

MA Oral Examination Guidelines

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT YORK UNIVERSITY

The MA Oral Examination is held once all other degree requirements have been completed. It is an oral examination based on three books that the student and the two readers have agreed upon. Generally, the books are drawn from the MRP (Major Research Paper) bibliography. The MA Oral exam may be booked only after all coursework has been completed, grades have been submitted, and the MRP has been read and passed by both the supervisor and the second reader.

The student must then email the GPD (spt_gpd@yorku.ca) with a copy to the GPA (sptprog@yorku.ca) to provide the following:

- › the booklist of the three books in proper academic style;
- › the proposed date, time and format of the exam (in-person/hybrid/online);
- › any suggestions for the Director's Representative.

Neither the student nor the committee members can select or contact the Director's Representative. Once the GPD has approved the books and chosen the Director's Representative (if necessary), the GPA will contact them to check availability and set up the exam.

Three weeks is the minimum time to book the exam once the MRP has been passed.

MA Oral Examinations are booked for a 2-hour period.

Exams cannot be held over the holidays when the University is closed.

What to expect during the exam

During the exam, the student is asked questions about the MRP's object(s) and method(s). The student is also asked questions directly and indirectly related to the texts that have been selected. Students need to demonstrate a clear understanding of the texts and an ability to explain the main arguments and concepts of both their work and that of other scholars.

The examination committee

The MA Oral Examination committee consists of three faculty members: the supervisor, the second reader, and either the GPD or the Director's Representative. All faculty members must be appointed to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in order to be on the committee.

The Director's Representative

It is more common to have the Director's Representative than the GPD due to their time commitments.

Although the student and the supervisor may make recommendations for the Director's Representative, the GPD makes the final selection. Usually, the student and the supervisor will develop a list of two or three faculty member names and rank the list.

The Director's Representative attends the exam and is responsible for handling the paperwork at the exam, ensuring all the committee members are present, explaining the process to other members that may have never sat on an SPTH oral exam (procedures vary from program to program at York). The Director's Representative also aids in mediating the committee's questions. The Director's Representative ensures that the signed paperwork is returned to the SPTH program office in a timely manner.

The student is requested to provide the GPD or the Director's Representative with a copy of the MRP at least three weeks prior to the date of the Oral Examination.