

## **GUIDELINES ON THE PREPARATION AND SUPERVISION OF THESES, EXTENDED ESSAYS, AND RESEARCH PAPERS (REPORT)**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

These guidelines are for all graduate programs at UFV. The guidelines introduce most aspects of preparing and supervising a master's thesis, an extended essay or a research paper. Therefore, unless otherwise specified, the word "thesis" is used in these guidelines to designate a master's thesis, a project, an extended essay, or a research paper or report. In the case of a project or a project evaluation, it designates a full report on the project or project evaluation.

Each program may also have additional requirements that have been approved by the Graduate Studies Committee. Students need to become familiar with these specific requirements before preparing their thesis. In addition, they will find it helpful to consult published theses in their respective discipline.

### **2. DEFINITIONS**

#### **Senior Supervisor**

The senior supervisor is the person principally responsible for supervising a student throughout a graduate program. The supervisor's main task is to help the students realize their scholarly potential. A senior supervisor is someone who has received supervisory status by the Graduate Studies Committee. Students are assigned a senior supervisor as soon as possible after admission to the graduate program.

#### **Interim Advisor**

All programs assign an interim advisor to all students who do not have a definite supervisor at the time of admission. If an interim advisor is not appointed, the Chair of the Graduate Program Committee is the de facto interim advisor of the student. The interim advisor can help students acquaint themselves with the research interests of professors in the program and helps them identify a suitable senior supervisor.

#### **Supervisory Committee**

The student's supervisory committee helps the student define and develop a program of studies and reports on the student's progress to the Graduate Program Committee. The supervisory committee forms part of the student's final examination committee.

#### **The Graduate Program Committee (GPC)**

Each graduate program has a Graduate Program Committee (GPC) which is responsible for recommending admission, reviewing the student's progress and arranging for the supervision and examination of the student.

#### **The University College Council (Senate) Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)**

The Graduate Studies Committee is a standing committee of the University College Council (Senate) and it has the final authority on the administration of UCC regulations which concern graduate work. It establishes, maintains and periodically reviews graduate studies regulations and guidelines. It oversees the application of graduate studies regulations and guidelines, especially with respect to the rights and responsibilities of graduate students.

### **Associate Vice President Research & Graduate Studies**

The AVP Research & Graduate Studies is the AVP to whom responsibility for the management of graduate studies has been delegated by the Vice-President Academic and Provost.

#### **Master's Thesis**

A Master's thesis is a significant body of work produced in writing by a student, usually in the form of a monograph, demonstrating that the student is able to work in a scholarly manner, carry out research and organize results and is familiar with the principal works published on the subject of the thesis. A Master's thesis must be expressed in good literate style. Original scholarship is encouraged but not necessarily expected. A Master's thesis should not normally exceed one hundred pages. Longer theses are discouraged. Depending on the discipline, the duration of the thesis project can vary significantly, but should not normally exceed two years.

#### **Research Paper (Report) or Extended Essay**

A research paper (or report) or an extended essay are shorter than a Master's thesis. They should normally be approximately fifty pages long. In some disciplines, the research paper may be a project report, a project evaluation report, a case study, or a more theoretical paper. Just like a master's thesis, they must be in good literate style and demonstrate that the student is able to work in a scholarly manner, carry out research and organize results and is familiar with the principal works published on the subject of the thesis. Original scholarship is encouraged but not necessarily expected. Depending on the discipline, a research paper or extended essay can normally be completed within one semester, four months, of full time study.

### **3. POLICIES AND STANDARDS**

Master's theses or research papers must conform to UFV's policies, regulations, and standards. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with all applicable policies and regulations of UFV.

### **4. TIME LIMITS**

Unless a different time limit has been specified for a particular program, a candidate for a master's degree is expected to complete all degree requirements within seven years of the date of the initial registration in the master's program. A Program Graduate Committee can specify its expectations of normal degree completion times for a given program as a guide to determining whether a student's progress is satisfactory.

### **5. CONTINUITY OF REGISTRATION WHILE THE THESIS IS BEING COMPLETED AND EXAMINED.**

Students must maintain their registration in the program until all the requirements, including the thesis, have been completed. Students in a "per semester fee program" are required to register in every semester until all requirements for the degree have been fulfilled. This includes students registered on leave. A student in a per semester fee program who does not register for a semester is considered to have withdrawn from UFV.

