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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

GRADUATE AND
POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES



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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

NAVIGATING YOUR FINAL DOCTORAL EXAMINATION



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GRADUATE AND
POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

Session Objective

- To provide you with:
 - An overview of the Doctoral Exam Process
 - Tips to help you plan effectively
 - A clear sense of your responsibilities and ours
 - Answers to your questions





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Vancouver Campus



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Final Doctoral Exam

Newly Admitted

Student Status & Classification

Student Responsibilities

Supervision & Advising

Managing your Program

Graduate Pathways to Success

Dissertation & Thesis Preparation

Final Doctoral Exam

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- Newly Admitted
- Student Status & Classification
- Student Responsibilities
- Supervision & Advising
- Managing your Program
- Graduate Pathways to Success
- Dissertation & Thesis Preparation
- Final Doctoral Exam**
- Final Dissertation & Thesis Submission
- Graduation
- Resources & Links

the culmination of years of research and writing. It is the last step toward the conferral of the doctoral degree. The exam is designed to provide the candidate with the opportunity to showcase his/her work and have it probed by a panel of experts in the community, both within UBC and beyond. We wish to thank UBC doctoral candidates for their hard work in their fields and wish them the greatest success in the future.

www.grad.ubc.ca



UBC Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

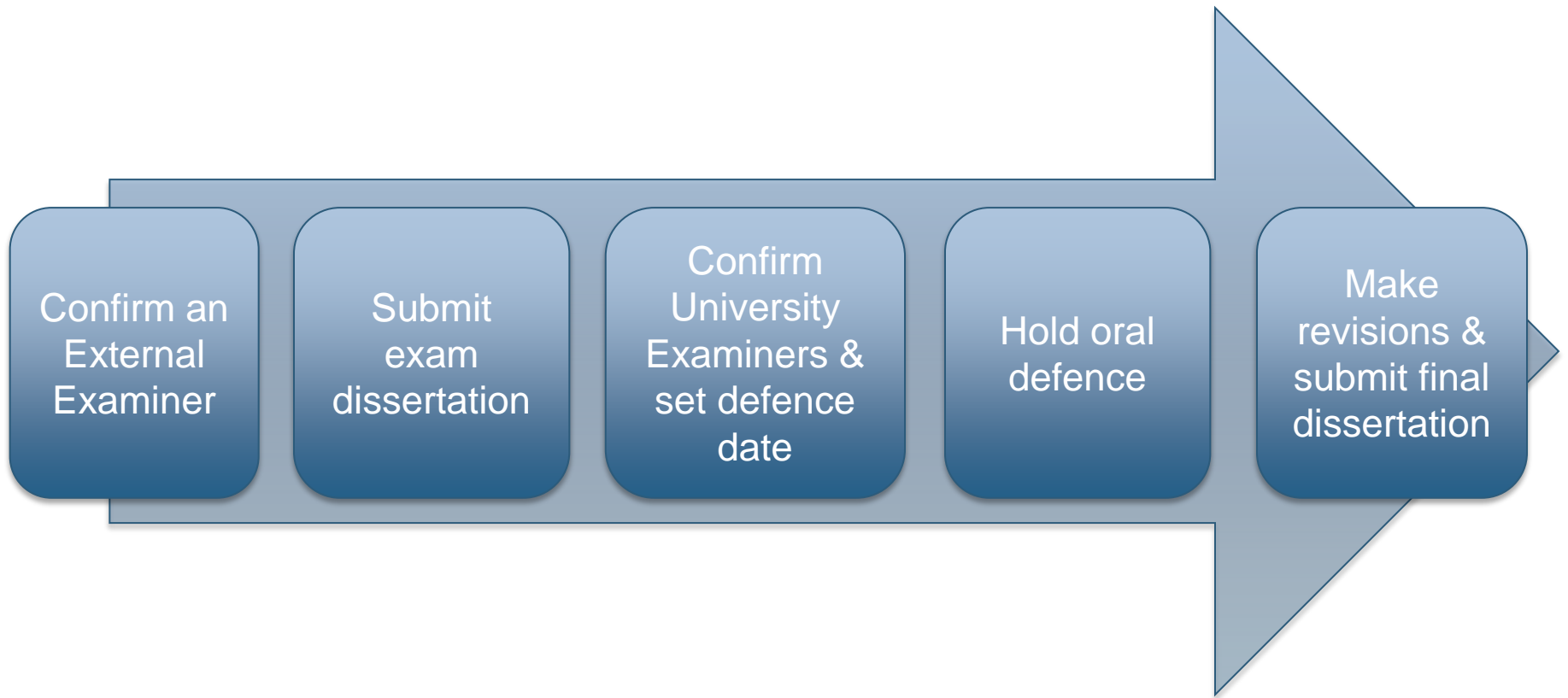
Examination Overview

The Final Doctoral Examination is composed of 2 parts:

