12 December 2016

MA Thesis Oral Examinations – Guidelines for Examiners
Ryerson Philosophy MA

A Thesis defence is an important event, for the student and for our program; it is important that examiners understand the exam format and are well-prepared. The defence is organized by the Chair of the Examining Committee (normally the Program Director), not the student's supervisor. The thesis is to be disseminated to the examining committee by the Chair, and questions about the exam should be directed to the Chair, not the supervisor. MA defences are governed by the regulations in Ryerson Senate Policy 142, section 6.

The format of the exam is as follows:

- A brief presentation of the thesis work by the candidate
- Examiner's questions (and subsequently, audience questions, if any)
- Deliberation of the examining committee
- Delivery of the committee's verdicts to the candidate and completion of the 'Report of the Oral Examining Committee' form

Some further particulars:

- Examiners must receive the thesis *four weeks* in advance of the examination date.
- If for some reason you are unable to attend the exam, you must submit a written evaluation of the Thesis to the Chair no later than *one week* before the exam date. The Chair will appoint a delegate to attend the examination on your behalf.
- There are typically three rounds of questions, allotting 10-15 minutes per examiner, per round. Please ensure that you have a sufficient number of questions—it is generally wise to consult with the other examiners to avoid overlapping lines of questioning.
- Please ensure that you make efficient use of your questioning time. This means having **direct and well-formulated questions** ready. If you spend five minutes formulating your question, you have used up nearly half your time.
- The supervisor goes last, and by convention, has the option to pass on the final round.
- Questions are to be answered *by the candidate*. Refrain from interjecting in another examiner's line of questioning, or offering suggestions to the candidate. This rule will be strictly enforced by the Chair.
- After deliberations, the examining committee votes on two things:
    - (1) whether the oral examination receives pass or fail; and
    - (2) whether the written thesis receives 'Accepted', 'Fail', or 'Major Revision'
- A candidate must receive 'pass' and 'accepted' in order to satisfy the Thesis program requirement. The Chair does not vote.
- Examiners are expected to provide written feedback on the Thesis in the form of comments, corrections and suggested revisions: these should be forwarded to the Chair after the exam, in a timely fashion. This is always important, but if the verdict on the thesis is 'Fail' or 'Major Revision', it is critical.
- In instances where the committee's verdict on the thesis is 'Major Revision', the examiners must approve the revised version of the Thesis. At the Chair's discretion, the examining committee may be reconvened for this purpose.