

## **Policy Title: Graduate Thesis/Dissertation Policy**

**Parent Policy:** None

**Policy Administrator:** Vice Provost Research and Graduate Studies

**Approving Body:** GAC

**Approval History:** Graduate Academic Council; April 25, 2017, Motion #2016/17-014

### **Purpose:**

The objectives of this policy are:

- To ensure quality in written dissertations and oral exams
- To ensure that students, supervisors and administrators understand expectations and requirements in the process leading up to and following oral examinations
- To ensure compliance with Tri-Agency Open Access policy
- To ensure that graduate theses are registered and archived appropriately
- To define the criteria for the selection of supervisors, committees, and the external examiner, where applicable

**Scope of this Policy:** All thesis programs in the Faculty of Graduate Studies (i.e. both SGS and GSTS)

**Policy Statement:** All theses, dissertations and oral defences will be coordinated through the Office of Research and Graduate Studies. The Office of Research and Graduate Studies is responsible for all procedures and documentation to support thesis-track students and their supervisory committees. Normally, students will be assigned a supervisor in the first semester after placement in a thesis-track option of a masters degree program, or by the second year of a doctoral degree program. Continuity of supervision throughout the thesis or dissertation, in keeping with graduate supervision best practices, is strongly recommended; however, changes may be approved by the Graduate Program Director upon request. Upon approval by the Supervisory Committee, the thesis or dissertation will be forwarded by the Office of Research and Graduate Studies to the Third Reader or External Examiner for review. The ORGS in consultation with the Graduate Program Director is responsible to schedule the oral defense.

For masters-level theses, the third reader may be an internal examiner, preferably from a different program or department, or an external examiner. For doctoral-level dissertations, the third reader must be an external examiner. The Office of Research and Graduate Studies has responsibility for the identification of, approval of, and communication with external examiners.

The Office of Graduate Studies and Research is responsible for compliance with external requirements such as those of the Tri-Agency councils and Canada Graduate Scholarships, and for ensuring that a final grade is submitted to the Registrar and that the thesis or dissertation is archived appropriately.

## **Definitions:**

**Best Practices:** Includes the use of effective communication strategies through implementation of checklists, regular meetings with the supervisor, and annual progress reports.

**Supervisor:** Provides primary supervision and guidance at the outset and throughout the student's research, writing, and defence.

**Supervisory Committee:** 2 or more members consisting minimally of a primary supervisor and second reader

**Second Reader:** The supervisor will consult with graduate program faculty and/or the student in the selection of an appropriate second reader. The second reader may (but not necessarily) participate early in the development and throughout the thesis process until completion.

**Supervisory Committee Approval (SCA) form:** a signed consent form from the thesis student's committee to send the thesis to the external examiner. Upon a positive recommendation by the external examiner, the student will be allowed to proceed to an oral defence.

**Third Reader:** The third reader is selected by the Supervisory Committee because of their expertise in the thesis discipline. The Third Reader will receive the thesis for evaluation upon approval by the Supervisory Committee, but may be called upon to participate at any stage of the thesis process. Typically they have expertise in the field or in specific areas of the thesis research.

**External Examiner:** The external examiner is usually a doctorally prepared (or possesses the appropriate terminal degree), nationally or internationally recognized distinguished scholar with particular experience in the field of research. They must have no conflict of interest with either the student or thesis supervisor.

**Thesis Examination Committee:** Three or more scholars who adjudicate both the oral defence and written dissertation. The committee consists minimally of the Primary Supervisor, Second Reader, Third Reader or External Examiner.

**Exam Chair:** A non-voting member of tenure track TWU or ACTS faculty who ensures that policy and process are followed during the oral defence, that the defence forms are signed, and that the result is communicated both to the student and to the Office of Research & Graduate Studies. Typically, the Chair's expertise is in the same or a related discipline, but this is not an essential requirement.

**Oral Defence:** the oral examination, by the Supervisory Committee, of a thesis-track graduate student upon conclusion of a written thesis.

**Post-Defence:** includes thesis revisions, submission, and administrative requirements leading to grade submission by the Office of Graduate Studies.

**Tri-Agency Open Access Policy:** "The objective of this policy is to improve access to the results of Agency-funded research, and to increase the dissemination and exchange of research results. All researchers, regardless of funding support, are encouraged to adhere to this policy."

**Child Policies:** none

## **Monitoring Data:**

The VPRGS will report annually to the Provost and Senate the following:

- Compliance with this policy
- Number of graduate defences and theses successfully completed
- Number of failed oral defences or incomplete theses