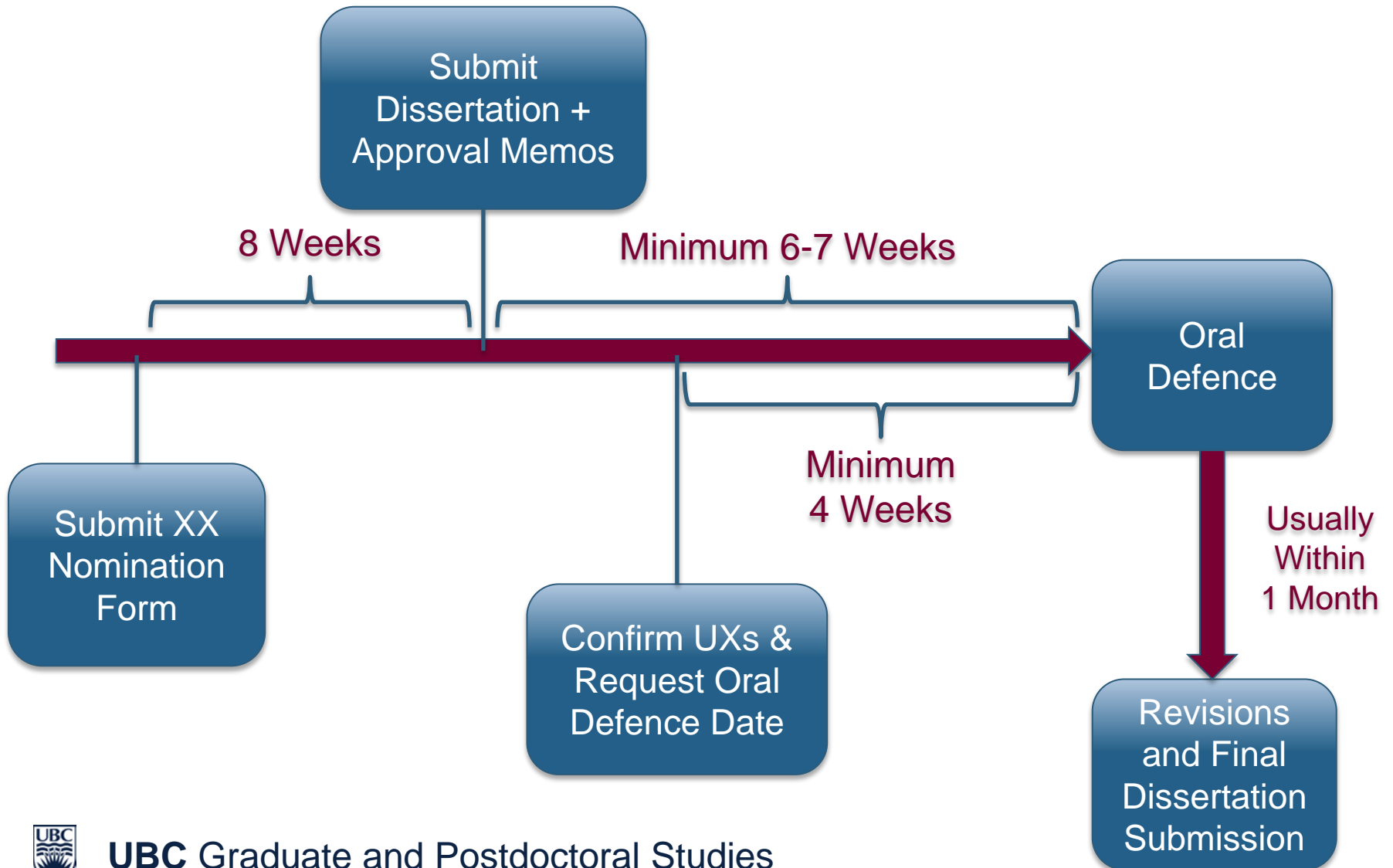
1. External Examination — *dissertation only*
 - An expert outside UBC reads & evaluates
 - **Must be passed before the oral defence can take place**
2. Final Oral Defence — *oral presentation & dissertation*
 - Panel of UBC faculty members evaluates



