

Thesis

Policy Category:	Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
Subject:	Thesis
Subsections:	Definitions ; Policy
Approving Authority:	Senate
Responsible Committee:	Senate Committee on Academic Policy
Related Procedures:	Procedure for Thesis Formats and Content Procedure for Thesis Examinations and Final Submission
Officer(s) Responsible for Procedures:	Vice-Provost (Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies)
Related Policies:	*
Related Regulations:	SGPS Membership
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DEFINITIONS

The Thesis

Thesis artifacts reflect a multitude of ways of knowing, being, and doing. Throughout this, and other Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Senate Academic policies, procedures, and School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) regulations, reference to ‘thesis’ includes ‘dissertation’. The following details the policy surrounding the process of producing, submitting, examining, and publishing graduate theses at Western. For the thesis guide that supports these processes, please see the SGPS’ website.

Definition of a Thesis

A thesis is an artifact that represents the culmination of a student's research, scholarship, and/or creative activity.

A thesis contributes to the fulfillment of the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents' Graduate Degree Level Expectations and program learning outcomes. It must make an original contribution to the discipline(s), through contributing new knowledge or new applications of knowledge.

A student may not submit a thesis that has been previously accepted for a degree, but may, with the permission of the graduate program, incorporate material included in a previous thesis.

Academic Integrity

All aspects of graduate education, including the thesis, are held to the highest standard of academic integrity.

The Thesis as a Degree Requirement

* For complete definitions see the policy on Program Design – Courses, Milestones and Course Outlines.

PhD Degree

PhD programs require completion of a thesis. PhD students must present a public presentation of their thesis in an open forum.

Professional Doctorate Degree

Professional doctorate programs do not require a thesis. A culminating milestone that has been approved through the Quality Assurance process is required. Programs must clearly explain the supervision and evaluation process for the culminating milestone. Professional doctorate programs may require a public presentation of their milestone in an open forum.

Master's Degree

Research master's programs may require a thesis or make a thesis optional, depending upon how the learning outcomes are met through milestones and/or courses. Master's programs may require a public presentation of their thesis or milestone in an open forum.

Professional Master's Degree

Professional master's programs do not require a thesis.

Evaluation of all theses must adhere to the policy as outlined in this section.

POLICY

Establishing a Supervisory Committee

For each student completing a thesis, programs are required to establish a supervisory committee consisting of a supervisor(s) and at least one committee member.

All students whose thesis addresses Indigenous issues have the right to a supervisor(s) with culturally relevant knowledge (i.e., expertise with Indigenous research, scholarship, and/or creative activity) and the option of an Indigenous community-recognized Indigenous Knowledge Keeper as a supervisory committee member. Programs are required to connect with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives about an appropriate Knowledge Keeper and remuneration. Programs also are required to connect with SGPS and the Indigenous Research Specialist at Western Research for more information on Indigenous research, scholarship, and/or creative activity.

Unless otherwise stated, only members of the SGPS can be involved in graduate student supervision. For more information on membership and supervision, see SGPS Membership Regulations on the SGPS website.

The Thesis Format, Focus, Scope, and Proposal

Normally, prior to undertaking the thesis proposal, the student discusses with their supervisory committee and Graduate Chair (or equivalent) their intentions regarding how the proposed format (see Procedure for Thesis Formats and Content) is appropriate to the scholarly goals of the thesis, and a realistic timeline for completing the thesis within the approved program timeframe. In this discussion, it is important to consider the student's long-term goals and career trajectories. This process is intended to encourage openness to various formats and to aid in the development of innovative research, scholarship, and creative activity while providing appropriate supervisory support and maintaining scholarly standards.

As part of the thesis process, students must complete a proposal that identifies the focus, scope, and format of the research, scholarship, or creative activity and have it approved by their supervisory committee.

The Thesis Examination and Oral Defense

To fulfill the degree requirement of a thesis-based program, the thesis and the student's oral defense of the thesis must be assessed and approved by a Thesis Examination Board and must meet the SGPS requirements for the thesis.

All students whose thesis addresses Indigenous issues have the right to a Thesis Examination Board that includes at least one member with culturally relevant knowledge (i.e., expertise with Indigenous research, scholarship, and/or creative activity). Normally, the thesis examination Chair should have relevant Indigenous or cultural safety training or expertise (e.g., 4 Seasons of Reconciliation online module).