

## Preparing for the PhD oral examination

### Workshop Questions & Answers

Question	Answer
In what way is the oral examination different to a dissertation defence that other universities run? Or is it the same thing just differently named?	It would be dependent on which university you are referring to. There are elements that may be common with other universities the essence of which is to allow examiners to engage with the student and their research.
Are there any faculty-specific requirements planned for the PhD Oral examination?	The pilot oral examination process would be the same for each faculty.
Does the CoA typically side with the least favourable outcome (from the perspective of the candidate) where examiners differ in their assessment of the dissertation?	No. The Oral committee makes a recommendation – usually by consensus – to the DDB. We never default to a least favourable, but look at all reports on their various merits and points being raised.
Do the students and supervisor get to see the prelim report?	Yes. The examiner reports will be made available to the student and supervisor 7-10 days prior to the scheduled date of the oral examination.
Can I still opt into the pilot PhD oral exam?	Yes. Please email <a href="mailto:PhDoral@uct.ac.za">PhDoral@uct.ac.za</a> and advise as to when you are planning to submit your thesis.
Are the examiners the external examiners? Or the university examiners?	There are three external examiners. However, there will be at least one members of the CoA as part of the oral committee. The external examiners will work collaboratively to reach consensus after the oral, noting the views of the CoA and DDB member on the oral committee.
In making revisions, does a PhD candidate have right of rebuttal (as is the case with academic paper revisions)?	Upon the receipt of a corrections/revision result, the student is advised to address the concerns of the examiner and tabulate the responses on a DDB06 form. The student could indicate if they made the correction, or the reason that they will not be making the correction (i.e. the student has the right of rebuttal). As always, it is prudent that the student completes their corrections and revisions following interaction with the supervisor(s) and that they are made aware of the edits and/or rebuttals. The corrections must be made to the satisfaction of the supervisor and CoA (this process remains the same as before the pilot.)

Question	Answer
<p>What if you are not strong in English i.e., it is not your first/home language?</p> <p>With the thesis, there is the writing centre to assist - will there be something similar for the oral exam?</p>	<p>UCT examines the thesis in English and we are hopeful that all students will be conversational in English with regards to their research and thesis.</p> <p>The examiners may also not be first language English speakers, so there is an understanding of this. It must be noted that all students regardless of their first language are expected to be familiar with the discourse of their discipline. The fact that all /most of your references and reading for your research are likely in English certainly allows non-English first language students opportunity to develop those language skills, and also students should've availed themselves of the opportunity to practise presenting their work and thoughts in group, departmental or conference seminars and meetings.</p>
<p>Is the supervisor present in the considerations during part 2?</p>	<p>Yes, however they do not have an evaluative role in the recommendation.</p>
<p>If the result after the oral is Revise and Resubmit, will the student have to do another oral after resubmission?</p>	<p>That may be decided on a case-by-case basis and generally we would not expect the dissenting examiner(s) to require a further oral exam. The written and submitted revision and corrections should be aimed at satisfying the examiner critique fully and comprehensively.</p>
<p>Do you need to be registered as a student to submit corrections?</p>	<p>Students are granted 2 months to complete their corrections, and therefore do not need to register for the new year. However, if the two months cross the academic years the student will be administratively registered in order for the degree to be awarded.</p> <p>In the case of a revise and resubmit, the student will be required to register for another year.</p>
<p>And what is the senate list of qualifiers date for this year? And what is the last day for an oral exam this year?</p>	<p>Dates are continuously updated on the DDB Website: <a href="https://uct.ac.za/students/current-students-doctoral-candidates/doctoral-candidates-overview">https://uct.ac.za/students/current-students-doctoral-candidates/doctoral-candidates-overview</a></p>
<p>If you are only submitting later this year e.g., November, will you no longer be able to do the voluntary oral exam?</p>	<p>At this point we are unable to advise if the pilot will be completed by this time. The DDB are relying on volunteers but will be capping the number of students in the pilot at 30.</p>
<p>How long does a student take to revise and resubmit? (range of time)</p>	<p>Students are given up to one year to complete their revision. It depends on the extent of revision needed how long it will take. Most revisions can be done in a few weeks to a few months.</p>
<p>Does the DDB have an anticipated timeline upon which they expect to roll the oral exam process out? So, if students do not volunteer for the pilot until when can they follow the standard procedure?</p>	<p>We are hoping that the pilot will be complete by the end of the year. Thereafter we will evaluate and decide on the future approach. There will be a transition period and implementation details will be communicated to all students and supervisors. if it will be implemented as a standard procedure. At this point we are unable to provide a timeline, but we are hoping to complete it by 2024.</p>

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In the case where student thesis is publication-based, how does the oral presentation benefit the work published (i.e., can the examiners recommend changes to the already published work?)	<p>Examiners are deciding on the award of a PhD. It is theoretically possible that examiners want something changed or added to the thesis – but of course that will be only to the thesis, not to the journal version of any paper.</p> <p>Students are reminded to apply with their faculty for the inclusion of publications to be approved prior to the submission of their thesis.</p>
To be a volunteer, must you be in your final year of your PhD program?	Yes, the pilot is running now (i.e. from April 2023), to participate you must be close to submission.
Could you please elaborate on the role of the supervisors in the oral exam? To what extent will they be involved in making sure that the questions from examiners are relevant and within the scope of the project?	<p>The supervisor’s role in the oral examination would be to assist the student with the preparation for the oral. The Chair may refer to the supervisor/co-supervisor and/or the CoA member during questions if appropriate for clarification purposes – but not to answer, correct or defend on behalf of the student. The supervisor/co-supervisor will be present in the discussion after the oral (Part 2), however will not be able to vote towards to the recommendation on the thesis. The supervisor/co-supervisor and CoA member may participate in the Part 2 discussion towards a fair and accurate assessment and recommendation but generally the Chair should ‘invite’ them to comment – i.e. not dominate the discussion.</p>
When is the pilot phase expected to end? Will those submitting their thesis in July still be under the pilot phase or the new normal phase?	Students are asked to volunteer for the pilot; therefore, you will not automatically be included in the pilot. Students submitting in July may volunteer to participate in the pilot by emailing <a href="mailto:phdoral@uct.ac.za">phdoral@uct.ac.za</a>

Further questions can be directed to Jodee Arendse in the DDB at [jodee.arendse@uct.ac.za](mailto:jodee.arendse@uct.ac.za) or e-mail [PhDoral@uct.ac.za](mailto:PhDoral@uct.ac.za).