



## POLICIES for THESIS PROPOSALS and DEFENCES

Over the course of completing a thesis, the student engages in the following activities:

1. *SELECTION OF THESIS SUPERVISOR, PARTICIPATION IN SELECTION OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE, AND EXTERNAL EXAMINER*
  2. *THESIS PROPOSAL PRESENTATION and DEFENCE*
  3. *LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD ETHICAL REVIEW*
  4. *THESIS PRESENTATION and DEFENCE*
  5. *THESIS SUBMISSION*
- 

All Thesis forms are available at: <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/health-sciences/graduate-programs/master-of-public-health-programs/about-our-thesis-option>

### 1. SELECTION OF THESIS SUPERVISOR AND COMMITTEE

Required form: *Department of Health Sciences Thesis Topic and Committee* (Appendix A)

Together, the thesis supervisor and thesis committee should have expertise in the content area of study, the methodology used, and implications for public health or health sciences. The thesis committee must be composed of at least three members, including:

- **Supervisor:** Each thesis will normally have one supervisor who is selected from the Department of Health Sciences Faculty. Thesis supervisors must have a doctoral degree, current research activity, and recent publications. Individual supervisors may have specific requirements related to the thesis.
- **Co-supervisor:** While the primary supervisor will be selected from the Department of Health Sciences Faculty, it is possible to have a co-supervisor who is an academic from another discipline/faculty, or a professional. This individual must have research interests related to the thesis topic, at least a Master's degree, and must be approved to co-supervise by the Department of Health Sciences by forwarding a CV to the Administrative Assistant.
- **Committee member(s):** Two Additional committee member are selected. Preferably, both and at least one of the committee members should be from within the Department of Health Sciences Faculty.
  - In cases where two individuals are co-supervising the student, two additional committee members are required, for a total of four committee members.



### Process

Once the committee has been formed, the “**Department of Health Sciences Thesis Topic and Committee**” form must be submitted for approval to the Graduate Coordinator and then to the Administrative Assistant for the student’s file.

## THESIS PROPOSAL PRESENTATION

### Required forms

**Department of Health Sciences Thesis Committee’s Report on Proposal** (Appendix B)

**Department of Health Sciences Permission to Proceed** (Appendix C)

Once the thesis supervisor, committee members (and co-supervisor, if applicable) has approved the written proposal, the student will present his /her thesis topic in an oral presentation open to the public.

**Master of Public Health (MPH) students** on campus will do their presentation on campus and via web-conferencing. Students completing the MPH program at a distance will do their presentation via web-conferencing and on campus, if desired.

**Master of Health Sciences (MHSc) students** will do their presentation on campus in order to permit other students in the MHSc program to attend.

### **The following steps must be taken prior to the Thesis Proposal Presentation**

1. The **thesis supervisor** must contact the student and all thesis committee members (*see page 4, Absent Committee members*) to schedule a date/time for the oral presentation, and then communicate the chosen date/time to the Administrative Assistant who will book a room and equipment (a minimum of 5 business days is required to confirm arrangements);
2. The **student** must provide each committee member and the Administrative Assistant with both a hard copy (if desired to each committee member) and an electronic copy of the thesis proposal at least 2 weeks in advance of the oral presentation; and
3. Once a copy of the thesis proposal has been received, the Administrative Assistant will announce the Thesis Proposal Presentation and place a copy of the thesis proposal on display.

### Process

#### **Thesis Proposal Presentation**

The presentation should last no longer than 20 minutes, and should include the following:

- Introduction and overview of the topic
- Summary of literature review
- Study objectives and rationale
- Proposed methods
- Relevance to public health or health sciences

Approved June 21, 2010 (Collaborative Faculty Meeting)

Updated July 14, 2011

Updated September 24, 2015

Updated January 23, 2017



The **thesis supervisor** will chair the Thesis Proposal Presentation, question period, and deliberations:

- Once the student has concluded his/her presentation, the committee will ask questions and comment on the proposed study.
- Each committee member will be invited to ask questions until he/she feels that the student has adequately addressed his/her concerns; it is not unusual for there to be more than one round of questions from each committee member.
- Once the committee has asked all questions, members of the audience will be invited to pose questions.
- Once the question period is completed, the student and audience will be asked to leave the room so that the thesis committee may evaluate the acceptability of the proposed project.

