

WATERLOO-LAURIER GRADUATE PROGRAM IN GEOGRAPHY
Regulations and Procedure Governing the Master's Thesis
Wilfrid Laurier University

Structure of the Thesis/Examination Advisory Committee

The graduate officers approve a Thesis Advisory Committee for each Thesis Option MA/MES/MSc candidate, **consisting of a Supervisor and one additional member (or two co-supervisors)**. The candidate must prepare a thesis proposal, normally in writing, to be approved in by the Thesis Advisory Committee by the end of the second term of registration. The thesis must be defended successfully before a **Thesis Examination Committee composed of a non-voting Chairperson at WLU (and a voting advisor at UW), the Thesis Advisory Committee, and two Readers who may be from outside the discipline, outside WLU/UW, or both, and who are knowledgeable in the area of the thesis topic**. The decisions available to the Examining Committee are the same at both WLU/UW.

Procedures for Conducting the Defence

The committee Chairperson is appointed by the Graduate Officer. The Chairperson and the 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.

- 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., readers, other members, advisor last);
 - ii) the limit on the number of questions (e.g., three per person in each round);
 - ii) 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 Thesis Oral Examination Report is completed, in detail, and returned to the Geography 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:
 - i) **Accepted**
Thesis may require typographical and/or minor editorial corrections to be made to the satisfaction of the Advisor.
 - ii) **Accepted with minor 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.
 - iii) **Accepted with major modifications**
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.
 - iv) **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 graduate officer. Normally the same Examining committee will serve. A decision to defer is open only once for each candidate.

v) **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 Masters 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 Oral Examination Report. 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 Examination Report. 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 sign the Thesis Oral Examination Report 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 Thesis Oral Examination Report. 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 Thesis Oral Examination Report; and all members of the Committee initial the Thesis Oral Examination Report.

The Chairperson should return the Thesis Oral Examination Report to the Geography Graduate Office immediately following the examination. At this time, the Chairperson should report any problems, irregularities or concerns about the examination process to the Graduate Officer.