



Graduate Studies in Education

MEd Thesis Handbook



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[MEd and SGS Thesis Final Submission Process](#)

## Introduction

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The *Thesis* presents a significantly different educational experience from course work. It demands a high degree of personal commitment, responsibility, self-direction and self-monitoring. As well, there is an expectation of collegial work with a supervisor or co-supervisors. The following overview of the process for completing the thesis may provide you with a sense of direction and clarify some of the personal demands that may be made on your time and resources. Since a support system is essential during the research process, your family and friends may also wish to read some of the following:

Balain, E.S. (1998). *How to design, analyze, and write doctoral or masters research*. Latham, Md.: University Press of America.

Hunt, D.E. & Cole, A. (Eds.). (1994). *The doctoral thesis journey: Reflections from travelers and guides*. Toronto: OISE Press. (See in particular pp. 83-89).

Ogden, E.H. (1991). *Completing your doctoral dissertation or master's thesis*. Lancaster PA: Technomic Publishing.

### What is a Thesis?

A thesis is defined as a formal study, examination or investigation of an issue, problem or question that is of significant importance to the candidate's field and to the general field of education. Within the M.Ed. program, the thesis has a program weighting of twelve (12) course credits. Specifically the thesis will have three main components, a research study, an Oral Defence, and a formal bound report of that study. It is expected that, once having elected to engage in a thesis and being granted permission to engage in a thesis, a candidate will conduct and report on research that is designed to provide new and useful information about the issue defined.

Any of the various social science research methodologies may be used in the completion of a thesis. These include (but not exclusively) field experiment, survey, case study, historiography and naturalistic, qualitative study (including arts-based inquiry, auto-ethnography, and narrative inquiry), and action research. While much educational research is applied, addressing practical issues confronting educators, it may take many forms. For example, some studies involve methodical observation, with the collection and analysis of empirical data. Other forms of current educational research focus on philosophical analysis or the development of theory.

While a variety of approaches are open to the candidate, there is an expectation that the candidate will ground the engaged research in an appropriate theoretical framework. Associated with this, the candidate will complete a thorough review of the pertinent literature and reported research.

### How do I get started?

The identification of a research topic for a thesis and the clarification of an issue, problem or question, that is both significant and researchable, usually takes a considerable amount of time and thought. You are encouraged to begin the process of finding a research topic early in your program. For many candidates this process may begin with personal experiences and observations that lead to the identification of a general area of interest (e.g., learner motivation) and related personal questions (e.g., How might I encourage and motivate the reluctant learner to become self-engaged?).

The course work during the Master of Education program, including informal discussion with faculty and colleagues, may provide additional ideas and opportunities for topic clarification. Another important source of information in this process may be the feedback that you receive from the completion of course assignments.

## **The Supervisory Committee – Roles and Responsibilities**

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In summary, the Supervisory Committee consists of the Supervisor(s) and a Second Reader. The role of the committee is to provide support to the student by broadening and deepening the range of expertise available, offering advice on coursework and Thesis preparation, and assessing the student's work.

### **Research Supervisor or Co-Supervisors**

All students who are completing a Thesis will work with a Research Supervisor, who should be a full Graduate Faculty member. Since the nature of the supervision and the quality of communication between graduate students and their Supervisor(s) can greatly affect their graduate education, students should work closely and effectively with their Supervisor(s) to improve the quality of their research.

Supervisors should be available to help their graduate students at every stage, including the formulation of their thesis research proposal, establishing methodologies, completing the Research Ethics Board Protocol (<http://www.nipissingu.ca/reb/Form.asp>), if required, selecting a Second Reader, completing the research, discussing results and presentation of research, and preparing for the Oral Defence. The Supervisor(s) will have completed the Research Ethics Board TCPS2 Online Tutorial. Supervisors must also ensure that students' work meets the standards of the University and the academic discipline.

