



Faculty of Nursing Master's Thesis Proposal Examination Guidelines

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I. PURPOSE OF THE MASTER'S THESIS PROPOSAL EXAM

The purpose of the master's thesis proposal examination is to ensure academic rigour, appropriate research design, and ethical soundness of the proposed thesis project. 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 proposal; and demonstrate the ability to pursue and complete the proposed thesis project.

II. PREPARATION FOR THE MASTER'S THESIS PROPOSAL EXAMINATION

Ideally, prior to commencing the MN program, a student finds a thesis supervisor, and in the first year of the program a thesis committee is established. It is expected that committee members are involved in the early phases of proposal writing. Students work with the thesis supervisor and supervisory committee to develop the research question and selected research method to enact the project. The supervisor and supervisory committee determine with the student when the proposal is ready to move forward towards the thesis proposal examination.

Students complete a series of one-credit courses (NURS 589, 590, and 591) leading up to the thesis proposal examination. These courses are taken sequentially across three consecutive terms (fall, winter, and spring) and will engage students as a community of inquiry. A draft of the research proposal is developed over the course of NURS 589, 590, and 591, with the course instructor providing general help with proposal writing skills. See [Thesis Proposal Formatting Guidelines](#). The supervisor will provide guidance on the substantive area and methods throughout. Students are encouraged to discuss their proposal with other committee members, experts in the area, or other students. Students can access resources from the University of Alberta [Academic Success Centre](#) to develop academic writing skills, and [Writing Services](#) for workshops, guided writing instruction groups, and tutoring for editorial support. It is expected that the research proposal is written by the student without [substantial assistance](#) from others.

The research proposal will be provisionally approved by the supervisory committee members prior to the scheduling of the date for the thesis proposal examination. It is important that the supervisory committee is in agreement that the student has the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to conduct the project. It is anticipated that final revisions to the research proposal may be made following the proposal examination, a benefit of receiving feedback from the deliberations of the examining committee.

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.

Establishing the examining committee

The Supervisory Committee must be approved by the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies in Nursing prior to the thesis proposal oral examination. While it is not a University requirement for master's students to have a supervisory committee, the Faculty of Nursing opts to appoint both a graduate supervisor and supervisory committee (usually a total of 2-3 persons eligible to serve).

The supervisor and supervisory committee constitute the thesis proposal examining committee. Inclusion of an additional examiner is at the discretion of the supervisory committee.

The timeline and activities for preparing for the proposal exam

At least 2 months prior to scheduled proposal examination date

1. Supervisor submits the completed [Appointment of Supervisory Committee form](#) to the Nursing Graduate Office (gradnurs@ualberta.ca)
2. Associate Dean will review and approve the supervisory committee.

At least 4 weeks prior to scheduled examination date

1. It is the responsibility of the student to provide the final draft of the thesis proposal to the supervisor or supervisory committee (if applicable) at least 4 weeks in advance of the scheduled date of the thesis proposal examination. The supervisor is responsible to circulate the thesis proposal to all examining committee members and to ensure that all examiners have received the proposal in a timely manner.

At least 2 weeks prior to scheduled examination date

1. Supervisor confirms availability of all examining committee members and schedules the exam.
2. Please ensure all examining committee members are added to the calendar invite and include the online meeting link (if applicable).
3. Supervisor completes the [MN Notice of Thesis Proposal Oral Examination](#) form and forwards to the Nursing Graduate Office (gradnurs@ualberta.ca) for processing.
 - o The supervisor, or a committee member, can serve as the chair for this examination.
4. Associate Dean will review and approve the Notice of Exam.
5. The Graduate Office will circulate the approved Notice of Exam to the examining committee.

IV. EXAMINATION PROCESS

1. Proposal 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 proposal, the student may bring paper, pen and summary notes to the examination if desired.
3. At the start of the formal examination, the supervisor should review the procedures for the examination and provide opportunity for the student and examiners to seek clarification if needed.
4. Rounds of questions (normally two to three) are offered beginning with the examiner(s) most external to the committee, i.e. the supervisory committee member(s), and then the supervisor.
5. Questioning during the oral exam will focus on the research proposal, but examiners will also ask questions that are more comprehensive in nature (e.g. implications for nursing education, leadership, research and policy).
6. When the questions have concluded, the supervisor should ask the student if they have any final comments they would like to add.
7. The student is asked to leave the room while the examining committee deliberates on the outcome of the examination.
8. 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.

9. Evaluation criteria to be considered by the committee are outlined in section IV below.
10. The exam may result in one of the following outcomes:
 - a. Adjourned; Pass; Pass subject to revisions; Fail.
11. The thesis supervisor informs the student of the decision and recommendations of the Committee.

V. EVALUATION OF THE MASTER'S THESIS PROPOSAL EXAMINATION

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

VI. FOLLOWING THE EXAMINATION

Immediately Following Examination

1. Supervisor will submit the completed [MN Report of Thesis Proposal Oral Examination](#) to the Graduate Office.

Following successful completion of the examination, the student can proceed with the applications for ethics and administrative approvals, and undertake the proposed research.

Research Ethics

Where applicable, graduate student research proposals must receive ethical clearance on behalf of the University after the Candidacy exam is passed, but before any data collection is initiated and prior to submitting any applications for funding to a funding body and/or health care agency. Students will submit their ethics application to the Research Ethics Office. Ethics review guidelines and forms are available from the [Research Ethics Office](#)

This does not preclude the student, in consultation with the thesis supervisor, from obtaining a letter or letters of support in principle from potential agencies where data collection may be carried out (if needed), in advance of proposal defense. It is emphasized that such documentation from an agency does not constitute a

commitment on the part of the agency, nor does it constitute ethical approval.

Institution/Agency Administrative Approval

In addition to University ethical approval, a health care agency ethics/operational review of the proposal may be required. The student, in consultation with the thesis supervisor, should carefully investigate the protocol and time frame of the administrative approval process.

Summary of Master’s Thesis Proposal Examination Timeline

<p>At least 2 months prior to exam...</p>	<p>Supervisor submits the Appointment of Supervisory Committee form (Forms & Guidelines>Guidelines, Policies, & Information>MN Program) to the Graduate Office.</p>
<p>At least 4 weeks prior to exam...</p>	<p>Student provides final draft of the research proposal to the supervisor at least 4 weeks in advance of the scheduled date of the candidacy examination.</p> <p>Supervisor circulates the research proposal to all examining committee members.</p>
<p>At least 2 weeks prior to exam...</p>	<p>Supervisor confirms availability of all examining committee members and schedules the exam.</p> <p>Supervisor submits the MN Notice of Thesis Proposal Oral Examination (Forms & Guidelines>Forms>MN Forms) to the Nursing Graduate Office.</p>
<p>Immediately following the exam...</p>	<p>Supervisor submits the MN Report of Thesis Proposal Oral Examination (Forms & Guidelines>Forms>MN Forms) to the Graduate Office.</p>