*Background:* The Graduate School has shied away from creating definitions for defense decisions for thesis, treatise or dissertation students in the past to allow flexibility in the process. However, the Manuscript Clearance Office still regularly receives questions about the difference between “Re-Exam” and “Fail”. Based on the experience of the Manuscript Clearance Office, “Re-Exam” and “Fail” are frequently under-utilized and seen as punitive. The “Pass” decision is inappropriately used in cases where students have major revisions that would more likely resemble a “Re-Exam”, but the committee does not wish for them to defend again. These situations made it seem that a new decision category, as well as accompanying definitions and guidance, may be helpful. The decision to make the defense decisions less complicated (i.e., by reducing the decisions to “Pass” or “Fail”) did not seem to adequately address the nuances of decision-making during a defense and would not address the feelings held by some committee members about the punitive nature of “Fail”. It should be noted, that these decisions are only present in the Manuscript Clearance Portal where defense forms have been completed by all programs since Summer 2019. Transcripts will still reflect “Pass”, “Fail,” or “Incomplete”.

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| **Defense Decision Definitions/Guidelines** | | | | |
| **Decision** | **Manuscript** | | **Defense** | |
| Pass | Minor revisions only (e.g., grammar, typographical, clarifications, minor changes not requiring review by full committee). | | Passed oral defense. | |
| Pass with Major Revisions | Major revisions needed (e.g., additional chapters, major restructuring, significant changes needing approval by either the major professor/chair or the full committee). Revisions must be completed and approved within 60 days of successful defense or a re-exam will be required per The Graduate School’s 60-Day Deadline. | | Passed oral defense. | |
| Re-Exam | Manuscript had significant flaws. Major revisions needed. The current research will take a substantial amount of work/time to correct. | OR | | Oral defense was unsatisfactory. Re-defense required. |
| Fail | Manuscript had significant flaws to the point at which the committee believes the student should discontinue the program, or that a new research direction is required. | OR | | Oral defense was unsatisfactory. Re-defense of existing project will not be allowed. |

**Procedural Items:**

*Pass:* If a committee member who suggested the minor edits other than the major professor wishes to review the revisions, this can be arranged separate from decisions in the Manuscript Clearance Portal. The major professor will be the one that provides Final Content Approval in the Portal though.

*Re-Exam:* This decision can only be given once. If the student re-defends and does not pass with only minor revisions required to the manuscript, they should be given a Fail.

*Fail:* This decision should only be given when a committee/academic unit does not wish for the student to continue in the program or they will be moving in an entirely new direction for their research. *It is the committee’s goal to prevent students from defending if their work is substantially flawed when they are reviewing it prior to defense.* This decision is required if a student conducts a Re-Exam and does not earn a Pass.