



FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

MSW THESIS MANUAL

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

MSW Program Advisor: When MSW students are admitted into the Program, they will initially be in contact with the MSW Program Advisor, who is not to be confused with the Thesis Supervisor. The Advisor acts as an initial contact to provide new students with information on the Program and processes. The Faculty of Social Work MSW Program Advisor is responsible for MSW student advising and assisting with the overall administration and support of the Master of Social Work Program.

Faculty of Social Work, Associate Dean Research & Graduate Program: The Faculty of Social Work, Associate Dean Research & Graduate Program is appointed by the FSW Dean to oversee and provide supervision of the Master of Social Work Program, in cooperation with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

Thesis Supervisor: The Thesis Supervisor is a faculty member of the Faculty of Social Work accredited by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research who directs and co-ordinates a student's research and thesis work. Supervisors are expected to have requisite knowledge and expertise in the thesis area. The Thesis Supervisor is selected by the student in consultation with the Faculty of Social Work, Associate Dean Research & Graduate Program.

Thesis Committee Members: The Thesis Committee Members consist of at least three members: the Thesis Supervisor and one other member from the Faculty of Social Work, and the third member may be selected from other Faculties within the University of Regina or elsewhere. A student may choose to have up to four committee members (including the Thesis Supervisor). Committee members are chosen for their expertise and interest in a student's topic. All members must be accredited by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

External Examiner: An external examiner is a person who is well-qualified and knowledgeable on the thesis topic. Nominees are to have an established reputation in the area of the thesis research and supervisory experience, and the minimum acceptable academic qualification of an external examiner is a degree equivalent to that for which the candidate is being examined. An External Examiner for a master's defense is usually from within the university and must be outside the academic unit. The role of the external examiner is to read the thesis and respond in writing regarding acceptability for defense.

Oral Defense: The oral defense is an oral examination of a student's thesis by the examining committee, including the external examiner. The purpose of the defense is to evaluate the candidate's understanding of the study as demonstrated in both the written thesis and the responses to questions from the examining committee.

Research Ethics Application: All research conducted by faculty or students involving the use of human subjects must be submitted for approval to the Research Ethics Board (REB). REB approval is required in order to ensure that ethics guidelines are followed during research. Students must complete and submit the appropriate forms to the REB prior to beginning their research.

Thesis: A thesis may be defined as a dissertation embodying results of original research and

especially substantiating a specific view (*Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*, Retrieved September 20, 2020), to be discussed and defended under competent third party scrutiny. Subjects for a thesis in social work vary widely. The thesis involves original research and must satisfy the same general standards of scholarly writing set out by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR).

Thesis Proposal: The thesis proposal is a document that details the step-by-step plan for the research study. The proposal is usually 30-35 pages in length and includes the purpose of the study/research, the research question, a comprehensive literature review, a brief description of the theoretical orientation/ foundation underpinning the research, and an outline of the methodology and research design.

INTRODUCTION

The process of undertaking a Master of Social Work (MSW) thesis occurs in the latter stages of a program at which point a student's coursework will have been successfully completed and a research topic formulated.

Students enrolled in the MSW thesis option will complete 6 courses (18 credit hours). The thesis (SW 901) carries 12 credit hours.

Three of the 6 courses are required:

- SW 880 (Quantitative Methods in Social Work Research);
- SW 881 (Qualitative and Applied Research Methods); and
- SW 885 (Thesis Proposal).

This manual provides information about the thesis options, and outlines the following:

1. Steps for setting up a thesis, including the required thesis proposal (SW 885) and documentation.
2. The roles and responsibilities of the thesis Thesis Supervisor, Thesis Committee Members, and student.
3. Requirements for completing the thesis proposal (SW 885) and thesis (SW 901), including supervision and defense.
4. Writing and research standards required for a successfully completed thesis.
5. Completion of the required forms, as part of the process to graduate.
6. Deadlines for submission of completed Thesis for Spring or Fall convocation.

