Final Oral Graduate School Examination  
(Dissertation Defense)

The Final Oral (Dissertation Defense) Exam is conducted by the doctoral committee following the requirements of the Oregon State University Graduate School [http://oregonstate.edu/dept/grad_school/](http://oregonstate.edu/dept/grad_school/). Please note the STUDENT (not faculty) is ultimately responsible for insuring that all requirements are fulfilled, all deadlines are met and any departmental and/or graduate school forms required are submitted appropriately and in a timely way. It is the second and last exam required by the graduate school in order to meet graduation requirements. The purpose of the exam is for the student to present the research findings publicly in order to defend the research approach, interpretation of results and conclusions. The first hour of the exam is the dissertation defense, a presentation which is open to all interested parties. After the defense portion of the exam, the examination committee excludes all other persons and in the second hour continues to assess the student’s understanding of the field and the contribution of the work to the field.

The examination committee will consist of the same members as for the preliminary examination, although substitutions may be made if approved by the department/program or college and the Graduate School. At least one complete academic term must elapse between the Oral Graduate School Comprehensive Exam (Preliminary Exam) and the Final Oral Examination. If the committee composition has changed since the Oral Graduate School Comprehensive Exam (Preliminary Exam), the student must ensure that the new committee member(s) is an approved member of the Graduate Faculty and meets the committee composition requirements. See Scheduling Exams: [http://oregonstate.edu/dept/grad_school/forms.php](http://oregonstate.edu/dept/grad_school/forms.php) If the faculty member is not a member of the Graduate Faculty or is not approved for the role proposed, the major department/program will need to nominate the proposed member to act in this role using the Nomination to Graduate Faculty form. The student should build time in for this process.

The student is responsible for contacting members of the Doctoral Committee, including the Graduate Council Representative, to arrange the date, time and place for the examination. The exam should be scheduled for two hours. When the Committee is in agreement about the details of the examination, the student schedules the exam with the Graduate School office at least two weeks before the examination using the Event Scheduling Form. The student is responsible for informing the Graduate School of the date, time, and place of the meeting and notifying and reminding the committee of the agreed upon date, time and place. Committee structure is evaluated by the Graduate School when the examination is scheduled. The student must submit the pre-text pages of the dissertation (see [Online Thesis Guide](http://oregonstate.edu/dept/grad_school/forms.php)) to the Graduate School office at least one week before the final exam. The student is expected to distribute examination copies of the dissertation (thesis) to all committee members, including the Graduate Council.
Representative, at least two weeks before the exam to permit thorough review prior to the final oral examination. However, note that the date on which review copies of the dissertation should be given to committee members may be earlier than two weeks before the examination if negotiated by the Major Professor (See Completing Your Thesis for more details). It is generally expected that all committee members will be physically present at the examination. If there is a special case in which a committee member may need to participate remotely, the student and the committee must assure that all the conditions listed on the Graduate School website are met (see http://oregonstate.edu/dept/grad_school/forms.php#program).

The Major Professor is responsible for communicating to the dissertation committee the expectations of the exam, the current status of the student and the dissertation, and each member’s role in the final exam. At a minimum, the major professor should make sure that each member receives a review copy of the student’s dissertation at least two weeks before the exam, although as noted above, an earlier date may be negotiated by the Major Professor. Prior to the final examination, the Major Professor is also responsible for gauging feedback from the Committee to assess whether the dissertation is complete and of high enough quality to be defended by the student. Committee members outside the Department should also receive some guidance about their role so that they can prepare appropriately. For example, a member of a science or mathematics department might be charged with assuring that any science or mathematics concepts within the dissertation are sound and accurate.

The Final Oral (Dissertation Defense) Exam can be assessed in one of four ways. (1) Student passes with all members of the committee agreeing on satisfactory performance, (2) Student passes with one dissenting vote of the committee, (3) Student’s exam is recessed and Committee determines appropriate action, or (4) Student’s responses are not considered passing and Committee determines appropriate action.