



Department of Cell and Systems Biology

Ph.D. Thesis Approval Meeting

The Cell & Systems Biology PhD program requires that all PhD candidates present their thesis for evaluation to a Thesis Approval Committee before proceeding to the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) PhD Final Oral Examination. The Thesis Approval Meeting must be held six to eight weeks prior to the SGS PhD Final Oral Examination. Consult the Graduate Office for deadline dates for convocation and the CSB website (<http://www.csb.utoronto.ca/graduate>) for “PhD Thesis Examination and Final Oral Examination Instructions”. Members of the Thesis Approval Committee who evaluate the thesis are expected to advise the student and supervisor as to whether or not changes are necessary before the Final Oral Examination (FOE) is formally requested, and the thesis is distributed to the FOE committee members. The student and supervisor must evaluate the recommendations and act accordingly.

Nature of the Thesis Approval Meeting

The Thesis Approval Meeting will be based on: (1) an assessment of the thesis containing the results of an original research study, (2) the ability of the candidate to defend the thesis and (3) the ability of the candidate to show a mastery of the research topic. The candidate must demonstrate that he/she understands the topic, can defend the thesis, and can place the findings in a general context. The candidate may also be asked to comment on the research developments in his major field of study. While not a formal exam, it should be conducted in a way that will prepare the student for the School of Graduate Studies Final Oral Examination.

Thesis Approval Committee

The committee for the Thesis Approval Meeting will consist of the Supervisor and all other members of the Supervisory Committee. The Committee will meet with the candidate *in camera* at a meeting time organized by the candidate.

Responsibilities of the Thesis Approval Committee

Each of the Thesis Approval Committee members should evaluate the thesis. The scientific qualities of the work presented should be those associated with published studies in refereed journals. The standards of quality that are imposed should be equivalent to those of a peer review. The Thesis Approval Committee must be satisfied that the study was performed with care and that, when necessary, appropriate controls were used. The interpretations of the results should be consistent with the data presented. The candidate is expected to place the results of his/her study into context in terms of the particular research topic. This should include a literature review and an assessment of the results in relation to the findings from relevant studies.

Conduct of the Thesis Approval Meeting

The candidate must organize the Thesis Approval Meeting at a time of mutual convenience for all members of the Thesis Approval Committee, and book a meeting room for this purpose. The candidate is responsible for ensuring that their audiovisual needs will

be met at the presentation. Up to three observers may attend the closed discussion portion of the evaluation, subject to the approval of the supervisor and the candidate. The observers can be anyone who would like to attend the meeting, and could include friends and members of the candidate's family. The observers must be solely observers, and not disrupt the meeting in any way. The observers must leave at the conclusion of the evaluation before the assessment of the performance of the candidate.

At the beginning of the Thesis Approval Meeting, the student (and any observers) will be asked to step out of the room so that the Thesis Approval Committee can discuss the nature of the meeting. The student is then invited back into the meeting room to make a 20 minute presentation that summarizes the thesis.

Feedback on the thesis and presentation is given by the Thesis Approval Committee. Editorial comments can be discussed at the Thesis Approval Meeting, but it is recommended that the student be provided with a list of such comments by each Thesis Approval Committee member to aid in revision of the thesis. At the end of the question period, the candidate is asked to step outside of the room. After the candidate has withdrawn from the room, the Committee will initiate a discussion on the quality of the thesis and the performance of the candidate. The Thesis Approval Committee then compiles recommendations to improve the quality of the thesis and help prepare the candidate for the SGS Final Oral Examination. The candidate will be informed of the outcome of the assessment by the Thesis Approval Committee: pass with the recommendation to proceed to the SGS PhD Final Oral Examination, or fail with the recommendation to complete more research and/or significant revisions. The Department will not allow theses that have not been approved by their Thesis Approval Committee to be submitted for the SGS Final Oral Examination.