Some specific responsibilities of Research Supervisors are to:

- assist the student with the selection and planning of a suitable and manageable research topic
- be sufficiently familiar with the field of research to provide guidance and/or have a willingness to acquire any additional knowledge required to fulfill efficiently the role of Supervisor
- be accessible to the student for consultation and discussion of the student's academic progress and research. The frequency of meetings will vary according to the program, stage of work, nature of the project, degree of autonomy of the student, full- or part-time status
- respond in a timely and thorough manner to written work submitted by the student, with constructive suggestions for improvement and continuation
- make arrangements to ensure continuity of supervision when absent for long periods of time
- assist the student in developing an awareness of current graduate program requirements, deadlines, and sources of funding
- encourage the student to complete their degree requirements in a timely manner
- ensure that the names of the External Examiners for examination committees are provided to the Graduate Chair in a timely manner
- assist the student in complying with changes that need to be made to the Thesis following the defence

### **Second Reader**

The Second Reader should be a member of the Graduate Faculty in the Schulich School of Education.

Some specific roles are to:

- read the Thesis proposal before final submission and provide feedback
- in collaboration with the Supervisor(s), provide ongoing advice and/or guidance
- be second reader for the final Thesis
- serve as a member of the Examination/Oral Defence Committee
- participate in the questioning of the candidate during the Defence and assess the candidate's responses
- evaluate the entire Thesis
- cast a vote in the final determination of the acceptability of the Thesis and Oral Defence

## Initial Steps in Developing a Thesis

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Listed below are the first steps that a candidate will follow after s/he has decided to pursue the thesis route:

### 1. Identification of a Thesis Topic

The first step in the thesis process is the identification of a thesis topic and the development of an overview of the candidate's research focus of about three pages in length.

### 2. Selection of a Research Supervisor or Co-Supervisors

Once the candidate has produced a thesis topic overview, s/he will choose a full-time member of the Education faculty who has full graduate faculty status to function as the candidate's Research Supervisor(s). Several factors will fall into play in this decision. The most important of these will be the focus of the study and the areas of faculty expertise. Although an exact match is not essential, Supervisors should be a member of the Education graduate faculty who understands most closely the candidate's thesis topic and the underlying concepts, current literature and issues associated with the proposed research. The candidate may contact their Faculty Advisor for assistance. Candidates may be required to create another thesis topic in order to find a Supervisor with necessary expertise.

A list of current GSE faculty members who are eligible to supervise theses or major research papers, and the specific areas of interest and expertise in which they are willing to act as Supervisors or Second Readers is available at <http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/graduate-studies/master-of-education/Pages/Research-Supervisor.aspx>

### 3. Selection of the Second Reader

The Supervisor(s), with the candidate, will select a suitable Second Reader who is a member of the Education faculty and who has full or associate graduate faculty status. This Second Reader should be chosen for her/his expertise in some aspect of the research being undertaken.

If a suitable Second Reader is not available among the Education faculty, the Supervisor(s) may identify a reader who is external to the Education faculty (but still a full-time member of Nipissing University). This should be done only on **very rare** occasions when all other avenues have been exhausted. Under no circumstances must a Second Reader be used in this capacity when Supervisor(s) are also external to the Education Faculty.

### 4. Registration in EDUC 5454: Thesis

Once a Supervisor or Co-Supervisors and Second Reader has been chosen, the student must complete the *MRP/Thesis/Dissertation Application* available on the School of Graduate studies website (<http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/graduate-studies/forms-procedures/Pages/Forms.aspx>) and forward it to the Supervisor(s) and Second Reader for signature. The signed application must be submitted to the GSE Office for approval by the Assistant VP–Academic and Research before the candidate may register in the course.

### 5. School of Graduate Studies Supervision Agreement

The Supervision Agreement is available on the School of Graduate Studies website (<http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/graduate-studies/graduate-administration/Pages/default.aspx>)

The Supervision Agreement provides context for discussion between supervisors and graduate students registered in a thesis or MRP program and establishes guidelines for supervision. The student and Supervisor are strongly encouraged to complete the School of Graduate Studies Supervision Agreement prior to beginning any research and no later than the submission of the first Progress Report for the student.