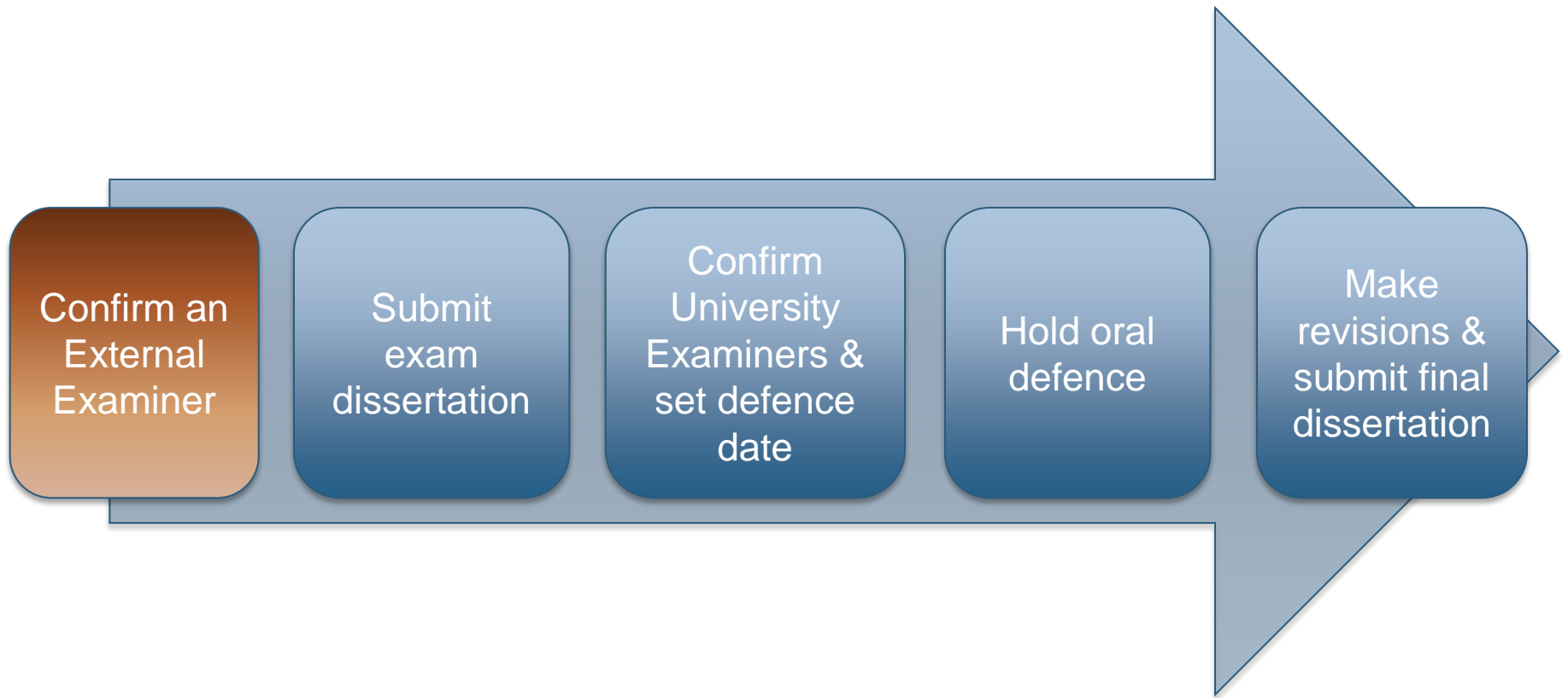
Major Steps in Doctoral Exam



Doctoral Examination Timeline



Major Steps in Doctoral Exam



External Examiner Eligibility

- Not associated or affiliated with UBC
- Established reputation in the area of your dissertation research
- Recent experience with doctoral supervision and examination
- Full, Associate or Emeritus Professor
 - Not Assistant nor Clinical



External Examiner Eligibility

- Arm's length from you and your supervisory committee members
 - No co-authors, research collaborators, future bosses, former supervisors/students, family
- Must not have acted as External for a candidate in your program or for another of your supervisor's students for at least 3 years



Selecting an External Examiner

- Your Supervisor/Grad Program submits Nominations for External Examiner form
 - Approximately 8 weeks prior to planned dissertation submission date
- **WE** begin the invitation process
 - **Do NOT contact potential nominees in advance**
- We cite the submission date provided on the form
- We notify you & your supervisor once an External Examiner is confirmed



Tips for a Smoother Examination

- Do **NOT** contact your External Examiner nominees
 - This may result in their disqualification
- Don't be hasty
 - Do not submit your External Examiner nominations if you are not reasonably 8 weeks from submitting the dissertation

