New Accelerated PhD Defence Process Information Sheet for Supervisors and Graduate Chairs

The new accelerated PhD Defence process has been introduced by Graduate Studies in an effort to align McMaster University with the defence practices of other U15 universities and to provide a more agile process for students and their supervisors. The new process is still being programmed in the online system. However, it can be invoked manually by following the steps below:

1. Student initiates the defence process in Mosaic.
2. Supervisor indicates that they’d like to use the new defence process by e-mailing gthesis@mcmaster.ca and copying their Department Chair.
3. After consulting with the Supervisory Committee, the Primary Supervisor nominates a potential external examiner who is at arm’s length from the student, committee, and department.
4. The Examiner’s name and affiliation is emailed to the Department Chair for approval. (This process will later be moved to an online website.)
5. When approved, the Primary Supervisor is notified via email by the Department Chair they may now invite the examiner.
6. Primary Supervisor invites examiner personally and asks her/him to participate in the defence and requests that the report be sent to Graduate Studies at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date of the defence. At this time, the external examiner is given the date and time of the defence which has already been confirmed by the Supervisory Committee and candidate. (Reports may only be sent to Graduate Studies. Examiners must not send their reports directly to the department or supervisory committee.)
7. Supervisor lets Graduate Studies know via email when an examiner accepts an invitation and informs Graduate Studies at gthesis@mcmaster.ca of the name of the examiner and their contact information.
8. Supervisor informs Graduate Studies at gthesis@mcmaster.ca of the date and time of the defence.
9. If available, the supervisor provides the name of the defence Chair and the location of the defence to Graduate Studies. Ideally, chairs should come from outside the supervisor’s department. If not available, Graduate Studies will assist the supervisor in securing a chair and room.
10. Graduate Studies sends the thesis and details to the examiner and waits for the report to be returned to gthesis@mcmaster.ca.
11. When the examiner returns a report to Graduate Studies an Academic Services Officer will distribute it to the supervisory committee. External examiners may not provide their reports directly to the committee. Supervisors should share the External examiner’s report with defending students at least one week before the defence date. Students are not to communicate with the external examiner for any reason prior to the defence.
12. Graduate Studies confirms the oral examination with the student and committee.
13. The student defends their thesis.

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1 Please note that the classic process continues to be available for those who prefer to use it and can be invoked through the existing online system. However, point 11 applies regardless of which process is used.
2 This will be updated in the calendar to be two weeks in the future.
3 If the external examiner report cannot be shared with the student at least one week before defending for any reason, the student must be asked if they give their consent to proceed with the previously established defence date. In such cases, there should be an email from the student clearly confirming that even though they have not received the external examiner report one week before the defence date, they are still ok with proceeding with the original defence date. This consent e-mail should be forwarded to gthesis@mcmaster.ca. If the student does not agree to proceed with the same date, a new defence date should be established at least one week from when the student received the external examiner report.