

# THE THESIS

## Introduction

The organization of the entire program (required courses, elective courses, and Comprehensive Exams) is intended to guide the student and provide the background for the formulation of the Thesis Proposal and production of the Thesis. The student works closely with the supervisor in selecting a thesis topic that can be feasibly researched within a one-to two-year time frame. The Thesis Proposal is initially approved by the supervisor and is subsequently submitted to the Supervisory Committee for final evaluation and approval. Once approved, the student carries out the proposed thesis research with the support and guidance of the supervisor and the Supervisory Committee. When completed, the Supervisory Committee approves the Thesis, and then an application for its final defense at a School of Graduate Studies (SGS) Oral Examination is made through the Graduate Administrator with the approval of the PhD Program Director. Completion and successful defense of the Thesis are required before the doctoral degree can be conferred.

The Thesis is an original piece of scholarly research on a topic that has been selected by the student and approved by the supervisor and the student's Supervisory Committee. The Thesis is a major undertaking that reflects the highest standards of scholarship and that makes a significant contribution to knowledge and practice in the field of research. When the Thesis is completed and has met the approval of the Supervisory Committee, the student proceeds to the Final Oral Examination that is administered by the School of Graduate Studies. Copies of the completed dissertations will be housed in the Daniels Faculty and may be signed out as they become available by request to the Graduate Administrator.

## The Thesis Proposal

The student's Thesis Proposal should outline the main argument, the rationale supporting the prospective thesis, a summary of existing research on the topic, a case for the originality of the research, a description of proposed methodologies, a description of proposed "archive" of primary material/data, and a schedule for research activities.

The thesis topic follows from the literature research conducted for the Comprehensive Exams. This means that most students develop a feasible study question in conjunction with the analysis of the research literature examined for Comprehensive Exam 2. Consultation with the supervisor enables the student to refine the question and prepare a Thesis Proposal.

In developing the thesis study question and method(s), the student should give careful attention to the time required to complete the project. The student should estimate that 3 to 4 months may be necessary to develop the proposal. A draft of the Thesis Proposal is submitted to the supervisor for feedback and revision prior to convening a meeting of the Supervisory Committee for review and approval of the Thesis Proposal. ***The supervisor is expected to provide feedback on the draft of the Thesis Proposal within a 2-week time frame.***

## Thesis Proposal Format

The proposal should not exceed 20 pages, double-spaced, excluding references and work plan.

In addition, the title page of the Thesis Proposal must include the following statement:

*"This Thesis Proposal is an independent piece of work submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements to be met for a doctoral Thesis in Architecture, Landscape, and Design."*

## Thesis Proposal Outline

1. **Title:** The thesis title should give a clear indication of the topic being studied.
2. **The Question:** A description of the thesis topic includes specification of the study question(s), justification for their selection vis-à-vis previous research, and the potential relevance of addressing these questions for the advancement of knowledge in the field of study.

3. **Theoretical Framework and Background Information:** The major theoretical premises that underlie the question are articulated, and the salient concepts are defined. Following a concise, critical review of the theoretical and research literature, a theoretical model or framework is proposed in support of the selected research question.
4. **Design and Methods:** Research questions and/or hypotheses are formulated clearly such that all study constructs and/or variables and their anticipated relationships are specified. The selected research design is detailed (survey, archival, descriptive, interpretive, experimental, etc.). The reasons for selecting the design are given, including its merits and limitations. A description of the primary research material is included. Where applicable, the operational definitions of each study variable are defined.  
  
If applicable, participants and the sampling procedures are specified including the inclusion/exclusion criteria for study participants, justification for selecting the population, or database, from which the sample is to be drawn. Sample size, or extent of database, is specified and justified.  
  
Data collection methods are described in detail. Interview schedules, procedures for analyses of archives, physical sites, databases, coding methods, recording methods, instruments, or any other proposed data collection techniques are to be described.
5. **Data / Primary Research Material Analysis:** The methods of analysis appropriate for the study design are described. The specified procedures are consistent with the nature and quality of the data. Pilot testing of the analytic procedures may be required when these procedures have not been previously tested. The results of the pilot study are reported, including the identification of potential problems.
6. **References:** Only items cited in the text are included.
7. **Work Plan:** At the end of the proposal the student attaches an addendum, which provides a detailed work plan, including estimates of the time needed to complete each phase of the proposed research.

