

APPENDIX B

FRAN MSc Thesis and Defence Guidelines

This summary is intended as a guide for FRAN Graduate Students and Graduate Faculty. In all cases of interpretation and administration, the specific regulations of the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies will take precedence. Refer first to the following Graduate Calendar and Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies web pages:

- [University's Degree Regulations, MSc](#)
- [Completion and Graduation](#)
- [Electronic Thesis Information](#)
- Review [Policy on Responsibilities of Advisors, Advisory Committees and Graduate Students](#)
- Review [Graduate Student-Advisor Mediation Procedures](#)

Establish Advisory Committee

The [Advisory Committee Appointment & Graduate Degree Program Form](#) (found under Graduate Records Forms) needs to be submitted to the Graduate Program Assistant by the 10th day of a student's 2nd semester. Failure to submit this form will result in blocked registration in the following semester. *A new Advisory Committee Appointment form must be submitted if any changes are made to an Advisory Committee after this form has been submitted.*

Thesis Proposal

- Detailed proposals for the thesis are prepared by the student in consultation with the Advisor and must be submitted to the Advisory Committee for approval. See [Thesis/Major Paper Proposal: Approval Form](#)
- MSc students must present a thesis proposal to the Advisory Committee and have this approved by the committee by the **end of the 3rd semester**.
- As part of the approval process, the Advisory Committee considers the feasibility of the study in terms of time limitations, expenses and availability of participants. The proposal may need several drafts to clarify the scope or to improve the writing.
- Students may be required to submit for REB approval after consultation with the Advisory Committee.
- Difficulties sometimes arise during the data collection that may require changes to the approved procedures. For example, access to subjects may be limited or recruitment may take an excessively long time and a smaller sample than originally planned might become necessary. In these cases, all changes must be approved by the Advisory Committee.
- Faculty are expected to read and return thesis drafts (or thesis proposals) within a reasonable period, typically two weeks. Students are expected to show similar consideration of faculty.
- **Ethics Approval** – In most cases it will be necessary to obtain clearance of all research involving human subjects from the [University of Guelph's Research Ethics Board](#).

Sanctions and Expectations

- It is expected that most students will have no issues meeting the deadlines for the selection of an Advisory Committee and the submission of a thesis proposal. The Department's Graduate Coordinator will review all cases where the deadlines have not been met and if the failure to comply is

judged to be due to [unsatisfactory progress](#) on the part of the student, the student will receive a “some concerns” or “unsatisfactory” semester evaluation. Success with Action Plans devised to address a “some concerns” or “unsatisfactory” evaluation will be used in subsequent semesters to determine satisfactory progress. Repeated poor evaluations and/or missed deadlines may result in a recommendation for withdrawal from the program.

MSc Guidelines for Thesis Proposal and Thesis

- The Master’s thesis provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to think and work independently. Typically, students conduct an empirical study for the purpose of fulfilling the thesis requirement. There are no prior restrictions on the design and methods employed in a research thesis other than that they must be appropriate to the chosen research question. Faculty play an active role in ensuring the feasibility, quality and appropriateness of scope of Master’s thesis research proposals. In particular, projects relating to a faculty member’s research interests are encouraged. The research question(s) must be precisely defined and narrow enough in scope to allow comprehensive treatment of the issues within the six-semester period of an MSc degree. The overall length and scope of the thesis is determined by the student in consultation with their Advisor.
- It is customary for papers and presentations arising from student thesis research to be co-authored by the student and the faculty research advisor (and others who have contributed significantly to the research). An understanding about the authorship of publications from a thesis should be determined at the time of proposal development and approval.

Form and Content of the MSc Thesis Proposal

a) Introduction

The proposal should review the relevant literature. This review should demonstrate that the student understands the critical, theoretical and methodological issues directly related to the problem which is to be investigated. The introduction should also include a clear statement of the purpose of the study.

b) Research Questions (or Hypotheses)

c) Study Design and Methods

- The procedures for obtaining access to subjects should be outlined. In rare cases, where the populations to be sampled are not easily accessible, enquiries regarding the feasibility of the project must be assured prior to the approval of the thesis proposal. Theoretical positions and stances should be clarified.
- A complete specification of the procedure and design includes: recruitment of sample, instructions to participants, assignment of participants to groups, the specific levels of variables selected or manipulated, randomization, questionnaires used, and other features which demonstrate the rigour used to carry out the study.
- Equipment needs should be detailed in this section. If a questionnaire is to be used, then its development, pre and pilot testing need to be described and a complete copy should be included with the proposal

- d) Analyses** – A detailed description of the data analysis and qualitative approaches, and/or statistical procedures to be used should be provided. It should be made clear how these analyses address the research questions or hypotheses.

