

Thesis Submission and Defence Procedures

Executive Summary:

This document has been prepared for Faculty of Science, Graduate Students, Supervisors and Supervisory Committee members by the Faculty of Science Graduate Studies Committee (FSGSC) for use when a Graduate Student is preparing to defend their thesis. It provides the responsibilities, the necessary paperwork, the schedule and some of the common pitfalls that can occur in the run up to the defence.

Preparation for Defence

Notice of Intent

At the beginning of each term the Faculty of Science Graduate Studies for the (FSGS) will send out a message requesting a *Notification of Intent to Submit* to collect a list of what students would potentially submit in a term. It is requested that students engage with their supervisor and their committee to identify what term they are likely to submit.

The student should reply to this message with an indication that they are going to submit and, if known, approximately when in the term. Should a student not meet these dates, there is no penalty, but it will help with planning defences to have this information.

Draft Thesis and Feedback

When a draft of a thesis is complete to the point where the student and supervisor agree that it is ready for defence, the student should submit the thesis and request a review and a progress meeting with their Supervisory Committee.

The guidance is that the Supervisory Committee should have at a minimum of 2 weeks to review the thesis before the scheduled progress meeting. Depending on the complexity of the dissertation and competing priorities, Supervisor Committees may require more time than this to get to the point where a Supervisory Committee Meeting on progress can occur. At that meeting, the student

and their Supervisory Committee should discuss any changes that need to be made to the draft and determine if the thesis is ready for examination. Students should be prepared that if the thesis requires substantial changes, the Supervisory Committee may request further rounds of drafting and review and potentially another progress meeting to approve the student to move forward in the defence.

If the Supervisory Committee unanimously agrees that a progress meeting is not required, and the thesis is ready to move forward, then they may bypass this Supervisory Committee meeting.

If Supervisory Committee agrees to move forward with the defence the Science Graduate Committee Approval for Thesis Examination Form and External Examiner Nomination Form should be completed and submitted to the head of department for signature. If two or more members of the Committee consider that further revision is required, the thesis will not move forward to Final examination. If the thesis is approved, it is understood that during the Thesis Defense the examination Committee is still entitled to request further revisions. It is also understood that the candidate has successfully completed all the required courses included in his/her program.

Examination Committee Formation

Supervisory Committees should recommend up to three external examiners to examine a thesis in ranked order of preference. For PhD defences, the committee should also nominate an examiner internal to UPEI that is not on the supervisory committee from a cognate unit. The approval of these externals by the Department Chair or Associate Dean as head of unit for the Supervisor is considered as selection of the Examination Committee as per UPEI Regulations.

The external examiner will be chosen by the Faculty of Science Graduate Studies Coordinator from a list of three arms-length nominees who should be experts in the candidate's research field. The nominees will be suggested by the Supervisory Committee in consultation with the student. It is preferred if the external examiner can attend the examination in person, however the external examiner can participate via video or audio conference call if this is impractical.

Definition of Conflict of Interest:

External Examiners must not be in conflict of interest with the student, supervisor(s), or members of the supervisory committee within the last 6 years. For purposes of this document, in the absence of official UPEI policy on this subject, conflict of interest is defined as:

- Joint publication or plans to publish together in the foreseeable future
- Shared funding, or funding applications (in progress or under review)
- Business or financial relationships
- Personal or familial relationship
- Supervisor / trainee relationship

An External Examiner Nomination Form should be completed by all members of the Supervisory Committee and signed by the Department Chair and included in the submission of the thesis to FSGS.

Students and their Supervisory Committee are encouraged to begin identifying external examiners early in the process of planning a submission for defence. This can include supervisors contacting external examiners to identify if they would be willing to serve as an external examiner and suggest potential dates for defence if possible.

MSc. Committee Composition:

Master's examination committees composition can be found in the University Calendar Section 111 Graduate Programs and Courses, under the [Master of Science programs](#).

PhD Committees:

PhD examination committee composition can be found in the University Calendar, Section 112 [PhD Faculty of Science](#) (Environmental Sciences (ESC) and Molecular and Macromolecular Sciences (MMS))

Submission for Defence of Thesis

The student should submit the thesis to FSGS at gsc@upei.ca with the necessary **Approval for Graduate Thesis Defence Examination**, signed by all committee members and the Departmental Chair or Associate Dean for the students' home unit. Dates and committees cannot be confirmed or booked until after all this material has been received by FSGS. Students should also apply to graduate at this time.

Scheduling the Defence

Students are advised that arranging a defence will take a minimum of 1 week from the time that all paperwork is complete. While FSGS will work to have the defence within that timeline there are several events that can delay scheduling of the defence:

- Paperwork has not been fully completed with all appropriate signatures
- External examiners are unresponsive to requests
- External examiners decline the invitation
- External examiners request more time with the thesis
- Examination committee and student cannot identify a date with shared availability
- Challenges finding Chair for the examination cannot be identified for the date

Informal agreements on external examining, including preview of the thesis to be examined so that the potential external examiner can consider the commitment appropriate can be helpful in maintaining this timeline.