## Thesis Writing Guidelines

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This section of the handbook discusses the steps in completing a thesis and the guidelines that assist in completing this process. These steps range from the initial development of a proposal through to the thesis that will be presented for internal and external examination (each of which is described in detail below)

### 1. Development of a Thesis Proposal

The development of a carefully considered research proposal is very important for the successful completion of a thesis and will ultimately form the foundation of your thesis. Working in close collaboration with your Supervisor(s), you will ensure that the research questions or phenomenon to be studied, methodology, and data analysis procedures have been planned in detail and carefully considered to ensure that they are complete, feasible, and ethical. The nature of the proposed research will, in part, determine the length of the proposal; however, 10-20 (double-spaced) pages is considered an appropriate length. Although some of the following elements of a complete proposal may be combined or rearranged somewhat, a properly constructed research proposal should address the following:

**Background and Significance of the Phenomenon/Thesis Problem:** In order to set the stage for the study, the problem you are planning to investigate should be introduced and clarified at the outset of the proposal. Included in this introduction will be a description of the significance of the problem and an explanation as to the importance of the proposed study in terms of the field of knowledge and the problem being addressed.

**Literature Review:** The literature review continues the process of setting the stage for your study. Typically relevant literature and research are used to provide historical background to establish present thinking about the research problem in question. In doing so, further evidence of the relevance of the problem to the professional community is provided. The review of previous studies and thinking provides a rationale for the approach used in the proposed study. In this regard, the information from the literature may be used in several ways in both the formulation and justification of the research methods employed. One way is to assemble various successful strategies and supporting reasoning from several studies. Another is to critique the shortcomings of previous research and then present an approach designed to overcome the recognized inadequacies.

**Theoretical Framework:** Theories can be utilized in a number of key ways in educational research. For example, because theories provide explanations for phenomena, they may be used in the formulation of and justification for hypotheses, research questions and research methods. The inadequacies of a theory's ability to explain related phenomena may also be examined. The relationship between theory and practice and how one informs the other may also be considered. Whatever the case, theory provides an important conceptual lens through which to view the object of study. **The recognition and use of theory is essential to good research;** therefore, a thorough understanding and articulation of how relevant theory will be used in your thesis will be a key element of the proposal.

**Research Questions and/or Hypotheses:** The formulation and clarification of one or more research questions is central to the design of a workable research study. Properly stated questions establish the focus and the direction of the study. When properly crafted they are (i) researchable, meaning that data may be collected to answer the question; (ii) feasible in terms of the time required to complete the study, resources required, etc.; (iii) clearly stated; (iv) significant; and (v) ethical in that the related research will not cause physical or psychological harm to human subjects. As might be expected, the creation of good questions requires a considerable amount of background knowledge and thought. Foreshadowing questions are a particular type of broad research question that guides many studies using qualitative methodology.

Hypotheses, which predict what might be the case in a certain situation or what might happen as a result of some treatment or experience, may also be stated. Hypotheses may complement research questions. They are particularly useful when the research involves experimental methodology and statistical analysis.

**Method:** The review of literature and course work, in the Master of Education Program, will provide a variety of ideas about suitable research methods for your study. In almost all cases, candidates will not find a ready-made method that can be used directly. Instead they will need to synthesize a set of methods that is appropriate to and feasible within the context of their proposed studies. Method is tied directly to the research questions. Indeed it is often the case that a workable set of methods is identified before the final versions of the research questions are articulated.

