

Guide for Doctoral Dissertation Jury Members

The purpose of this guide is to define the roles and responsibilities of each doctoral dissertation jury member, and to clarify conflict of interest between jury members and the student defending their dissertation.

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1. Introduction

Doctoral programmes aim to develop a high level of knowledge, intellectual rigour, scientific curiosity and creativity in candidates. They also seek to enable graduates to understand and evaluate the literature, to develop mastery of rigorous methods of reasoning and experimentation, to carry out an innovative scientific research projects independently, and to disseminate and publish the results of scientific work.

The doctoral dissertation must make an original contribution to the advancement of knowledge or technological development, and satisfy competences to be developed at the doctoral level.

The jury must impartially assess the content of the dissertation, its quality, originality, coherence and clarity and precision of language.

2. Conflicts of interest

According to the [Politique relative à l'intégrité et aux conflits d'intérêts en recherche](#), ([Policy on Integrity and Conflict of Interest in Research](#)), each jury member has an obligation to declare any conflict of interest which may exist, in relation to the research activities of this jury panel.

“**Conflict of interest**” refers to any potential, actual or apparent situation where an individual's personal or business interests, or the interests of a related person, conflict with the interests of their organization, partners or other interest holders, as well as any situation that compromises or is likely to compromise the individual's loyalty, duties, obligations or judgement in the course of their duties.

A “**related person**” means any person who is related by blood, parentage, adoption or any marital status (spouse), including the spouse's children.

An “**interest**” is that which one seeks, on behalf of which one acts or which one tries to satisfy or achieve. Interests can be of various kinds, including **financial** (e.g. shares in a company, capital gain, salary received for a given mandate, gift, promotion, royalties received, etc.), **material** (e.g. access to scarce resources, use of computer services, obtaining equipment, time to use equipment, premises, etc.), **human** (e.g. maintaining an interpersonal relationship, access to influential people, etc.) or **symbolic** (e.g. invitation to a prestigious event, signing of a publication, promise of an honorary title, obtaining a prize or position, etc.).

Joint signing of publications, supervision of internships or research stays, research collaboration, interests in a competing technology, business ties with the person defending the dissertation or other members of the jury are, among others, situations that are conducive to conflicts of interest and should be declared.

3. Jury composition

As per *Règlement 76.4 des études supérieures*: "(unofficial translation) *the doctoral dissertation is examined by a jury composed of at least four members appointed by the*

Polytechnique Montréal Graduate Studies Director (directeur études supérieures) and upon the recommendation of the Coordinator of Graduate Studies (coordonnateur des programmes d'études supérieures) and the Department Director.

The jury for a doctoral dissertation is made up of at least four persons who have recognized knowledge in the field of research to be able to evaluate fairly the student's work:

- jury chair;
- research director;
- One or more co-directors (if applicable);
- One or more members of the jury (if applicable);
- At least one external reviewer;
- Representative - direction des études supérieures.

Jury composition for a co-supervised dissertation varies according to where the defence takes place, and must respect the composition established in the co-supervision technical file.

4. Qualifications, roles, and responsibilities - jury members

4.1 Chairperson of the Jury

Qualifications

The Chair must be a full, associate or emeritus professor at Polytechnique Montréal or at an attached (joint) program at Polytechnique Montréal.

The Chair of the jury must not have been involved in the work included in the dissertation, must have no "financial interest" in the work included in the dissertation, and must not be a "related person" of the student or other members of the jury.

Role

The Chair of the Jury acts as a coordinator between the student, the other members of the jury, the supervisors and co-supervisors, and the Department Chair. The Chair also acts as a liaison between jury members and the Registrar's Office.

The Jury Chair is an evaluating member of the dissertation jury. The Chair's report is placed in the student's file.

The Chair sets up and eventually presides over deliberations leading to the authorization of the defence.

The Chair presides over the defence and the subsequent deliberations.

Responsibilities

The Chair receives the manuscript and has at least 20 working days to write their evaluation report and recommendations (&5). The Chair may make a recommendation for the best dissertation award.

The Chair receives all evaluating members (members and external member) reports, and ensures that they are in order (&5).

Depending on evaluation report recommendations, the Chair decides whether or not to deliberate among the members of the jury, and whether or not to authorize the defence.