To maintain quality and integrity of the examination process, the External Examiner should have a minimum of 2 weeks to read the dissertation and prepare questions for the defence.

Attending the Defence

The process of the running the defence is detailed in the **Faculty of Science, Graduate Studies, Thesis Defence Examination Guidelines**.

Based on the comments from the Examining Committee, if each element of the examination (presentation, defense, thesis) is deemed "satisfactory", the Committee will decide whether the thesis is accepted "as is", or if "minor" or "major" corrections are required. In general, major corrections imply the re-analysis (and not just the re-writing) of a set of results and their interpretation.

One or more sections of the examination will be considered "failed" if two or more members of the Examining Committee consider them to be not satisfactory. The committee must then complete the Assessment of Graduate Examination.

Completing Corrections

There are three positive potential outcomes for a graduate student defence.

- 1) A student may have no corrections in which case the final thesis copy can be submitted.
- 2) A student with minor corrections are provided by members of the examination committee and typically include things like typographical errors, small amounts of elaboration on the contents of the thesis, increase depth of analysis and synthesis and so on. Minor corrections can be completed by the student and checked by the supervisor, with the option of the examination committee checking that the corrections have been completed.
- 3) A student with major corrections are typically those that require substantial additional work for the student at the request of the examination committee. At the time of the decision of major corrections an examination committee can request an additional oral defence of the corrected research thesis. Major corrections are always approved by the examination committee.

Failing a Thesis Defence

If a student fails to defend the thesis successfully, or if the thesis is determined to not be of sufficient quality by the examination committee, the committee can recommend that the student not be awarded the degree.

Submitting Final Thesis

When corrections are confirmed to be completed, the **supervisor** should submit the finalized copy to FSGS with a statement that all corrections have been completed. Students should check their thesis against the formatting guidelines before submission. The student should provide 3 copies (4 if there are 2 co-supervisors) for binding. Binding will be arranged by FSGS, and a copy will be received by each of: the student, the supervisor(s) and the department.

If not already completed, the student will be asked to complete a non-exclusive licensing agreement that permits the archiving and publication of the thesis by the university for non-commercial purposes.

When the thesis has been confirmed to be completed and the final copy submitted, a memorandum of program completion will be sent to the Registrar office and the student will be added to the next graduation roster.

Example Thesis Timeline for Submission

The following timeline assumes a student wishes to complete by a particular date, say December 16, 2024, and shows an approximate timeline of what is required to be able to have completed their requirements for that date. For a student to not have to register for the next term, the completion memorandum for their thesis must be sent from FSGS to the Registrar office by the last day marks are due for term. If the student submits their revisions after that day, they must register for the next term, but if they complete their corrections before the add/drop date of the next term they will receive a full refund of their tuition.

Step	Responsibility	Weeks Prior to Defence	Date Completed
Notification of Intent	Student	7	Sept. 9, 2024
Check Thesis Formatting Guidelines	Student	6	Sept. 16, 2024
Draft Thesis to Supervisory Committee	Student	5	Oct 21, 2024
Supervisory Committee Meeting	Student	4	Oct. 28, 2024
Approval for Thesis Defence Examination Form	Supervisor	3	Nov. 4, 2024
Draft Thesis and Approval Form Submission	Student	3	Nov. 4, 2024
Apply to Graduate	Student	3	Nov. 4, 2024
Schedule Thesis Defence	FSGS	2	Nov. 11, 2024
Submitted Thesis to External Examiner	FSGS	2	Nov. 11, 2024
Defence		0	Nov. 25, 2024
Step	Responsibility	Weeks After Defence	Date Completed
Submission of Corrections to Supervisor	Student	2	Dec. 9, 2024
Final Thesis Submission to FSGS	Supervisor	3	Dec. 16, 2024
Completion Memo to Registrar	FSGS	3	Dec. 16, 2024

Thesis Submission and Defence Checklist

The following is a blank checklist for use by students in preparation of their thesis for submission and defence to aid in managing their time.

Step	Responsibility	Weeks Prior to Defence	Target Date	Complete?
Notification of Intent	Student	7		
Check Thesis Formatting Guidelines	Student	6		
Draft Thesis to Supervisory Committee	Student	5		
Supervisory Committee Meeting	Student	4		
Approval for Thesis Defence Examination Form	Supervisor	3		
Draft Thesis and Approval Form Submission	Student	3		
Apply to Graduate	Student	3		
Defence		0		
Step	Responsibility	Weeks After Defence	Target Date	
Submission of Corrections to Supervisor	Student	2		
Final Thesis Submission to FSGS	Supervisor	3		

Document Change Log

Date of Change	Details	Change Made By
October 2, 2024	Updates based on committee feedback to produce version 1	Christopher Power