A detailed description of methods must be provided in the proposal statement. When applicable, the method outline should include such elements as the following:

- **Rationale for Research Method:** In this section of your thesis you should outline the research methods you will use, including procedures for the collection of data (interview, questionnaire, audio/videotaping, experimentation, etc.) and the specific data analysis techniques you intend to employ (qualitative and/or quantitative techniques). In addition, you will provide a rationale for these procedures and techniques, with support from the literature.
- **Study Sample:** If your thesis research involves human subjects you will need to describe the population of subjects that will be represented within your study. Following this description you will outline the process you will use in identifying the specific sample subjects you intend to involve.
- **Data Description and Preparation:** You must clearly describe the data that you will gather. For example, if you intend to videotape participants in a professional setting and later audiotape interviews with them, what constitutes the data you will use in your study? Will you use transcribed videotaped records and/or transcribed audiotaped interviews? How will you prepare these data – unedited or edited? If they will be edited, what guidelines will you follow for the editing process?
- **Data Analysis:** The processes you will use to analyze the data need to be described very thoroughly. If you anticipate using a specific statistical program, such as SPSS, or content analysis program, such as ATLAS, this needs to be described. As well you will need to outline clearly the analysis techniques you intend to employ. The literature that supports the use of these techniques will be included in this section.
- **Resources Required:** If, in the collection of your data or its analysis, you will require special equipment or materials, these need to be outlined in this section. Here is where you might discuss the sources of any computer programs you will be using.
- **Ethical Considerations:** You must take into consideration ethical issues that might arise during the selection of your sample, the collection of data or the analysis of that data. You will discuss those issues here.
- **References:** A reference list should be limited to the actual materials consulted to date. The references used in your study will be checked by the thesis examination committee, to ensure accuracy in citation and to determine effective use of the citations in your literature review and theoretical framework. The reference list must be properly formatted according to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (available in the library as well as in the Campus Bookstore).

American Psychological Association. (July 2010). *Publication Manual* (6<sup>th</sup> Edition), Washington, DC: APA; ISBN-10: 1433805618

While each thesis proposal will be unique, based on each student's research topic, theoretical positioning, selected methodology, and Research Supervisor(s), there are similarities that exist. Appendix One contains sample thesis proposal outlines.

## 2. Approval of the Thesis Proposal

Once the Supervisor(s) and the Second Reader have concluded that the proposal is acceptable, they, as well as the GSE Chair, will complete and sign the Thesis Proposal Approval Form (<http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/graduate-studies/forms-procedures/Pages/Forms.aspx>). This form will be forwarded to the GSE office for registration.

## 3. Ethical Review

If the research involves human participants, the candidate must obtain permission from the Nipissing University Research Ethics Board (REB) to conduct the research. Please visit our REB website: <http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/research-services/ethics/reb/Pages/default.aspx>. *Please note that students intending to complete research involving **self-study/auto-ethnographic methodologies** will also be required to prepare an ethics application to NUREB who will decide whether a formal certificate of ethics is required for the particular project and/or research context.*

Prior to submitting the REB Protocol students are required to complete the Research Ethics Tutorial found at: <http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/research-services/ethics/reb/Pages/Ethics-Application-Procedure.aspx> and submit the certificate generated at the end of the tutorial to their research supervisor.

*Please note that a Change to Research Supervisor or a Request to Switch Routes (from MRP to Research Project) that is approved after Nipissing University Research Ethics Board (NUREB) Approval has been granted may have NUREB implications that must be discussed with the Research Supervisor.*

## 4. Completion of the Research and Thesis

Once formal approval of the thesis proposal has been granted, you may begin your study. You should continue to work closely with your Supervisor(s) and keep your Supervisor(s) informed of progress. ***Regularly scheduled meetings and a series of check-in points will keep you on track.***

Your thesis report will *normally* consist of the following sections and/or address the following areas throughout your writing:

- An abstract of approximately 150 words
- Background and significance of the thesis problem
- Literature review
- Theoretical framework
- Research questions and/or hypothesis
- Method
- Results of the study
- Discussion of the results in relation to the research problem, questions and/or hypothesis
- Conclusions concerning the importance of the study findings in relation to the problems, implications for professional practice, strengths and weaknesses of the study and suggestions for further research
- References
- Appendices

Generally a thesis will consist of approximately 100-200 pages, single-sided, double-spaced.



All thesis drafts submitted for review to your Supervisor(s) and members of the Examination Committee must be in the proper format and free of spelling and grammatical errors. Refer to the M.Ed. Thesis Formatting Guidelines in Appendix Two of this document.