Depending on evaluation report recommendations and jury deliberations following the defence, the Chair decides whether or not to complete the recommendation form for the best dissertation award. If the decision is not to complete the form, the Jury Chair invites members to discuss the appropriateness of awarding a commendation to the student's doctoral work.

The Jury Chair completes the Doctoral Dissertation Examination Board Report and has it signed by all members of the jury before submitting it to the Registrar.

Following a successful defence, the Jury Chair ensures that any corrections requested by the jury have been made.

4.2 Directors and Co-Directors

Qualifications

The student's supervisors and co-supervisors are de facto invited to be members of the jury, but may not chair it.

If a vote is taken during deliberations, the student's supervisor and co-supervisor votes count only as one single vote. If they do not agree with each other, their vote may be nullified or considered an abstention.

Role

Supervisors and co-supervisors do not report on the evaluation of the dissertation.

After discussion with the student, the supervisor nominates members of the dissertation jury by completing the dissertation jury nomination form.

Responsibilities

The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that jury nominees have recognized expertise in a field of research which enables them to properly evaluate the student's work.

The supervisor nominates a graduate representative by completing the representative nomination form and submitting it to the CPÉS and the Department Chair for approval. Each year, departmental assemblies appoint volunteer representatives for a period of 1, 2, or 3 years. The student's supervisor may draw on this non-exhaustive list maintained by the graduate director to solicit one of the volunteer representatives, perhaps with interests in a niche that is in affinity with that of the student's dissertation.

4.3 Jury members (other than directors and co-directors)

Qualifications

Any person with recognized competence in the field of research may serve as a jury member.

The jury member must not have been involved in the work included in the dissertation, must have no financial interest in the work included in the dissertation, and must not be related to the student or other members of the jury.

Role

The jury member is an evaluating member of the dissertation jury. The report is filed in the student's file.

Responsibilities

The member receives the manuscript and has at least 20 working days to write their evaluation report and recommendations (& 5). They may make a recommendation for the best dissertation award.

4.4 External member

Qualifications

The external member is a recognized expert in the research field of the person defending the dissertation, who must be chosen from outside the Université de Montréal and its affiliated schools.

Polytechnique Montréal expects the external examiner's judgment on the research activities presented in the dissertation defense to be impartial and independent. Independence implies that the external member has no direct or indirect ties (i.e. related person, past relationship) over the past 5 years with the student defending the dissertation, or other members of the jury that could affect their decision, subordinate their judgment, or otherwise interfere with their decision-making autonomy.

Role

The external member is an evaluating member of the dissertation jury. The report is filed in the student's file.

The external member informs the jury's deliberations by comparing the knowledge and skills of the student defending the dissertation, with those of their counterparts at other institutions.

Responsibilities

The external member receives the manuscript and has at least 20 working days to write their evaluation report and recommendations (& 5). Their may make a recommendation for the best dissertation award.

4.5 Representative - direction des études supérieures

Qualifications

The Direction des études supérieures representative must be an associate or full professor at Polytechnique, cannot be affiliated with the program in which the student is registered, and must not have any direct or indirect ties (i.e. related person, past relationship) with the student which would interfere with their decision-making autonomy.

Role

The role of the Direction des études supérieures representative is to ensure that the process occurs in accordance with established institutional standards - from the initial submission of the dissertation, during the evaluation of the dissertation, during the defense, and during deliberations.

Responsibilities

In the event of difficulties during the deliberations following the defense, the Direction des études supérieures representative will determine the appropriate action to be taken as to the jury's decision.

The representative will then issue a joint report to the Registrar's Office and the Directeur des études supérieures by completing the « Rapport du représentant du directeur des études supérieures ».

5. Content of the dissertation evaluation report

The evaluation report should be at least 1-2 pages long, and comment on the scientific merit of the dissertation as well as the:

- relevance of the research area;
- originality of the contributions;
- consistency of the dissertation's structure and organization;
- proper use of documentation;
- selection of appropriate methods to answer the research questions and objectives;
- rigour in argumentation and processing of sources and data as well as in the analysis of results and their interpretation;
- acquisition of research methodology and knowledge in the field;
- contribution to technological development or the advancement of knowledge;
- potential spin-offs.

The evaluation report should also comment on the quality of presentation of the document:

- accuracy and clarity of title and style;
- quality of writing;
- language accuracy;
- quality of illustrations and tables;
- appropriate bibliographic references selection and their presentation.

