

WATERLOO-LAURIER GRADUATE PROGRAM IN GEOGRAPHY

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

**MA/MES THESIS PROCEDURES
STUDENT GUIDE**

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I. PREPARATION OF A THESIS PROPOSAL

A carefully formulated proposal is the first step to be taken in any research if it is to be conducted in an efficient manner. Not only will it save you much time and frustration in carrying out the work, it might also serve as the introductory chapter in the final report. The proposal should be prepared in consultation with your advisor and thesis committee member, and must bear their signature of acceptance.

General Format

The thesis proposal should be typed, double-spaced, with appropriate citations, foot-notes and bibliography. Proposal should be kept as short as possible, consistent with adequate exposition and should not generally exceed ten content pages.

Specific Contents

Every proposal should consist of the following:

- (a) Title page - Proposed title of thesis; degree for which it is being prepared; name of student; date of submission; and a 50-100 word abstract, typed, single-spaced, stating concisely the nature of the problem to be pursued, objectives of the study, and data and methods to be employed.
- (b) Introduction and justification - A specific statement of the problem as a researchable issue, including its relationship to past and present research.
- (c) Procedure - Where appropriate, discussion of any hypotheses to be tested and methodology and data to be employed, with special attention given to those which may be controversial or present problems in the research.
- (d) Outline of the organization of the research - To include a brief discussion of the rationale for the organization and the nature of the content (where appropriate), and rough timetable of the research, analysis and writing phases.
- (e) Bibliography - To cite those works which most clearly relate to the study as sources of theory, data, or methodology. While it should reflect a thorough awareness of the literature, it need not be all-inclusive (i.e. A Xerox copy of the final bibliography).

Once the proposal is accepted by the thesis committee, the student must get the faculty members' acceptance signatures on the Reporting Form and submit it and a thesis proposal copy to the Graduate Officer.

II. FACULTY AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES IN THESIS PREPARATION

The MA/MES Faculty Thesis Advisory Committee consists of two people, a major supervisor and one other member. The other member is normally chosen from within the Waterloo-Laurier Graduate Program in Geography program.

The role of the major supervisor is to guide the student in the completion of the MA/MES research. More specifically this would entail:

- (a) to judge the merits of the thesis topic.
- (b) to evaluate the thesis proposal; inform the student of its shortcomings and merits in writing and once it is in an acceptable form pass it on to the other committee member for further evaluation. All comments from the committee are collected by the advisor and passed on to the student and discussed before he/she finalizes the proposal.
- (c) to circulate the final proposal to the committee member for their approval and signature. One copy is to be deposited in the student's file.
- (d) to monitor and evaluate the research and writing progress of the student. The other committee member does not have to be involved in the day-to-day problems of the thesis writing. However they should be involved in major deviations from the proposal. Sections of the work may be shown to committee members.
- (e) to circulate the entire first thesis draft to the committee members for comment. All written suggestions on improvements and the nature of these improvements are collected by the advisor and discussed with the student. Naturally the student is also free to seek clarification from individual members.
- (f) to supervise the writing of the final draft.
- (g) to ask the grad officer to set up the thesis defence when the thesis is acceptable to the advisor and the committee member.
- (h) to oversee any revisions required in the thesis after the defence. Once completed the advisor should take one copy and deposit it in the Graduate Dean's office and sign the 'revision completed' form.

It is the student's responsibility to produce a thesis topic by the end of his first semester, a formal proposal by the end of the second semester, and then research and write an acceptable thesis as soon as possible (see graduate calendar for deadlines). It is the student's responsibility to incorporate changes in the topic, proposal and thesis as advised by his thesis committee.

Students will be given written advice on all major matters pertaining to the thesis proposal and

the thesis itself. (Copies will be kept by the advisor.)

In order to make sure student and faculty are using their time efficiently it is expected that faculty will normally respond to:

- (i) a thesis topic suggestion within 2 weeks after receiving it
- (ii) a thesis proposal within 3 weeks
- (iii) a substantial part of the thesis (chapter) within 3 weeks
- (iv) a complete draft of the thesis within 4 weeks

It is expected that most faculty will perform these tasks earlier and that the above times would only be taken when absolutely necessary.

III. THESIS FORMAT GUIDELINES

The following are minimum requirements. The department/faculty concerned may add others as it deems appropriate.

Style and Copy Requirements

The thesis should be neatly typed, on one side only, using double spacing throughout. The type should be of a standard face and size.

Paper should be heavy white bond of good quality in a standard size of 8½ x 11 inches.

Margins of all pages should be an absolute minimum of one inch at top, bottom, and right hand side. The left margin should be a minimum of one and a half inches to allow for binding.

The first line of every paragraph should be indented a standard five spaces.

Abbreviations may be used (if conventional in the particular discipline) but must be defined the first time they are used.

If there are alternative correct spellings of a particular word, either form may be used, but such use must be consistent throughout the thesis.