Finally, you might also choose to download the electronic template and style guide that has been prepared to assist you in your digital formatting and assist with such things as proper placement of page numbers, automatic generation of table of contents, etc. This can be found at:

<http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/graduate-studies/master-of-educaton/MEd-thesis-and-major-research-paper/Pages/Digital-APA-Template.aspx>.

## **Examination and Approval of the Thesis**

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Examination and approval of the thesis involves multiple levels of internal and external examination as well as a formal Oral Defence.

### **Internal Acceptance**

The Supervisor, in conjunction with the second reader and candidate decide when the thesis is ready for Defence. In the very rare instance that the Second Reader and the Supervisor(s) cannot agree on the readiness of the thesis for Defence, they will consult the GSE Chair to work towards a resolution. If no consensus can be reached, or if extenuating circumstances exist (i.e., the Second Reader has retired, moved on, on sabbatical, etc), the Supervisor(s) and the GSE Chair will then, in concert, select another suitable Second Reader.

### **External Acceptance**

The Supervisor(s) and the Second Reader will use the SGS External Examiners' Recommendation form to present to the GSE Chair the names of two individuals to serve as the External Examiner, one of whom who will be selected and invited to be a member of the Examination Committee. The form is available on the SGS website (<http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/graduate-studies/forms-procedures/Pages/Forms.aspx>). We recommend that this form be submitted 6-8 weeks in advance of the anticipated Oral Defence to facilitate timing and commitment.

The External Examiner should be a Graduate Faculty member with equivalent status to a Graduate Faculty member. The individuals must be external to Nipissing University, and must be at arm's length from the candidate and Supervisor(s) (that is, s/he cannot have vested interest, positive or negative, in the outcome of the examination). The External Examiner must not have been involved in the supervision and direction of the Thesis and must be in a position to render an objective and impartial assessment of the quality of the work.

Once the GSE Chair selects the potential external examiner, GSE will send her/him a letter or e-mail of introduction to confirm the individual's willingness and availability to act as External Examiner and to confirm the review timeline. Once a positive response has been received, GSE will forward the draft thesis and the *External Examiner's Report* to the external examiner. The External Examiner will have a minimum of two weeks and ideally up to four weeks to review the draft and submit the report. S/he will also be asked whether s/he believes that this thesis is ready to be successfully defended. Once a positive response has been garnered from the external member along with potential meeting times, a date for Oral Defence will be set as soon as reasonably possible by the research supervisor, the internal second reader, the GSE Chair and student in concert. The GSE Chair will announce the date, time and place of the Oral Defence.

## **The Examination Committee – Roles and Responsibilities**

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The Examination Committee for all Master's Thesis students consists of the Supervisory Committee plus an External Examiner, who shall be external to Nipissing University, and the Assistant Vice President Research and Graduate Studies or Designate, who shall be a faculty member of the Senate Graduate Committee. The Assistant Vice President Research and Graduate Studies or Designate or the Graduate Chair's or Graduate Advisor's designate, shall chair the examination.

The role of the Examination Committee is to:

- read the Thesis document prior to the Oral Defence
- attend the student's Oral Defence in person or by video or teleconference call
- ask the student questions related to the Thesis research
- decide on the outcome of the examination
- provide the student with a written description of the outcome of the Defence including any changes required to the written document
- sign the Examination Committee Report at the time of Oral Defence and the Signature Page according to the signature requirements.