The evaluation report should also include specific comments. The evaluating member may refer to their annotations on an electronic or paper version of the dissertation.

The dissertation evaluation report is also the best place to justify whether the dissertation should be submitted to an excellence competition such as the best dissertation award. In relation to all the theses they have evaluated during their career, the evaluating member can comment on the quality of the dissertation according to the following criteria:

- scientific content quality;
- originality;
- relevance of work to applications of engineering interest;
- potential impact in the field of research.

6. Deliberation process

6.1 Deliberations following the evaluation of the dissertation

After receiving the reports, the Jury Chair shall make one of the following decisions:

- a) The dissertation is recommended and will pass to the defense process.
- b) The dissertation must be revised (major corrections).
- c) The dissertation is deemed unacceptable and the student's candidacy is terminated.

If the reports are not unanimous, the jury must deliberate.

The decision (c) must be unanimous.

For decision (b), the jury will state the requirements to be met by the candidate and the time limit make said corrections, which may not exceed one year or extend by more than one quarter (4 months) a maximum period granted.

A revised dissertation will be subject to new reports and a new decision. If it is neither recommended by the majority for defense, nor is it unanimously rejected, a second jury must be formed.

6.2 Deliberations at the end of the dissertation defense

At the end of the defense, the jury must give one of the following verdicts:

- a) The dissertation is satisfactory and accepted.
- b) The dissertation is satisfactory, but some minor modifications have to be made. In this case, the corrections and modifications to be made are indicated to the candidate by the jury chair, who ensures that they are made.
- c) The thesis must undergo major modifications. In view of new reports, the jury can refuse the thesis or accept it, and may or may not require a second defense.)
- d) The dissertation is unacceptable, the student's candidacy is terminated.

The jury's verdict must be unanimous. If the jury is not unanimous, the jury shall be disbanded and a second jury must be formed.

7. Absence of a member of the jury

7.1 Withdrawal of one of the jury members after official nomination

In the event that one of the jury members withdraws after the official appointment by the Polytechnique Direction des études supérieures, a new appointment must be submitted to the Registrar's Office for approval by the Direction des études supérieures. However, the new jury member should be given at least 10 working days to evaluate the thesis.

A new appointment of the Direction des études supérieures representative must be filed with the Registrar's Office if a withdrawal occurs.

7.2 Absence of one of the jury members on the day of the defense

In the absence of the external member, the defense can only take place if the Chair of the jury has received and read the absent member's report and their recommendation for the defense. The Chair should also have received a copy of any questions the absent member may have wished to ask the student during the presentation or defense. If not, the defense must be rescheduled.

In the absence of the supervisor or co-supervisor, the defense can only proceed if the Chair of the jury has obtained the absent member's opinion on whether or not to accept the thesis and preferably the comments or questions that they would have asked during the defense. Otherwise, the defense must be postponed.

The Chair of the jury should take note of the student's comments or answers to the absent member's questions during the defense.

After the jury deliberates, the jury's decision is pending. Within hours of the defense, the Chair of the jury must contact the absent member and provide a brief report on the defense, the student's comments or responses to questions, and the content of the deliberations of the jury members present. The absent member will then be asked to give their opinion.

- If there is agreement, the absent member must sign the appropriate form and send it to the jury chair.
- If there is disagreement, the Jury Chair will report the disagreement to the other members of the jury and take the necessary action.

In the absence of the chairperson, the defense cannot take place, except in the event of force majeure. In the event of force majeure, the decision to postpone or proceed with the defense may be left to the department Chair or their representative. If the defense is held, the department Chair or their representative will sit as Jury Chair and will perform all the tasks assigned to jury chair.

After the defense, the decision of the jury is suspended. The Department Chair will contact the absent Jury Chair and report back. The next steps are at the discretion of the chairperson.

In the absence of the direction des études supérieures representative, the Chair should ask if a professor in the audience (or immediately available) can serve as the direction des études supérieures representative. If no faculty member is available, the Chair should ask the member of the jury (other than the external examiner, supervisor or co-supervisor) to assume this role. This person will then produce a short report explaining the situation, sign it and forward it to the Registrar's Office.

The Graduate Studies representative's report should note the absence of a member and what was done in this case. It should also mention any irregularities, if any.

In the absence of the student, the defense cannot take place.