

## Guidelines for Neutral Chair

### Role of the Neutral chair

1. Timekeeper for the exam (Allow 45 minutes for questions and 15 minutes for deliberations)
2. Report results to student and to ASRB/Dean and VC
3. Does not question student or offer opinions that would sway the examining committee
4. Records minutes of the exam
  - a. Purpose of the minutes is to provide:
    - i. a summary of the process for the Dean, and ASRB
    - ii. a guide for an oral summary of the results to the student and supervisor
  - b. Content/Format of the minutes:
    - i. Should include a brief summary of questioning of the student and any anomalies or challenges that occurred. (Detailed listing of the questions and responses is not necessary.)
    - ii. can be handwritten or typed
    - iii. include date and time of exam, names of examiners. and start/end time of each examiner's questions,
    - iv. time the exam concluded; time deliberation concluded (deliberations are not recorded. (A summary of the result is all that is necessary).
5. If an examiner is participating via distance, receive his/her approval via email to record a proxy vote provided verbally at the conclusion of the exam.
6. Ensure safety of students and if an examiner is aggressive or questioning in a threatening manner intervene and halt the examination temporarily and caution the examiners. Student may be asked to leave.
7. Intervene in the examining process only if there appears to be bias, misconduct or unfairness, or if the examiners are diverting from the agreed format of the thesis defense in such a manner as to disadvantage the student, or if the chair believes the thesis defense is progressing in a manner which could compromise the University's academic standards. Actions which might be taken include calling a temporary halt to the Exam and holding a private discussion with the examiners or the student, or, most exceptionally, ending the examination.
8. Ensure safety of examiner- if a student gets aggressive then s/he needs to interject and call for a recess. Student may be asked to leave temporarily and examiner asked on how to go forward with exams. After deliberations decision can be taken with consensus including the supervisor.

### **Process for Exam –**

The following occurs with the student present

#### *A. Introduction to Examination Process*

1. Welcome examiners and extend thank for participating; introductions if needed.
2. Remind participants to turn off cell phones, pagers, and laptops.
3. All examiners must be present for the entire exam process. If an examiner has to leave the room, the exam stops, and the clock stops until he/she returns.
4. Only those listed on the ***Notice of Masters/PhD Examination*** should be present.

5. The VC (or representative) may attend without prior notice

#### *Examination Process*

1. Questions to be based around the thesis topics, research methods and references.
2. Questioning should begin with the senior external examiner and then junior external examiner. (Confirm they are okay with this.) Depending on the program, the neutral chair will advise on the timing and duration of the rounds of questions
3. Examiner may “pass” if no further questions.
4. If there is time at the end, the neutral chair can welcome additional questions from the examiners.
5. Once examiners are satisfied that all their questions have been answered and/or the 45 minutes’ time limit is up, the student is asked to leave the room.

#### *Post Examination Discussion Process*

#### **The following occurs with the supervisor and student absent.**

1. Asking examiners to write down recommendations on the prescribed form and give it to the neutral chair. The exam results should be according to the options mentioned in the form.
2. The Neutral Chair reveals results.
3. If consensus on the recommendation is not reached, the Neutral Chair may remind the examiners that if the outcome includes one negative vote, the candidate will pass. If the outcome includes two or more negative votes, the recommendation will be Fail.
4. Begin discussion with external examiners first and then include all starting from asking who voted fail.
5. Role of the Neutral Chair is to help focus and summarize the issues, but NOT to participate in the discussion or give an opinion on the recommendation. In determining the final recommendation, refer the examiners back to the examination form handed over by the research department
6. Student and Supervisor are called back in and provided results of the exam. The Neutral Chair may wish to give the results to the student and supervisor in private if the exam was not successful.
7. The Neutral Chair returns the ***Report of thesis Examination*** to the research department director/Administrator immediately following the exam. Distance examiners must email the Neutral Chair prior to the examination giving him/her permission to initial the result on their behalf of the distance examiner. Please include a copy of the email with the ***Report of Examination***.
8. In the case of a Fail, all examiners including, the Neutral Chair, Supervisor and Co-Supervisor are required to complete a report addressing the result of the exam within 5 working days. These are addressed to the VC and ASRB