The Examination Committee shall consist of the following members:

a) *The Committee Chairperson*

- Is the Dean/Assistant Vice President Research and Graduate Studies or Designate OR the Chair of the GSE Program or Designate
- Is an *ex-officio* (non-voting) member
- Opens and closes the examination proceedings
- Instructs guests at the Defence that they may not participate in any way during the Defence
- Monitors the length and conduct of the candidate's presentation
- Sets the order of questioners and the length of their question periods
- Does not comment or participate in the questioning
- Intervenes if questioning becomes inappropriate
- Deals with behaviour that interferes with the proper conduct of the examination
- Requests student and guests to withdraw for the *in camera* discussion
- Moderates *in camera* discussion on the merits of the thesis, the candidate's oral presentation and responses to questions, and other relevant matters
- Calls for a vote and recommendation
- Recalls the candidate and advises her/him of the recommendations that are to be made to the Office of the Dean of the Schulich School of Education
- Recalls the guests for comments and questions
- Is responsible for sending the *Thesis Examiners' Recommendation Report* (<http://www.nipissingu.ca/graduatestudies/forms.asp>) to the Office of the Dean of the Schulich School of Education

b) *Research Supervisor*

- Participates in the questioning of the candidate, evaluating both the thesis and the candidate's responses at the Oral Defence, and provides a written description to student of the outcome of the Defence including any changes required to the written document
- Casts a vote in the final determination of the acceptability of the thesis and Oral Defence
- Must be a full member of the Nipissing University Graduate Faculty

c) *Second Reader*

- Participates in the questioning of the candidate, evaluates the thesis and the candidate's responses, and provides a written description to student of the outcome of the Defence including any changes required to the written document
- Casts a vote in the final determination of the acceptability of the thesis and Oral Defence
- Must be a full or associate member of the Nipissing University Graduate Faculty

d) *External Examiner*

- Has an established reputation in the special field of the thesis
- Is able to judge whether the thesis would be acceptable at a comparable university
- Includes in the External Examiner's Report a recommendation on whether or not the Thesis should proceed to Oral Defence. If the recommendation is not to proceed, the report should also include what, if anything, would be required to make the Thesis acceptable
- Participates in the questioning of the candidate, evaluates both the thesis and the candidate's responses at the Oral Defence, and provides a written description to student of the outcome of the Defence including any changes required to the written document
- Casts a vote in the final determination of the acceptability of the thesis and Oral Defence
- Is or has been a full-time member of an AUCC-affiliated Faculty of Education (or equivalent) and has had extensive experience in graduate education

## **Procedures during the Oral Defence**

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Oral Defences are open (advertised to the Nipissing University community). As a result, a Defence may be videoconferenced to our two other campuses. At the beginning of the Defence, the Chair will instruct guests, attending either in person or via videoconference, that they **MAY NOT** participate in any way during the Defence. Guests will have an opportunity to comment or ask questions after the Defence.

Once all members of the examining committee and the candidate have assembled in the designated examining room, the Chair will review the procedures to be followed for the Oral Defence. These will be listed on an "Agenda of Examination" created by the Chair and distributed to all participants beforehand. The candidate will then make a presentation about her/his thesis that will be limited to a maximum of **twenty minutes**.

Two official rounds of questioning will then take place. Each examiner will have the opportunity to pose a question (and a follow-up question if required) to the candidate in each of the two rounds. These questions must be related to, if not directly covered in, the thesis.

*First Round of Questioning:* Questioning in this round is individual, with no interventions from other members of the Examination Committee. It is normal to begin with the External Examiner, proceed to the Second Reader, and finally the Supervisor.

*Second Round of Questioning:* As with the first round, questioning will continue to be individual, beginning with the External Examiner, then the Second Reader, and finally the Supervisor(s) to conclude the formal part of the oral examination.

To finish the examination, informal questions may then come from any of the examiners, and comments and general discussion may take place. The duration of this part of the examination will be at the discretion of the Chair. However, the total duration of the entire examination should not exceed two hours and preferably should be less.

When questioning is concluded, the candidate may wish to make a brief final statement (usually one minute). The Chair will then request that the student and guests withdraw, and the Chair will lead an *in camera* session to reach a decision as to the outcome of the Oral Defence. Initially, only the student will be recalled to hear the outcome of the examination. Thereafter, the guests will be recalled for comments and questions. **This discussion is also moderated by the Chair.**

#### **Examination through Alternative Technologies**

In exceptional circumstances, alternative technologies such as video- or teleconferencing can be made available for oral examinations of graduate work. However, such an occurrence would have to be approved by both the Chair of the M.Ed. Program and the Dean of the Faculty of Education.

