



Faculty of Nursing Master's Thesis Examination Guidelines

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I. PURPOSE OF THE MASTER'S THESIS EXAMINATION

The purpose of the master's thesis examination is to judge the acceptability of the thesis submitted by the student, as well as the student's ability to defend it. The examination provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge about the discipline, research methods, and their substantive research area; respond to questions about their research; and demonstrate the ability to pursue and complete a thesis research project.

II. PREPARATION FOR THE MASTER'S THESIS EXAMINATION

Creation and formatting of the thesis document is outlined in the [Faculty of Nursing Thesis Guidelines \(Traditional & Paper-Based\)](#). Key academic requirements for the dissertation are described in the [University of Alberta calendar](#).

Masters students work closely with their supervisor and all members of the supervisory committee in the months leading up to the master's thesis examination.

III. SCHEDULING THE EXAMINATION

It is the responsibility of the supervisor(s) to ensure that proper arrangements are made for the student's examination, and that the exam is held in accordance with GPS and Faculty of Nursing regulations. Key steps are as follows:

Establishing the examining committee

The master's thesis examination includes an examining committee. The [role and structure of examining committees](#) is outlined in the University of Alberta Calendar. To ensure the examination committee meets all requirements, please review the "Size and Composition of Examining Committees" section in the [University Calendar](#) which outlines regulations.

1. Where there is a supervisor only, the examining committee is the supervisor and two university examiners or one university examiner and one specialized knowledge examiner. Where there is a supervisory committee, the examining committee is the ex-officio examiners and one university examiner or one specialized knowledge examiner.
2. The supervisor(s) and supervisory committee members are "ex-officio members" of the examining committee.
3. The university examiner or specialized knowledge examiner should not be connected to the thesis research in a significant way; not be associated with the student outside of usual contact in courses or other non-thesis activities; not be related to the student or supervisor; not be an active collaborator of the supervisor(s).
4. At least half or more of the examiners must hold a master's degree or higher.
5. At least half of the examiners must hold tenured/tenure-track appointment with the University of Alberta; be active in the general subject area of the student's research; and demonstrate continuing scholarly or creative activity of an original nature.
6. The chair is not an examiner but is a faculty member who is normally identified by the Nursing Graduate Office from a rotating schedule of members of the Graduate Exam Chairs Committee.

Preliminary Acceptance of the Thesis

It is the responsibility of the student to provide the final draft of their thesis to their supervisory committee at least 8-10 weeks in advance of the scheduled date of the master's thesis examination, allowing sufficient time for review and feedback by the supervisory committee and revisions by the student

The timeline and activities for preparing for the exam:

1. Supervisor confirms availability of all examining committee members and schedules the exam. Please ensure all examining committee members are added to the calendar invite and include the online meeting link (if applicable).
2. Once the exam date is set, the supervisor will contact the Nursing Graduate Office to request an exam chair. The supervisor will be provided with the name of the next exam chair on the rotation list to contact. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to secure the exam chair and provide the chair with the calendar invite and online meeting link (if applicable).

3. The supervisor informs the examining committee members of meetings and details of the examination.

At least 4 weeks prior to scheduled examination date

1. Supervisor completes the [Notice of Examining Committee & Examination Date form](#) and forwards to the Nursing Graduate Office for processing.
2. Associate Dean will review and approve the Notice of Exam.
3. The Nursing Graduate Office will circulate the approved Notice of Exam to the examining committee and forward it to GPS for processing.
 - a. This form must be received by GPS at least 4 weeks prior to the scheduled examination date.
4. The Nursing Graduate Office will forward the [Thesis Approval/Program Completion form](#) to the supervisor who will collect signatures at the exam.
5. Supervisor distributes the final thesis to the examining committee.

IV. EXAMINATION PROCESS

Guidelines for the [Conduct of Thesis Examinations](#) are outlined in the University of Alberta Calendar.

