DUTIES OF MCV CAMPUS GRADUATE COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE FOR M.S. AND Ph.D. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

A Representative of the MCV Campus Graduate Committee serves as the Chair of the final examination for the awarding of the M.S. degree and the oral qualifying examination for students enrolled in Ph.D. programs. The Representative supplements the Student Advisory Committee in constituting the examining body. The principal role of the Representative is to ensure that the examination process is conducted equitably and in conformity with University, School and Department/Program guidelines. While scholarly expertise in the disciplinary area for a particular examination is of some advantage, this is not a requirement for service as a Representative. The primary responsibility of the Representative is to ensure that the process of the examination is appropriate, equitable to the student and consistent with the maintenance of standards of excellence in our programs.

Particularly in the case of the Ph.D. oral comprehensive examination, departments and programs have evolved distinct formats for the examination process. In many cases, a written document in the form of a research "proposal" is prepared by the student and distributed in advance to the Committee. This document then serves as a vehicle for initiating the questioning phase of the examination. The Representative will be provided with a brief description of the examination format as employed by the department/program at the time of appointment. The Representative also shall be given a copy of any written document employed in the conduct of the examination in advance, following the protocol applicable to other members of the examining committee. Irrespective of format, the subject matter appropriate for questions at both the M.S. level examination and the Ph.D. oral comprehensive examination includes general knowledge relevant to the disciplinary area, including the subject matter of course work undertaken by the student. While committee members may not elect to question the student in these areas, these remain legitimate areas of inquiry.

Specific responsibilities associated with the conduct of the examination are listed below noting that these responsibilities are borne by the Student Advisor for the conduct of the final Ph.D. examination.

1. In advance of the examination, the Representative shall collect the student file and examination signature page from the Office of Graduate Education.

2. The Representative shall preside at examinations and
   a. shall instruct the committee on purpose of exam,
   b. shall have the student's folder available for circulation or for questions concerning student's background,
   c. should briefly review student's academic career, including comments on undergraduate and graduate record.

3. After these introductory remarks, the Representative may turn the running of the
meeting over to the advisor during the questioning period and shall see that the examination is of, and for, the student keeping discussion and interruption by the examiners to a minimum.

4. At this stage the advisor or Representative shall set the order of questioning (traditionally, other committee members, advisor, Representative, visitors), establish any general protocol (i.e. 10-15 minute time period for questioning by an individual; the presentation of a summary statement by the candidate prior to the questioning period, etc.).

5. At the end of a complete round of questioning, the committee membership is asked if there are further questions. A full round of questions followed by a focused second round will occupy approximately two hours.

6. As the duration of the examination approaches two hours, the advisor or the Representative may call for a brief recess (10-15 minutes). Fatigue and stress, experienced over a prolonged time, have an effect on both the examiners and the examinee. In general, the quality of the examination process deteriorates if extended beyond two-two and a half-hours. It is appropriate for the advisor or Representative to ensure that the extension of the examination period does serve to assist the committee in arriving at an appropriate recommendation. Once initiated, an examination may not be continued at a later date. The student will either pass or fail the examination as administered on that date.

7. At the conclusion of the questioning the Representative shall excuse the student and request for a motion and second as to the examination outcome. The Representative shall then elicit discussion of the performance ensuring that the duration and focus of the discussion is appropriate.

8. For a doctoral candidacy examination, the questioning period may reveal an area of weakness of the candidate that requires remediation. While the examining body cannot adopt a “conditional” pass, in such circumstances the Representative should remind the Student Advisory Committee members that they are able to mandate appropriate action to address the deficiency acting as the Committee in their Advisory role.

9. The Representative then calls for a vote on the motion by show of hands. All committee members and Representative must vote on the performance as passing or failing and are the only persons allowed to vote. More than one negative vote on M.S. examination, a Ph.D. oral or a Ph.D. final examination constitutes failure of the examination.

10. If the result is a failure, the Representative should ask the Committee if they would support a Re-examination and, if so, the approximate date at which a retake might be held. The Representative should communicate the Committee determination and report this to the Associate Dean for Graduate Education.

11. The Representative shall recall the student and informs the student of the outcome, offering congratulations or condolences as appropriate. The student should be informed (if the examination has not been passed) what recourse may be appropriate. The Representative should remind the student, faculty advisor and student committee members that should the opportunity for a re-examination be
deemed appropriate, approval of the MCV Campus Graduate Committee is sought by the department/program on behalf of the student. The Student Advisory Committee has the primary responsibility of formulating a recommendation and communicating the Recommendation to the Director of Graduate Programs in the student's parent department.

12. The signature page indicating the student passed/failed shall be signed by all committee members, the Representative, and visitors and returned to the Office of Graduate Education with the student's folder at the conclusion of the examination.