### [4.4.2 Examinations](https://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/handbook/chapter.php?id=4&search=remote&section=4.4#search)

The preliminary oral examination must be passed at least six months before the final oral examination.

The student, in consultation with their committee chair(s), may decide on the examination modality (in person, remote, or hybrid). The student and committee chair(s) should discuss the choice of modality with the committee, and for remote or hybrid meetings, arrange for facilities and equipment to ensure full video and clear communication. Determination of meeting modality must be determined when the student submits the Preliminary Oral Examination Request form. If the chosen modality is not in person, the student must inform the Graduate College of the modality at the time the request form is submitted. Best practices for remote meetings may be found on the Graduate College website **<INSERT LINK HERE>**

When one committee member cannot participate at a time that suits other participants, two options are available:

1. Complete the Request for Committee Substitution at the Preliminary or Final Oral Exam form before the examination to arrange for a temporary, substitute committee member who will serve with voting rights only for the examination that the permanent member cannot participate. This option can be used in cases in which the member’s absence is planned, or in cases of emergency/unplanned absences. The substitute must fill the same role (be an inside vs. outside member) as the absent member.

2. The committee member may be replaced permanently on the committee by another member of the graduate faculty who can participate in the examination and commits to fulfilling all other remaining responsibilities of POS committee service. The new member must fill the same role (be an inside vs. outside member) as the member being replaced. To make this replacement, a new POSC should be routed and approved.

The Graduate College is responsible for maintaining a process for the committee members to report the outcome of the examination to the college. The reporting process must require that each committee member attest to their mode of participation, the degree to which full (audio and video) and clear communication was sustained throughout the examination, and to their participation throughout the entire examination. The Graduate College is expected to confer with committees and program DOGEs in cases where at least one committee member reports problems with communication or participation. The college may nullify examinations that do not meet expectations of the college, the DOGE, and all committee members.

### 7.1.2 Final Oral Examinations

Thesis and non-thesis master’s students and all Ph.D. degree candidates must pass final oral examinations. The final oral examination must be held by the final oral examination deadline date for the semester in which the degree is granted. All coursework in the program of study must either be completed or in progress before the final oral examination can be scheduled. This examination is oral; it may also include a written component if specified by the student’s program of study (POS) committee.

Graduate students must register at Iowa State University for a minimum of one credit, or Examination Only (GR ST 681B) if no course work is needed, during the semester in which the final oral examination is taken. International students, even those in their final term, must be registered full-time or previously approved by the International Students and Scholars (ISS) to reduce their course load.

The following conditions must be met before the “Request for Final Oral Examination” form is submitted to the Graduate College:

* full admission status,
* electronic Program of Study and Committee (POSC) form with all coursework completed or in progress, approved by the Graduate College no later than the semester before the final oral examination,
* English requirement met (for nonnative English speakers),
* not on probation,
* time limit not exceeded (see [Chapter 4](https://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/handbook/chapter.php?id=4#ttd)),
* approved “Report of Preliminary Oral Examination” form (for Ph.D. candidates only),
* “Application for Graduation” form submitted,
* registered for term in which final oral examination is taken for a minimum of one credit or for Examination Only (GR ST 681B) if no course work is needed,
* overall G.P.A. above 3.00 reflecting all courses listed on the graduate transcript whether undergraduate or graduate level and regardless if listed on the POSC form or not, or petition filed and approved stating extenuating circumstances,
* a minimum of six months between the preliminary oral and final oral examinations (for Ph.D. candidates only).

The master’s final oral examination is conducted after the thesis is finished, if a thesis is required. The thesis and nonthesis final oral examinations are comprehensive, oral, and may include written sections. The Ph.D. final oral examination, conducted after the dissertation is finished, is oral and often, but not always, limited to a defense of the dissertation. To receive the degree at the end of a given semester, the student must hold the final oral examination before the final oral examination deadline for the semester.

The candidate is responsible for initiating the “Request for Final Oral Examination” form, which must be submitted to the Graduate College at least **three** weeks before the examination. When a final oral examination includes a defense of the dissertation or thesis, the candidate must submit copies of the manuscript to members of the POS committee at least two weeks before the examination. A committee member who does not receive the dissertation or thesis at least two weeks before the final oral examination may cancel the examination.

Oral examinations are the primary ways the university assesses learning by graduate students. These examinations also gauge whether students’ accomplishments meet expectations associated with earning advanced degrees. Oral examinations must involve the full engagement of all participants simultaneously, and unobstructed communication among participants is essential. Students and their committees should schedule oral examinations far in advance so that all participants are together on campus for the events whenever possible.

For the final oral examination, the student, in consultation with their committee chair(s), may decide on the examination modality (in person, remote, or hybrid). Similar to the preliminary oral examination guidance, the student and committee chair(s) should discuss the choice of modality with the committee, and for remote or hybrid meetings, arrange for facilities and equipment to ensure full video and clear communication. Determination of meeting modality must be determined when the student submits the Final Oral Examination Request form. If the chosen modality is not in person, the student must inform the Graduate College of the modality at the time the request form is submitted. Best practices for remote meetings may be found on the Graduate College website **<INSERT LINK HERE>**

When one committee member cannot participate at a time that suits other participants, two options are available:

1. Complete the Request for Committee Substitution at the Preliminary or Final Oral Exam form before the examination to arrange for a temporary, substitute committee member who will serve with voting rights only for the examination that the permanent member cannot participate. This option can be used in cases in which the member’s absence is planned, or in cases of emergency/unplanned absences. The substitute must fill the same role (be an inside vs. outside member) as the absent member.

2. The committee member may be replaced permanently on the committee by another member of the graduate faculty who can participate in the examination and commits to fulfilling all other remaining responsibilities of POS committee service. The new member must fill the same role (be an inside vs. outside member) as the member being replaced. To make this replacement, a new POSC should be routed and approved.

The Graduate College is responsible for maintaining a process for the committee members to report the outcome of the examination to the college. The reporting process must require that each committee member attest to their mode of participation, the degree to which full (audio and video) and clear communication was sustained throughout the examination, and to their participation throughout the entire examination. The Graduate College is expected to confer with committees and program DOGEs in cases where at least one committee member reports problems with communication or participation. The college may nullify examinations that do not meet expectations of the college, the DOGE, and all committee members.

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Reporting Final Oral Examination Results

The “Report of the Final Oral Examination” form must be submitted to the Graduate College immediately after the examination. On this form the POS committee indicates whether the student

* has passed the examination and may be granted the degree sought,
* must meet some conditions before the degree may be granted. These conditions are specified on the report form and will remain in effect until the major professor and/or committee, if specified, submits the [Preliminary or Final Oral Exam Conditions Met](https://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/documents/forms/Preliminary%20or%20Final%20Oral%20Exam%20Conditions%20Met.pdf) form to the Graduate College. This form notifies the Graduate College that conditions have been satisfied and the degree may be granted,
* has not passed but the exam may be retaken. Two months must elapse before the exam may be retaken (a written explanation should be provided with the report form), or
* has not passed and the exam may not be retaken at a future date. The degree is denied (a written explanation should be provided with the report form).

In a final oral examination, if one member of the committee votes not to pass the candidate, each member of the committee must forward to the Dean of the Graduate College in writing a justification for their vote. If more than one member of the committee votes not to pass the student, the candidate does not pass the examination.