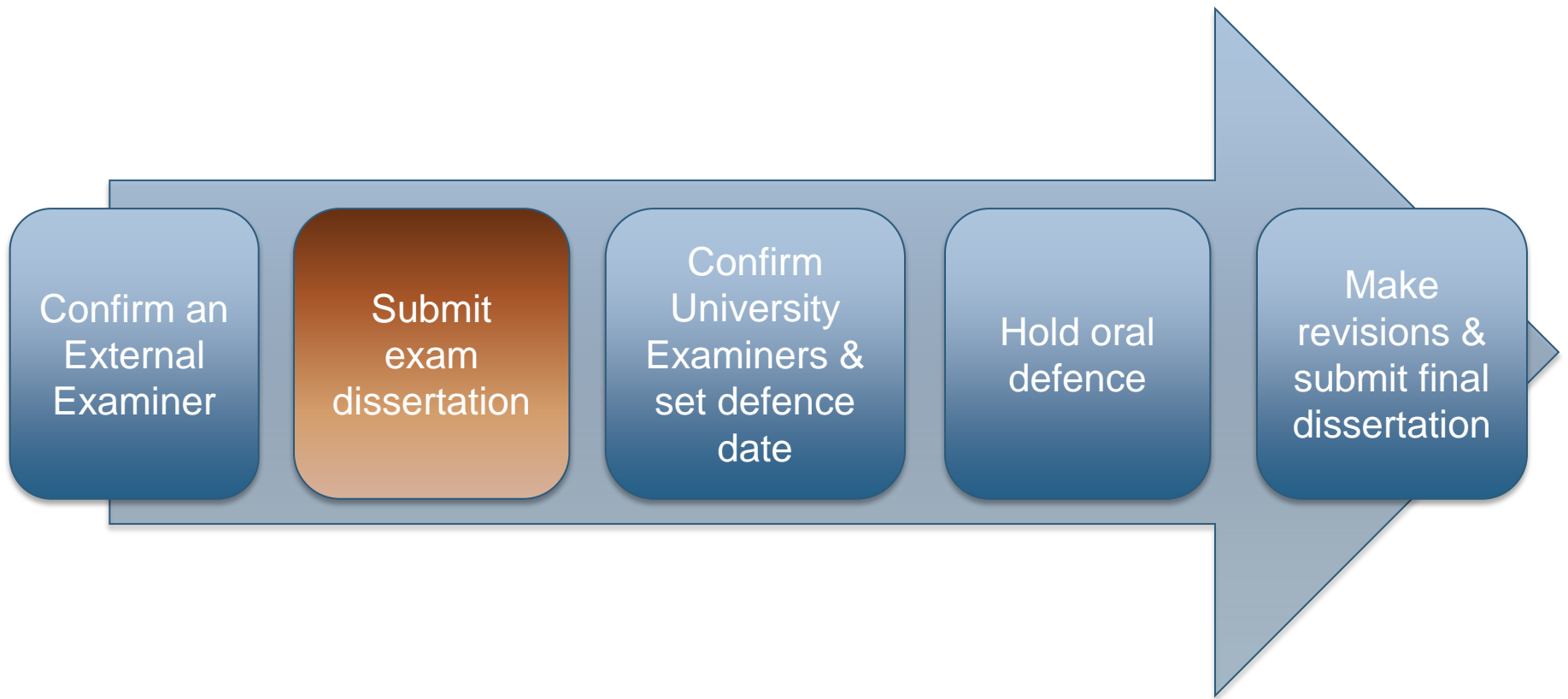


Tips for a Smoother Examination

- If you know there will be a significant delay, let us know
 - This allows us to communicate such changes to the External Examiner and avoids unnecessary delays when you're ready for examination
 - Your external examination & defence may be delayed if you do not notify us of a change to your submission date in advance



Major Steps in Doctoral Exam



Submitting for Examination

1. Have your dissertation formatting approved by Thesis Team at G+PS
2. Arrange to have the Graduate Program Approval Memo signed & submitted
3. Make a PDF of your dissertation
4. Get a copy printed and bound (if required)



Submitting for Examination

- Submit all required documents to G+PS
- **BREATHE!**
- Wait for confirmation email with details about booking your oral defence

