



## Master's Thesis Oral Examination - Neutral Chair Responsibilities & Procedures

The College of Graduate Studies will approve an appropriate faculty member to serve as Neutral Chair of the Examination as based on the criteria in the [Graduate Policy and Procedure Manual](#).

The **Responsibilities** for the Neutral Chair is as follows:

1. Represents the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies.
2. Moderates the Examination; ensures procedures are followed by the committee.
3. Brings the printed copies of the following forms to the examination:
  - a. Final Master's Thesis Oral Examination – Neutral Chair's Report
  - b. Master's Thesis Approval & Program Completion form
  - c. Voting Ballots
4. Once the examination starts the door to the room should remain closed.
5. The entire Examining Committee must be present for the duration of the examination.
6. Normally the Supervisor must attend the examination in person and any irregularities must be noted on the Chair's Report.
7. All Examiners must be in attendance ten minutes prior to the start of the examination and any irregularities must be noted on the Chair's Report.
8. All Examiners, either in person or via tele-video conference, must be present during the student presentation, questioning, and deliberation.
9. If an Examiner has failed to appear for the appointed start of the examination, the Neutral Chair is:
  - a. To contact them immediately to see if they are coming.
  - b. If the Examiner arrives within the first 30 minutes, the Neutral Chair must poll other Examiners to determine if they are ALL able to stay for at least 2.5 hours commencing from that moment (taking into account the presentation, the examination and the deliberation periods).
  - c. If this is the case, the Neutral Chair can start the examination.
  - d. If any Examiner is unable to remain for that time period, the College of Graduate Studies must be informed immediately and the examination may be postponed.
10. If an Examiner cannot be reached- and be present- within a 30-minute period the



Neutral Chair must:

- a. Postpone the examination;
  - b. Contact the College of Graduate Studies immediately either by phone at 250.807.8702 or email all of the following: [deanna.roberts@ubc.ca](mailto:deanna.roberts@ubc.ca) and [gradtheses.ok@ubc.ca](mailto:gradtheses.ok@ubc.ca).
11. If video conferencing fails for longer than 5 minutes, the Neutral Chair advises the committee the remainder of the exam will be conducted via teleconference.
  12. States that no audio or video recording and/or pictures are to be taken during the exam.
  13. States that no committee member or audience member are allowed to use Skype through their own computer.
  14. Does not vote or ask questions of the student or regarding the thesis.
  15. Facilitates the examination and deliberation and marks the “straw vote” recommendations on the Final Master’s Thesis Oral Examination – Neutral Chair’s Report.
  16. Comments on the overall proceedings of the examination on the Final Master’s Thesis Oral Examination – Neutral Chair’s report.
  17. Submits the Final Master’s Thesis Oral Examination – Neutral Chair’s Report within two (2) business days following the examination.
  18. If an Examiner alleges academic misconduct during the examination or in the post- examination discussion, the Neutral Chair must:
    - a. Suspend the examination;
    - b. Contact the College of Graduate Studies immediately either by phone at 250.807.8702 or email all of the following: [deanna.roberts@ubc.ca](mailto:deanna.roberts@ubc.ca) and [gradtheses.ok@ubc.ca](mailto:gradtheses.ok@ubc.ca).

The **Procedures** for the Neutral Chair is:

1. Introduces the Candidate and Examining Committee.
2. Announces the procedures for the examination to the candidate, examination committee and audience. These procedures (summarized) are:
  - a. Candidate has 10 – 30 mins to present his/her thesis without interruption.
  - b. After the student’s presentation, audience members who are unable to stay are directed to leave the examination.
  - c. Question period of 2 to 3 rounds of questioning from the Examining Committee (up



- to 2 hours).
- d. If time allows, questions from the audience.
- e. Requests audience and student to leave for the in-camera session (30 mins).
- f. Records the “straw vote” from the ballots on the Chair’s report.
- f. Calls the student back in to announce the recommendations.

