# Terms of Reference for Thesis Advisory Committee Membership & Examination Committee(s) Membership

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## THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEES:

Thesis advisory committees, which will consist of the supervisor and at least two other members, will be formed within the first semester of the student’s program. The committee is formed by the student in consultation with their supervisor(s). **It is the supervisor’s responsibility to contact and invite thesis committee members.**

Members may include all regular and cross-appointed faculty members of DBMS, provided they are recognized as graduate faculty by the SGSPA ([*see appended table for more information*](#_Table_1:_Permissible)). In the case where there are two co-supervisors, the committee would still require two additional faculty members. Thesis committee membership will be approved by the DBMS Associate Head of Graduate Studies. The purpose of the thesis advisory committee is to provide ongoing advice and assistance with problems that may arise as students progress through their programs. Once a supervisory committee is established, the student or supervisor may contact the committee to arrange meetings.

MSc (AS): All MSc (AS) students enrolled in the program will meet every three weeks with their supervisor, every nine weeks with their Advisory Committee and every two months at a “Class Business Meeting”, to which all students attend and provide input and feedback. For nine-week Advisory Committee meetings students must provide a summary of their progress in advance. Students then receive oral feedback on their progress from their committee members at the meeting.

Your supervisor will provide the Pattern II Supervisory Committee Report Form.

If you have any questions, please contact Brooke Parfett (b.parfett@queensu.ca).

Thesis-based MSc: Each student is required to meet with their committee once every year to review progress and the state of their research. The student must prepare a written summary of progress (usually 2-4 pages) to be distributed to the committee members at least five working days prior to each meeting.

Thesis-based PhD: The frequency and administration of all PhD student progress will be as described above for MSc students with the additional component of the comprehensive examination as a mechanism of assessing the students’ progression.

## EXAMINING COMMITTEES:

Examining committees are composed as a result of consultations between the student and supervisor(s). It is the supervisor’s responsibility to contact and invite examination committee members. Where appropriate, the supervisor or Field Coordinator will arrange timing of examinations.

PhD Comprehensive Examining Committee: The PhD Comprehensive Examining Committee includes: three examiners and the Field Coordinator, or delegate, who shall Chair the committee. The student’s supervisor is invited to attend the examination; however, the supervisor will not question the student during the examination, nor will they be a voting member of the Examining Committee.

Mini-MSc Exam Committee: The mini-MSc Examining Committee includes: two examiners (usually the TAC), the Supervisor(s), and the Field Coordinator or Delegate as Chair of the committee.

Thesis Defense Committees: Examining committees for each of the three DBMS graduate programs are outlined below. The supervisor(s) shall nominate members for the Thesis Examination Committee and propose a date, time, and location for oral thesis examination. The supervisor(s) must obtain commitments from those nominated for the committee to serve as examiners and to attend the oral thesis examination as scheduled.

As per the general SGSPA Regulations[[1]](#footnote-1): “No member of the examining committee can be in conflict of interest. Conflict of interest is defined as a personal or family relationship with the candidate and/or vested interest in the thesis or research for personal or financial gain. Further, the Chair, External Examiner, and at least one other examiner must be ‘arms-length’ to the candidate (e.g., must not have a prior supervisory relationship, must not have co-authored with or co-presented with the candidate). Provided the conditions above are satisfied, members of a candidate’s supervisory committee are eligible to be thesis examining committee members. In addition, please note that external examiners must continue to be arms-length from the supervisor, following the criterion: “The supervisor is arms-length from the external examiner (i.e., does not hold a current grant with nor has published with the external examiner within the past five years)”.”

The applicable Program Form is completed and signed by the supervisors(s) and approved by the Graduate Coordinator (or Head/Director if the Graduate Coordinator is a supervisor).

#### Thesis-based MSc:

The MSc thesis document will be submitted to an Examining Committee composed of:

* Chairperson
* Head or Delegate (Field Coordinator or Delegate)
* Two Faculty (from DBMS or Queen’s external department)
* Supervisor(s)

Note – At least one MSc Examining Committee member must be external to the DBMS student’s

Field of Study, either The Chair or an Examiner.

#### Thesis-based PhD:

The PhD thesis document will be submitted to an Examining Committee composed of:

* Chairperson (to be determined by the DBMS)
* Head or Delegate (Field Coordinator or Delegate)
* Two Faculty (one from Field of Study and one from outside their Field of Study)
* External Examiner (external to Queen’s University)
* Supervisor(s)

Notes:

* At least one PhD Examining Committee faculty member must be external to the DBMS student’s Thesis Advisory Committee.
* The Chair and Heads Delegate positions may be held by the same individual. In this case, the Heads Delegate does not vote.

# Table 1: Permissible Faculty for DBMS graduate student committees

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| **Permissible Faculty for DBMS graduate student committees[[2]](#footnote-2)** |
| **Queen’s University Position** | **Supervisor (primary & co-supervisor)** | **Thesis advisory committee member** | **Internal thesis examiner** | **Internal/External thesis examiner** | **Exam Chair or Head’s delegate** |
| **Full time faculty****Professor****Associate****Assistant** | Sole in own department, may co-supervise in all other departments | YES | YES | YES, in all other departments | YES |
| **Cross-appointed** | Sole in either department, may co-supervise in all other departments | YES | YES – in either department | YES, in cross departments if appropriate distance from the thesis can be shown, and in all other departments | YES – in either department |
| **Joint-appointment** | Sole in either department, may co-supervise in all other departments | YES | YES – in either department | YES, in cross departments if appropriate distance from the thesis can be shown, and in all other departments | YES – in either department |
| **Emeritus professor** | With approval of Associate Head, evidence of continuing research, and with a full-time faculty member co-supervisor in DBMS | YES – with evident of recent research or supervisory activity  | YES – with evident of recent research or supervisory activity  | YES – with evidence of recent research or supervisory activity | YES, if recently retired |
| **Sessional appointment** | NO, except when the period of appointment is longer than the normal time to degree completion and with a full-time faculty member co-supervisor in DBMS | YES – with evidence of appropriate level research activity | YES – with evidence of appropriate level research activity | YES – with evidence of appropriate level research activity | NO |
| **Adjunct appointment** | If noted on the adjunct appointment letter and if there is a full-time faculty member co-supervisor in DBMS | YES – with evidence of appropriate level research activity | YES – with evidence of appropriate level research activity | YES, with evidence of appropriate level of research activity | NO |
| **Public/private sector with no appointment at Queen’s** | In exceptional circumstance, can co-supervise with a full-time faculty member from DBMS.Requires approval of DBMS Associate Head and the Associate Dean SGSPA | YES – in exceptional circumstances and requires approval of Associate Dean SGSPA | NO | In exceptional circumstances; requires approval from Associate Dean SGSPA and must provide evidence of appropriate level of research activity | NO |

1. <https://www.queensu.ca/academic-calendar/graduate-studies/general-regulations/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Adapted from SGSPA [↑](#footnote-ref-2)