

# THESIS FOR THE MASTER'S DEGREE

ASK A QUESTION OR SUBMIT FEEDBACK ON THIS POLICY

**Effective Date:** August 2020

**Last Reviewed:** April 2020

**Last Revised:** May 2020

**Next Review:** September 2025

## Policy Statement

The writing of an acceptable thesis is mandatory or an option in certain master's degree programs.

### Thesis Topic

The thesis topic must be approved by the student's academic unit and filed with the college dean no later than the semester preceding that in which the candidate expects to receive the degree. The thesis topic should be one that will further the student's educational development by developing research or other skills that will help the student keep abreast of the field and enable the student to pursue independent work. The thesis topic is formulated by the student in consultation with the advisor and submitted to the academic unit for approval according to normal procedures for that academic unit.

All students preparing a thesis are required to file a Notification of Approved Thesis Topic form. After the topic has been approved by the student's advisor and a committee has been formed, the advisor, members of the committee, graduate/program coordinator and lead administrator of the academic unit sign the form and forward it to the college dean for approval. The college office returns a copy of the completed form to the academic unit.

When submitting the form, the student should attach a short summary of the thesis (no more than a paragraph) that includes a clear statement of the problem to be undertaken and the procedure or methodology to be used in the research.

### Thesis Committee

When the student has developed a thesis topic acceptable to the advisor, a thesis committee is convened, responsible for overseeing the progress of the candidate's thesis. The graduate/program coordinator appoints the members of the committee in consultation with the student and the student's advisor. This group will consist, at minimum, of three members:

- The advisor, who chairs the committee
- Minimum two additional members from the candidate's academic unit
- If appropriate, one or more committee members also may be selected from other academic units. However, the majority of the committee members must be from the student's home academic unit.

The advisor must be a member of the graduate faculty who has been approved to direct theses. The other members of the committee must have associate or full graduate faculty status and be approved to serve on a master's committee. A co-advisor, if used, will count as one of the required members from the student's academic unit.

Special permission must be obtained from the college dean for anyone on the thesis committee who does not meet the qualifications stated above.

The graduate/program coordinator, in consultation with the graduate studies committee will, as necessary, review the composition of the

proposed committee for appropriate balance, and the topic for strength and suitability.

### Thesis Registration and Applicability Toward Degree

Upon approval of the thesis topic, the student is required to register continuously for Thesis I (6x199) each semester (fall, spring) for a total of 6 credit hours. A student who has completed the required 6 credit hours of Thesis I but has not finished the thesis is expected thereafter to register continuously for Thesis II (6x299) each semester (fall, spring) until all degree requirements are met. Students who are planning to defend their thesis in summer or early fall, or who are requiring access to university resources during the summer months – including, but not limited to, feedback or mentoring from their thesis advisors, use of university buildings and other research resources – must register for thesis in the summer term. For students in good standing, those credit hours will be approved by the academic unit administrator. The student receives an In-Progress (IP) administrative mark until the thesis is completed, at which time the IP mark is changed to either the Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (U) grade. No more than 6 credit hours of Thesis I may be counted toward completion of degree requirements. Credit hours earned in Thesis II do not, under any circumstances, count toward the degree.

Student must register for thesis no later than the last semester they are in residence. The thesis must be completed and in the hands of the examining committee by the deadline as determined by the college and communicated in advance to the student.

### Final Examination (Oral Defense)

In some academic units, a final examination (oral defense), open to the university community, may be required of candidates writing a thesis. This examination is directed primarily toward the thesis but may contain other topics with which the committee feels the candidate should be familiar. The procedures for the final examination are detailed in the procedures section below.

### Thesis Submission

Master's candidates are required to submit their thesis in electronic form to the OhioLINK Electronic Thesis or Dissertation Center, where the thesis is made publicly available. Information on the process can be found on the University Libraries guidelines for ETD preparation website. The thesis must be prepared according to established guidelines, which are available in the college office. Individual units may still require submission of a paper copy for their archives and the deadline for the thesis to be filed in the college office is the last day of classes for the term of graduation (some colleges may require an earlier deadline). It is the responsibility of the master's student to fulfill this requirement.

## Reason for Policy

Policy enforces uniform standards for the master's thesis submission and oral defense and defines the thesis committee and applicability toward the master's degree.