THE MSW THESIS

1. What is a Thesis?

A thesis is defined as a dissertation embodying results of original research and especially substantiating a specific view (*Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*, Retrieved September 20, 2020), to be discussed and defended under competent third party scrutiny. Subjects for a thesis in Social Work vary widely. You can view the list of completed University of Regina theses at <http://ourspace.uregina.ca/handle/10294/2899>

The thesis, as compared to the MSW Practicum Report, involves a more elaborate theoretical basis, an extensive literature review specific to the research question, a clear description of research methodology and design, a deep analysis of data, and a strongly written interpretation of findings, discussion and recommendations.

Research for the thesis may involve:

- hypothesis-testing studies based on prior research and theory
- descriptive or development studies (baseline data collection)
- case studies
- ethnography
- historical/archival studies
- action/collaborative research
- participatory/emancipatory/feminist/Indigenous research

2. Steps to Setting Up a Thesis: Process, Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Student

The first step for a student is to consider their thesis topic and choose a thesis supervisor. By the end of three courses (9 credit hours), students should have a reasonably good idea of a thesis topic. Ideas for research topics come from numerous sources, including the courses students have taken, reflection on professional experiences, readings, discussions with faculty members and discussions with others. At times, students may choose to participate in a specific aspect of research being conducted by a faculty member. It may be possible to define a topic based upon this ongoing research. This possibility should be discussed with the faculty member who is doing the research.

Prior to choosing a Thesis Supervisor, the student is advised to consult with the Faculty of Social Work, Associate Dean Research & Graduate Program, who can advise about the availability and research expertise of faculty members. Once a decision is made, and a faculty member approached by the student has agreed to be their Thesis Supervisor, the student will

inform the Faculty of Social Work, Associate Dean Research & Graduate Program and provides the names of their Thesis Supervisor, members of Thesis Committee and the topic of the student's thesis research.

Student's responsibilities include:

- Identification of a thesis topic;
- Selection of a Thesis Supervisor (see 2.2); and a Thesis Committee (see 2.3);
- Development of a thesis proposal (SW 885)
- Presentation and defense of the thesis proposal (SW885) to the Thesis Supervisor and the Thesis Committee;
- Application for ethics approval through the University of Regina Research Ethics Board to conduct research (when applicable), see https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/current-students/Thesis_and_Defense/Before_You_Start/index.html ;
- Conducting the thesis-related research (e.g. designing of instruments, questionnaires and/or specific approaches to be used in the research, collecting data, statistical analysis of data (if applicable), and the critical examination of materials and texts).
- Keeping the Thesis Supervisor informed of their progress, submit chapter drafts and revisions within agreed timelines;
- Complete all aspects of the thesis; and
- Defend the thesis to an External Examiner and the Thesis Committee.

2.2 Thesis Supervisor

The Thesis Supervisor co-ordinates a student's research and thesis work. Supervisors are expected to have requisite knowledge and expertise in the thesis area. The Thesis Supervisor is selected by the student in consultation with The Faculty of Social Work, Associate Dean Research & Graduate Program. A Thesis Supervisor must be accredited by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) to supervise a Masters' thesis. Co-supervisors may be selected in cases where a faculty member is not yet in a position to supervise a Masters' thesis independently.

The Thesis Supervisor will:

- Explain to student the purpose and function of a Thesis Committee;
- Advise student on identifying qualified persons to serve as members of the Thesis Committee and suggest and make replacements should the need arise;
- Call and chair meetings of the Thesis Committee;
- Advise student on research topics and how to prepare a thesis proposal;
- Supervise the development and defense of the thesis proposal (SW 885);