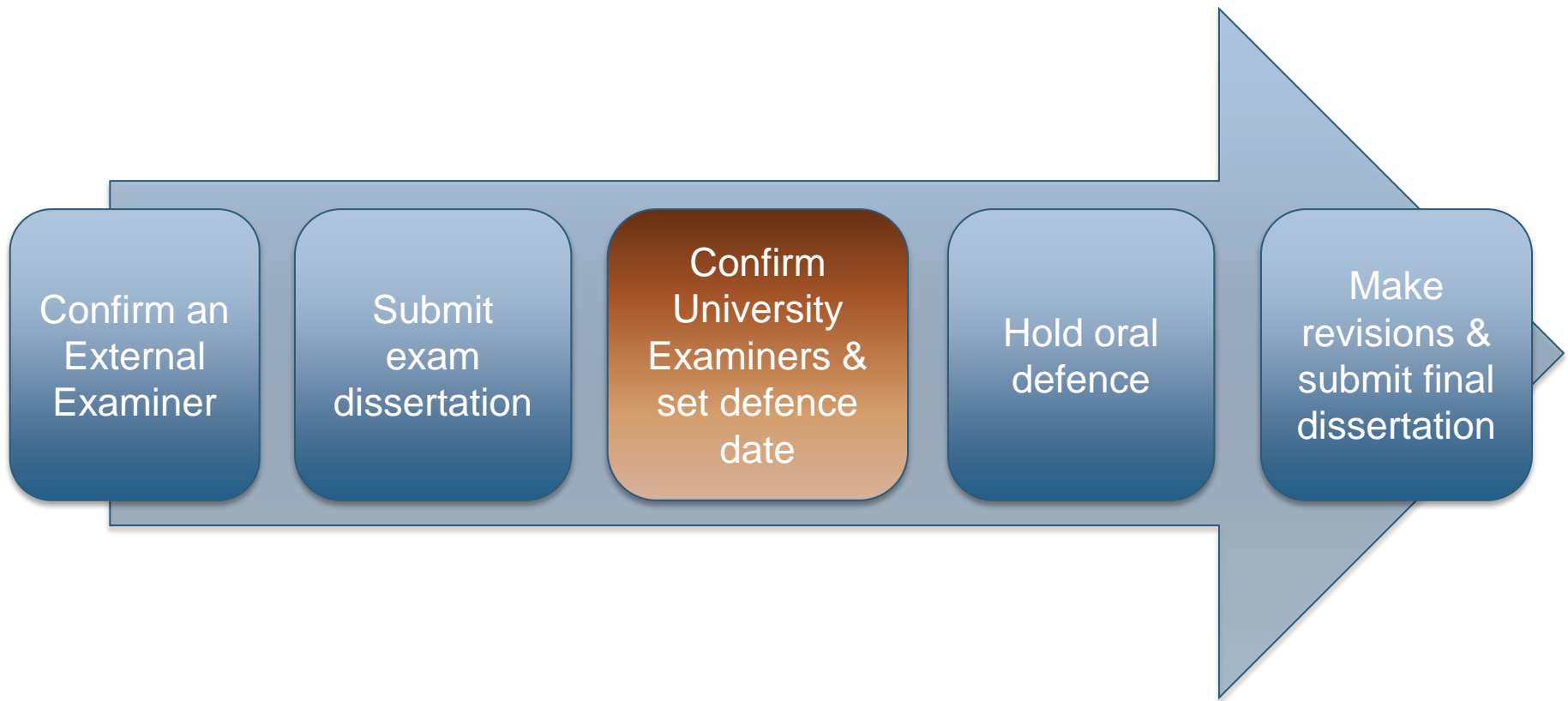


Tips for a Smoother Examination

- Take time to thoroughly proofread your dissertation
 - This document represents you as a professional academic
- Do not have your dissertation bound until after your formatting has been approved
- Contact your Graduate Program Staff to arrange the Graduate Program Approval Memo well in advance



Major Steps in Doctoral Exam



Composition of the Examining Committee

- Examination Chair (G+PS responsibility)
- 2 or 3 Supervisory Committee Members (including Research Supervisor)
- 2 G+PS approved University Examiners
- External Examiner (not required at the defence but welcome)



University Examiner Eligibility

- Two UBC-V faculty members required
- Expertise in a field closely related to your dissertation research
- Normally Full, Associate or Emeritus Professors who have a formal affiliation with a graduate program
 - Not Assistant, Adjunct, Clinical



University Examiner Eligibility

- Both must be at arm's length from you and your Research Supervisor
 - No present or former members of your supervisory committee
 - Not connected with thesis research in any way
 - Normally no co-authored papers or research collaborations with Candidate or Supervisor
- At least one must be from **outside** your Graduate Program and your Supervisor's Department



Selecting University Examiners

- University Examiners must be approved by G+PS
 - Submit signed Approval of University Examiners form at least 4 weeks before defence date
- Consent of the proposed University Examiners must be confirmed by your Research Supervisor or Graduate Program prior to submission of form



Setting the Oral Defence Date

- Check the availability of the entire examining committee
- Provide us with at least 4 weeks notice
- Send us 2-3 dates that work for everyone (if possible)
- Once we confirm the date, consider it final



Prepare Your Exam Programme

- Use the template provided on our website
- Ensure that all information is correct (check spelling!)
- Observe maximum abstract length (350 words)
- Submit this to us at least 4 weeks before your defence date



Optional: Practice Session

- If feasible, book a practice session in your exam room to familiarize yourself with the room, the equipment, etc.
- Practice sessions can only be booked with less than 4 weeks notice