During the deliberations:

- The **thesis supervisor** is responsible for documenting all suggested changes to the original thesis proposal (e.g., to the literature review, research questions, methods) on the ***Thesis Committee's Report on Proposal (Appendix B)*** form
- The *Thesis Committee's Report on Proposal* form will be distributed within one week of the Thesis Proposal Presentation to the student, all thesis committee members, and the Administrative Assistant (for the student's file)
- All thesis **committee members** must sign the form

Once the *Thesis Committee's Report on Proposal* is received:

- The **student** will make the appropriate revisions to the thesis proposal and resubmit to the thesis supervisor.
- The **thesis supervisor** is responsible for ensuring that all committee concerns have been adequately addressed in the revised document.
- Once the **supervisor** has accepted the revised document, he/she will complete and sign the ***Permission to Proceed (Appendix C)*** form and submit the form for approval by the Graduate Coordinator, and once signed to the Administrative Assistant (for the student's file).
- Once the *Permission to Proceed* form has been signed by the Graduate Coordinator, the student may proceed with the submission for ethical review.
  - In the unlikely event that a thesis project is **deemed unacceptable**, the student will not be permitted to continue with submission to ethics and data collection until the proposal has been rewritten and approved by the committee. A second proposal presentation may also be required.



Absent Committee Members

**Department of Health Sciences Policy on Absent Committee Members for the Thesis Proposal Presentation**

- It is assumed that committee members will make every effort to attend the Thesis Proposal Presentation – in person, or by video or teleconference.
- The presentation will not take place **unless at least two committee members are present**, one of which must be the supervisor.
  - In cases where two individuals are co-supervising the student, three committee members must be present (including both the supervisor and co-supervisor).
- In the event that a **committee member cannot attend** the Thesis Proposal Presentation, the committee member must submit a written document to the Thesis supervisor summarizing his/her questions to be posed during the presentation, assessment of the proposal, and suggestions for improving the study.
- It is the responsibility of the **thesis supervisor** to ensure that this information is communicated during the oral presentation.
- If the supervisor is unable to obtain written feedback from the absent committee member prior to the Thesis Proposal Presentation, the final decision on the acceptability of the proposal and permission to continue with the ethics submission **will be withheld until received**.



### 3. ETHICAL REVIEW

While most students need an ethical review some exceptions exist.

View the guidelines for ethical review, available through the [Office of Research](#).

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/research-and-innovation/ethics>

#### Required forms

**Department of Health Sciences Confirmation of Master's Thesis Ethics Approval (Appendix D)**

**The following must be completed during the ethical review process:**

1. **Certificate of completion of the online tutorial for the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct** for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2); and
2. **Researcher's Agreement form** – this form includes all components of the thesis proposal (the proposal may also be attached as an Appendix to the form), as well as the following (as appropriate): a letter to potential participants, consent form, and sample questionnaire.

#### Process

- The **student** must have successfully completed the Thesis Proposal Presentation prior to submitting their project for ethical review.
- *Permission to Proceed must be received before data collection or data analysis may begin.*
- All studies involving human or animal subjects must be approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. Secondary analysis of existing, anonymized data is exempt from review as per the TCPS2. All students completing secondary analysis must request an exemption from the [Office of Research](#).
  - Information on how to submit an ethics application may be obtained by contacting the [Office of Research](#). If the **student** is uncertain whether the study requires ethical approval (e.g., use of archival data), he/she should consult with the thesis supervisor and the Office of Research (i.e., Research Ethics Administrative Officer).
- **Students** should consult with their supervisor and [Office of Research](#) to determine whether ethical review is required by another organization. For example, in cases where the student is recruiting subjects from a healthcare organization, approval by that organization's Research Ethics Board may also be required.
- It is the **student's and supervisor's** responsibility to ensure that all necessary ethics approval is obtained.
- Upon receipt of ethics approval, the **student** must complete the **Confirmation of Ethics Approval (Appendix D)** form and submit it to the Administrative Assistant along with copies of the ethics certificate(s). If an exemption was obtained (i.e., secondary analysis), then this letter should be submitted instead.