## Procedures

### Procedures for the Final Examination (Oral Defense)

When the thesis has been accepted by a student's advisor, the advisor will arrange for the final examination, and the student will distribute the thesis to members of the thesis committee. The advisor will designate the time and place of the oral defense and notify the student and all members of the thesis committee. The oral defense should be scheduled to allow a minimum of 10 days for all members of the thesis committee to review the thesis. The college dean will be kept informed of the time

and place of the examination and the composition of the examining committee.

In the absence of the advisor, the graduate/program coordinator will postpone the oral defense. In the case of long-term absence or enduring illness of the advisor, the lead administrator of the academic unit, in consultation with the graduate studies committee and the original advisor, should make arrangements for a substitute.

The oral defense will be open to the university community. The advisor should notify the academic unit of the time and place of the so that it may be announced in a suitable way. The student should provide copies of the thesis abstract to the academic unit so that it will be available to interested individuals prior to the defense to familiarize members of the graduate faculty with the methodology and findings.

Students may participate in the oral defense in a different location than the committee members (i.e., by web conferencing) if they are declared in a fully online degree program or have obtained permission in advance from the committee chair. See the policy on remote participation in a thesis or dissertation defense in the University Catalog.

The thesis advisor will act as the moderator at the oral defense. The duties of the moderator are to preside and ensure that all participants act in a civilized, polite and proper manner. The advisor should be familiar with the procedures of the oral defense and has the authority to suspend proceedings should a situation arise that would not be conducive to a fair examination. The student will open the defense with a brief presentation of the thesis findings, after which the members of the thesis committee will question the student in an order determined by the advisor. Questions dealing with the substance, meaning and usefulness of the research in the thesis are of greatest priority. Inquiries or comments dealing with punctuation, grammatical minutiae, spelling, etc., are out of order and should be written out and privately submitted to the student and the advisor.

When, in the judgment of the advisor, members of the thesis committee have had an adequate opportunity to question the student, the advisor may open the examination to non-committee members of the graduate faculty, then, as the advisor deems appropriate, to others present. If, in the opinion of the advisor or upon a motion duly passed by a majority of the committee, it is deemed desirable to discontinue the oral defense, the advisor may recess the oral defense until a time mutually agreeable to the advisor, the student and the thesis committee.

When the questioning has run its course, the advisor will excuse everyone except members of the thesis committee and, if in attendance, the graduate/program coordinator and lead administrator of the academic unit. Parliamentary procedure will be followed to determine the success or failure of the student, with the advisor serving as chair. The student should be evaluated upon both: (a) the overall quality and significance of the thesis, and (b) the oral defense of the findings.

The advisor and members of the thesis committee will sign the Report of Thesis Final Examination form, and all register their vote of "pass" or "fail." Thesis committee members may not abstain in this vote. A student passes the oral defense and becomes a "candidate" for the degree if there is no more than one dissenting vote. The graduate/program coordinator and lead administrator of the academic unit also signs the report, and the document is forwarded to the college for the signature of the dean. The college returns a copy of the completed form to the academic unit.

Following any revisions required by the committee, the advisor and the lead administrator of the academic unit must approve the final version of

the thesis document by signing the signature page of the Thesis and the Thesis Preparation Approval Form when the student submits the thesis.

## Forms/Instructions

- Thesis Forms and Guidelines - Graduate College Forms Library

## Additional Resources

- Financial, Billing and Enrollment Center

## Frequently Asked Questions

There is no FAQ associated with this policy.

## Definitions

**Academic Unit:** an academic department, school or a designated graduate program within a college, department or school

**Defense:** refers to students presenting, explaining and defending their ideas submitted in their thesis. The defense is designed so that faculty members can ask questions to ensure that students understand their chosen field and focus area.

**Thesis:** a highly individualized investigative study that results in the development and writing of a scholarly, comprehensive paper and fulfills the culminating requirement for a master's degree. The thesis topic is formulated by the student in consultation with the advisor and should be one that will further the student's educational development by developing research or other skills that will help the student keep abreast of the field and enable the student to pursue independent work.

## Related Information

- Guidelines for Submission of Electronic Theses and Dissertations
- Remote Participation in a Thesis or Dissertation Defense
- Qualifying Examination for Master's Degree
- Thesis for Master's Degree

## Revision History

**Amended August 2020:** Revised policy includes procedures, removes graduate faculty status levels, eliminates summer registration requirement, adds deadline for filing thesis and removes deadline for thesis completion (deadline now determined by each college).