

## Final Doctoral Exam

I write to inform you of a recent change to UBC's Final Doctoral Exam policy that was discussed and ratified by the Graduate Council on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011. We plan to implement this change for all defences from January 1, 2012 onward.

### What Changed?

A candidate will pass his/her defence not by a simple majority, but by a near unanimous majority. All or all but one of the examining committee members must recommend the same course of action to the Dean of Graduate Studies. If two examiners dissent, the Dean or appropriate Associate Dean shall promptly confer with the examining committee before a final decision is made. These changes will be reflected in the Exam Instructions and Chair Report Form, both of which can be found at:

<http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-doctoral-exam/doctoral-examination-final-oral-defence>

### Why the Change?

A person earning a UBC doctoral degree should have the benefit of the solid (if not unanimous) endorsement of his/her examining committee following a rigorous Final Doctoral Exam. As well, the University should have the assurance that its doctoral graduates have met or exceeded the expectations of all (or nearly all) of the appointed examiners at the defence. While this change will affect the outcome in only a small minority of exams, it puts into place an important check that is missing from the current procedure.

### How will it work?

The Chair's Report form provides check-boxes that concisely express both evaluations and an **overall recommendation**. The Examination Chair will check any such box only when it represents the judgement of all, or all but one, members of the examining committee (including the external examiner if s/he has participated in the defence). Dissenting opinions should be noted in the Examination Chair's report. In any category where two or more examiners disagree with the majority view, the Examination Chair should leave the associated check-boxes blank and provide a written description of the differing views in the text of the report.

If this occurs, the Examination Chair is expected to inform the Faculty of Graduate Studies as soon as possible--typically within one business day of the examination. The Dean of Graduate Studies or Associate Dean will review the Examination Chair's Report and promptly determine an appropriate course of action, in consultation with the Examination Chair and the examining committee.

### What hasn't Changed?

A positive recommendation by an external examiner to UBC is still required before the defence can proceed. A full description of the process can be found at:

<http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-doctoral-exam/exam-overview>

If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Jacqueline Webb

Doctoral Exams Coordinator | Faculty of Graduate Studies | Office of the Dean

The University of British Columbia | Vancouver Campus

6371 Crescent Road | Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z1

Phone 604 822 3989 | Fax 604 822 5802

[jacqueline.webb@ubc.ca](mailto:jacqueline.webb@ubc.ca)