

MASTER'S THESIS

The thesis will deal with an aspect of Canadian history chosen in consultation with a supervisor and assessed by an internal and an external examiner. Acceptance of the thesis will be based ultimately on the assessment of the internal and the external examiners. The student will be required to provide an oral defense of the thesis.

A student is advised to determine the topic on which she/he plans to write as soon as possible and then begin contacting prospective supervisors within the Department. A given topic can be approved only if a faculty member has the expertise and the willingness to take on the responsibility of supervision. Please refer to the section in this Handbook on Faculty Teaching and Research Interests for further assistance. A supervisor must be secured by the end of the first term during the first year of the program. The Graduate Coordinator will assist students in finding an appropriate supervisor.

GUIDELINES FOR M.A. THESIS PROPOSAL

Once you and your thesis advisor have agreed on a topic, you will need to prepare a thesis proposal of approximately 3-4 pages (single-spaced) plus bibliography. This can be the most difficult part of the thesis writing process, as you are expected to have a fairly clear idea of what your thesis will accomplish before you have done much of the research. It is usual for theses to develop and change, however, so think of the proposal not as a rigid contract but as a declaration of intent. Your thesis topic will become more focused and refined as you carry on with your research and writing.

The thesis proposal should begin with a description of the main subject area in which you will work the time period which it will cover, and the key historical questions which you will investigate. Include a brief discussion of the work already done in this field and indicate what your thesis will contribute to this historiography. You may plan to explore primary resources which have not been used by historians before or to cast a new analytical perspective on documents already used by others. It is not necessary, at this point, to identify an overall "thesis" or principal argument, but you need to indicate what issues you intend to investigate in depth. If possible, suggest in your proposal how your thesis topic may break down into chapters, each of which will focus on a particular aspect of your project.

Your proposal also needs to include a discussion of the source materials and research methods you will use, e.g., archival sources, newspapers, private papers, government documents, oral history, a specific theoretical approach, etc. You will need to have done some secondary reading and investigated what primary sources are available, but your methodology may change substantially as you continue your work.

Also include in your proposal a tentative work schedule, indicating how long you may need for your research and when you will begin writing. Allow at least one month for each chapter, plus time for revisions.

Attach a full, formal bibliography of all the sources, primary and secondary, which you have already seen or intend to investigate. Although there will be many deletions and additions, this preliminary list can form the basis of your final bibliography.

Important Dates in the First Year of the Thesis Program:

June 1st thesis proposal due.

A resubmit deadline when necessary is August 1st.