

## PhD THESIS PROPOSAL

### **See also: Faculty of Graduate Studies Regulations and Department of Biological Sciences Supplemental Regulations (7.9 Thesis Proposal)**

All students must present a Thesis Proposal within the first 15 months of the program, and before the Candidacy Examination.

**Goals:** The goals of the Thesis Proposal and presentation are:

1. to test the student's ability to use the scientific method and formulate testable hypotheses
2. to examine the student's understanding in the area of specialization and identify specific weaknesses relevant to the proposed research-specialty area
3. to provide the student and the supervisor with a critical appraisal of the research proposed for the thesis
4. to test the student's ability to communicate in written and oral formats

**Format:** The Thesis Proposal will consist of a written proposal and a public presentation.

The *written* proposal will be submitted to the Advisory Committee by the student 1 week prior to the date of the presentation. The written proposal should be **5-10 pages** (excluding reference list, figures, tables, and appendices). Details of the methods and protocols can be placed in an appendix unless new methods will be developed specifically as part of the research. The proposal should be developed between the student and the advisor, in consultation with the Advisory Committee, and should be made available for general review within the department at least 1 week prior to the oral presentation.

The *presentation* will be a public 20-minute presentation to the department and should be understandable by a broad scientific audience. The presentation will be chaired by a member of the departmental Graduate Studies Committee designated by the Chair of that committee. The presentation should highlight the goals of the work, the research strategy, and the expected contribution to new knowledge. Details of methods and protocols should be avoided and replaced by a summary table or flow chart.

The Chair will provide for the audience a description of the expectations and the purpose of the presentation, at the beginning of the session.

After the presentation the audience will be allowed to ask questions for up to 15 minutes. The chair will then tell audience members to leave the meeting and the committee will then ask questions. The presentation and questioning by the committee will take no more than 2 hours. The Chair of the proposal presentation will provide the required form from the Faculty of Graduate Studies on the approval of the "PhD Thesis Proposal" for completion by the committee.

**Timing:** The Thesis Proposal and presentation will occur at a time specified by the Advisory Committee and a designate from the GSC, in the first 15 months after registration in the program but preceding the major portion of research toward the PhD thesis. These requirements are the

same for those students who enter the PhD program directly from a BSc Honours degree program.

Evaluation will be based on the written proposal, the clarity of the proposal presentation, and the student's ability to answer questions and respond to feedback. The Advisory Committee (and members of the audience, if they have constructive comments) will provide useful comments and suggestions for improving the proposal.

**Evaluation:** The Advisory Committee will meet in the absence of the student immediately following the presentation and questions to deliberate on the outcome of the proposal. If the proposal is deemed *satisfactory* (with or without minor revisions), the Advisory Committee can sign the thesis proposal form (<http://www.umanitoba.ca/graduate-studies/sites/graduate-studies/files/2020-07/phd-thesis-proposal.pdf>). The committee may ask to see a revised version within 2 weeks, or allow the supervisor to ensure the minor revisions are incorporated before submitting the proposal to the department office.

If, however, *major revisions* of the thesis proposal are required, the student will complete the revisions in conjunction with the supervisor and submit the revised proposal to the Advisory Committee within 2 weeks (timing may be extended with approval of the graduate chair). One week after the revision is submitted, the committee should then reconvene for a discussion of the revised proposal. The student is not required to give another public presentation although the committee may require another oral presentation. The committee may question the student for up to 1.5 hours. If the committee approves the revised proposal (with or without minor revisions), they can sign the thesis proposal form (see above link). If, however, the proposal revision is determined to be *unsatisfactory*, a Progress Report Form should be completed (<http://www.umanitoba.ca/graduate-studies/sites/graduate-studies/files/2020-07/interactive-progress-report.pdf>), and the student rating should be "Unsatisfactory", which will lead to withdrawal from the program.

A copy of the final proposal will be placed on file with the Student records in the department. Once the proposal is approved by the Advisory Committee, the form will be signed by the Department Head and returned to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.