Students in a "per credit fee program" are required to register for thesis supervision in every semester until they have complete all he requirements of the program. After initial registration for thesis supervision, a student who fails to register for continued thesis supervision in a given semester before all the requirements of the program are met is considered to have withdrawn from UFV.

### **6. APPOINTMENT OF SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE**

A supervisory committee must be established for each gradate student. The supervisory committee is chaired by the student's senior supervisor and is responsible for helping the student develop a program of study leading to a degree and for reporting to the Graduate Program Committee at least

once a year on the student's progress towards completing the degree requirements. The supervisory committee shall be available to the student for consultation on a regular basis.

The student's senior supervisor, in consultation with the student, shall recommend the composition of the supervisory committee. The supervisory committee consists of the senior supervisor and at least one other person. Normally, this recommendation shall be made during the same semester in which the senior supervisor is appointed, usually the first semester after admission to the graduate program, and in any event before the substantive design of a thesis proposal takes place. Early appointment of a supervisory committee is associated with high completion rates and shorter average time to completion.

The composition of the supervisory committee must be approved by the Graduate Program Committee and sent to the AVP Research & Graduate Studies for final approval. A standard form exists and should be used for this submission.

All members of supervisory committees must have received supervisory status from the Graduate Studies Committee. The supervisory committee membership may include senior instructors, professors emeriti, adjunct faculty, off campus professionals as well as faculty members of other universities. A request for approval for these members must be submitted to the AVP Research & Graduate Studies and include a copy of the individual's curriculum vitae and a letter from the Graduate Program Committee Chair.

Continuity of supervision is important. Therefore, after a supervisory committee is established, a change in supervisory committee, especially a change in senior supervisor, may be made only on the basis of strong reasons. A request for a change in the supervisory committee may come from the student or any member of the supervisory committee. It shall be sent to the Graduate Program Committee accompanied by the reasons, in writing, for the proposed change. If the Graduate Program Committee concurs in the request, it shall be sent to the AVP Research & Graduate Studies for final approval.

The supervisory committee must be available to the student for consultation on a regular basis. The supervisors must be reasonably accessible to the students for consultation and discussion of the student's progress and research problems. They offer substantive and procedural assistance with the design, planning and conduct of feasible thesis project. They provide constructive criticism and assessment of the student's ideas and research as it develops. They must also ensure that the scholarly standards of the institution and the discipline are complied with.

Students are advised to meet regularly with their supervisor, develop in conjunction with their supervisor and supervisory committee a timetable for completion of all stages of the thesis, and work diligently to realize that timetable. They should plan to meet with their senior supervisor at least once a month and no less than once each semester and interact with other members of the supervisory committee as appropriate.

## **7. REGISTRATION OF TOPIC AND THESIS PROPOSAL**

The topic of the thesis is to be determined in consultation with the student's supervisor as soon as possible, but no later than one year after the student's admission in the program. Students are also expected to prepare a thesis proposal in consultation with their supervisory committee. In some programs, students are expected to participate in a seminar which facilitates the development of the proposal. The proposal must be submitted in writing and approved by the student's supervisory committee. It is then transmitted with the appropriate form<sup>1</sup> to the Chair of the Graduate Program Committee who, in turn, is responsible for submitting it to AVP Research & Graduate Studies once the program requirements in regard to the proposal have been satisfied. When the proposal is approved, the AVP Research & Graduate Studies will notify the Chair of the Graduate Program Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> *Thesis Proposal Submission Form*

The maximum length of a proposal is 3,000 words. It should contain a brief statement in non-technical language of the purpose or goals of the research, the relationship to existing work in the area, the method which will be used and the contribution that will be made to the field of enquiry.

## 8. ETHICS CONSIDERATIONS

All research plans must comply with UFV Research Ethics policies. Students must familiarize themselves as soon as possible with these policies and, when applicable, seek the necessary approvals from the Research Ethics Board before the research is initiated. When a formal Research Ethics Board (REB) review is required, the submission to the ethics Board must be submitted at the same time or after the thesis proposal is submitted to the AVP Research & Graduate Studies for approval. The proposal must be approved by both the AVP and the REB in order to proceed.

## 9. STRUCTURE OF THESIS

In a thesis, a student presents a proposition or theory and the findings to support it. The student draws on existing research, which the student may accept or reject. Some standard components of a thesis or research paper are listed below. Not all of these components are necessarily required or even recommended for every field of study or type of projects and, therefore, it is always best to check with the supervisor.

