FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

MSW THESIS MANUAL

September 2015
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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](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](https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/current-students/Thesis_and_Defense/index.html)

WHERE TO FIND COPIES OF COMPLETED THESSES

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

1. Go to Ourspace at [http://ourspace.uregina.ca](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](http://ourspace.uregina.ca/handle/10294/2899)
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Academic Advisor: The Academic Advisor is part of the student support staff. She/he provides continued support for all students with information on the program and processes.

Academic Supervisor: The Academic Supervisor is a faculty member of the Faculty of Social Work accredited by Graduate Studies and Research Work 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 Academic Supervisor is selected by the student in consultation with the Faculty of Social Work (FSW) Graduate Studies Coordinator.

External Examiner: The external examiner is a person who is well-qualified and knowledgeable on the thesis topic. The role of the external examiner is to read the thesis and respond in writing regarding acceptability for defense.

Faculty of Social Work Graduate Studies Coordinator: The Faculty of Social Work designate, 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.

Faculty of Social Work Graduate Studies Student Services: The Student Services staff person responsible for the administration and support of the Master of Social Work Program.

Oral Defense: The oral defense is an oral examination of a student’s thesis by the examining committee. 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 body of propositions or ideas advanced in writing to be discussed and defended under competent third party scrutiny (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1990). 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 Committee Members: The Thesis Committee Members consist of at least three members: the Academic Supervisor and 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. 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.

**Thesis Proposal:** The thesis proposal is a document that details the step-by-step plan for the research study. The proposal is usually 25-35 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. The roles and responsibilities of the thesis Academic Supervisor, Thesis Committee Members, and student.
2. Steps for setting up a thesis, including the required thesis proposal (SW 885) and documentation.
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.
1. What is a Thesis?

A thesis may be defined as a body of propositions or ideas advanced in writing to be discussed and defended under competent third party scrutiny (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1990). 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. Who is Involved: Roles and Responsibilities

a) Academic Supervisor

The Academic Supervisor 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 Academic Supervisor is selected by the student in consultation with the Faculty of Social Work (FSW) Graduate Studies Coordinator. A 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 Academic 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 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;
- Guide student in methods of obtaining ethical and other forms of permission as needed;
- 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;
- Provide constructive criticism and feedback on drafts, preferably within a month of receipt of interim and final drafts;
- Apprise committee members of the student’s ongoing progress and encourage student to consult other committee members for guidance on aspects of the research;
- Ensure other committee members have been given one month to read and comment on final drafts of a thesis and that, upon agreement by the committee that thesis is ready to be submitted to the External Examiner, sign the Thesis Committee Release Form.
- Consult committee members for nominees for External Examiner;
- Submit a list of nominees for External Examiner to the FSW Graduate Studies Coordinator;
- Submit the signed Thesis Committee Release Form to the FSW Graduate Studies Coordinator;
- Consult committee members on the dates for the oral defense as submitted by the External Examiner and inform the FSW Graduate Studies Coordinator of an agreed upon date and time;
- Brief students on the nature and format of an oral defense;
- Ensure all revisions arising from an oral defense are completed by the student in a satisfactory and timely manner and, if necessary, passed to the external examiner;
- Advise the FSW Graduate Studies Coordinator when all revisions have been made;
- Ensure the room and all technical equipment are provided for the defense.
b) Thesis Committee Members

The Thesis Committee consists of at least three members including the Academic Supervisor and 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. 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 members of the thesis committee will:

- Guide student on matters relating to proposal, research and writing phases;
- Provide constructive feedback on the student’s proposal and drafts of the thesis, preferably within a month of receiving them;
- Approve the thesis proposal (SW 885) and decide when the student is ready to commence the research phase;
- Relay concerns on any aspects of interim or final thesis drafts to the supervisor and seek further reasonable revisions;
- 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 committee should hold at least two formal meetings: one to approve the proposal (SW 885) and another to approve the final draft of a thesis. At this latter stage they will develop a list of nominees for External Examiner. Other meetings may be held at the request of any committee member with concerns or questions about the research or thesis work or at the request of the student.

3. Steps to Setting up a Thesis

By the end of three courses (9 credit hours) students should have a reasonably good idea of a thesis topic and have selected an Academic Supervisor. Students will submit their Academic Supervisor’s name and the topic of their research to the FSW Graduate Studies Coordinator.