- Consult committee members and student on the date for the thesis proposal defense;
- Submit the Thesis Proposal Approval Form (SW 885) and a copy of the student's final approved thesis proposal to the Faculty of Social Work to the Associate Dean Research & Graduate Program and MSW Program Advisor;
- Guide student in methods of obtaining research ethics approval and other forms of permission as needed, and submit a copy of the REB Approval Certificate to the MSW Program Advisor;
- Monitor and guide the student's progress in thesis research and writing;
- Ensure the appropriate scholarly standards are being consistently upheld;
- Ensure that the study is kept within the confines of the approved proposal;
- Ensure that Thesis Committee members are consulted on any substantial changes in research design;
- Provide constructive feedback on drafts, preferably within two weeks of receipt of interim and final drafts; or discusses any possible delays or unavailability with the student or committee members;
- Apprise committee members of the student's ongoing progress and encourage student to consult other committee members on aspects of the research;
- Ensure other committee members have been given at least two weeks to read and comment on final drafts of a thesis;
- Consult committee members for nominees for External Examiner and submit a list of nominees to the Faculty of Social Work MSW Program Advisor;
- Ensure that the student will work with MSW Program Advisor to follow the pre-defense procedures as outlined by FGSR. The description of the pre-defense procedures can be found here: https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/current-students/Thesis_and_Defense/Pre-Defense_Procedures/index.html
- Consult committee members on the dates for the oral defense as submitted by the External Examiner and inform the Faculty of Social Work, MSW Program Advisor;
- Brief student on the nature and format of an oral defense;
- In consultation with the MSW Program Advisor, ensure the room and all technical equipment are booked for the defense.
- Ensure, that post-defense, all required revisions arising from an oral defense are completed by the student in a satisfactory and timely manner;

2.3 Thesis Committee Members

The Thesis Committee consists of at least three members, including the Thesis Supervisor and at least one other member from the Faculty of Social Work. The third member may be selected from other Faculties within the University of Regina or elsewhere. Thesis Committee members are chosen for their expertise and interest in a student's topic. All members must be accredited by the University of Regina Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. The student and the

Thesis Supervisor will collaborate to identify individuals who may serve on the Thesis Committee.

The members of the Thesis Committee will:

- Guide student on matters relating to proposal, research and writing phases;
- Provide constructive feedback on the student's thesis proposal and drafts of the thesis, preferably within two weeks of receiving them; or discuss any possible delays or unavailability with the student and the Thesis Supervisor;
- Participate in the student's thesis proposal defense;
- Approve the thesis proposal (SW 885), and indicate whether the student is ready to commence to the research phase;
- Agree when a thesis is at the final draft stage;
- Consider the names of possible External Examiners to be submitted to the FGSR;
- Sign the Thesis Committee Release Form when satisfied the thesis is ready to be forwarded to the FGSR;
- Participate in the oral thesis defense.

The Thesis Committee meetings may be held at the request of any committee member with concerns or questions about the research or thesis work or the student's request.

Changes to Supervisory Committee

When changes in life circumstances, availability, or other issues arise, a change in Thesis Supervisor or committee member might be necessary. If this occurs, the Supervisor or committee member is to notify the student as soon as possible and consult with the Associate Dean Research & Graduate Program to follow the formal process of change (aligned with the policies of FGSR). The change will be communicated to all relevant parties. If the student has reason to believe a change in Thesis Supervisor or committee member might be necessary, the student is expected to consult this change with the Associate Dean Research and Graduate Program, their Thesis Supervisor and committee members. The Student submits the Change of Graduate Supervisor Form

https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/assets/forms/Supervisor_Change_Jan_2019.pdf to Associate Dean Research & Graduate Program. After it has been verified that all involved parties (new supervisor, previous supervisor and the student) are accepting the change, the form is forwarded by the Associate Dean Research & Graduate Program to the Dean of FGSR. The policies regarding the changes to the Thesis Supervisor and thesis committee can be found here <https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/current-students/Rights%20/change-supervisor.html>

3. Thesis Proposal (SW 885)

3.1 Format of Thesis Proposal

A student's thesis proposal is a research proposal, a roadmap, that the student will follow to conduct their thesis research and write their thesis.

