

EDCP MA Thesis and Committee Guidelines¹

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Thesis Supervisor and Committee

When students are admitted to the program they are assigned a **protem advisor**, a faculty member who oversees the student's program of study in its beginning stages. As students define their research topics they should also identify (as early as possible after admission or even prior to admission) a faculty member from the Department who is willing to act as their **research supervisor**. Typically in EDCP the protem advisor becomes the research supervisor. A supervisor must be a member of the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FoGS) and an EDCP faculty member (i.e., a UBC tenure track faculty member listed as Professor, Associate Professor or Assistant Professor). Individuals who are not tenure-track or not tenured including Lecturers, tenure track instructors, and other non tenure-track instructors, or not members of FoGS may co-supervise with an EDCP tenure-track faculty member upon special permission from the Department Head or Graduate Advisor.

The Handbook of Graduate Supervision provides further information on the roles and responsibilities of supervisors. <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/handbook-graduate-supervision>.

The **thesis committee** is usually formed in time to review and approve the student's research proposal. The role of the committee is to advise students through the research process including preparing, conducting, and writing-up the research. The committee consists of at least two members (supervisory committee) including the research supervisor. The supervisor invites a new committee member, who must be from outside the program area, once the supervisory committee deems the thesis ready for examination. The research supervisor invites this new member in consultation with the student and the other supervisory committee member(s) to serve as external examiner/reader. Supervisory committee members are chosen in consultation with the supervisor for their expertise and experience in the related research area. Committee members may be members outside the Department or Faculty or off-campus professionals who are academically qualified to advise graduate students with approval from the EDCP Graduate Advisor or Department Head. Membership of the thesis committee and any changes to it need to be approved by the Graduate Advisor or Department Head.

The student and thesis committee members share responsibility to ensure that the student's program meets the requirements of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the specialization program requirements of EDCP, with the ultimate responsibility resting with the student. The supervisor accepts primary responsibility for overseeing the thesis.

The thesis committee should meet regularly to review and support the student's progress. Scheduling **committee meetings** is generally the responsibility of the student. Often a good time to schedule a meeting with the supervisor or committee is once the student has completed the required annual progress report. Usually the student organizes the committee meetings and the supervisor serves as chair. More frequent meetings can be established between the student and research supervisor. FoGS requires that student progress be reviewed regularly by the Department and at least once a year by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The student and supervisor can discuss an appropriate form of summarizing and keeping records of student/supervisor and committee meetings.

At all times during their program students must be assigned either a protem advisor, who normally becomes the student's research supervisor. Students may request a **change in supervisor** and such a change needs to be approved by the EDCP Graduate Advisor or Department Head. Students may also request a change in thesis

¹ *General information on the process of completing the MA Thesis is available through the Handbook of Graduate Supervision and the Faculty of Graduate Studies website. The EDCP MA Thesis and Committee Guidelines is meant to supplement the information provided by FoGS within the EDCP context and hopefully provide more specific guidance to EDCP students and faculty.*

committee members with such changes being coordinated by the research supervisor. Students are discouraged from changing committee members after the research proposal is approved except for extraordinary circumstances. Changes made after approval of the research proposal require approval of the Graduate Advisor and/or the Department Head.

Research Proposal

MA students must prepare a written research proposal and have it approved by her/his thesis committee prior to beginning substantial research work. The research proposal typically includes the following (not necessarily in this order):

1. Title
2. Introduction to the problem area or issue
3. Background and theoretical/conceptual framework (e.g. literature review)
4. Research question(s) or general goal(s)/hypothesi(e)s
5. Research Methodology and methods – (e.g. Methodology framing the research, details of research context and data collection and analytical procedures or details of conceptual argument)
6. Ethical issues
7. References
8. Appendix: Research protocols
9. Timeline

The format and content of the proposal will vary depending on the student's research problem, student's writing style and the research committee advice.