**Title page:** Every thesis must have a title page.

**Table of contents:** The table of contents lists everything that comes after, including the abstract and acknowledgements. It details chapter titles, sections, and other subheadings.

**List of tables:** A list of tables used in the text consists of the table number, the full title of the table, and the page number where the table appears. Tables must be numbered in order of appearance.

**List of figures:** When figures are included, a list of figures is produced in the same manner as the list of tables.

**Acronyms and symbols:** Acronyms or symbols used frequently in the text may be listed on a separate page.

**Abstract:** A thesis is preceded by an abstract. The abstract will typically include a statement of the problem, a summary of the methodology, the main findings, and the conclusions. Abstracts should be no longer than 150 words.

**Acknowledgements:** The acknowledgements section recognizes those who helped the student.

**Copyright:** If published material from other authors has been used, a copy of written permission to use these materials must be included with the thesis. This written permission usually comes from the publisher.

**Introduction:** The introduction typically presents the hypothesis or thesis statement and an overview of the study.

**Body of the thesis:** The main part of the thesis details the methodology and findings of the study. The first part of the body discusses the existing literature in the area and it places the work within that literature.

**Conclusion:** The conclusion sums up the content and findings of the thesis. It often goes further by delineating the policy or other implications of these findings and suggesting areas of potential future research and investigation.

**Appendices:** Appendices include materials and data that are not essential to the exposition of the work but are, nevertheless, relevant. Ethics and copyright permissions are also placed here.

**Footnotes and endnotes:** These are to be prepared using the appropriate scholarly conventions of the discipline and the library style requirements.

**Bibliography:** Bibliographic entries will also be prepared using the appropriate scholarly conventions of the academic discipline and the library style requirements.

## 10. LIBRARY STYLE REQUIREMENTS

Library style and copyright requirements have to be adhered to. They can be consulted on UFV's graduate studies webpage.

## 11. SUBMISSION OF THE THESIS

Before submitting a thesis, a candidate must have completed all other program requirements, including residence when applicable. At the time of submission of the thesis, members of the supervisory committee must certify that they have read the thesis or research paper and find it acceptable for submission to the examining committee.<sup>2</sup>

The student must submit to the Chair of the Graduate Program Committee as many copies of the thesis as there are examiners on the examining committee, including an electronic version.<sup>3</sup>

## 12. EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Each candidate for an applied master's degree is examined on the thesis by an examining committee appointed by the AVP Research & Graduate Studies and comprised of:

- a) the Chair of the student's Graduate Program Committee, or his/her designate, who shall be a non-voting Chair of the examining committee. If the Chair of the Graduate Program Committee is also on the student's supervisory committee, he/she shall designate a member of faculty at UFV, who is not a member of the student's supervisory committee, as chair.
- b) all members of the student's supervisory committee.
- c) a member of faculty at UFV, or an external person otherwise suitably qualified, who is not a member of the student's supervisory committee, must be included for examination of a thesis.

## 13. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A student could be assessed unduly positively or negatively as a result of a conflict of interest or close relationship between the student and the examiners or supervisory committee members. The Chair of a Graduate Program Committee or the AVP Research & Graduate Studies should be made aware of and seek to avoid situations which may affect the assessment of the work of graduate students, such as potential conflicts of interest or other situations where examiners may not be sufficiently at arm's length from the student.

## 14. PREPARATION FOR THE EXAMINATION

An examination may take place as soon as the examiners have had an opportunity to review the thesis and are available to meet with the candidate. If there is an oral defence, it takes place after the examiners have had time to evaluate the thesis or research paper. Candidates should allow at least one month for the reading and examination of their thesis or research paper.

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<sup>2</sup> A form is available for that purpose: *Statement of Thesis Supervisors*

<sup>3</sup> This should be in a version that is not protected so that identifying information can be removed for blind review by external examiners.

The candidate's supervisory committee makes a recommendation to the Chair of the Graduate Program Committee concerning the date, place and time of the examination and the composition of the examining committee. This recommendation is then submitted for approval to the AVP Research & Graduate Studies.

Once the examining committee has been formed and approved, copies of the thesis are distributed by the Chair of the Graduate Program Committee, not by the students, to all examiners.

Prior to the examination, the Chair of the Graduate Program Committee will notify the Registrar of the title of the thesis and the schedule for the examination. At this time, the Chair of the Graduate Program Committee will notify the University community of the intended time and place of the examination.

## **15. EXAMINATION**

All members of the examining committee must be present at the oral examination, except under exceptional circumstances when prior permission has been granted by the AVP Research & Graduate Studies.

