

*Excerpt from the Graduate Studies Guide for Students and Supervisors*  
**“The Doctoral Thesis**

*A Doctoral Thesis must set forth a significant contribution to knowledge or understanding, adding to or critiquing through approved research methodologies to the current theoretical underpinnings and empirical base in the student’s field of study.*

.....

*The Doctoral Degree is, by nature and tradition, the highest certificate of membership in the academic community. It is meant to indicate the presence of superior qualities of mind, intellectual interest and high attainment and knowledge in a chosen field. It is not conferred merely as a certificate to a prescribed course of study and research, no matter how long or how faithfully pursued. Independent achievement at a high intellectual level is a necessary prerequisite to its conferment. A Doctoral thesis or parts thereof must be judged to be potentially publishable.”*

### **Guidelines for Chairing of Ph.D. Oral Examinations**

1. Chair confers with examiners before convening and order of questioning agreed to.
2. Chair convenes meeting, introduces candidate, examiners, thanks audience etc and requests silence, cell phones off etc, and outlines procedure, indicating that the role of Chair is that of moderator and not examiner. However, it must be pointed out that in the absence of the External Examiner, the chair and other examiners may raise issues contained in the External Examiner’s report.
3. Candidate’s Presentation
  - a. The candidate is given 20 minutes to half an hour to present. PowerPoint is acceptable, but the candidate must not simply read or present from a script.
  - b. Examiners ask questions in an order which has been discussed and agreed upon or with variations as may be required based on responses
  - c. When the examiners are fully satisfied, the Chair invites questions from the audience, indicating that these are non-examinable and that the time for such questions is at the discretion of the Chair. The Chair may opt not to invite questions from the audience, at his/her discretion.
4. Chairs must ensure that supervisors do not answer questions on behalf of candidates and generally perform as an objective examiner.
5. When question period is ended, the candidate and audience are asked to leave the room.
6. Chair and examiners confer on award of degree and then invite the candidate in to inform of their decision.
7. Examiners are reminded of the Regulations governing the Examination of theses – reproduced here.

#### *Section 3 Regulations 24, 26 – 30 and 35*

24. *If, in the opinion of the Examiners, a PhD thesis is of insufficient merit to justify the award of the Ph.D. degree, the Examiners may, without further test, recommend to the Board for Graduate Studies and Research that the candidate be permitted to resubmit the thesis with revision for the M.Phil degree, or that the MPhil be awarded without further revision of the work.*
26. *If, in the opinion of the Examiners, the thesis is inadequate, but of sufficient merit to justify a second attempt at the examination, the Examiners may, without further test, recommend to the Board for Graduate Studies and Research that the candidate be permitted to resubmit the thesis for examination in a revised form. A candidate who is*

*required by the Examiners to make such major changes to the thesis and to resubmit the thesis in a revised form for examination, must resubmit within eighteen months of the date of notification. The Campus Committee shall send to the candidate pertinent comments of the Examiners relating to the changes they propose.*

- 27. If, in the opinion of the Examiners, the thesis is adequate but defective in ways which do not require it to be resubmitted for examination, they may require the candidate to make such amendments to the thesis as will remove the defects indicated before the award of the degree. Subject to Regulation 28, such changes shall be made after the oral examination for Ph.D. candidates. A candidate who is required by the Examiners to make such amendments to the thesis must do so within a period of six months after the date of notification. The Campus Committee shall specify how these changes are to be made. If the candidate fails to make the alterations required by the Examiners to the satisfaction of the student's Supervisor and the Campus Committee within that period, and is not granted an extension, he or she will be deemed to have failed the examination.*
- 28. If the reports of the Examiners indicate that a thesis requires extensive revision, but not re-submission in accordance with Regulation 26, the Chairman of the Board for Graduate Studies and Research may, at his or her discretion, direct that the candidate be requested to satisfactorily effect such revision prior to any oral examination of the candidate, and such revision should be completed within twelve months of the date of notification.*
- 29. If, in the opinion of the Examiners, the thesis is adequate but the candidate fails to satisfy the Examiners at the oral, practical, or written examination held in connection therewith, the Examiners may recommend to the Board for Graduate Studies and Research that the candidate be permitted to submit to a further oral, practical or written examination within a period not exceeding eighteen months from the decision of the Board for Graduate Studies and Research.*
- 30. If, in the opinion of the Examiners, the thesis is adequate, and if the candidate satisfies the Examiners in any oral, practical or written examination required, the Examiners shall recommend to the Board for Graduate Studies and Research that the degree be conferred. Where Examiners recommend conferment of the degree, they are required to certify that the thesis is worthy of publication as a thesis approved for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Doctor of Medicine (MD) or Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) of the University of the West Indies.*
- 35. Candidates who fail to present themselves for any oral or written examination, or who fail to resubmit a revised thesis within the time periods specified in these Regulations, will be deemed to have failed the examination*

In general the entire process should last not more that two to two ½ hours.

### **Preparation of the Chair's report**

The report is prepared by the Chair and should reflect the main points which the examiners have agreed should be included in the report. The Report must be signed by all examiners along with the Chair. Where there is disagreement/difference of opinion, examiners may submit individual reports.

### **Award of High Commendation**

According to present practice, the examiners' written reports need not state this grade. Final judgment may be reserved until the oral defense. The discussion of whether high commendation is deserved may be discussed following the oral examination. If the external examiner is not present, he or she can be contacted for agreement, as the decision must be unanimous among all examiners.