Ideas for research topics come from numerous sources, including the courses students have taken, reflection on professional experiences, readings, discussions with faculty members and
At times, students may choose to participate in research being conducted by a faculty member. It may be possible to define a topic based upon this on-going research. This should be discussed with the faculty member who is doing the research.

a) **The Student will:**
- Select an Academic Supervisor (see 2.1);
- Select a Thesis Committee (see 2.2);
- Identify a thesis topic;
- Develop a thesis proposal (SW 885) in close consultation with the Academic Supervisor to be approved by the Thesis Committee;
- Apply for ethics approval through the University of Regina Research Ethics Board to conduct research, see [https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/current-students/Thesis_and_Defense/Before_You_Start/Ethical_Clearance.html](https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/current-students/Thesis_and_Defense/Before_You_Start/Ethical_Clearance.html)
- Conduct the Research
- Be responsible for the design of instruments, questionnaires and/or specific approaches to be used in the research, for the collection and statistical analysis of data (if applicable), and the critical examination of materials and texts. The student will keep the Academic Supervisor informed of his/her progress, submit chapter drafts and revisions within agreed timelines and prepare for the final oral defense.
- Complete all aspects of the thesis;
- Defend the thesis to an External Examiner and the Thesis Committee;

**4. Thesis Proposal (SW 885)**

The student, under the direction of the Academic Supervisor, will complete a thesis proposal. The length of the proposal is usually 25-35 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.
The Academic Supervisor will review the proposal and affirm that, in their view, it is ready to go forward for approval of the Committee. At that time a time and date will be set for the entire Thesis Committee to meet to approve the thesis proposal.

- The format for the Thesis Committee Proposal Meeting will be:
  - The student will give a 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 proposal or if more work is required.
- When the Committee agrees that the student has successfully completed the requirements for the Thesis Proposal, the Academic Supervisor will enter a grade of Pass.
- Once the thesis proposal has been approved by the Thesis Committee, the student will submit the Ethics Application to the University of Regina Research Ethics Board (REB).

**NOTE:** The research cannot begin until REB approval has been received.

### 5. Thesis

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 to consult the current edition of the APA Manual.

The following general standards of writing are to be demonstrated:

- 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;
- Accuracy and completeness of references, reference list, and appendices;
- Adherence to the University of Regina, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research standards 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 70 to 100 pages of double-spaced 12 point text (excluding bibliographies and 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.

Final versions of all University of Regina thesis will be submitted the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, along with the following documents:
• Thesis Committee Release Form: This form must be signed by all committee members agreeing to the acceptability of the thesis to go to defense.
• Thesis Submission Checklist: Checklist for the Submission of a Thesis
• 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.

6. Oral Defense and Evaluation

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. Visitors may not participate in the proceedings of an oral defense, that is, they are not invited to ask questions or 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 questions from the examining committee.

a) External Examiner
• A list, comprised of at least two possible External Examiners, is created by the Thesis Committee.
• The External Examiner must be selected from outside the Faculty in which the thesis is written but must be knowledgeable of the subject area of the thesis. To ensure impartiality, the External Examiner must not be related to the student or have worked closely with the student in the past five years.
• The FSW Graduate Studies Coordinator will request the curriculum vitae of the proposed External Examiners.
• The list and CVs are submitted, along with a copy of the final draft of the thesis, to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for their approval of an 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.

b) Oral Defense Procedures

When the student is ready to defend their Thesis, the Academic Advisor will complete the Notice of Oral Defense Examination and submit it to the FGSR. In addition the Academic Advisor will post a notice of the presentation and circulate the notice to faculty, students and the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers. It is the responsibility of the Academic Supervisor to provide this information to the FSW Student Services staff, and ensure space is booked for the Presentation. The defense is a public defense.

c) Examining Committee and Procedures

The examining committee consists of the original thesis committee, the External Examiner, the MSW Chair/Dean of Social Work and the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research or designate who chairs the defense.
• The Chair of the thesis defense will ask the candidate if they agree to have public members present. If the student has any concerns, she/he can request that the public members leave.
• The candidate is given approximately 20-30 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 standards for the MSW degree.

- The candidate returns to the room upon the invitation of the examining committee and their decisions are announced immediately to the candidate.
- The process of defense and examination normally takes one to two hours.

Further details on procedures followed in an oral defense may be found on the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research website [https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/current-students/Thesis_and_Defense/Post_Defense/index.html](https://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/current-students/Thesis_and_Defense/Post_Defense/index.html)

7. Distribution of Final Draft of Thesis

Upon the successful completion of the defense, the student must make all corrections and submit the final thesis to the Academic Supervisor and/or External Examiner as decided at the defense. Whoever is required to review the corrected thesis must send a confirmation to the FGSR that the thesis is corrected as required by the examining committee.

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 FSW Graduate Studies’ Coordinator. This will be forwarded from FGSR to the Library for Library approval. The thesis will then be posted to the Library website.

The deadlines for submission of the final corrected copy of the thesis to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research are as follows:

- For Spring Convocation: **March 31st**
- For Fall Convocation: **July 31st**