### **Assessment of Thesis Proposal**

The supervisor, as the Chair of the Committee, and the Supervisory Committee members have the responsibility of adjudicating the merits of the Thesis Proposal. The student proceeds to the collection of data and preparation of the Thesis only after approval of the Thesis Proposal has been obtained from the Supervisory Committee.

### **Thesis Proposal Defense Meeting**

Following revisions of the Thesis Proposal based on feedback from the supervisor, the student in consultation with the Supervisor convenes a Thesis Proposal defense meeting with the Supervisory Committee. The student must inform the Graduate Administrator of this meeting by submitting the Thesis Proposal Review Booking Form together with a copy of the Thesis Proposal at least 3 weeks before the scheduled date. The student must submit copies of the Thesis Proposal to each member of the Committee at least 2 weeks prior to the proposal defense. The student attaches to each copy of the proposal the Thesis Proposal Review Assessment Criteria when circulating their Thesis to the committee members. The Thesis Proposal defense meeting is required in adjudicating the merits of the student's Thesis Proposal. To obtain candidacy, students are required to complete their Thesis Proposal defense by the end of the third year. However, it is strongly encouraged that students complete the Thesis Proposal at the beginning of their third year of study. The following criteria will be considered for assessing the Thesis Proposal during the proposal defense:

- To what extent is the research question focused and researchable?
- To what extent has a coherent and relevant theoretical model been developed in support of the research question?
- To what extent are the design methodologies and methods appropriate and clearly articulated?
  - Are the sampling strategies and other sources of information well thought out and appropriate?
  - Are the information-collecting strategies clearly stated, including psychometric properties where appropriate?
  - Are the planned analyses of the collected information clearly outlined and appropriate?

- Is the proposal work plan feasible?

During the meeting, the student is expected to present a brief summary of the Thesis Proposal to the committee and respond to questions raised. Based on the assessment of the written proposal and the student's responses to these questions, the committee makes specific recommendations as to corrections, modifications, or substantial revisions. The supervisor records the recommendation of the Committee on the Thesis Proposal Review Committee Recommendation form. The supervisor completes the Thesis Proposal Review Supervisor Summary Report with a summary of the Supervisory Committee's review of the Thesis Proposal addressing each of the assessment criteria.

### **Final Submission of Thesis Proposal**

The Thesis Proposal Review Supervisor Summary Report is appended to the completed Thesis Proposal Review Committee Recommendation Form and copies are sent to the student, each committee member and the PhD Program Director and Graduate Administrator. The Graduate Administrator will make a record of this milestone on ACORN and a copy of the Supervisor Summary Report and Committee Recommendation form will be saved in the student's file. Possible results of the Supervisory Committee's review of the Thesis Proposal are as follows:

- **Approved...**
  - Without changes
  - With minor corrections
  - With minor modifications
- Or**
- **Not Approved**
  - Revision and resubmission required

If the Thesis Proposal is approved, the student makes corrections or modifications to the proposal as recommended by the Supervisory Committee and submits a copy to the supervisor, each committee member and the PhD Program Director. Following the initial notification of the approval status, students who receive "Approved with Minor Corrections" are required to submit the final copy within 1 month, and those who receive "Approved with Minor Modifications" are required to submit the final copy within 3 months. If the revisions are considered to be of minor corrections or modifications, the committee may approve the proposal without reconvening a meeting.

If the Thesis Proposal is not approved and major revisions have been recommended, the student revises the proposal accordingly. The Supervisory Committee is reconvened, and a second adjudication of the proposal proceeds as described above. When final approval has been obtained, steps are taken to inform the appropriate parties as mentioned above and the student proceeds with data collection. Irrelevant of the outcome, the student is required to meet with their supervisory committee within three months of submitting the Thesis Proposal to discuss progress.