### **The Examination Starts**

- 3. Invites the candidate to present a synopsis of the thesis and states:**
  - a. The presentation should be 10 – 30 minutes in length.
  - b. That they may speak from notes and may use audio-visual equipment, but must not read the synopsis.
  - c. Stop the presentation if it exceeds 30 mins.
4. Calls upon Examining Committee to pose their questions to the candidate in this order:
  - a. University Examiner.
  - b. Examining Committee.
  - c. Supervisor and Co-Supervisor (if applicable).
5. Exercises discretion in managing the question period and may, for example, curb hostile questioning or stop any interventions by the supervisor.
6. Allows for two to three rounds of questioning but should proceed (within the allowable period) until Examiners have no further questions.
7. Ensures the student:
  - a. Is given reasonable time to answer.
  - b. Has understood the question. If the student understands the question but cannot answer, moves onto the next question.
8. Ensures that:
  - a. The supervisor does not attempt to help the student in any way with the answers.
  - b. The Examining Committee are not collaborating amongst themselves on questions.
  - c. The Examiners’ editorial comments on the thesis are not discussed at the oral examination.
  - d. If time allows, questions from the audience may be invited.
9. Requests that the candidate and all individuals not on the committee leave the room prior to the in-camera discussion.



### **In-Camera Discussion**

10. Before any discussion of the candidate's performance, the Neutral Chair:
  - a. Passes out the ballots to each Examination Committee member.
  - b. Reads the full list of possible recommendations to the examiners.
  
11. Asks each Examiner to:
  - a. Identify their "straw vote" on the secret ballot i.e. recommending a pass or fail both the thesis and the oral defense.
  - b. Forward their secret ballot to the Neutral Chair.
  
12. If an Examiner is tele-videoconferencing into the examination, the Neutral Chair should:
  - a. Collect the secret ballots from those present.
  - b. Ask those examiners to briefly leave the room.
  - c. Behind a closed door, record the secret ballot of the examiner who is tele-video conferencing.
  - d. Invite examiners back into the room for the official examiners' discussion.
  
13. The post examination discussion begins with:
  - a. The Neutral Chair reading out the different votes from each of the ballots.
  - b. Marking that 1st initial (straw) vote(s) onto the Final Master's Thesis Oral Examination – Neutral Chair's Report.
  
14. If **consensus is not reached**:
  - a. After the 1<sup>st</sup> round of discussion, the Neutral Chair is to continue with up to 2 additional rounds of open voting to reach a consensus. \*
  - b. If after 3 rounds of discussion, no consensus is reached the Neutral Chair declares a hung jury and documents this outcome on the Chair's report.
  - c. Instructs each committee member to download the [Final Oral Examination – Committee Member Report](#) from the CoGS website to record their final vote and rationale for their recommendation.
  - d. Indicates the report needs to be submitted to CoGS within 5 business days of the examination.
  
15. If **consensus has been reached the Neutral Chair**:
  - a. Proceeds to obtain the signatures from each Examination Committee member on the Master's Thesis Approval and Program Completion form and the Master's Thesis Oral Examination – Neutral Chair's report.
  - b. Marks whether the thesis should be nominated for a national award on the Master's Thesis Approval and Program Completion form.
  - c. Hands over the "Master's Thesis Approval and Program Completion form"