The thesis proposal will be written under the Thesis Supervisor's direction and in consultation with the Thesis Committee members. Generally, the proposal is sent for feedback and approval to the Thesis Supervisor first, before it is sent to the rest of the Committee. The length of the proposal is usually 30-35 pages, not including references.

The thesis proposal will include:

- Objectives or purpose of the research;
- Clear research question(s);
- Comprehensive literature review;
- An outline of the proposed methodology and research method;
- An outline of the proposed data analysis methods;
- Timeline of the thesis research project;
- References;
- Appendices

The Thesis Supervisor will review the proposal and affirm that, in their view, it is ready to go forward for review and approval by the Thesis Committee. Once Committee members have had the opportunity to review the thesis proposal and provide feedback, a time and date will be set for the entire Thesis Committee to meet for the student to present and defend the thesis proposal.

3.2 The Thesis Proposal Defense

To pass SW 885 (3 credits), the student will present their thesis proposal at a Thesis Committee Meeting:

- The student will give a 15-20 minute presentation on the proposal;
- Time will be allotted for questions, discussion and suggestions;
- A decision will be made as to whether the student has successfully completed the thesis proposal and is ready to start thesis research.
- When the Committee agrees that the student has completed the requirements for the thesis proposal, the Thesis Proposal Approval Form (SW885) ([MSW Forms | Social Work, University of Regina \(uregina.ca\)](#)) will be signed by the Thesis Supervisor and submitted to the Faculty of Social Work, Associate Dean Research & Graduate Program, along with

a copy of the approved thesis proposal. The Thesis Supervisor will then enter a grade of Pass for the student.

- Once the Thesis Committee has approved the thesis proposal, the student will submit the Ethics Application to the University of Regina Research Ethics Board (REB) (if applicable).
- The Thesis Proposal Approval Form (SW 855) and a copy of the approved thesis proposal will become part of a student's file. Should there be substantial changes to thesis research after the thesis proposal has been approved, the Thesis Supervisor and the student are responsible for ensuring that thesis committee members are aware of the changes.

4. Thesis (SW 901)

A thesis involves original research and must satisfy the same general standards of scholarly writing set out by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) and the Faculty of Social Work (FSW). For guidelines on report-writing and format, students are expected to consult the current edition of the APA Manual.

4.1 Preparation of Graduate Thesis – General Standards of Writing

- Evidence of an up to date literature review;
- Clarity of purpose and rationale;
- Coherence and logic of organization;
- Clarity, cogency and suitability of expression;
- Soundness of sentence and paragraph construction;
- Accuracy and completeness of sections; references, reference list, and appendices;
- Adherence to the University of Regina, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research standards and requirements with respect to: title page, abstract, acknowledgements, table of contents, list of tables, list of illustrations and figures, text, list of references, literature cited or bibliography, and appendices, see [A Guide For Thesis Preparation Of Graduate Thesis](#)
- The average length for a thesis is in the range of 50-110 pages of double-spaced 12 point text (excluding reference list and/or appendices).
- Once the student and the supervisor are satisfied that the thesis is acceptable in form and content, it is presented to the Thesis Committee.
- If the Committee approves the thesis, the members sign the Thesis Committee Release Form.
- The approximate timeline from the completion of the thesis to its defense is outlined here:

[https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/current-students/Thesis and Defense/Timelines and Deadlines.html](https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/current-students/Thesis%20and%20Defense/Timelines%20and%20Deadlines.html)

4.2 Submission of Thesis for Defense

The final draft of the pre-defense thesis, along with the specified following documents and information, will be submitted to the MSW Program Advisor by the Thesis Supervisor. The MSW Program Advisor will then compile the complete pre-defense package and submit to Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Program, Dean of Social Work, and then to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research:

The Thesis Supervisor will submit the following to the MSW Program Advisor:

- a copy of the pre-defense thesis
- a separate copy of the Abstract of the thesis
- the completed Thesis Committee Release Form. Thesis Committee Release Form: This form must be signed by all committee members agreeing to the acceptability of the thesis for defense.
- the names and contact information of potential External Examiners (minimum of 2 names) indicating 1st and 2nd choice