### **Achieving Candidacy**

Doctoral candidacy is achieved when all requirements except for the Thesis are met. This includes all coursework, the successful completion of the comprehensive examination, and the acceptance of the student's proposal. The candidate will then proceed to researching and writing the Thesis. Students are expected to achieve candidacy at the beginning of the third year of study, and no later than the end of the third year.

### **Thesis Format**

Consistency in the style and formatting of a thesis is essential.

We strongly recommended that authors use an SGS thesis template. The template can be applied at any stage of the writing process, but using one at an early stage will simplify formatting and PDF conversion.

Students must familiarize themselves with and follow the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) [thesis formatting requirements](#).

### **The Final Oral Examination**

Candidates complete a thesis that must be based on research conducted while registered in the PhD Program. Copies of the completed Thesis must be submitted to all final oral examination committee members and to SGS at

least 8 weeks before the candidate's final oral examination to allow enough time for the appraisers to review the Thesis and provide feedback. The candidate shall successfully defend the Thesis at a final oral examination which is administered by SGS. The student and Supervisor must refer to the [SGS Guidelines for The Doctoral Final Oral Examination](#) to ensure that all requirements and regulations (e.g. Quorum) are met before booking the exam. The student must not have any contact with the External Appraiser until the Exam.

When the Supervisory Committee has approved a final draft of the Thesis, the Supervisor in consultation with the student arranges with the Graduate Administrator a date and time for the Oral Examination by submitting a completed PhD Final Oral Exam (FOE) Booking Sheet and providing any necessary supporting materials (e.g., External Appraiser - CV and information). This request **must be made at least 8 weeks** prior to the desired examination date. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to decide, in consultation with the student, which scholar is appropriate as an external examiner for the oral examination. [See SGS website for regulations.](#)

The Final Oral Examination Committee Must Include:

- Minimum 4 voting members, Maximum 6 voting members as follows:
  - 1-3 Supervisory Committee Members
  - Minimum 2 arm's length examiners – one external to UofT and the Supervisory Committee (e.g. the External Appraiser), and one internal to UofT and external to the Supervisory Committee.
  - A non-voting Chair appointed by SGS (SGS will provide the Department with the name of a suitable Chair and will notify the Chair by letter).

\* Note: Only a maximum of 2 remote telephone/video participants are allowed.

### **Submission of Thesis**

The student must ensure that a copy of the final Thesis is provided to the Graduate Administrator **at least 8 weeks** in advance of the examination date so that it may be distributed to the External Appraiser for review.

The student is also required to distribute their final Thesis to some of the members of their Final Oral Examination Committee upon notice from the Graduate Administrator. The Graduate Administrator will distribute the final Thesis to the Chair and External Appraiser.

### **Appointment of a Final Oral Examination Committee**

With the exception of the External Appraiser, each member of the Final Oral Examination Committee must hold a Graduate Faculty Membership at the University of Toronto.

1. The Examination Committee shall consist of four to six voting members. Because quorum is four voting members, SGS recommends including at least five voting members to ensure the exam proceeds as scheduled. The Committee must include:
  - a. At least one member, but not more than three members, of the Candidate's supervising committee.
  - b. At least two examiners who have not been closely involved in the supervision of the Thesis. Those eligible include: the External Appraiser, members of the faculty appointed to the Candidate's graduate unit, and members of the faculty appointed to other graduate units of the University.
  - c. A non-voting Chair requested by the Graduate Administrator and appointed by SGS. The Doctoral Examinations Office will inform the graduate unit when a Chair for the examination has been appointed.

### **Producing Your Thesis**

Following final revisions of the Thesis as recommended by the examiners, the student follows the [SGS guidelines for preparing and submitting the Thesis in Electronic Theses and Dissertations](#) (ETDs are text-based PDF files) format. The student is responsible for the binding of copies of the Thesis for personal use. In addition, the student submits

one bound copy of the Thesis to the Daniels Faculty. Binding service is available through the University of Toronto Bookstore, 214 College St., 416-640-5849. This is only a suggested option; you may use any binding service that you prefer.