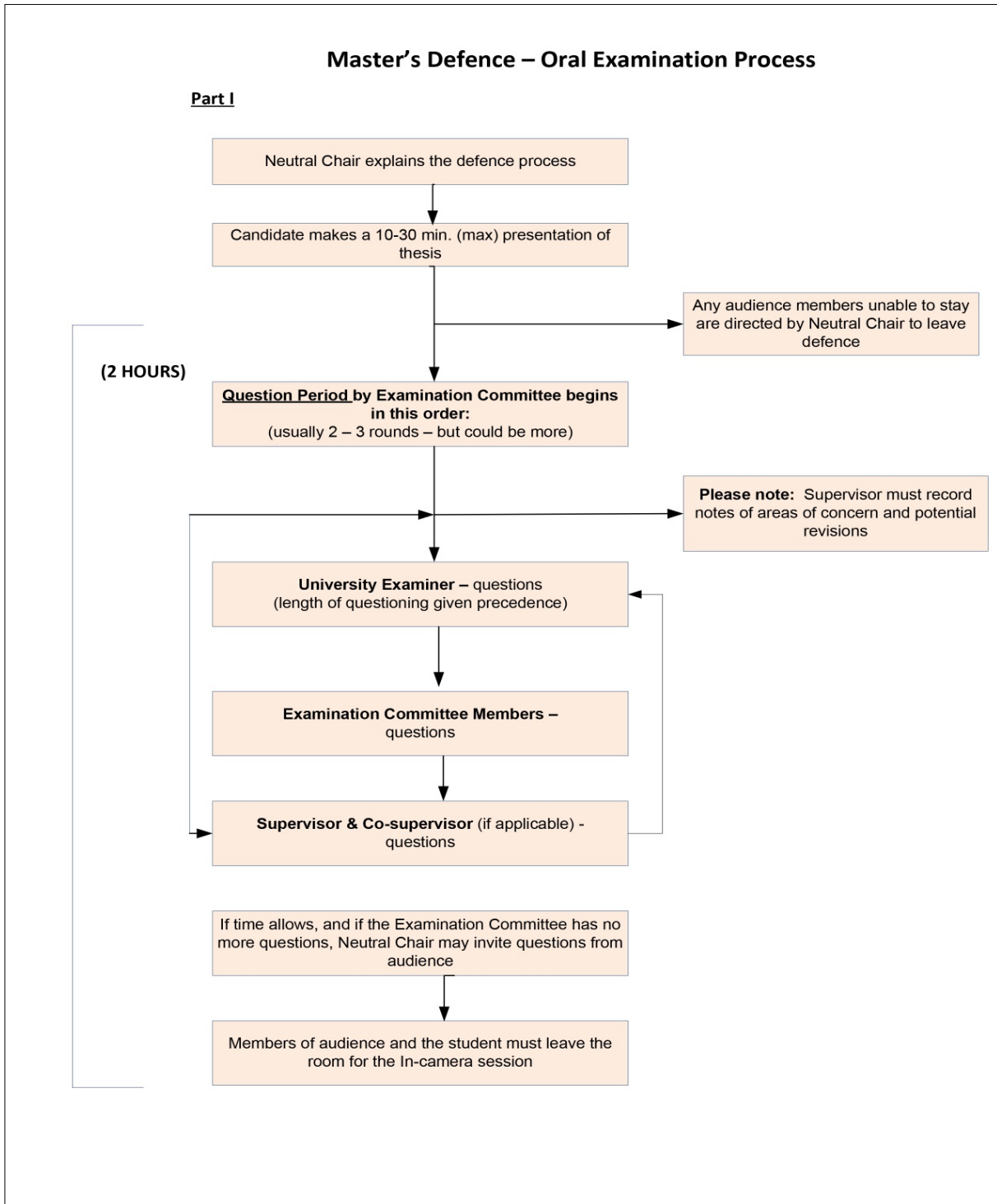
to the supervisor and instructs he/she to hang onto the form until all revisions have been completed. *The Supervisor is to hand in the signed form as part of initiating final submission for the student.*

- d. **Submits the “Master’s Thesis Oral Examination – Neutral Chair’s report” to the College of Graduate Studies within 2 business days of the exam including the ballots.**

16. After deliberation, the Neutral Chair:

- a. Recalls the candidate and, in the presence of the exam committee, informs the candidate of the recommendations that are to be made to the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies, while avoiding the implication that a final decision has been made.