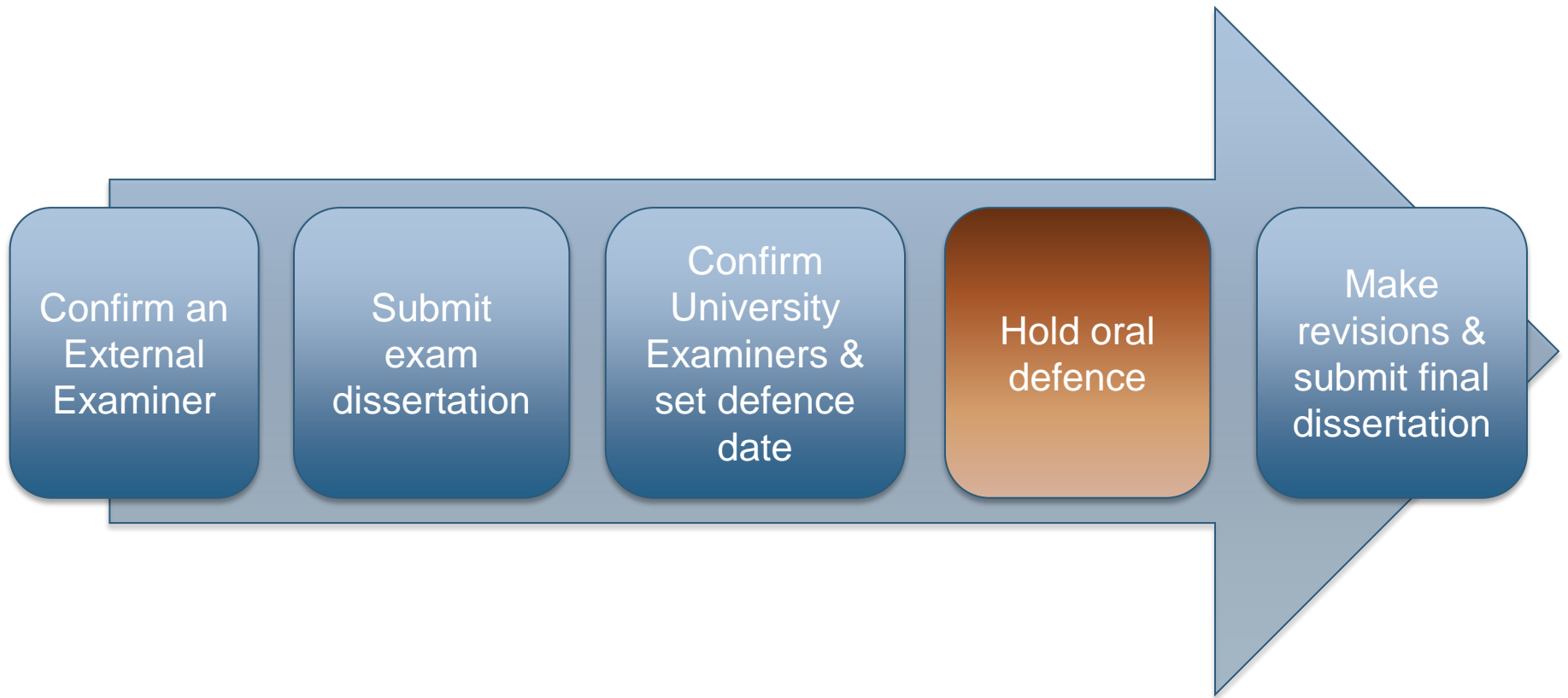


Tips for a Smoother Examination

- Do not book a defence date without consensus from your committee
- Do not make assumptions about exceptions to eligibility criteria
 - If you're unsure, check with us first



Major Steps in Doctoral Exam



Defend!

- Showcase your research and wow the committee with your expertise
 - Plan to arrive 30 minutes early to get set up
 - Bring your own laptop
 - Let us know in advance if you will require one of ours
 - If you wish to bring refreshments for your committee, you will need to clean up after the defence



Defence Day

- Quorum must be met, which means the following must be present, **in person**:
 - Doctoral Candidate (that's you!)
 - Examination Chair
 - 2 or 3 members of the Supervisory Committee
 - 2 approved University Examiners
- This is a public event
- No one can be admitted to the room once the exam has begun



