

Frequently Asked Questions About the M. Ed. Thesis Route

Faculty of Education, Brandon University

These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are commonly posed by students contemplating the thesis route. Individual circumstances may alter individual paths, so feel free to consult the Grad Office (facultyedgrad@brandonu.ca) with any inquiries.

FAQs posed to the Grad Chair

1. When does a student need to declare their choice for thesis route?

A student can declare a desire to move from Course-Based to Thesis Route in their M. Ed. after completing 15 credit hours in their program including the two required courses 07.752 Overview of Educational Issues and 07.714 Introduction to Educational Research Methodologies. The latest a student can request a desire to move into Thesis Route would be before taking Graduate Summative Seminar as your final course. It is best to make the request after having completed between 15 and 24 credits to ensure you have space for a second research course and do not accumulate more electives that can fit into your program, and to allow sufficient time remaining in one's program to complete a thesis.

2. What is the process for requesting thesis route?

Students interested in requesting a move to Thesis Route complete a M.Ed. Thesis Request form and send via email to the Graduate Studies office in the Faculty of Education. This form then goes to the student's department for a two-step process. First the department will determine if the student is suitable for the thesis route and there is someone able to provide supervision. Second the department chair will meet with the student and help identify a thesis supervisor which would next be approved by the department.

3. If one decides to move into the Thesis route and later has a change of heart, can it be reversed?

It is possible to reverse the decision by discussing it with your thesis supervisor and/or the Graduate Studies Chair and completing a change of program request form and submitting to the Graduate Studies office via email. Once approved by the department and the student is returned to the Course-Based stream, additional courses (9 credit hours) will be required to complete the Course-Based program and those can be identified and scheduled in consultation with the Graduate Studies office.

4. What impact does selecting thesis route have on one's courses?

The impact of choosing Thesis Route on your program of study depends on what stream you are in. You are always required to complete all the courses listed as required for your stream as well as the two required courses for all streams (07.752 and 07.714). On top of that you will have some electives depending again on your stream. As the Thesis itself counts for 9 credit hours plus you need an additional 3 credit hours of research credits, opting for the thesis route has the most impact on the number of electives you can take. If you are also pursuing a provincial certificate, for example the MB School Counsellor or MB Special Education, you may find that you require more than 36 credit hours to satisfy the provincial certificate requirements, and complete the thesis.

5. What impact does electing the thesis route have on future academic options?

Completing a Master's thesis is usually required for admission to a PhD or EdD program. We recommend that any students contemplating a doctorate complete a thesis. Doctoral programs want to know that you have completed an extensive research study at the Master's level before beginning a doctorate program. There are a few exceptions in Canada of doctoral programs that will accept students who graduate from a Course-Based route, however the competition is fierce for spots in those programs and there are typically a lot of applicants from Course Based programs.

6. What impact does selecting thesis route have on one's time to completion of the degree?

The answer to this question depends on a number of factors. The one consistent response is that the time for completion in the thesis route is less predictable than in the Course-Based route. Students may be allocated up to three years (note: program may not exceed 6 years, from 1st course registration) once they register for their thesis which is sufficient in most cases. Unpredictable factors that may influence time to completion include dedicated time to work on the thesis, methodology, recruitment, ethics, revisions and complexity of the research. Students wishing to complete a thesis within a tight time frame should share their intention with their supervisor so they can determine a plan for moving forward in a timely manner.

7. How and when does a student pay for their thesis?

The thesis counts as nine credit hours within your program. Tuition payment is due in full at time of thesis registration. The total thesis tuition cost is equivalent to nine credit hours of coursework.

8. What parts of the thesis are rigid and what parts are up for negotiation with the supervisor?

A traditional thesis format in faculties of education would be five chapters with an Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Findings and Discussion/Conclusion. The first three chapters would be completed in time for the thesis defence and the other two chapters after the data a collection and analysis has occurred. However, many other formats are also possible including a different number of chapters, inclusion of multi media and creative works. In negotiation with the supervisor and thesis committee, alternative formats can be negotiated and approved. Components that must be present in the thesis for acceptance for graduation would be scholarly references, ethical approval (or a waiver), a research methodology and high quality academic product.

9. What supports are in place if a student encounters difficulty while completing their thesis?

There are a number of supports provided through the university. The Writing Centre and Library offer academic supports for research, writing and referencing. Your supervisor and thesis committee provide support with research design, thesis structure, ethics, analysis and writing. Counsellors and Accessibility services are available for students seeking emotional or academic supports. If a student finds they are not receiving the support they require or are having difficulty working with their thesis supervisor it is possible to request a change of supervisor. Any difficulties should be discussed with the supervisor first (if possible) and then with the Grad Chair. A change in supervisor would require the availability of a

replacement supervisor and approval of the student's department. A change in supervisor may also extend the time for completion.

10. What steps are involved in completing a thesis?

- a) Once the thesis request is approved and a supervisor is identified, the student will work together with the supervisor to identify a committee, then the committee meets with the student to discuss the potential direction for the thesis, the preferred process for feedback and associated timeline, and is then directed to register for the thesis and start developing a research question and written thesis proposal (usually three chapters).
- b) A thesis proposal defence will take place where the student presents their research plan to their committee and seeks approval for the planned research.
- c) Once approved, together with the supervisor, the student then applies for ethical approval from BUREC to conduct the research.
- d) Once ethical approval is received, recruitment, data collection, data analysis, and writing begin. The final chapters of the thesis are written and revised with input from the supervisor and committee members.
- e) Once all agree the thesis is ready, a thesis defence is scheduled. This includes a public presentation of the thesis and responding to questions posed by members of the thesis committee. This event is chaired by the Graduate Studies Chair and friends and family may attend.
- f) Following the defence, either major, minor, or no revisions are required to complete the degree. Once the thesis is finalized student submits it to the university library for cataloguing and gets ready for convocation.
- g) It is important to remember that each thesis is unique and variations from this sequence may be approved by the thesis committee as required.

FAQs posed to Department Chairs

- a) **What does your department consider when reaching a decision about whether a student who applies for thesis route will be accepted?**

As a department, we consider whether the student has demonstrated strong academic writing and intellectual focus in the courses they have taken with faculty members and the availability of an appropriate supervisor for the proposed topic.

- b) **How might students identify a potential supervisor?**

Students seeking a faculty supervisor can look at individual faculty member's People pages on the BU website, examine the courses the individuals have taught, explore their publications and talk to colleagues, the faculty member and the chair of the department. If students do not have a particular faculty member in mind, the department chair will assist the student in identifying potential supervisors.

- c) **What can students do if they have a faculty member they would like to work with?**

Students who have an idea of a supervisor they would like to work with can share the name of the person with the department chair and indicate whether they have discussed the idea with the individual

member or not. The department chair will explore the availability and interest of the faculty member in becoming the student's supervisor. If both parties are interested, then the department would be asked to approve the supervisor.