A draft proposal is generally sent to the supervisor for feedback before it is circulated to the committee members. A final draft of the proposal should be distributed to the committee members and discussed with the student at a committee meeting. The committee will provide feedback and perhaps suggest changes to the proposal. Changes to the research plan may be made as the research progresses. Substantial changes may result in the research supervisor requesting a new written proposal. A copy of the approved research proposal should be submitted to the Graduate Program Assistant (See attached Research Proposal Approval Form).

Please see the EDCP website to download a thesis proposal guide <http://edcp.educ.ubc.ca/>

Thesis Preparation

If students plan to pursue **research involving human participants** then UBC Research Ethics Board approval must be obtained before the research begins. In some cases other institutional approval (e.g., school district or school administration) must also be obtained at this time. See UBC Researcher Information Services <http://www.rise.ubc.ca/>

There are many ways to **'write-up'** the thesis. The student in consultation with the supervisor and committee can explore various structures that would be appropriate for the student's research. The length of an MA is dependent on the nature of the topic and its form of representation. Generally, MA theses often include but not limited to the following sections:

- Introduction and research problem
- Review of literature
- Research questions and research methods
- Research findings
- Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations
- References
- Appendices (as needed)

Details of the specific structure of a Masters thesis can be found on the FoGS website at:
<http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/dissertation-thesis-preparation/structure-masters-thesis>

Please note that the thesis must conform to the specifications listed by the Faculty of Graduate Studies at <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/dissertation-thesis-preparation>. These specifications will ensure that the thesis complies with the requirements for the UBC Library and Library Archives Canada and that the thesis is consistent with other UBC theses, as well as professional and of the highest quality.

Thesis Examination

Prior to the presentation of the completed thesis, the research committee must approve the thesis. At this time the committee will select an external reader/examiner with expertise to examine the thesis and offer constructive feedback.

The committee and student determine a date for defense of the thesis. The thesis defense is a public, oral presentation and examination of the thesis to which students, faculty, and members of the public are invited to attend. The defense should be advertised at least one week before the defense date.

Following the thesis defense, revisions to the thesis may be required and in some cases the thesis may need to be re-examined.

Procedures for the thesis defense are:

- The thesis must be prepared according to the specifications listed by FoGS.
- The thesis committee must approve a draft of the thesis before the thesis oral presentation and examination.
- The student and the committee set a date for the defense and in consultation with the supervisory committee. Subsequently, the supervisor invites a new member to serve on the committee to examine the thesis as stated above. At this time the supervisor should notify the Graduate Program Assistant that the student's thesis has been approved by the committee and is ready for defense.
- Generally 4 weeks prior to the defense the student should distribute copies of the thesis to all members of the committee.
- The student sends the title and abstract of the thesis to the Graduate Program Assistant for advertising of the defense at least 1 week before scheduled defense date.
- During the defense at least two committee members must be present – with feedback from the external reader/examiner considered either through face-to-face discussion, virtual, or written.
- The student makes a presentation (usually 20 – 30 minutes) summarizing the research completed. Following the presentation, members of the committee may ask questions of the student with reference to the thesis topic or research area. Opportunity may be offered to the attending public to ask questions. Members of the audience and the student will be asked to leave the room so that the committee may discuss the presentation and thesis and decide upon a percentage grade to be assigned to the thesis. The grade can include evaluation of the presentation, response to questions, the thesis, and research experience. After deliberations are completed, the candidate will be invited to meet the committee to review the committee's decision and possible revisions.
- Upon final acceptance of the thesis should be accompanied by the appropriate thesis approval form and must be signed by the supervisor and at least one other committee member. The supervisor will hold the Thesis Approval Form until she/he is satisfied that all the revisions proposed by the committee are completed. At this point the supervisor gives the original form to the student for submission to FoGS and a copy of the form to the Graduate Program Assistant with a percentage grade for posting.