The possible outcomes of the examination are:

1. the thesis may be passed as submitted;
2. the thesis may be passed on the condition that minor revisions are completed to the satisfaction of the senior supervisor;
3. judgement on the thesis may be deferred once, up to one semester, pending major revisions to be completed to the satisfaction of the examining committee.
4. the thesis may be failed. In this case the candidate is required to withdraw from UFV.

The Chair of the Examining committee immediately informs the candidate of the verdict. If the examining committee cannot reach a unanimous decision, the Chair informs the Chair of the Graduate Program Committee who refers the matter to the AVP Research & Graduate Studies. In this case, each opinion must be conveyed in writing.

When required to make corrections to the thesis after its defence, the student must do so within two weeks following the defence and submit the corrected version to the supervisory committee who can then recommend that the degree be awarded. If the corrections cannot be made by the deadline, and a new semester has started, the student must register for the current session and maintain registration until the corrected copies are submitted and accepted. A maximum of one semester is allowed to submit corrected copies of the thesis, unless permission has been obtained from the AVP Research & Graduate Studies. Failure to submit the corrected copies within these time limits may result in the Graduate Studies Committee closing the file.

The Graduate Studies Committee keeps two copies of a rejected thesis.

## **16. ORAL DEFENCE OF MASTER'S THESES**

A Master's thesis is subject to oral defence which is chaired by a professor representing the AVP Research & Graduate Studies and who is not a member of the examining committee. The Graduate Program Committee arranges the defence of a master's thesis. An oral defence is not necessary for research papers (reports) or extended essays. (See: Regulations of procedures for oral defence of master's theses).

## **17. FINAL SUBMISSION OF THE THESIS TO THE LIBRARY**

A student is considered to have completed degree requirements on the date that the thesis is submitted to the Library, provided that the Library finds the format acceptable. The final version of the thesis is submitted in five copies to the Library. The degree will not be conferred unless acceptable final copies of the thesis or research paper have been submitted to the Library. The Library will inform the AVP Research & Graduate Studies of acceptance. The candidate is responsible for

checking the quality of all copies and for ensuring that they are ready for binding. They must meet Library standards. The bound copies will be distributed as follows: one for the Library, one for the Graduate Program Committee, one for the senior supervisor, one for the secondary supervisor, and one for the candidate.

By registering for graduate studies at UFV, a candidate agrees to the use of his/her thesis or research paper for research purposes. The Library will submit a copy of the thesis to the National Library of Canada.<sup>4</sup> Once deposited in the University or National Library, the thesis or research paper becomes a public document although the copyright remains with the student.

## 18. PUBLICATION AND POSTPONEMENT OF PUBLICATION

The results of research conducted at the UFV should be available freely to the public, and it is expected that every thesis will be placed in the library immediately following final revisions. It is the responsibility of graduate students to ensure that this policy is communicated clearly to relevant individuals and organizations outside UFV prior to the initiation of any research project.

Students must sign an agreement form authorizing the Library and Archives of Canada to reproduce the thesis and make it available in a variety of formats. Students must sign a partial copyright license which grants to UFV the right to lend the thesis to users of the library, and to make partial or single copies for such users. Multiple copying is not permitted without written permission from the author except that, if the author is unobtainable, the AVP Research & Graduate Studies may give this permission.

UFV's General Regulations for Graduate Studies (para 9.4) provide the possibility for a temporary postponement of publication of a thesis, whereby a thesis may be withheld from circulation and from copying for a period of 12 months from the date of defence in order to protect confidential commercial information, patentable material, pending application, or where immediate commercial publication is anticipated. No extension to this time limit is permitted.

Under exceptional circumstances, portions of a project, extended essay or thesis may be withheld from the reference copy of the document that is made available to faculty members and students. This procedure must be authorized by the AVP Research & Graduate Studies well in advance of the distribution of the document.

## 19. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

Intellectual property rights are a complex matter. At UFV, students, faculty members and other authors have copyright in works they produced. UFV's policy on intellectual property<sup>5</sup> is designed to protect all parties to the intellectual enterprise. These policies protect the rights of students, faculty, staff, UFV and its partners and others around the world whose intellectual property we use.

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<sup>4</sup> For information on the dissemination of theses by the National Library of Canada, please consult the following website: [www.nlc-bnc.ca/thesescanada](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/thesescanada).

<sup>5</sup> UFV Policy 210.11 – Intellectual Property