



## Master of Science Oral Examination

The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS) sets the [thesis basics, formatting and final thesis submission requirements](#) for MSc students in all UBC programs. The Reproductive and Developmental Sciences Program sets program-specific guidelines for the scope of the thesis and oral examination (defence) procedures.

### Permission to Write

Prior to writing the thesis, the MSc student should schedule a meeting with their supervisory committee (typically the second meeting). The supervisory committee should determine whether the student's thesis content will be sufficient, and give formal approval for the student to write their thesis.

### Format/Length of Thesis

Students should carefully review the [G+PS requirements for thesis structure and formatting](#).

The general length of theses in the RDS program is: 100-130 pages, including figures and references. Theses of a different length should be approved by the Program Director, upon recommendation from the student's supervisor.

### Scope

The MSc thesis must adequately demonstrate the student's ability to produce significant scholarly work with original contribution, their understanding of the background and principal works of their research area, and their ability to interpret and communicate their research and results.

### Approval of Thesis for Examination

The student's supervisor is to read the complete thesis in draft form. The appropriate revisions should be made before the rest of the supervisory committee reads the thesis. Members of the supervisory committee normally return their comments to the student within 2-3 weeks. The suggested changes must be made to the thesis, and then the final version sent to the External Examiner.

As long as adequate time for these steps has been included, the exam can be scheduled before or during the approval phase. The student should make the Program Assistant aware of any delays in thesis preparation accordingly.

### RDS Program Requirements for the MSc Oral Examination

- 1) The RDS Program Assistant will assist with scheduling the student's thesis defence. Students should refer to the MSc Oral Examination Planning Tool, and discuss their proposed timeline with their supervisor before contacting the Program Assistant.
- 2) MSc students are required to hold an exit seminar, scheduled during the OBST 506 seminar class. Where possible, the exit seminar should be scheduled prior to the oral



exam, so that the student can practice their presentation and receive feedback from their peers.

- 3) The MSc oral exam will be 2 hours in length, and proceed according to the Conduct of the Examination instructions below.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the MSc examination is to evaluate the student's knowledge in:

- 1) The area of specialization in their research project
- 2) Mammalian reproductive and developmental biology

The student will be assessed on:

- critical thinking abilities
- breadth of knowledge of the relevant discipline
- ability to reason and to integrate knowledge of the discipline to their thesis project
- ability to explain methodology, analysis and/or statistical tests used, as well as the strengths and limitations of these
- ability to effectively communicate results of their research project

### **Questions to Consider when Preparing for the Examination**

#### 1) Introduction

- a) What is known (published literature)?
- b) Why is this research question worth asking?

#### 2) Methods

- a) Description of approach and experiment protocols

#### 3) Results

- a) Data tables and figures
- b) How do you interpret these data?
- c) How do your results address the research question?

#### 4) Discussion

- a) How do the results integrate into the published literature and contribute to knowledge in the field?



## Conduct of Master of Science Oral Examination

The instructions below are directed to Chair of the examining committee.

1. Provide the statement of purpose: “The student’s supervisory committee has agreed that this thesis is appropriate for final oral examination for the degree of Master of Science.”
2. State the title of the thesis and introduce the student.
3. Ask the student to present an oral presentation of the thesis in 20-30 minutes. The student must not read from a prepared script, but speaker notes/memory aids are acceptable.
4. Thank the student and introduce the supervisor and examining committee.
5. Ask for questions from the examining committee, starting with the external examiner, then supervisory committee members, and ending with the supervisor.
6. Ask for questions from faculty members, graduate students present.
7. As Chair, you may also ask questions.
8. One or two rounds of questions
9. Ask student and the audience to leave the room.
10. Lead the examining committee’s discussion of the thesis and examination, addressing the following:
  - a. Is the written thesis of the standard expected for a MSc student in Reproductive and Developmental Sciences?
  - b. Did the student present their work and respond to questions adequately?
  - c. The supervisor may be asked to briefly describe the student’s career while in the program.
11. The examining committee can decide to:
  - a. Accept
  - b. Ask for minor revisions
  - c. Ask for major revisions
  - d. Reject

12. The examining committee will also assign a grade as a percentage.

A+	90-100
A	85-89
A-	80-84
B+	76-79
B	72-75
B-	68-71

13. The Chair will help the examining committee reach a final decision, and may cast a deciding vote, in the case of disagreement.
14. Ask the student to return to the room to receive the outcome of the examination. At this time, the student will be informed by the examining committee of any revisions required before the final thesis is submitted.
15. Submit the Chair’s Report to the Program Assistant.



## Chair’s Report for the Master of Science Oral Examination

**Student Name:**

**Student Number:**

**Thesis Title:**

**Date and Time of Examination:**

**Location of Examination:**

**Examining Committee Present:**

<b>Supervisor</b>	
<b>Chair</b>	
<b>Supervisory Committee Member</b>	
<b>Supervisory Committee Member</b>	
<b>External Examiner</b>	

**Examining Committee Decision** (check one of the following):

- a) Accept ( )
- b) Accept with minor revisions ( )
- c) Accept with major revisions ( )
- d) Reject ( )

**Mark Assigned:**

**Chair’s Comments:**

**Name of Chair:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Chair:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Return this report to:**

Program Assistant (Natalie Twohey), [natalie.twohey@cw.bc.ca](mailto:natalie.twohey@cw.bc.ca)  
BCWH, C420-4500 Oak Street, Vancouver BC, V6H 3N1