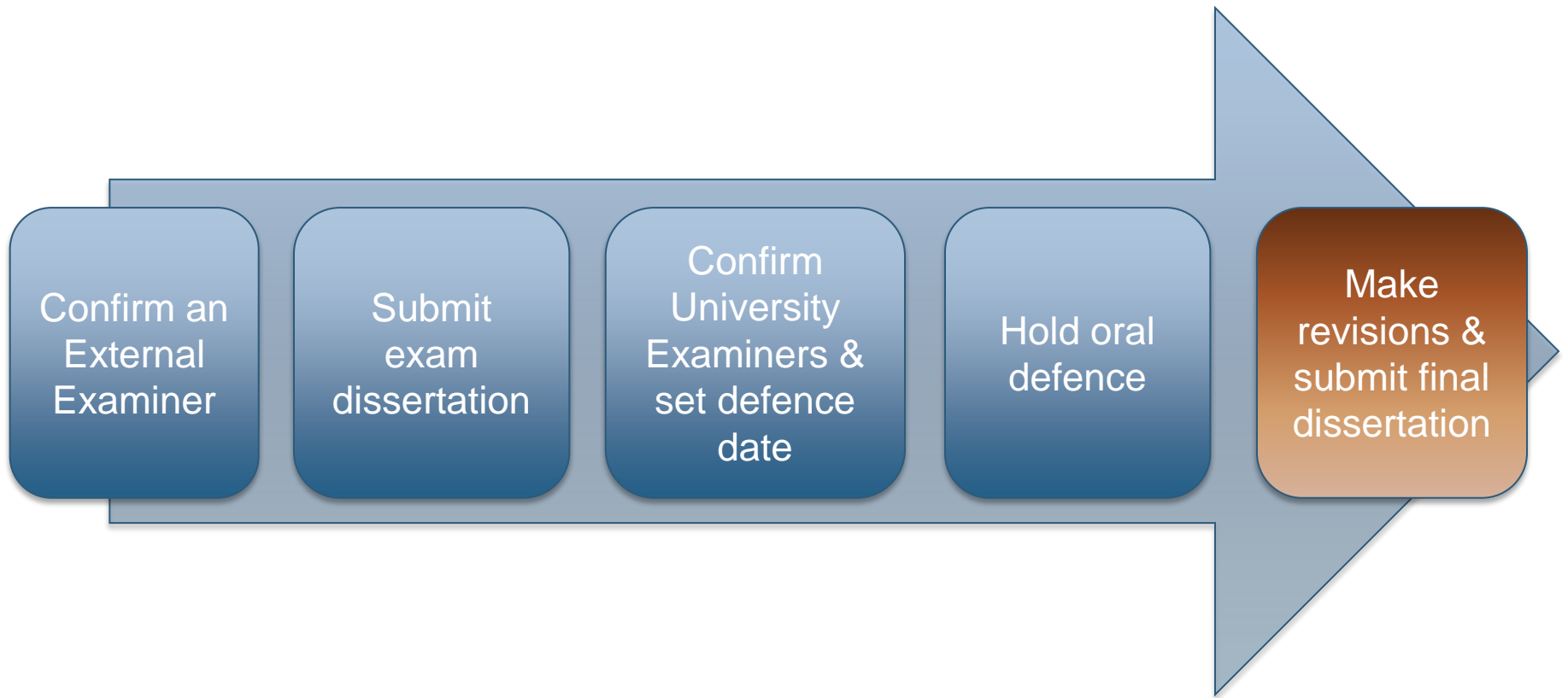
Structure of Defence

- You present
 - Maximum 30 minutes
 - Not to be read
- Examining Committee asks you questions
 - Including questions from External Examiner
- Audience members are invited to ask questions
- Examining Committee holds *in-camera* discussion
- Chair conveys the committee's recommendations to you

Usually lasts 2 – 2.5 hours



Major Steps in Doctoral Exam



Final Revisions

- The Examination Chair will notify you of:
 - The Committee's recommendations to G+PS
 - What (if any) revisions are required for final approval
 - Which Committee Members will sign off on your final revisions
- Normally, you will be granted 1 month from the defence date for revisions



Submit the Final Dissertation

- The final dissertation and associated forms and approvals are submitted to the Thesis Team at G+PS
- Online submission to cIRcle is required
- See the website for further details, including deadlines



Bravo! Graduation

- In order to graduate, you **MUST** apply for graduation
- Program End Date (when the Thesis Team confirms your final submission) is **NOT** actually graduation
- *A Letter of Program Completion* can be issued once your final submission is confirmed



Research Descriptions

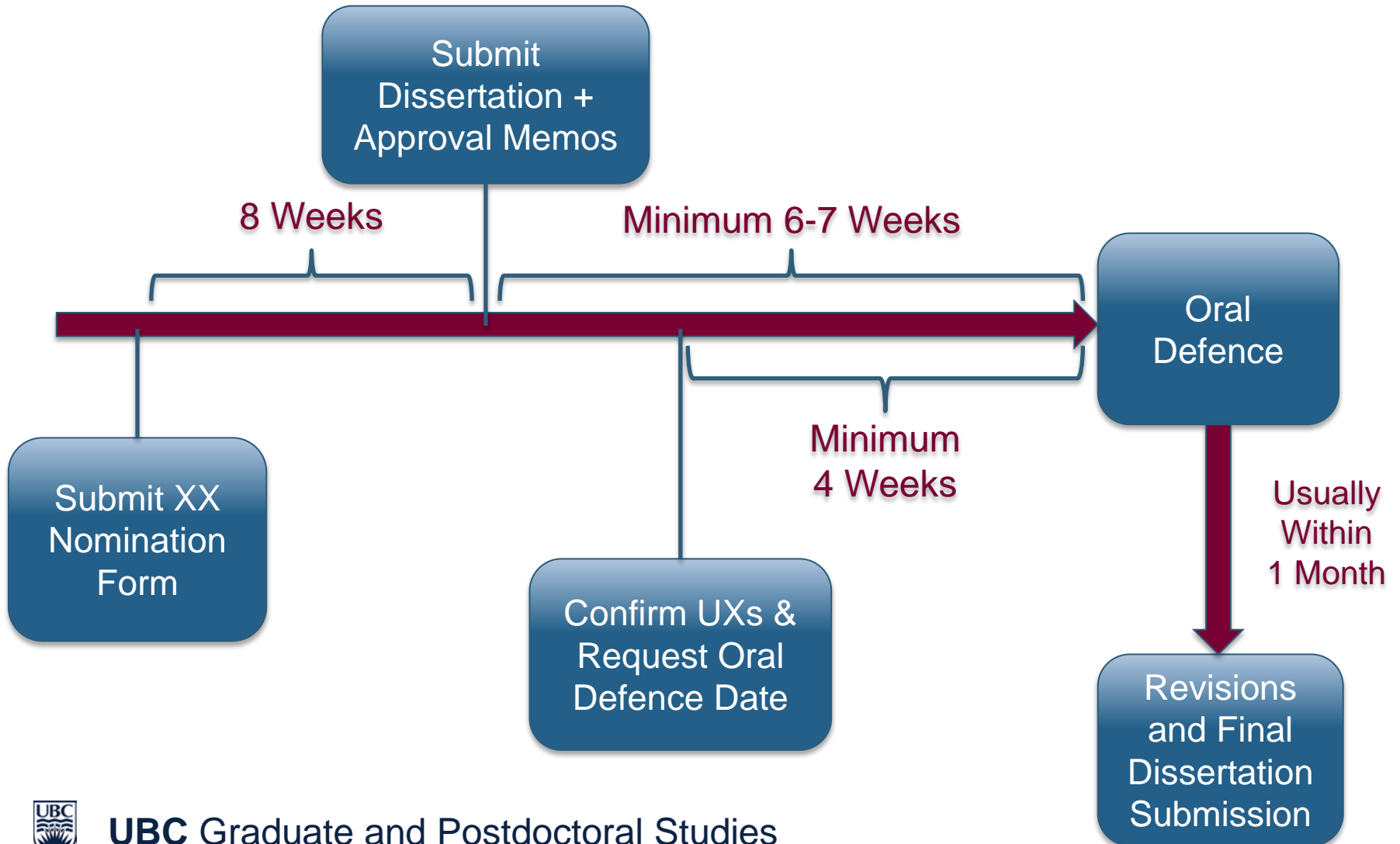
- To be submitted as part of the Application to Graduate in SSC
- Main purpose is to have a script to be read at Congregation
- 350 characters (including spaces), approx. 3 sentences
- Suggested format for an interesting, non-technical description:
 - Sentence 1: Broad overview in lay language
 - Sentence 2: Brief description of study
 - Sentence 3: Finding and their impact
- Questions to editor: elizabeth.wallace@ubc.ca



