The graduate thesis examination: An overview of policies and guidelines for students

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Case example:

- Debbie started her Master’s program in neuroscience in the Fall of 2012; she understood it was a two year program with a couple of required courses, lab work and a written thesis at the end.
- Her research had been going well and she expected to finish her degree by the summer of 2014 to start her B.Ed. at MUN in Sept.
- At her recent supervisory committee meeting (Jan. 2014), the final experiments were defined and she was strongly encouraged by her supervisory committee to put her thesis outline together and “start writing”.
- Unlike her undergraduate degree that had a fixed exam schedule, Debbie had no real idea what was involved to finish her graduate program besides the completion of the experimental work and the process of “writing-up”, which she heard was hard...
Debbie’s to-do list:

• Finish her research
• Prepare a thesis ready for examination
• Familiarize herself with the steps of “finishing off” her graduate degree...
Debbie’s Program of Study - Master’s program in neuroscience
(preparations for graduation)

Program audit (RGS)

(When? As soon as you know you are)

(RGS = Office of Research & Graduate Studies; SGS = School of Graduate Studies)
Program Audit

• Program of Study Requirements
  – Seminar series registration
  – Graduate course requirements
  – Animal care requirement
  – Supervisory committee changes
  – Thesis title
  – PHIA (Personal Health Information Act)
    http://www.mun.ca/sgs/current/PHIATraining.php

Who must take PHIA Training?
As the department responsible for all graduate programs, the School of Graduate Studies requires all graduate students who, at any time during their program, are required to take a course/practicum/internship/placement in Newfoundland and Labrador involving the use of personal health information to undertake PHIA training. If such training is a requirement for your program, it will be noted on the Program of Study form sent to graduate students at the time of admission, or added to a program through a Change of Program form upon consultation with a supervisor and/or Department Head.
Students – get to know your program of study form on file in RGS

Have all the requirements been met; if not, graduation will be delayed....

Have the requirements changed for your program (eg. did you take a different course than initially specified?); then a change of program form MUST be submitted to RGS
Debbie’s Program of Study - Master’s program in neuroscience
(preparations for graduation)

- Program audit (RGS)
  ✔

- Thesis preparation
  (student-supervisor) (months)
  + supervisory committee
  review of final draft and sign off) (weeks)

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Thesis preparation:
(is the subject of multiple upcoming Thesis Club sessions...)

- Academic writing for graduate students (tone and flow)*
  
  * Fundamentals of writing may be addressed with special workshops, writing courses, or individual appts. at The Writing Centre

- Citation management

- Borrowed illustrations and copyright considerations

- Workshop for digital image publishing (photoshop)
Debbie’s Program of Study - Master’s program in neuroscience (preparations for graduation)

- Program audit (RGS)
  - ✔
- Thesis preparation
  - Form sign off by supervisor and supervisory Committee members
  - ✔
- Thesis examination + forms
  - (8 ± 2 weeks) for written theses
  - Plus, variable timing for oral defence (PhD only)

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Submission Changes

As of June 2^{nd}, 2014 the thesis forms that were originally required to be submitted with the first thesis submission are now redundant.

The Supervisory Approval Form, is the only form that is required. All other prior thesis forms will be entered online (my.mun.ca) along with your final thesis submission.

All thesis submissions are reviewed and are required to be approved by Dr. Jules Doré, Assistant Dean, Research and Graduate Studies before RGS contacts potential examiners.

The copyright form may be submitted so that the Assistant Dean is aware of the copyright permissions status if you have any included.

RGS are working towards paperless thesis submission, so PDF versions are encouraged. If an examiner requests a paper copy of a thesis, RGS will contact the student to provide this.
MSc & PhD Thesis Process (Pt 1)

- **Supervisory Approval Form** -
  [http://www.mun.ca/sgs/supervisory_approval_fill.pdf](http://www.mun.ca/sgs/supervisory_approval_fill.pdf) *(Please ensure your committee circle “I concur” when they sign)*

- **MSc submission**, please circulate a **PDF version** of your thesis to [rgs.thesis@med.mun.ca](mailto:rgs.thesis@med.mun.ca).

- **PhD submission**, submit a PDF via e-mail or USB drive of your thesis to [rgs.thesis@med.mun.ca](mailto:rgs.thesis@med.mun.ca). Once the assistant dean has approved first submission please submit 4 paper copies.

- Please ensure the **cover page reflects the next date of convocation** (i.e. May or October of respective year).
MSc & PhD Thesis Process (Pt 2)

● Potential examiners are to be supplied by your supervisor. **They are to be confidential to you, the student.**

● If someone is submitting on your behalf please send our office a letter indicating whom you authorize to do this and sign the letter.

● Apply to Graduate via Memorial Self-Service - information is available at the following website regarding the procedure [http://www.mun.ca/regoff/graduation/apply_grad.php](http://www.mun.ca/regoff/graduation/apply_grad.php).

