

MASTER OF SCIENCE (ENVIRONMENTAL AND LIFE SCIENCES) THESIS AND ORAL EXAMINATION (DEFENSE) REGULATIONS

Each student's thesis will be adjudicated by an Examining Committee. The Committee will consist of the student's Supervisor, Graduate Advisory Committee, and one External Examiner. The Committee will assess both the written thesis and the student's ability to defend the thesis in an oral examination.

Before the Examination:

With support of the Supervisor and Graduate Advisory Committee, the student must submit a **REQUEST FOR ORAL EXAMINATION AND APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINER** at least 6 weeks prior to the proposed examination date. Students are reminded that the final submission of a grade for the thesis must occur no more than 24 months from first registration in the thesis to avoid incurring continuation fees. Also, selection of the examination date does not guarantee that the student will graduate at the preferred graduation date, as final submission of the grade may depend on completion of revisions to the thesis following the examination.

The student and Supervisor will recommend an External Examiner to the MELS Steering Committee. The Supervisor may make initial contact to ensure he/she is willing and able to examine the thesis. At this time, the Supervisor shall not share the thesis with the recommended External Examiner. After initial contact, the MELS Steering Committee will be responsible for approving the appointment of the recommended External Examiner, and the MELS Coordinator and/or MELS Administrative Assistant will solely be responsible for all communication with the External Examiner regarding the thesis and examination. The External Examiner will not communicate directly with the student or Supervisor on matters pertaining to the thesis or examination prior to the examination.

The date of the examination should be finalized at least 4 weeks prior, in consultation with the MELS Coordinator.

The final examination copy of the thesis shall be distributed to the Examining Committee through the MELS Administrative Assistant at least 4 weeks prior to the examination. No further changes to the thesis are permitted after its distribution. It is recommended that the examination copy be provided to the examining committee members in the format they each prefer (digital *versus* hardcopy). However, the costs of providing hardcopy, if requested, are the responsibility of the student and/or Supervisor. To minimize such costs, it is suggested that hardcopy, where requested, be provided in black and white only, and full colour digital copy be provided as well for reference to colour images, graphs, and figures.

The members of the Examining Committee must all agree that thesis is acceptable to proceed to examination. Graduate Advisory Committee members indicate this by their signature on the **REQUEST FOR ORAL EXAMINATION** form. The External Examiner must rule on this no later than 1 week prior to the examination.

Upon final approval to proceed to examination by the Supervisor, Graduate Advisory Committee and External Examiner, the examination will be announced to the campus by the MELS Administrative Assistant.

The Examination:

The examination will be conducted on campus. The presentation by the candidate and the formal examination by the Examining Committee are open to the public but may not be recorded in any format (audio or visual), in whole or in part.

It is the responsibility of the student and Supervisor to ensure that the necessary audio-visual equipment is available. All members of the Examining Committee must be present at the examination. 'Presence' may be via telecommunication if necessary. The candidate must be present on campus for the examination. Neither the MELS program nor the Faculty of Graduate Studies are responsible for the costs of attendance at the examination for the candidate or any member of the Examining Committee.

The examination will be chaired by the MELS Coordinator, or a designate if he/she is not available. The designate must be a member of the Faculty of Graduate Studies at Brandon University and must be from outside the area of research of the thesis. The Chair may not be a member of the student's Graduate Advisory Committee.

The examination will be a maximum of 2 hours 30 minutes, plus time required for deliberation. The examination will begin with a presentation (about 20 minutes) by the candidate of a synopsis of the thesis. The candidate may speak from notes but may not read the synopsis. Following the presentation, the public audience may ask questions (10 minutes maximum), after which no further questions or comments from the public are permitted.

After a short break, the Examining Committee will proceed with the formal examination. This consists of two rounds of questions, each beginning with the External Examiner and ending with the Supervisor. Each examiner is allowed up to 15 minutes in the first round and up to 10 minutes in the second round. The External Examiner may be permitted additional questions after the second round, if time permits, or at the Chair's discretion.

Immediately following the examination, the candidate and all members of the public will be asked to leave, while the Examining Committee meets *in camera* to discuss and reach a decision as to the result of the examination. The decision of the Examining Committee shall be based on the content of the written thesis and the oral defense. One of the following possible outcomes will be selected by simple majority of the Examining Committee (the Chair has no vote). In the case of a tie, the higher outcome will stand.

1. Pass without revision – the thesis is accepted in its current form with no revisions required. All members of the Examining Committee sign the THESIS APPROVAL PAGE.

2. Pass with minor revision – revisions are required but are not substantial (e.g. typographical and/or grammatical errors, minor structural changes). All members of the Examining Committee

except the Supervisor sign the THESIS APPROVAL PAGE. The Supervisor signs when revisions have been completed to his/her satisfaction.

3. Pass with major revision – revisions are substantive and affect the content of significant portions of the thesis (e.g. rewriting of complete chapter(s), additional data and/or interpretation, change to general format, or substantial cumulative minor revisions). Major revision requires approval of the Supervisor and Graduate Advisory Committee before the thesis is accepted in final form and a grade is recorded. In this case, a precise summary of the required modifications will be prepared by the Chair of the examination and the thesis supervisor. Only the External Examiner signs the THESIS APPROVAL PAGE. The Supervisor and Graduate Advisory Committee members sign upon satisfactory completion of the revisions.

4. Thesis is unsatisfactory in its current form – it requires major rethinking and rewriting, and possibly additional research and/or analysis. A re-examination is required. After a second outcome of unsatisfactory, the student must withdraw from the program.

After the Examination:

The candidate is invited back into the room, and the Chair conveys the decision of the Examining Committee. The Chair will prepare the THESIS AND ORAL EXAMINATION FINAL REPORT summarizing the outcome. All members of the Examining Committee, plus the Chair, sign the FINAL REPORT.

The Brandon University Library requires final copies of theses to be submitted for archiving in digital format (pdf). Any bound copies desired by the student or Supervisor are to be arranged at their own expense.