

University Oral Examination

Biomedical Informatics

The Ph.D. oral examination in Biomedical Informatics is held approximately one year prior to anticipated completion of the dissertation. A formal thesis proposal, following the outline of the anticipated dissertation document, is submitted to the orals committee prior to the examination. Thus the oral exam is generally held after 3 years in the Ph.D. program; this presumes 4 years for completion of the degree. Oral presentations on the completed dissertation at the end of the fourth year are also mandatory, but these are not used to fulfill the University oral examination requirement.

During the first hour of the University Ph.D. oral examination, the candidate presents a review of his or her dissertation which is open to the public, i.e., graduate students from this and other departments, as well as non-Committee faculty, associates, and others with academic interest in the topic.

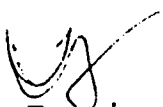
Immediately following this, there is a period for questions from the audience. When these have been exhausted, the Examining Committee continues to meet with the candidate, each examiner being allotted a proportion of the remaining time for pursuing questions related to or deriving from the subject under discussion.

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27 January 1993

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To: Departmental Graduate Studies Administrators
From: Tiffany Jung, GDSS 
Re: Guidelines for Oral Examinations

Enclosed please find a revised copy of the "Stanford University
Guidelines for University Oral Examinations" for distribution to
oral examination chairs.

Thanks!

*use for
copying*

**STANFORD UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY ORAL EXAMINATIONS**

The University Oral Examination is a requirement of the Ph.D. and Ed.D. degrees. The purpose of the examination is to test the candidate's command of the field of study and to confirm fitness for scholarly pursuits. Departments determine the type of oral examination given to their doctoral students; it may be a test of knowledge of the field, a review of the dissertation proposal, a defense of the dissertation, or a combination of these functions.

Types of University Oral Examinations

The University oral examination may include any one or a combination of the following:

1. An area examination in the student's area of special interest or dissertation area. This type of oral is intended to assess the student's overall mastery of a specific field of knowledge; it might test, for example, in-depth knowledge of the literature and methodology of the field.
2. A defense of the dissertation proposal covering content relevant to the area of study, rationale for the proposed investigation, and strategy to be employed in the research. This type of exam is intended to assist the student in refining a dissertation topic and to ensure mastery of theoretical and methodological issues as well as the materials needed to conduct the dissertation research successfully.
3. A dissertation defense, presented either upon completion of a substantial portion of the dissertation work or upon completion of a pre-final draft of all dissertation work. In either case, a draft of the work completed should be available for the examining committee will in advance of the examination. This type of exam is intended to verify that the research represents the candidate's own contribution to knowledge, and to test his or her understanding of the research. General questions pertaining to the specific field as a whole, but beyond the score for the dissertation itself are not to be excluded. The candidate is passed or failed on the basis of performance in the oral examination; approval of the dissertation itself is the prerogative of the dissertation reading committee.

The examination shall be conducted according to the major department's adopted practice, as presented in a statement provided to the committee chair.

Committee Membership

The University oral examination committee consists of five members: four examiners and a chair from another department not represented by the examiners. The major department must be represented; the minor department determines whether their representation is required. At least three of the examiners must be Academic Council Members. A fourth or fifth examiner who is not on the Academic Council may be appointed if approved in advance by the department chair and/or school dean.

Who May Be Present

A portion of the University oral examination may take the form of a public seminar. However, all examinations must include a period of private questioning by the official examining committee.

Length of Examination

The examination should be conducted according to the major department's stated practice, but should not exceed three hours in length.

Responsibilities of the Committee Members

The responsibilities of the chair of an oral examination are:

- to serve as an impartial representative of the academic standards of the University
- to ensure that the candidate is asked challenging but fair questions; the chair may participate in the questioning
- to note the departmental/school guidelines for an oral examination
- to observe the University guidelines for oral examinations and to keep examiners aware of both sets of rules
- to assign one or more members of the examining committee to give the candidate adequate evaluation after the examination
- to vote on the candidate's performance
- to report the examination results and any changes in committee composition on the University Oral Examination Schedule form and to return this form to the department graduate studies administrator within five days of the examination
- in the event of a candidate's failure, to submit a written evaluation of the student's performance to the candidate's major department and School Dean within five days of the examination.

The responsibilities of the examiners are:

- to ask challenging questions
- to follow the University and departmental guidelines for oral examinations
- to vote on the candidate's performance

Voting Procedures

Voting is by secret ballot. Only members of the official examination committee are eligible to vote. Five members of the committee constitute a quorum. To be eligible to vote, an examiner must have been present throughout a substantial part of the examination and during the final discussion. It is the Chair's responsibility to determine who is eligible to vote.

Success on an oral examination requires 4 favorable votes out of 5, 4 favorable votes out of 6, 5 favorable votes out of 7, or 6 favorable votes out of 8.

Oral Examination Results

At the conclusion of the examination, the chair tallies the votes of the committee members and records the results of the examination on the University Oral Examination Schedule. Within five days of the examination, this form is distributed to the departmental graduate studies administrator who records the results in NSI ORALS screen.

Any violation of University policy regarding University oral examinations (committee membership, insufficient numbers of voting members, etc.) should be reported to the school dean's office for review.

Procedures for Failures

If a University oral examination committee votes to fail a student, the committee should remain convened to review the results. The examination committee chair is responsible for transmitting to the chair of the student's major department and to the student, within five days of the examination, a written evaluation of the student's performance. Copies of the Oral Examination Schedule and this evaluation should also be sent to the School Dean. Within 30 days of the oral examination, the department must send a written statement indicating their final action to the student and to the School Dean's Office. The committee may recommend the length of time that should intervene before the student retakes the examination and conditions to be met before it may be retaken.

The committee has the option of recommending that the student not be permitted to repeat the oral; however, this option must have been preceded by a written warning from the department that the student has not been making satisfactory progress. In effect, this is a recommendation that the department should terminate the candidate. The "Guidelines for Dismissal of Graduate Students for Academic Reasons," described in the Stanford University Bulletin should be followed. A meeting of the departmental faculty or appropriate faculty committee, with a minimum of three faculty, should be convened. The student has the right to attend the meeting and to present his or her case; a student may also make this case in writing. After full discussion, the departmental committee will, without the student present, review the case and vote on dismissal. The student will then be sent a written summary of these discussions, including the committee's recommendations and the reasons for those recommendations.

This statement should include a reference to "Academic Grievance Procedures" stated in the Stanford University Bulletin. The committee's response to any request for reconsideration should also be made in writing.