The MSW Program Advisor will ensure completion of the following forms and secure the signature of the Thesis Supervisor and student as needed. All forms are found on FGSR website: <https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/forms.html>

- Thesis Submission Checklist: Checklist for the Submission of a Thesis
- External Examiner Nomination Form: The Academic Supervisor must sign off this form.
- External Examiner Conflict of Interest Checklist: This form must be signed off by the student and Academic Supervisor
- License for Thesis: License for Thesis, Dissertation, Research Practicum, and Field Practicum. This permits the thesis to be posted on the University of Regina website.
- Registration Form: This form is only for those students who are not currently registered. Students must register to facilitate the processing of the thesis, and they must also be registered in the semester of the defense.

5. Oral Defense and Examination

Students are encouraged to attend an oral defense before their own to observe firsthand the steps and procedures that are followed. No formal permission is needed to attend and observe an oral defense. Visitors may not participate in the proceedings of an oral defense; that is, they are not invited to ask questions nor to add comments during the defense.

The oral defense of a thesis is scheduled after the External Examiner has read the thesis and agrees that it may proceed to the defense stage. The purpose of an oral defense is to examine and evaluate the candidate's understanding of the study, as demonstrated in both the written thesis and the responses to the examining committee's questions.

5.1 External Examiner

- The External Examiner must be selected from outside the Faculty of Social Work and must be knowledgeable of the subject area of the thesis, well-qualified, impartial and have adequate supervisory experience. To ensure impartiality, the External Examiner must not be related to the student, the Thesis Supervisor, or the Committee members; or have worked closely with the student, the Thesis Supervisor, or the Committee members the past five years.
- After receiving a list of a minimum of two recommended nominees (with an indication of 1st and 2nd choice) for the External Examiner, and an abstract of the thesis from a Thesis Supervisor, the MSW Program Advisor will contact the nominees, provide an abstract of a thesis and inquire about their availability.
- The MSW Program Advisor will submit the name of the first choice of the External Examiner and CV, along with a copy of the final draft of the thesis, to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research [FGSR] for their approval of the External Examiner.
- Neither the Thesis Committee nor the student is to have any contact with the External Examiner prior to the oral defense.
- The oral defense is not scheduled until the External Examiner has read the thesis and agrees it is ready for examination.
- The External Examiner completes the External Examiner forms and returns them to the Faculty of Graduate Studies advising that the defense may proceed.
- The External Examiner is the principal questioner at the defense and, in the evaluation phase, provides an assessment of the adequacy of oral responses and of the quality of the written thesis.

5.2 Scheduling an Oral Thesis Defense

After the External Examiner has advised that the defense may proceed, the MSW Program Advisor will complete the Notice of Oral Defense Examination and submit it to the FGSR. The MSW Program Advisor will finalize a thesis defense date based on the availabilities provided by the Thesis Committee and the External Examiner. In addition, the MSW Program Advisor will post a notice of the thesis presentation and circulate the notice to faculty, students and the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers. It is the responsibility of the Thesis Supervisor to work with the MSW Program Advisor to ensure that the required space and technological

equipment is booked for the defense. The defense is a public defense. The summary of defense procedures can be found here: https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/current-students/Thesis_and_Defense/index.html).

Once the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research notifies the Faculty of Social Work, that the External Examiner has signed off on the thesis draft and provided a written report, the MSW Program Advisor will secure a Chair for the oral defense.

5.3 Examining Committee and Oral Defense Procedures

The examining committee consists of the Thesis Committee, the External Examiner, and the Chair of the thesis defense.