Form and Content of the MSc Thesis

The thesis includes all of the sections described above for the thesis proposal and will be in the format specified by the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies. In addition, the thesis includes:

- e) Results** – Note: this chapter may be written as a draft publication for submission, including abbreviated literature review/introduction, methods and discussion. Please note this explanation of results suggests

it may be written as an abbreviated literature review/introduction/methods/discussion. Students who choose this option are still expected to write a comprehensive literature review as well as a thorough discussion/implications section (as noted in the next session).

f) **Discussion** – overall discussion of the project as a whole

g) **Appendices with copies of the following**

- REB approval certificate
- Information letter for study participant, if appropriate, and consent form
- Recruitment materials (e.g. Copies of ads in newspapers, posters, etc.)
- Final copies of instruments or questionnaires used, if they are not copyrighted
- Additional data/results not presented in the Results chapter

In this department, the choice of format for the final dissertation is made by the student and the Advisory Committee. Two formats for the dissertation are common:

1. A single **unified write-up** with separate chapters for the literature review, methodology and analyses, results, and discussion
2. A **modified write-up**. Chapters in the dissertation will include a complete Introduction, Objectives/Hypotheses, Methods and detailed Discussion, as in the unified write-up (above). The Results chapter(s) consists of a series of two or more self-contained articles, which could be submitted separately for consideration to a scholarly journal. The scope of the Introduction, Methods and Discussion chapters is similar to that of the unified write-up (above) demonstrating the depth and breadth of the work undertaken.

Submission of Thesis for Examination

During the preparation of the written thesis, the student should be receiving regular feedback from the Advisory Committee. In the event that the student demonstrates an inability to prepare a suitable thesis, the Advisory Committee will report to the Department's Graduate Coordinator, through the semester reports, the challenge the student is having (see: Graduate Calendar [Unsatisfactory Progress](#)). A copy of the semester report will be sent to the student and the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Graduate Faculty may then recommend that the student withdraw from the program.

When the Advisory Committee indicates that a thesis is ready for examination, the Advisory Committee will put forward a proposed date for the examination by having each member of the Committee sign the [Examination Request Form](#), and submitting it to the Graduate Program Assistant a minimum of **3 weeks** before the scheduled examination. Once a chair has been determined (see below), the Graduate Coordinator signs the form and it is then forwarded to the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies for processing of final paperwork.

The student distributes drafts (hardcopy or digital copy depending on the committee's preference) of the thesis to the examination committee a minimum of **2 weeks** prior to the defence date.

It should be noted that the candidate may request the examination even though the Advisory Committee considers that the thesis is not ready to go forward for examination and defence. At busy times in the semester, or when faculty are on vacation, quick turn-around time or the scheduling of the oral defences may not be possible.

Raw data and/or copies of computer printouts do not need to be included in the final draft of the thesis, but they must be available for inspection by the Advisory Committee if requested. The original of all research materials, laboratory records, questionnaires, transcripts, computer printouts etc. must be made available to

the Advisor on a regular basis, with copies retained by the student. REB may also require that materials be stored in a particular way.

Thesis Defence Suggested Protocol

Once the Chair of the defence has been appointed by the Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Program Assistant, the date, time and location of the examination are determined in consultation with the Advisory Committee and Defence Chair. The Graduate Program Assistant notifies the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies. The necessary paperwork is forwarded to the Chair of the defence and a Defence Notice will go out to notify the Department of the upcoming defence.