Should the candidate be unable to attend in person, s/he must request, in writing, an oral examination by an alternative technology, signed by the supervisor. Within this petition, a rationale for this examination mode must be made for each and any variance. The request for variance should be submitted to the Chair and the Dean for consideration no later than three weeks prior to the Oral Defence.

In the event that a member of the Examination Committee is unable to attend in person, alternative technology may be made available. However, no more than one member of an Examination Committee may be linked to the examination process through alternative means. In the event that the Chair and/or the Dean do not permit the use of alternative technologies, the Oral Defence must be postponed until such a time when all committee members and the candidate can be present in person. This postponement may necessitate the assignment of new committee members and the re-initiation of the Oral Defence process.

#### **Recommendations of the Examining Committee**

*The examining committee may reach one of the following four recommendations: (refer to the School of Graduate Studies Thesis Examination Committee Report form at <http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/graduate-studies/forms-procedures/Pages/Forms.aspx> for a definition of the recommendations).*

**RECOMMENDATION (1): Unconditional Pass (accepted as submitted)**

**RECOMMENDATION (2): Conditional pass with minor revisions**

**RECOMMENDATION (3): Conditional pass with major revisions**

**RECOMMENDATION (3): Fail**

**RECOMMENDATION (4): Adjourned**

Once a decision has been reached, the Chair will immediately invite the candidate back into the examining room and convey the decision.

## **Final Thesis Presentation**

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Once your Oral Defence is completed, you have made the changes resulting from the defence, and final approval has been given by your Examination Committee, you will be required to submit two digital copies and three bound copies of the revised Thesis to the School of Graduate Studies. Please refer to the [MEd and SGS Thesis Final Submission Process](#).

## **Scheduling the Oral Defence and Final Submission**

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For candidates who wish to participate in the June convocation, the final submission date of the bound thesis MUST be on or before April 30 of that year. The following is a “longest time” timeline that the Defence process may take from the time the draft is sent to the Second Reader:

January 1	Second Reader receives the thesis
February 1	Second Reader’s Positive Response and External Examiner receives the thesis
March 1	External Examiner’s Positive Response and Oral Defence date announced
April 1	Oral Defence
April 30	Submission of bound thesis (if Unconditional Pass recommendation was made)
June	Convocation

[Refer to the website for the ideal M.Ed. Defence Dates](#)

## M.Ed. Thesis Process Overview

<b>Step 1</b>	<p><b>Faculty Advisor</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps select courses (beyond core), if necessary</li> <li>• Suggests route – thesis, major research paper, research project</li> <li>• May assist with topic outline</li> <li>• May assist with the selection of a Research Supervisor</li> </ul>
<b>Step 2</b>	<p><b>Research Supervisor(s) and Second Reader</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should be member of M.Ed. faculty with similar research interests</li> <li>• See list of M.Ed. faculty at: <a href="http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/graduate-studies/master-of-education/Pages/Finding-a-Research-Supervisor.aspx">http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/graduate-studies/master-of-education/Pages/Finding-a-Research-Supervisor.aspx</a></li> <li>• Complete MRP/Thesis Application form: <a href="http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/graduate-studies/forms-procedures/Pages/Forms.aspx">http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/graduate-studies/forms-procedures/Pages/Forms.aspx</a> and submit to the Supervisor(s) and Second Reader for signature and furtherance to the GSE Office</li> <li>• Register for the Thesis course</li> <li>• Assists in developing a thesis proposal, completing the Research Ethics Board Protocol, if required, selecting an internal second reader, completing the research and thesis and preparing for the thesis defence</li> </ul>
<b>Step 3</b>	<p><b>Proposal Development/Approval</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in collaboration with Research Supervisor(s) and second reader</li> <li>• Complete MRP/Thesis Proposal Approval form: <a href="http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/graduate-studies/forms-procedures/Pages/Forms.aspx">http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/graduate-studies/forms-procedures/Pages/Forms.aspx</a> and submit to the GSE Office</li> </ul>
<b>Step 4</b>	<p><b>Ethical Review, if required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete tutorial: <a href="http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/education/tutorial-didacticiel/">http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/education/tutorial-didacticiel/</a></li> <li>• Print certificate</li> <li>• Complete Research Ethics Protocol: <a href="http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/research-services/ethics/reb/Pages/default.aspx">http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/research-services/ethics/reb/Pages/default.aspx</a></li> <li>• Also ethics approval from board, agency, organization</li> </ul>
<b>Step 5</b>	<p><b>Completion of Research and Thesis Writing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work closely with your Research Supervisor(s) and keep your Supervisor(s) informed of your progress</li> </ul>
<b>Step 6</b>	<p><b>Thesis Defence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acceptance by Second Reader</li> <li>• Research Supervisor(s) and Second Reader recommend External Examiner</li> <li>• External Examiner invited by GSE Chair</li> <li>• Acceptance by External Examiner</li> <li>• Thesis Oral Defence</li> </ul>
<b>Step 7</b>	<p><b>Thesis Presentation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make changes as required</li> <li>• Final Approval of Research Supervisor(s)</li> <li>• <a href="#">MEd and SGS Final Submission Process</a></li> </ul>

