

Complete Policy Title:  
**Graduate Examinations Policy**

Policy Number (if applicable):  
N/A

Approved by:  
**Senate**

Date of Most Recent Approval:  
**April 9, 2014 (effective May 1, 2014)**

Supersedes/Amends Policy dated:

**Keeping Records of Graduate Student Oral Examinations – Policy – last revised date:  
October 14, 2009**

Responsible Executive:  
**Associate Vice-President and Dean of  
Graduate Studies**

Enquiries:  
[University Secretariat](#)

*DISCLAIMER: If there is a Discrepancy between this electronic policy and the written copy held by the policy owner, the written copy prevails*

---

## PREAMBLE

This document is intended to communicate clearly the university's expectations with regard to examinations and mid-terms in graduate courses (excluding comprehensive examinations, transfer examinations and thesis defenses) and the responsibilities of both students and instructors.

## SECTION A: INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Except in graduate programs where examinations are scheduled centrally, instructors are responsible for scheduling and invigilating examinations and communicating the date, location and any relevant details to students.

Instructors should be fair and consistent in how they manage any examination situations, e.g., students arriving late, students who are unable to write an examination at the scheduled time, etc.

Any authorized aids must be indicated on the examination paper and communicated in writing to students in advance of the examination date. If an instructor authorizes the use of a calculator it must be communicated to the students in advance of the examination. The instructor may specify the use of the McMaster Standard Calculator(s). If an instructor permits the use of a different calculator, it is the instructor's responsibility to ensure the calculator does not allow an unfair advantage or disadvantage.

It is the responsibility of the instructor to devise and use checking procedures in the grading of all examinations to ensure that every portion of the examination is marked and the totalling of the marks awarded is correct.

## SECTION B: STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

As per the Graduate Calendar, full-time students are expected to be on campus except during times of approved vacation. As such, students must be available for any examinations required for their classes. Any requests for an examination to be re-scheduled should be sent directly to the instructor of the course.

Students who miss an examination for compelling medical or personal reasons should contact the instructor directly as soon as possible. Evidence supporting the reason for missing the examination may be requested by the instructor and/or program. Students may be asked to sign documentation confirming academic integrity.

Students with disabilities who require additional aids or other accommodations in their examinations must contact and receive a recommendation regarding appropriate accommodation from Student Accessibility Services (SAS) in advance of the examination. No additional aids or accommodations are allowed other than those confirmed by SAS and the course instructor.

### **SECTION C: EXAMINATIONS IN PROGRESS**

From time to time unforeseen problems arise during examinations such as:

- A fire or other alarm leading to the evacuation of the examination location,
- A power failure, and/or
- A number of examination papers being defective.

When such an irregularity occurs, the instructor decides whether or not to terminate the examination(s) and collect the papers. Such decisions are reported to the Department Chair<sup>1</sup>.

If the University is unexpectedly closed during an examination period (e.g. inclement weather) the instructor will re-schedule the affected examinations and communicate the new schedule to students.

If academic dishonesty is suspected during an examination the instructor (and/or invigilators) will document and/or stop the behaviour. Note: Students suspected of cheating should not be prevented from finishing the examination. The Office of Academic Integrity will be informed of all suspected cases of academic dishonesty in examinations and will proceed according to the Academic Integrity Policy.

### **SECTION D: STUDENT ACCESS TO WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS (if not returned by Instructor)**

A student who wishes to view their written examination should contact the instructor. The instructor will either review the examination with the student, allow the student to read the examination under supervised conditions, or provide the student with a photocopy of the graded examination. The responsibility for ensuring students have access to written examinations rests with the Department Chair.

### **SECTION E: TAKE-HOME EXAMINATIONS**

When a take-home examination is part of the assessment process for a graduate student, acceptable and unacceptable collaboration expectations must be clearly communicated to the students.

The allocated time for students to complete the take-home examination must be reasonable and the location to which the exam should be returned must be noted.

### **SECTION F: NON-WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS**

Alternate means of assessment may be appropriate or necessary, such as oral examinations, assessment of practical or performance skills and clinical performance (e.g., OSCE). Evaluation criteria are determined

---

<sup>1</sup> In this document any reference to a Department Chair shall also include the Director of a School or Program.

on the basis of the course objectives. In these assessments, students must be made aware of the objectives and criteria for evaluation in advance of the assessment. Suitable notes, records, marking sheets, recordings, etc. must be kept intact for at least one year after last use, and remain accessible to the Department Chair for that period.

1. Oral Examinations

When an oral examination is part of the assessment process for a graduate course, an audio or video recording must be made if there are fewer than three examiners.

The examiners are responsible for arranging the recording and for ensuring that the recording is accessible to the Department Chair (or equivalent) for at least one year from the last use of the recording.

2. Practical Skills or Performance Exams

Examinations can be structured to measure practical skills or performance skills. Practical skills or performance examinations may be recorded or may have multiple observers evaluating the students.

3. Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCE)

An OSCE is an objective evaluation measure used to assess components of clinical competence. Students should be made aware of the objectives for the evaluation in the OSCE, which is structured to sample student performance in a variety of areas relevant to these objectives. Students rotate through a series of timed stations normally each lasting 5-10 minutes. At each station students are asked to perform a specific task (such as taking a patient history, performing a treatment technique, etc.). There are two types of stations. Examiner stations involve the use of a rater who observes and scores a student's performance and may entail interaction with a standardized patient or mannequin. Written stations, where a student is asked to answer written questions, record findings or interpret patient data, do not require an observer but entail subsequent marking of written responses. A rating form or standardised checklist clearly specifies the evaluation criteria and the scoring system to be used by the examiners.

OSCE examinations consisting of 8 or more stations can be used toward the final grade in a course. As 8 or more raters (1 per station) are involved in assessing the student's performance, a review of the documentation provided by these raters on the student's performance by an independent faculty member competent in the subject being examined would constitute a fair and adequate review of the student's performance in the case of a student appeal of the mark.

If the final OSCE examination consists of 7 or fewer stations, one of the following must be included when conducting the OSCE examination:

1. A second rater at all examination stations, or
2. Videotaping or audiotaping, depending on the nature of the task being examined of each student, at all examiner stations, or
3. Using standardised patients at all examiner stations who are trained to complete a checklist regarding each student's performance.

The standardised marking sheets for each student should be kept intact for a period of 1 year after last use following the end of the academic session in which the evaluation takes place.

---

## SECTION G: RETENTION OF EXAMINATION PAPERS AND OTHER GRADED MATERIAL

Department Chairs are responsible for ensuring that final examinations and all other graded material not meant to be returned to students, and the instructor's record of how the final grades in a course were determined, are retained for at least one year after last use, and remain accessible to the Department Chair for that period.

This policy applies to all instructors. Sessional instructors and those retiring or otherwise leaving the service of the University must notify their immediate supervisor of the on-campus storage location of the material.