MA Thesis Sample Timeline for Students²

From deciding on your focus of inquiry to submitting your thesis to FoGS

1. Find a problem or focus of inquiry. Think about this in relation to a small, researchable question likely with original research, although, at times an innovative literature review or conceptual piece might be the right direction for you.
 - a. **Read** everything you can find in your area of interest. Read. Read. Read. Start a bibliography with keywords and links as early as possible. We strongly recommend you to use a bibliographic program such as [Refworks](#) (the web version is available for free to UBC students through the library), [Endnote](#) or comparable software. Take notes on what you read and link to the bibliography if you are able. Assign keywords and themes as you write your notes. Compiling an annotated bibliography is also highly recommended. Practice analysis as you write your literature notes. Think about including relevant quotes (what the author said), a restatement of what the author said in relation to your areas of interest, and ways you analyze and make sense of it. Synthesize it with others who write in the field.
 - b. **Write**, as you read, as you think, as you enter into conversations about your project; write about what you are thinking. At this stage, the form of your writing doesn't matter, or how beautiful it is, just write. It is surprising how much of it your write up will end up being useful.
2. Once a problem or focus for inquiry is decided upon, a **Research Committee** is formed in consultation with the supervisor. The committee should consist of the research supervisor who chairs the committee and other member (see [FOGS policy](#)).
3. **Begin work on your research proposal**, which is normally about 15-18 pages. However, the length of a proposal may vary with research supervisors and committees. What is important is the proposal's clarity and succinctness.
4. *After you have completed all course work and have checked with the Graduate Program Assistant and your supervisor that you have satisfied all requirements, register for **EDCP 599 (9 credits) and re-register each term in this course until the thesis is complete. However, in exceptional circumstances the research supervisor may request that the student be allowed to register in EDCP 599 pending the completion of the course requirements.***
5. Submit a draft of your proposal to your supervisor. Give your supervisor at least three weeks to read and comment.
6. **Complete revisions** of the first draft.
7. After implementing supervisor feedback to the draft proposal and subsequently obtaining her/his approval, send it to all members of your thesis committee members electronically or otherwise depending which mode individual members prefer. At this time, set up a committee meeting for the oral presentation of the proposal, discussion and further feedback (if any). You must obtain the committee's approval **before commencing your research**.
8. If your research requires university ethical approval you will need to begin working on your ethics application through the UBC Researcher Information Services <http://www.rise.ubc.ca/>. Once your

² Adapted from "Route to an Empirical M.A. Thesis" by Dr. Lisa Loutzenheiser
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completed application is submitted, ethical approval for your research generally takes between 4-6 weeks.

9. Discuss with your research supervisor and committee members communication procedures between you and them during the time you are conducting your research and writing it up.
10. Preparing the final thesis requires regular feedback from your supervisor and committee. Be prepared to work on multiple drafts and edits during this time.
11. Once the final draft is submitted to the committee, you will need to prepare for the defense.
 - a. The defense typically occurs between three to four weeks after the final draft has been submitted to the committee. Defense dates generally need to be scheduled well in advance to accommodate committee member's schedules.
 - b. Check the dates and deadlines with FoGS for graduation and for submission of your thesis to FoGS and for graduation.
 - c. Allow at least two weeks following the defense to address any required editorial suggestions or changes to the thesis recommended by the committee.



Masters Thesis Proposal Approval Form

Student Name (Last, First): _____

Student Number: _____ e-mail: _____

Program Area: _____

Working Title of the Thesis _____

Committee members:

Supervisor: _____

Committee Member/Co-Supervisor: _____

Committee Member: _____

The Committee listed above approves the thesis proposal in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at UBC for an M.A. Degree in _____ (Program area)

Date: _____

Signatures of Supervisory Committee

Supervisor

Committee Member/Co-Supervisor

Committee Member

Attach to this form:

- Research Supervisor’s brief summary of the meeting outlining the committee’s feedback
- Copy of the thesis proposal

A copy of this form and attachments will be placed on file with the EDCP Graduate Program Assistant. Copies will be made for the student and supervisor.