ROUTINE FOR PRESIDING AT DOCTORAL ORAL EXAMINATION:

Thank you for agreeing to preside at the upcoming oral examination. The following guide walks you chronologically through the steps you will take as a presider.

1. **During the Defense — Overall Duties**
   
a. During the defense, you will lead the discussion by following the guidelines set forth in the rest of the document. You can use the quoted statements in sections 3 and 4 verbatim while presiding over the defense.
   b. As presider, if anyone is participating virtually, you will be responsible for ensuring the technology is running smoothly and is not disrupting the flow of the defense. Considerations for managing technology include:
      i. Accessing WebEx prior to the defense to ensure the virtual participant is available via audio and video.

2. **During the defense — Opening of Session**

   You may use the quoted statements below verbatim, except where names are bracketed.
   
a. Open by saying:

   “This the final examination for the degree of [DEGREE] for [STUDENT].”

   “The purpose of the examination is to determine 1) whether the dissertation is acceptable, and 2) whether the candidate satisfactorily defends it. That decision will be made at the conclusion of the examination by the four examiners. (The chair is present but does not participate in the examination or the decision.)”

   “Since a decision to accept the dissertation stipulates that all errors of an editorial or typographical nature will be corrected before the final copy of the dissertation are submitted, it is not necessary to question the candidate concerning matters of this sort. The candidate and chairperson will appreciate receiving notes on these errors, either in the text, or separately. Therefore the examiners can address their questions to matters of substance.”
“Each examiner will be given an opportunity to introduce questions. Once a question has been introduced, any other examiner who is interested in the same general area may feel free to enter the questioning at that point. It is hoped that the initial questioning will proceed expeditiously enough that there will be an opportunity for a second round, in which examiners may introduce questions they have been reserving, or which may have occurred to them in the course of the examination.”

b. Ask the Chairperson to present the candidate to the examiners: "Dr. [NAME], could you present the candidate to the examiners please?"

c. Permit the candidate to make a brief introductory statement.

“[NAME], you now have the opportunity to make a brief introductory statement. I would suggest that it is not necessary to summarize the content of the dissertation. Rather, you may tell the examiners anything that may be helpful to them in understanding the research, your background, or the relationship between the two. You should plan to keep your statement to about 5 minutes.”

3. During the Defense – Examination Period

   a. Call on examiners, in turn. You should remind participants that follow-up questions are allowed, even if they did not ask the original question.

   “As is our custom, I usually begin with a committee member, and then alternate between committee members and outside examiners for purposes of examining the candidate. The questioning will begin with [NAME] examining the candidate.”

[Note: If helpful, you may use the guide below to keep track of questions.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examiner</th>
<th>Question 1</th>
<th>Question 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b. If there is time, call on examiners again. In general, you should aim to complete all questions within about 1½ hours from the start, but stretching this period to 1¾ hours is fine.

c. Ask if anyone has any final questions.

d. Ask if any observers want to ask questions.

4. During the Defense — Decision Period

a. During this part of the defense, you should ask the candidate and any guests to leave the room to enable a private discussion among the committee members. Instruct the student that the chair will contact him/her once it is permissible to re-enter the room.

b. Consider the acceptability of the dissertation document. Please ask for a motion and a second to that motion, discuss the defense and the motion, and then call a formal vote. Two negative votes defeat a motion.

Possible decisions:

- **Accept:** All errors are corrected, and recommendations which had consensus in the course of the examination are incorporated. The examiners delegate to the Chairperson the responsibility for seeing that this is done.

- **Accept conditionally:** Any examiner who cares to do so may withhold his or her signature until the revised document has been submitted to him or her and is approved. Please notify Student Services ([docgsehd@gwu.edu](mailto:docgsehd@gwu.edu)) if an examiner has made this decision.

- **Reject conditionally:** The examiners establish conditions under which the dissertation may be reconsidered and accepted. This may or may not include another oral.

- **Reject:** The dissertation is judged totally unacceptable. The candidate has no alternative except to produce a new study, if permitted to continue.

c. Consider the acceptability of the oral defense:
Possible decisions: Accept or not accept. If not accepted, a second oral is called for. Please call for a motion and a second to the motion to finalize the decision.

5. After Decision is Made
   a. The chair will invite the candidate back into the room. Once the candidate has re-entered the room, the chair will make the formal announcement of the committee’s decision.
   b. Notify Student Services of the result by emailing docgsehd@gwu.edu; Student Services will then reach out to the student and chair with final instructions for submitting the document to ProQuest. If the committee’s decision is unanimous, please confirm that with Student Services. If the decision is not unanimous, please provide the name of the committee member who wishes to dissent or withhold his/her signature, so Student Services can follow up with them during the graduation clearance process.

Please contact Student Services at docgsehd@gwu.edu to reschedule if necessary.