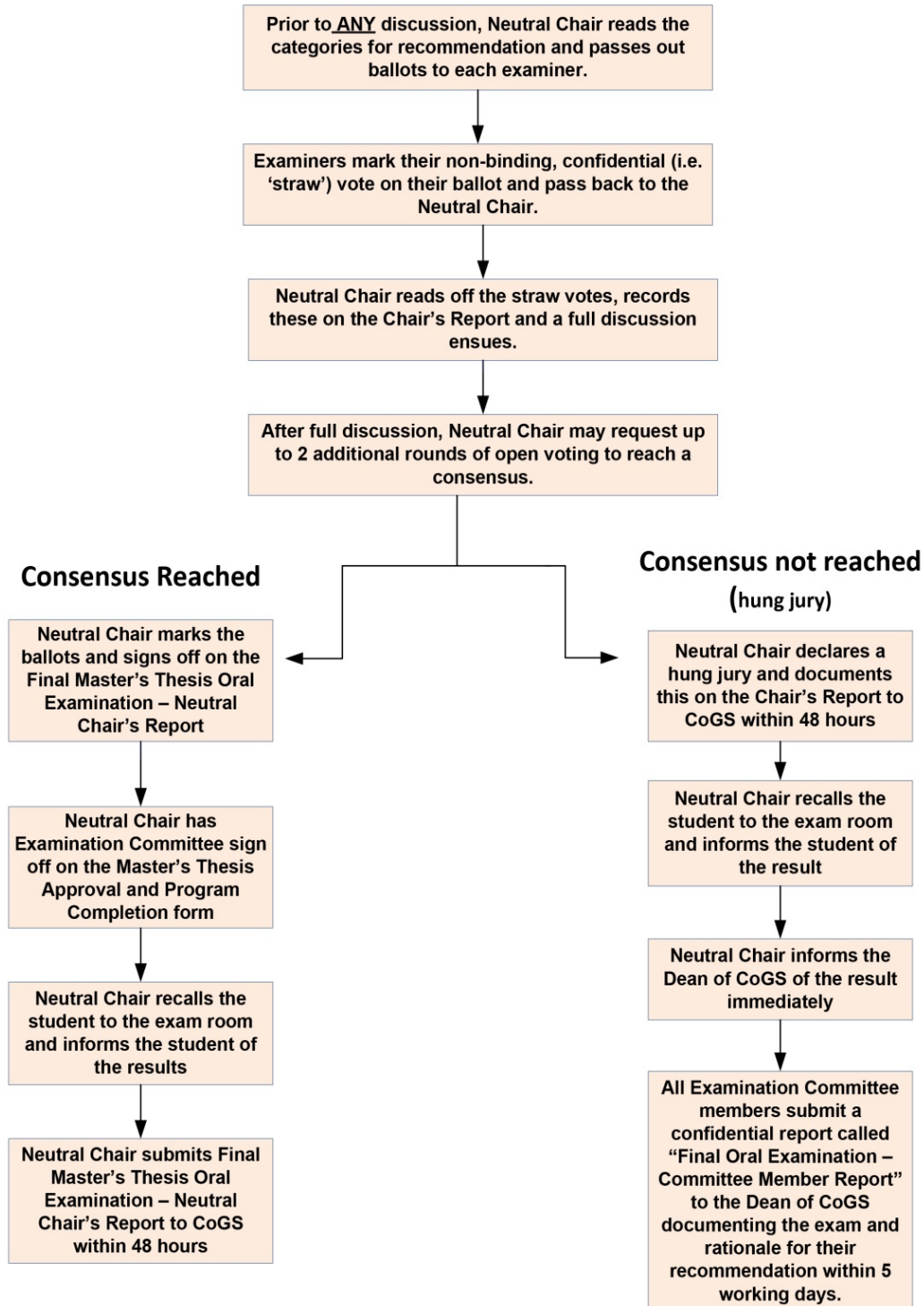
**\*Please note:** if there is contention amongst the examiners, the Neutral Chair may use the written ballots for each subsequent vote, including the final vote.





### Master's Defence – Oral Examination Process

#### Part II: In-Camera Session with Examination Committee







### Master's Thesis Oral Examination Outcome Flowchart