1. Master's thesis examinations are normally scheduled for a maximum of 2 hours including the student presentation (normally 15-20 minutes maximum), approximately 1 hour of direct examination, and the remaining time for committee introductions and post-exam deliberation.
2. In addition to the thesis, the student may bring paper, pen and summary notes to the examination if desired.
3. The student presentation may be public, and open to students, faculty members and invited guests. Questions and discussion are reserved for the subsequent meeting with the examining committee, which immediately follows the presentation.
4. The exam chair is a non-voting member whose role is to moderate the exam and ensure a fair process that conforms to GPS policy and Faculty of Nursing procedures.
5. At the start of the formal examination, the chair should review the procedures for the examination and provide opportunity for the student and examiners to seek clarification if needed.
6. Rounds of questions (normally two to three) are offered beginning with the examiner(s) most external to the committee, the supervisory committee members, and then the supervisor.
7. Questioning during the oral exam will focus on the thesis, but examiners will also ask questions that are more comprehensive in nature (e.g. implications for nursing education, leadership, research and policy).
8. When the questions have concluded, the chair should ask the student if they have any final comments they would like to add.

9. The student is asked to leave the room while the examining committee deliberates on the outcome of the examination.
10. The examiners are asked to give their opinions on the quality of the written work and the oral responses to questions in the same order as questioning occurred.
11. Evaluation criteria to be considered by the committee are outlined in section IV below.
12. The exam may result in one of the following outcomes: Adjourned; Pass; Pass subject to revisions; Fail. There is no provision for a final examination to be “passed subject to major revisions”. If the examining committee fails to reach a decision in a reasonable time, the matter will be referred to the Dean of GPS.

V. EVALUATION OF THE MASTER’S THESIS EXAMINATION

As the thesis exam is integrative, the examination is passed or failed in its entirety. The evaluation of the examination will be based on demonstration of oral and written competence related to the following areas:

1. Ability to question and challenge colonial practices and thought in knowledge production, theory and practice as appropriate to the topic under study;
2. Reflexivity in your own positionality in colonial practices and thought in knowledge production, theory and practice as appropriate to the topic under study;
3. Knowledge and skills specific to the proposed research methodology;
4. Potential to pursue and complete proposed research;
5. Ability to respond to questions about the feasibility of the proposed project;
6. Ability to openly engage in scholarly discussion and debate.

VI. FOLLOWING THE EXAMINATION

Immediately Following Examination

1. Supervisor will submit the completed [Thesis Approval/Program Completion form](#) to the Nursing Graduate Office.
2. The Nursing Graduate Office will submit the Thesis Approval/Program Completion form to GPS for processing.
 - a. This form must be received by GPS within 5 business days of the thesis examination date.
3. Supervisor and student will receive a follow up email from the Nursing Graduate Office with thesis submission and convocation details.

Submission of Thesis and Approval for Convocation

Students are responsible for ensuring their thesis is formatted according to GPS guidelines and convocation application deadlines are met. Please refer to the [GPS Thesis Preparation, Requirements & Deadlines](#) website for important information, deadlines, required forms and submission options. The student is also responsible for

ensuring they apply for convocation. Please refer to the [Convocation](#) website for further details.

Summary of Master's Thesis Examination Timeline

8-10 weeks prior to exam...	<p>Student submits copies of thesis to the supervisory committee allowing time for review, feedback and revisions.</p> <p>Supervisor confirms availability of all examining committee members and contacts the Graduate Office to request an exam chair.</p>
At least 4 weeks prior to scheduled examination date...	<p>Supervisor completes the Notice of Examining Committee & Examination Date form and forwards to the Nursing Graduate Office for processing.</p> <p>The Nursing Graduate Office will provide the supervisor with the Thesis Approval/Program Completion form.</p> <p>Supervisor distributes the final thesis to the examining committee.</p>
Immediately following exam...	<p>The supervisor provides the Nursing Graduate Office with the signed Thesis Approval/Program Completion form that lists the decision of the committee.</p>