Review of External Examiner Nomination Process

Despite the best intentions of students/advisors, a significant number of PhD (and MSc) defenses face pressure to be scheduled before the end of a given semester.

1. How can the process be streamlined?

   ▶ Can we reduce the number of potential External nominees?

   ▶ Do advisors need to contact nominees for availability?

   ▶ Can advisors supply more information to the Progress Committee to speed their deliberation?

2. Should the School have some understood guidelines for the qualifications of an External Examiner?

image: https://www.gettyimages.ca/photos/deadline

Current External Examiner Nomination Process

At least 8 weeks prior to defense:

1. The **Advisor(s)** submit a nomination form identifying at least three potential External examiners along with their CVs. They should confirm their availability and willingness to serve before submitting.

2. For each nominee, a member of the **Progress Committee** will research the nominee and report:
   - Name, title, institution
   - How well their expertise matches the student's research area
   - How active they are in the area
   - History of graduate student supervision - have they advised PhDs?

3. The committee deliberates on the suitability of the nominees and ranks them

4. The ranking is submitted to the **Director** for approval

5. A formal invitation is sent to the selected External, confirming their availability

The Current Graduate Calendar

The nomination will be made when the candidate's Advisor declares that the thesis is about to be prepared, **normally no later than the beginning of the student's last semester**.

The **External Examiner:**

- ▶ must not have served as Advisor to the student's Advisor or have been a trainee of the Advisor in the last six years,
- ▶ must not have directly collaborated in joint projects or co-authored publications with the Advisor or the student in the last six years,
- ▶ must not have an existing plan to collaborate with the Advisor or the student, and
- ▶ must not have been a student or member of the graduate faculty at the University in the last five years.

Note: There are no guidelines on qualifications for an external examiner such as: Should they hold a PhD? Should they have advisory experience at MSc or PhD levels?

Historically, the external was appointed by the Department Chair, but in the current calendar it is updated to Graduate Program Coordinator.

https://calendar.uoguelph.ca/graduate-calendar/degree-regulations/doctor-philosophy/

Additional University Guidelines

It is the responsibility of the Advisor(s) to begin making arrangement for the doctoral thesis defense **at least eight weeks** prior to the anticipated date of the defense.

The Advisors should:

- ▶ Identify three potential external examiners
- ▶ Contact the potential external examiners to verify their availability
- ▶ Nominate to the Program Committee, the names of the three potential external examiners

https://graduatestudies.uoguelph.ca/current/completion/thesis_completion/doctoral_sched

For Discussion

Contact external nominees only once they have been vetted by the Progress Committee. This saves the advisor from reaching out to prospective externals that may not be selected.

Risk: A nominee's availability is unknown

From recent Graduate Progress committee meeting:

1. Instead of requiring **three nominees**, the Progress Committee could begin deliberation on the Examination Request once **two nominees** have been selected.

2. When submitting the nominees, the Advisor(s) should also provide the Progress Committee with more details as to why the nominee is suitable:
   - recent relevant publications in the research area
   - advisory experience

3. Do we want to have more formal guidelines for faculty to help determine suitable examiners? For example:
   - They should have recent publications in the research area
   - They should have graduated a PhD student