All copies of the thesis shall be fully equivalent to the typed original with respect to content, legibility, quality, and weight of paper. The candidate is advised to seek both departmental and Graduate Office approval of any other specific method

Format and Organization of Thesis

The organizational sequence should be as follows:

1. Title Page of the thesis which must include Universal Copyright Notice © (see next page)
2. Abstract;
3. Acknowledgements;
4. Table of Contents;
5. List of Tables (if appropriate);
6. List of Figures (if appropriate);
7. Text of the thesis;
8. Endnotes and/or footnotes may be included in the text if the department desires;
9. Appendices (if appropriate);
10. References.

The thesis pages should be numbered in consecutive order with Arabic numerals,

starting with the first page of text and continuing through to the last page of the entire thesis. Pages preceding the text, starting with the first page of the abstract should be numbered consecutively with lower case Roman numerals.

Theses become the property of Wilfrid Laurier University. However, a candidate retains the right to publish his or her thesis. All copies made under the authority of the University's "Partial Copyright Licence" shall bear a statement to the effect that the copy in question "is being made available in this form by authority of the copyright owner solely for the purpose of private study and research and may not be copied or reproduced except as permitted by the copyright laws without written authority from the copyright owner".

(TITLE OF THESIS)

By

(Full name of the author)

(Undergraduate Degree, University, Year)

THESIS

Submitted to the Department/Faculty of
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts/Master of Environmental Studies degree
Wilfrid Laurier University
(date)

© (name of author) (date)

IV Procedures and Guidelines for Administering Oral Defence Examinations of MA/MES Theses

1. The thesis advisor notifies the Graduate Officer that a final draft thesis has been produced which is acceptable to all members of the thesis committee.
2. The Geography Graduate Program Administrative Assistant requests the University Graduate Studies Office to prepare the Thesis Oral Examination Release Form. This form is forwarded to the Geography Graduate Office to be completed by the Graduate Officer, thesis advisor, committee member and student.
3. The Graduate Officer, in consultation with the thesis advisor and student, identifies two external readers. The Graduate Dean approves the readers.
4. The Geography Graduate Office then schedules a time and location for the Thesis Oral Defence and indicates this on the Thesis Oral Examination Release Form.
5. The Geography Graduate Office posts notices of the defence at the following locations:
 - a) WLU University Graduate Studies Office
 - b) WLU Geography Department
 - c) UW Geography Department
6. The student produces six thesis copies (at own expense) - one for each member of the committee (2), one for each external reader (2), one for the chair, and one for display at the University Graduate Studies Office. The student delivers a copy to each committee member and four copies to the Geography Graduate Office. The Geography Graduate Office then delivers two copies of the thesis along with the Thesis Oral Examination Release Form to the University Graduate Studies Office.
7. The University Graduate Studies Office sends to each external reader:
 - a) a notice of the defence
 - b) a copy of the thesis
 - c) Procedures for Conducting Oral Defence Examinations of MA/MES Theses
 - d) "Ready to Defend" form
8. When the completed Thesis Oral Examination Release Form is filed with the University Graduate Studies Office the Graduate Dean prepares the Candidate Record Sheet.

9. The Dean of Graduate Studies appoints a chairperson for the oral defence. The supervisor may serve as a non-voting chairperson.
10. The Graduate Dean forwards to the chairperson for the oral defence:
 - a) the Candidate Record Sheet.
 - b) a copy of the thesis
 - c) Procedures for Conducting Oral Defence Examinations of MA/MES Theses
 - d) Guidelines for Administering Oral Defence Examinations: Last minute Absence of a Chairperson or Committee Member
11. The Chairperson, after the defence, ensures that the Candidate Record Sheet is signed and completed and returns it to the University Graduate Studies Office. The Geography Graduate Program Administrative Assistant receives a copy for the student's file from the University Graduate Studies Office.
12. The Student submits a completed thesis to their supervisor. He or she must sign the Candidate Record Sheet to indicate that the changes have been satisfactorily completed and notifies the Geography Graduate Officer.
13. When the master's thesis or doctoral dissertation has been accepted by the supervisor, the candidate must submit four unbound copies to the Graduate Studies Office for approval and forwarding to the university library. Of these four copies, one unbound copy will be sent for inclusion to the Canadian Thesis on Microfiche Service at the National Library, Ottawa. The remaining three copies of the thesis or dissertation are bound by the library and distributed as follows: one for the candidate, one for the candidate's department, and one for the supervisor. The copy returned by the National Library after microficheing is bound and becomes the WLU library copy.
14. Students who wish additional bound copies must submit the extra copies along with payment for the binding to the Graduate Studies Office

V PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING ORAL DEFENCE EXAMINATIONS OF MA/MES THESES

The committee Chairperson is appointed by the Graduate Dean. The Chairperson and the External Readers are responsible for ensuring that the examination is conducted fairly and objectively.

NOTE: The Candidate should bring a copy of the thesis to the oral examination.

