **at least 6 weeks** before the exam so she can courier it to the external (note: SGS no longer requires that all externals receive a hard copy of the thesis); if the external would like an e-version of the thesis, the student must provide that to the EEB Grad Office **at least 6 weeks** before the exam. The student is responsible for **giving copies of the thesis** to the rest of the exam committee members **at least 6 weeks** before the exam. Ask the U of T exam committee members if they would prefer a hardcopy, and/or electronic copy (Word, or pdf or both), and the format (double sided, two pages per side, etc.).

Note: It is useful to have the talk(s) for the exit seminar and/or defence talk **ready at least 10 days in advance**. This allows time to practice the talk for supervisor(s), lab mates, others in the department, etc., revise if necessary and give another practice talk.

Note: Graduate students have found it useful to have a mock defence with their peers, where graduate students each read one thesis chapter and come with prepared questions.

**After the defence**, SGS will email information to the student about how to complete the requirements of the degree, including uploading the thesis online. If you do not wish to have the thesis released publicly immediately, you should submit the form requesting restricted access to the thesis for 1 or 2 years. The Associate Graduate Chair or Graduate Coordinator can sign this form for you electronically. Note: EEB no longer requires a bound copy of the thesis.

For information completing your program, you may also want to see this webpage:  
<https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/academic-progress/program-completion/>

Note that it can take at least a month to have the tuition fees that you will owe adjusted for your completion date (that is the date when you submit the final version of your thesis to the SGS website).

Please ask Kitty ([gradadmin.eeb@utoronto.ca](mailto:gradadmin.eeb@utoronto.ca)) if you have any questions about any of the steps in finishing up.

Note: if you notice any errors in this list or discrepancies with other information from the EEB graduate office, please let Kitty Lam ([gradadmin.eeb@utoronto.ca](mailto:gradadmin.eeb@utoronto.ca)) know.