- The Chair of the thesis defense will facilitate the thesis defense meeting in line with the policies and procedures provided by the University of Regina Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research:
<https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/assets/docs/pdf/InstructionsforChairAug2017.pdf>
- The Chair will ask the candidate if they agree to have public members present. If the student has any concerns, she/he/they can request that the public members leave.
- The candidate is given approximately 15 minutes to introduce and describe the study, highlighting its most salient features while bearing in mind that all members of the Committee have read the thesis.
- The External Examiner conducts the major part of the examination, followed by questions from other members of the examining committee.
- Once the presentation and questions from the examining committee are complete, the public members, along with the candidate, will be asked to leave the room.
- The Committee makes the final decisions in-camera as to whether the candidate's oral responses and the written thesis satisfy the MSW degree standards.
- The candidate returns to the room upon the examining committee's invitation and their decisions are announced immediately to the candidate.
- The process of defense and examination typically takes one to two hours.

Details on procedures followed in an oral defense can be found here:

https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/current-students/Thesis_and_Defense/Defense/index.html.

The procedures followed post-defense can be found here:

https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/current-students/Thesis_and_Defense/Post_Defense/index.html

6. Distribution of Final Draft of Post-Defense Thesis

Upon successfully completing the defense, the student must make all corrections and submit the final post-defense thesis to the Thesis Supervisor and/or External Examiner as decided at the defense.

The final corrected thesis, along with the signed License for Thesis, Dissertation, Research Practicum and Field Practicum Form, will be submitted as an electronic PDF copy to FGSR by the MSW Program Advisor and the Faculty of Social Work. This will be forwarded from FGSR to the Library for Library approval. The thesis will then be posted to the Library website.

6.1 Deadlines for Submission of the Post-Defense Thesis

Post-defense, the final, corrected copy of the thesis need to be submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research [FGSR]

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ❖ For Spring Convocation: | March 31st |
| ❖ For Fall Convocation: | July 31st |

WHERE TO FIND THE REQUIRED FORMS

Required forms related to the Thesis can be found online at the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research website: <https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/forms.html>

Required Forms

Checklist for the Submission of a Thesis

Notice of Oral Defense of Thesis

Thesis Committee Release Form

Nomination Form: External Examiner

External Examiner Conflict of Interest Form

Ethics Approval Application

Request for Confidentiality of a Thesis

Additional information on thesis procedures can be found on the FGSR Website https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/current-students/Thesis_and_Defense/index.html

WHERE TO FIND COPIES OF COMPLETED THESES

Theses are stored online at the University of Regina Library at:

1. Go to Ourspace at <http://ourspace.uregina.ca>
2. Click on Communities & Collections
3. Find Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
4. Under Theses and Dissertations, click on Masters Theses

You can view the list of completed theses at <http://ourspace.uregina.ca/handle/10294/2899>

STUDENT TO DO LIST

1. Complete the course work (two required research courses and three elective courses - 15 credits in total)
a. After completing three courses (9 credit hours), start planning for your thesis.
i. Identify a topic of your thesis
ii. Consult with the Associate Dean Research & Graduate Program to select a Thesis Supervisor and at least 2 Thesis Committee Members.
b. Complete all remaining course work.
2. Register in SW 885 Thesis Proposal (3 credit hours)
a. Under the Thesis Supervisor and Thesis Committee's supervision, write and defend your thesis research proposal (30-35 pages).
b. Receive passing grade for SW 885.
c. Obtain a research ethics approval from the Research Ethics Board before you start conducting your thesis research project.
3. Register in SW 901 (Thesis, 12 credit hours in total)
a. Collect data and analyze your results or findings
b. Write your thesis (50-110 pages) while consulting with the Thesis Supervisor and Thesis Committee members; make revisions to your thesis as advised.
c. Obtain approval from the Thesis Supervisor and the Thesis Committee to proceed with scheduling your thesis defense.
d. In collaboration with MSW Program Advisor, submit your thesis and required forms to FGSR.
e. Your Thesis Committee and FGSR will identify an External Examiner and schedule your thesis defense and examination date after the External Examiner has advised that your thesis defense can proceed.
4. Complete your thesis defense and examination
a. Submit your post-defense thesis and additional forms by the required deadlines to convocate.