PROCEDURES:

- A. The Committee meets and the Chairperson introduces the candidate to the Committee.
- B. The candidate and any visitors are excused while the Committee establishes procedures regarding:
 - i) the order of questions (e.g., external readers, other members, advisor last);
 - ii) the limit on the number of questions (e.g., three per person in each round);
 - iii) whether or not the chairperson should recognize questions from observers (observers may only be present when the student is present).
- C. The Defence begins with a 10 minute summary of the thesis by the candidate. This presentation should conclude with a statement in which the candidate indicates the most significant contribution to knowledge of the thesis.
- D. The Chairperson's Role is to serve as an impartial chair of the examination. The Chairperson is not a member of the Examining Committee per se, and should not, normally, address questions to the candidate about the thesis. The Chairperson does not have a vote. More specifically, the responsibilities of the Chairperson include insuring:
 - i) that the examination is conducted according to the regulations and practices approved by the Faculty of Graduate Studies;
 - ii) that the examination is conducted fairly and objectively;
 - iii) that questions are related to the thesis;
 - iv) that all members of the Committee have had their questions answered satisfactorily;
 - v) that the examination is completed within 1½ to 2 hours;
 - vi) that the Committee understands the possible decisions;
 - vii) that the Graduate Candidate Record Sheet is completed, in detail, and returned to the University Graduate Office.

E. The Decision

1. The candidate and visitors are excused while the Committee deliberates.
2. The Chairperson summarizes the five decisions that are open to the Examining Committee:
 1. **Accepted**
Thesis may require typographical and/or minor editorial corrections to be made to the satisfaction of the Advisor.
 2. **Accepted with modifications**
Thesis requires minor changes in substance or major editorial changes which are to be made to the satisfaction of members of the Examining committee designated by the Committee. The Examining Committee's report must include a brief outline of the nature of the changes required and must indicate the time by which the changes should be completed. Normally such changes should be completed within four weeks of the date of the examination.
 3. **Accepted conditionally**
Thesis requires more substantive changes, but will be acceptable when these changes are made to the satisfaction of those members of the Examining committee designated by the Committee. The Examining Committee's report must include a brief outline of the nature of the changes required, and the date by which the changes are to be completed.
 4. **Decision Deferred**
Thesis requires modifications of a substantial nature, the need for which makes the acceptability of the thesis questionable. The Examining Committee's report must contain a brief outline of the modifications expected and should indicate the time by which the changes are to be completed. The revised thesis must be resubmitted for re-examination. Normally, the re-examination will follow the same procedures as for the initial submission except that the display period may be reduced or eliminated at the discretion of the appropriate graduate dean. Normally the same Examining committee will serve. A decision to defer is open only once for each candidate.
 5. **Rejected**
Thesis is rejected. The Examining Committee shall report the reasons for rejection. A student whose thesis has been rejected is required to withdraw from the MA/MES program.

3. The Chairperson determines each member's opinion regarding the thesis defence and consequently the Committee must, through deliberations, arrive at a clear consensus. Should it be impossible to reach a unanimous decision, a simple majority rule will apply. However, in this case, a short note indicating the reasons must be included on the Graduate Candidate Record Sheet. If the Examining Committee is not prepared to reach a decision at the time of the thesis defence, it is the responsibility of the Chair to determine what additional information is required by the committee to reach a decision, to arrange to obtain this information for the committee, and to call another meeting of the committee as soon as the required information is available. It is also the responsibility of the Chair to inform the candidate.

The Chairperson must list changes on the Record Sheet. The Chairperson also indicates who will be responsible for ensuring that the changes will be made and by what date.

The person responsible for approving the changes must submit one copy of the approved thesis to the Graduate Studies Office. He/she must sign the Graduate Candidate Record Sheet to indicate that the changes have been satisfactorily completed.

F. Recommendation for Medal for Academic Excellence

The Chairperson must also determine whether the Committee wishes to recommend the candidate for a Medal for Academic Excellence. This decision is recorded on the Graduate Candidate Record Sheet. The criteria for recommending a student for the award include:

- i) normally a minimum overall grade point average of a least 10.5 in course work;
- ii) normally a minimum of A- in any course;
- iii) the Examination committee, considers the thesis to be outstanding.

The Chairperson must record a detailed recommendation from the Committee that the thesis project is outstanding.

G. Recommendation for Graduation With Distinction

All candidates who are nominated for the Medal for Academic Excellence will graduate "With Distinction".

H. Concluding the Examination

The Chairperson advises the candidate of the decision, including the requested changes, the time frame and the individual(s) who must approve the final copy.

The candidate is invited to offer any comments about the defence, especially with regard to the fairness of the examination and the findings. (Additional time in which to complete the required revisions or different supervisors may be requested by the candidate and the Committee may grant these requests.)

The Chairperson signs and dates the Record Sheet (Item #8); and all members of the Committee initial the Graduate Candidate Record Sheet (Item #5).

The Chairperson should return the Graduate Candidate Record Sheet to the Graduate Studies Office immediately following the examination. At this time, the Chairperson should report any problems, irregularities or concerns about the examination process to the Dean of Graduate Studies.