● Graduate students are responsible for graduate fees until the final thesis submission has been approved by the School of Graduate Studies (Recommendation for Award of Degree form).
Important dates for 2015 convocations:

• **January 12th, 2015** Final date for submission of Master's and Doctoral Theses and Reports for examination, by candidates who expect to receive their degree at the Spring Convocation 2015.

• **June 26th, 2015** Final date for submission of Master's and Doctoral Theses and Reports for examination, by candidates who expect to receive their degree at the Fall Convocation 2015.

• *Theses and Reports received after these dates will be processed as time and resources permit*
Theses have multiple examiners whose identities remain confidential during the exam process.

Master’s thesis

FofM external examiner  FofM internal examiner

PhD thesis

FofM external examiner  FofM internal examiners (×2)
What are the examiners looking for?

- **Good writing** (writing style and academic quality)
- Thoughtful presentation (error-free, reader-friendly)
- A coherent body of work
- Research significance of the work
- Quality of the work relative to other graduate theses they have examined (a response relevant to SGS awards nominations)
What choices do the examiners have?

MSc:
- Acceptable; without modifications
- Acceptable; modifications required but thesis does not require re-examination
- Unacceptable; thesis requires modifications and re-examination
- Totally unacceptable; thesis is failed

PhD:
- The candidate be allowed to proceed to oral defence
- The candidate not be allowed to proceed to oral defence
- The thesis should be failed
M.Sc. thesis outcomes: 2012-2014
(Faculty of Medicine only)

25% re-examination rate
75% pass with revisions
PhD thesis outcomes: 2012-2014
(Faculty of Medicine only)

PhD
22 % re-examination rate
78 % pass with revisions
Thesis Forms

Please submit the following forms with your thesis:

● Supervisory Approval Form - 
  http://www.mun.ca/sgs/supervisory_approval_fill.pdf (Please ensure your committee circle “I concur” when they sign)

● Request to Include Copyright Material/
  http://www.mun.ca/sgs/copyright_fill.pdf (Complete only if this applies to your thesis)
Debbie’s Program of Study - Master’s program in neuroscience (preparations for graduation)

- Program audit (RGS)
  ✔️
- Thesis preparation
  Form sign off by supervisor and supervisory Committee members
  ✔️
- Thesis Examination (passed)
  ✔️
- Thesis
  Revisions complete;
  Final thesis submission form;
  RGS head signature;
  SGS receives “Recommendation for Award of Graduate Degree” form = final date of program

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Final steps to graduate (medicine)

The SGS deadline for final thesis submission for convocation/fees purposes is **September 24th, 2014**.

In order to ensure RGS make the SGS deadline in a timely matter we are requesting that the thesis be submitted to RGS by **September 19th, 2014**.

Final date for Departments to submit Recommendation for Award of Degree in order for graduate students to be deregistered from Graduate Registration 9000/Medicine 9900 without incurring any liability for continuance fees, Fall semester 2014.

**PART A**

**Final Thesis Departmental Approval (Assistant Dean, Research & Graduate Studies):**

The following documentation is required to be submitted to the Research & Graduate Studies office:

- **Recommendation for Award of Degree form** (The form must be signed by your supervisor and supervisory committee before it will be considered for approval by RGS) *Signature of Head of Academic Unit is the Assistant Dean, Research and Graduate Studies.*

- A **PDF version** of corrected thesis on USB drive or e-mail to rgs.thesis@med.mun.ca

- *Please include with your corrected copy, a summary of the changes made, addressing each comment made by the reviewers.*

- Cover page of a final thesis, is always the date of convocation (month and year of graduation) not the submission date i.e. October 2014.

- Once the Assistant Dean approves the Recommendation for Award of Degree, RGS will scan the form to SGS for final approval.
Final steps to graduate (medicine)

**PART B**

*Final Thesis Submission via my.mun.ca*

**The Recommendation for Award of Degree form must be signed by the Assistant Dean, Research & Graduate Studies, Faculty of Medicine before a student is permitted to submit their final thesis via my.mun.ca.**

- Log on to [my.mun.ca](https://login.mun.ca/cas/login?service=https://my.mun.ca/Login)
- Click the **Student’s Tab** at the top
- Click the **Open Form** button in the **eThesis box** located at the bottom on the page.
- **Step 1**: Thesis information (Complete the required information).
- **Step 2**: Upload PDF version of Thesis/ supplementary files i.e. Copyright form
- **Step 3**: Review and Submit
Thesis-related resources

● The School of Graduate Studies *Guidelines for theses and reports* may be found at

● Thesis Writing retreats (5 days), April and August for PhD students only; registration required

● Thesis Club (FofM)

● The Writing Centre (MUN campus)
  [http://www.mun.ca/writingcentre](http://www.mun.ca/writingcentre)