Examination Timeline Planning



Examination Timeline Overview



Tools for Planning



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The best way to prepare for a smooth examination process is to plan ahead and communicate clearly with Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

Planning ahead for the doctoral exam can seriously reduce stress for everyone involved. Make sure you let us know what your plan is, and if it changes, keep us informed so we can try to advise accordingly.

So much thought goes into the research and writing of the dissertation, but the final details require thought as well.

These resources are meant to help students and supervisors map out your exam timeline.

If you have questions, check out our [Frequently Asked Questions](#). If you need more guidance, please email to [Doctoral Exams Team](#) at Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

- [Checklist for Doctoral Exam](#)
- [Sample Workplan for Candidates and Supervisors](#)
- [Timeline Worksheet for Doctoral Exam](#)
- [Procedure for Accessing Doctoral External Examiner Transport Fund](#)
- [Navigating Your Doctoral Exam Presentation PowerPoint Slides](#)
- [Navigating Your Doctoral Exam Webinar Recording](#)

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UBC Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

Deadlines for Common End Dates

- Posted on our website:
<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-doctoral-exam/doctoral-deadlines>



How Important Are Deadlines?

- Very important if you are absolutely counting on a particular
 - Graduation date (diploma in hand)
 - Program end date (end of fees to UBC)



Tips for a Smoother Examination

- Do not plan on the barest minimum timeframe without accepting the risk that something could go wrong
 - We cannot accelerate the process for candidates who have delays
- If possible, submit well ahead of the deadline
 - Dissertations are sent out in the order they are received...and we receive a LOT on deadline days



Managing Administrative Responsibilities

Yours, Your Supervisor's, Ours



What Are You Responsible For?

- Ensuring all required documents are received by G+PS and that the information they contain is correct
- Having the content of your dissertation approved by your committee
- Having the formatting of your dissertation approved by G+PS
- Completing & submitting your examination programme
- Bringing a laptop to your defence
- Getting permission from the committee if you would like to record the presentation portion of your defence
- Leaving your exam room as you found it
- Applying for graduation and notifying Thesis Team when you have uploaded your final dissertation to cIRcle



What Is Your Supervisor Responsible For?

- Nominating External and University Examiners who meet eligibility and arm's length requirements
- Ensuring your dissertation is ready for external exam
- Getting commitment from University Examiners in advance of submitting nominations
- Ensuring the University Examiners receive a copy of the dissertation
- Confirming the commitment of all members of the examining committee for the date and time of the oral defence
- Providing a paper copy of the dissertation to the Chair, if requested



What Is G+PS Responsible For?

- Communicating with the External Examiner
- Transmitting the dissertation to the External Examiner
- Receiving the External Examiner's report
- Approving all examiner nominees
- Inviting and confirming an Exam Chair
- Transmitting an electronic copy of the dissertation to the Chair
- Sending an email reminder to your Examining Committee one week before your defence



Be the Captain of Your Own Ship!

- It's your degree and your life, not your Supervisor's, not your Graduate Program Staff person's
- If vital parts of the process are not attended to, you could be more than a little inconvenienced
- We have over 500 candidates a year; we cannot micromanage you



We're Here For You!



Jenn Fletcher

jennifer.fletcher@ubc.ca

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