1. The student arranges for a projector and lap-top, if necessary, for the defence presentation. The presentation should be approx. 20-30 minutes long, after which the Chair invites members of the audience to leave if they cannot be present for the entire questioning period (approx. 1.5 hours for MSc students).
2. The oral examination is open to the public. People from external agencies who were involved with the research may also be invited. The defence Chair announces the rules of the examination, and the audience is responsible for following these.
3. The Chair of the defence introduces the student and examination committee members and states the number of rounds of question and the order of the examiners. Members of the audience may question the candidate only upon invitation of the chair.
4. Generally, a 2-hour time slot is booked for the defence, but defences can run longer. If the defence goes longer than the 2 hours, the Chair can end the questioning. At any time during the questioning the Chair can also call for a recess if needed.
5. When the questions have ended, the Chair asks the audience and the student to leave the room while the examination committee discusses the student's performance on the: (1) written thesis, and, (2) oral defence. Members of the examination committee also discuss the specific changes they want to see in the final thesis.

Chair of the Defence

The Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Program Assistant, in consultation with the Advisor and student, are responsible for determining the Chair of the MSc defence. The Advisor and student are to put forward the names of three Regular Graduate Faculty members who have knowledge on the particular subject-area but are not on the student's Advisory Committee (Special and Associated Graduate Faculty are not able to chair defences) at least 3 weeks prior to the defence date requested. The Graduate Program Assistant will make contact and arrangements will be made.

Role of the Chair

The Chair serves to administer and ensure the proper conduct of the examination. The Chair is expected to exercise full control over the proceedings and does not participate directly in questioning the candidate during the examination. In unforeseen circumstances where an examiner is unable to attend due to sudden illness, accident, etc., the Chair will attempt to receive questions to ask on behalf of the absent member, to be answered by the student to the satisfaction of the examiners. ([2020-2021 Graduate Calendar](#))

The chair of the thesis defence records whether the written thesis and oral defence are "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" and ensures that all paperwork is properly completed and submitted to the Graduate Program Assistant.

Authority

The Chair may:

- Call for a recess if the student or examination committee need a break

- Ask members of the audience to leave if they are being disruptive
- In exceptional circumstances, stop the oral examination and ask for it to be rescheduled.

If there are issues among members of the examination committee that cannot be resolved, the Chair should contact the Department's Graduate Coordinator for assistance.

Examination Committee

The master's examination committee consists of four members, as follows:

- A member of the regular graduate faculty of the department, who is not a member of the advisory committee, to act as Chair of the master's examination committee
- A member of the candidate's advisory committee (normally, the advisor)
- A member of the graduate faculty who may be a member of the advisory committee
- A fourth member appointed from among graduate faculty from another department, from the department or from the advisory committee, according to departmental and/or examination requirements. If possible, a member of another department should be included on the committee

Responsibilities of Examiners

All examiners come to the defence prepared to ask questions that may be theoretical, methodological, focused on the interpretation of results and potential implications.

All members of the examination committee are expected to be present for the examination.

Possible Outcomes of the Thesis Defence:

- There is consensus among the examination committee that the student has passed the oral examination and the thesis is acceptable (if necessary revisions are made).
- There is one "unsatisfactory" - i.e., one person on the examination committee feels that the oral exam or the written thesis (or both) was (were) not satisfactory. The student passes with one "unsatisfactory" vote.
- There is more than one "unsatisfactory" – the student would need to reschedule another oral defence

Communicating Results of the Examination

After the student returns to the room, the Chair reviews the forms that need to be signed by the student and the changes that are required before the thesis can be submitted to the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies.

Final Disposition of the Thesis

The student meets with the advisor to show him/her the changes that were required to be made to the thesis. It is expected that these changes are to be made and reviewed immediately to avoid delay in submission.

Thesis Submission

After the student has successfully defended the thesis at the final oral examination, has made required changes, and received final approval from the examination committee, see submission instructions using the [Thesis Submission Checklist](#).

Thesis Binding

Once the electronic submission is approved by the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies, you have two options if you wish to have your thesis bound:

- 1) You may submit your thesis as a PDF online through PageforPage at www.pageforpage.com . Simply follow the instruction, upload your files, choose the desired option for your thesis, make your payment and wait for your bound thesis to be delivered.
- 2) Retain a copy of the approval email to submit to M & T Printing Group with any PDF or required paper copies for binding. Thesis binding and copying may be done by contacting M & T Printing Group at guelph@mtprint.com to receive instructions on submission, binding and delivery. Payment for printing and binding copies is made through the M & T Printing Group.

Lastly, complete and submit an [Application for Graduation form](#) to the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies along with the appropriate graduation fee.

CONGRATULATIONS!