#### 4. THESIS EXTERNAL EXAMINER REVIEW & FINAL DEFENCE PRESENTATION

##### Required forms

**Department use only: Department of Health Sciences External Examiner Guidelines – Confirmation of Arm’s-Length** (Appendix Ei)

**Proposed Examiner** (Appendix Eii – on FGS website)

**Thesis Ready for Review by Examiner** (Appendix F – on FGS website)

**Examiner’s Report on Thesis** (Appendix G – on FGS website)

**Thesis Committee’s Report on Thesis** (Appendix H)

- Once the **supervisor, committee members** (and co-supervisor, if applicable) has approved the final thesis, the thesis will be sent to the External Examiner who is invited to either 1. attend the defence in person or via web-conferencing, or 2. submit a written document to the Thesis supervisor summarizing his/her questions to be posed during the presentation, assessment of the thesis, and suggestions for improving the thesis.
- The student will defend in an oral presentation open to the public

**Master of Public Health (MPH) students** on campus will do their presentation on campus and via web-conferencing. Students completing the MPH program at a distance will do their presentation via web-conferencing and on campus, if desired.

**Master of Health Sciences (MHSc) students** will do their presentation on campus in order to permit other students in the MHSc program to attend.

##### **The following steps must be taken prior to the Thesis Defence Presentation**

1. The **thesis supervisor (or co-supervisor, if applicable)** must submit the **Arm’s-Length** (Appendix Ei) and **Proposed Examiner** (Appendix Eii) form to the Administrative Assistant for approval by the Department of Health Sciences;
2. The **thesis supervisor (or co-supervisor, if applicable)** must submit the **Thesis Ready for Review by Examiner** (Appendix F) form to the Administrative Assistant, who will forward to the Graduate Coordinator for signature;
3. Once received, the Administrative Assistant will forward the documents for approval by the Graduate Coordinator, and contact the proposed External Examiner to ask about his/her ability and willingness to review the thesis.
4. The Administrative Assistant must contact the student and all thesis committee members in addition to the External reviewer (*see Page 9, Absent Committee Members*) to schedule a date/time for the oral presentation, and then book a room and equipment;
5. The **student** must provide each committee member, including the External Examiner, and the Administrative Assistant with an electronic and hard copy (if desired to each committee member) of the thesis at least **6 weeks in advance** of the desired date for the oral presentation;



6. Once the External Examiner has been confirmed, the Administrative Assistant will send him/her an electronic copy of the thesis for review (with the option of also having a hard copy sent).
  - The External Examiner will have at least 4 weeks to review and evaluate the thesis using the **Examiner's Report on Thesis (Appendix G)** form.
  - Once the completed *Examiner's Report on Thesis* form has been received by the Administrative Assistant, copies of the form will be sent to the thesis supervisor, student, committee members, the Graduate Coordinator and the Faculty of Graduate Studies.
7. The **thesis supervisor and committee members** will (if desired by student or Supervisor) review the External Examiner's assessment of the thesis with the student prior to the defence.

The external reviewer's assessment of the thesis will fall into one of the following four categories:

1. Accepted
2. Accepted Subject to Revisions
  - Revisions are specified and the final document is reviewed and approved by the thesis supervisor.
3. Appreciable Revisions Required
  - Revisions are specified and the final document is reviewed and approved by all members of the thesis committee.
  - The revised thesis must be returned to the Examiner for re-evaluation, through the Graduate Coordinator of the academic unit/program.
  - A copy of the assessment of the revised thesis must be submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.
4. Thesis Rejected

Upon receipt, if recommended by the Thesis Committee, a candidate receiving an evaluation of 'Thesis Rejected' will be allowed to defend and resubmit the thesis to the Thesis Committee. The final decision on accepting a thesis is made by the Thesis Committee after considering the reports of the Examiners. The student has failed the program if the thesis is rejected by the Thesis Committee following re-examination.

#### Process

##### **Thesis Defence Presentation**

The presentation should last no longer than 30 minutes, and should include the following:

- Introduction and overview of the topic
- Summary of literature review
- Study objectives and rationale
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions
- Implications for public health or health practice, policy, and research



The **thesis supervisor** will chair the Thesis Defence Presentation, question period, and deliberations:

- Once the **student** has concluded his/her presentation, the committee will ask questions and comment on the study.
- The **External Examiner** and each **committee member** will be invited to ask questions until he/she feels that the student has adequately addressed his/her concerns; it is not unusual for there to be more than one round of questions from each individual.
- Once this is completed, members of the audience will be invited to pose questions.
- Once the question period is completed, the student and audience will be asked to leave the room so that the thesis committee and external examiner may evaluate the acceptability of the thesis.
- During the deliberations, the **thesis supervisor** is responsible for documenting all suggested changes to the thesis (e.g., to the literature review, research questions, methods, results, discussion, conclusion) on the **Report on Thesis Examination (Appendix H)** form. This form documents not only the suggested revisions, but also the final decision regarding the assessment of the thesis.
- Each of the **thesis committee members** must sign the “*Report on Thesis Examination*” form.
- The form will then be distributed within one week of the Thesis Defence Presentation to the student, all thesis committee members, and the Administrative Coordinator (for the student’s file).
- Once received, the **student** will make the appropriate revisions as indicated in the *Report on Thesis Examination form* (if any) and resubmit as appropriate (i.e., to the thesis supervisor or thesis committee).
- Once the **supervisor** has accepted the revised document based *Report on Thesis Examination* he/she will complete and sign the *Department Recommendation of Thesis* form and submit it to the Administrative Coordinator for signature by the Graduate Coordinator.

### Assessment

The examination **committee’s** assessment of the thesis will fall into one of the following four categories:

1. Accepted
2. Accepted Subject to Revisions
  - a. Revisions are specified and the final document is reviewed and approved by the thesis supervisor
3. Appreciable Revisions Required
  - a. Revisions are specified and the final document is reviewed and approved by all members of the thesis committee
4. Thesis Rejected
  - a. A choice of “Thesis Rejected” means that the thesis is of insufficient worth to be counted as credit toward a Master’s degree. Please see [Faculty of Graduate Studies regulations](#)



Absent Committee Members

**Department of Health Sciences Policy on Absent Committee Members for Thesis Defence Presentation**

- It is assumed that **thesis committee members** will make every effort to attend the Thesis Defence Presentation – in person, or by video or teleconference.
- The presentation will not take place unless at least two committee members (one of which must be the supervisor) and the external examiner are present.
- In cases where two individuals are co-supervising the student, three thesis committee members must be present (including both the supervisor and co-supervisor).
- In the event that a **committee member cannot attend** the Thesis Defence Presentation, the thesis supervisor must contact the committee member and obtain a written document summarizing his/her questions to be posed during the presentation, assessment of the thesis, and suggested revisions.
- It is the responsibility of the **thesis supervisor** to ensure that this information is communicated during the oral presentation.
- If the **supervisor** is unable to obtain written feedback from the absent committee member prior to the Thesis Defence Presentation, the final decision on the acceptability of the thesis and completion of the *Examiner's Report on Thesis* form are **postponed** until such feedback may be obtained.



## 5. MASTER'S THESIS SUBMISSION

Please see the [Faculty of Graduate Studies Thesis Process \(Master's\)](#) for **current and additional information**. The Department of Health Sciences may have requirements that differ from the requirements of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Required forms – Submission of Thesis to Faculty of Graduate Studies

**Thesis Ready for Final Submission** (Appendix I – on FGS website)

**Recommendation of Thesis** (Appendix J – on FGS website)

Once the **supervisor** has accepted the revised document based *Report on Thesis Examination* he/she will complete and sign the **Thesis Ready for Final Submission** (Appendix I) and **Recommendation of Thesis** (Appendix J) form and submit it to the Administrative Coordinator for signature by the Graduate Coordinator.

5.a **The Department of Health Sciences** must submit the following forms to the faculty of graduate studies upon satisfactory completion of the thesis.

- Report on Thesis Examination
- Recommendation of Thesis

5.b The **student** must submit the following forms to the Faculty of Graduate Studies upon satisfactory completion of the thesis:

- Students are required to submit an electronic copy, in a locked pdf format
- License to the University  
Non-Exclusive License to Reproduce Theses