**Appendix A –  
Sample Proposal Outline 1**

(Intervention-based proposal using quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection)

**Outline**

<b>Proposal Headings</b>	<b>Considerations</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>Purpose of the Study</b> <b>Context of the Study</b>	Why this topic?
<b>Research Questions</b>	Describe the political, educational, personal, and social contexts for your study. What do you intend to focus on in your research?
<b>Anticipated Outcomes</b>	
What are the possible benefits of your study? What do you hope to gain?	
<b>Rationale and Literature Review</b>	Offer a rationale for why you selected this particular study and research question(s). Situate your study historically, socially, and theoretically within the available literature and research that pertains to your topic.
<b>Methodology/Method</b>	
<b>Target Population</b>	What methodology do you intend to use and why?
<b>Potential Risk</b>	Who will be participating in your study? For what reasons did you select this population?
<b>Procedures</b>	What risks might exist for participants in your study? How will you attempt to control for these risks?
<b>Data Collection</b>	How will you conduct your research in practical terms?
<b>Data Analysis</b>	How do you intend to obtain your data? How do you intend to interpret your data?



## Sample Proposal Outline 2

(appropriate for Qualitative Methods that include Narrative Inquiry, Autoethnography, Ethnography, Action Research, etc.)

(Proposal outline provided by C. Shields;  
adapted from F.M. Connelly, OISE/UT, 1995)

### Outline

Proposal Headings	Considerations
<b>Phenomenon</b>	<i>What</i> do you intend to focus on in your research?
<b>Justification</b>	<i>Why</i> this topic? What is the personal and/or social significance of your choice of research topic?
<b>Methodology/Method</b>	Note: Some literature may fit here to substantiate your choice of topic. <i>How</i> do you intend to go about your research in both theoretical and practical terms? What methodology are you intending to use and why? What method(s) will you use within your chosen methodology to obtain your data?
<b>Theory/Literature</b>	<i>Contextualize</i> your research framework socially and theoretically by placing your study within the literature(s) available that pertain to your topic.
<b>Positioning</b>	<i>Contextualize</i> your research position relative to points of view of other researchers, programs and/or ideological perspectives on the phenomenon you are researching.
<b>Analysis or Interpretation</b>	<i>How</i> do you intend to move from your field text to your research text? <i>How</i> do you intend to go about interpreting your data?
<b>What's Special</b>	<i>Why</i> are you choosing to go about your study in the particular way you have chosen? What might you be able to know about your phenomenon using the methodology and method(s) chosen that could not be known in the same way using other methodologies and methods?

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## Appendix B

### MEd Thesis Formatting Guidelines

#### *Graduate Studies in Education*

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These guidelines cover formatting requirements for thesis submissions specific to Graduate Studies in Education. Candidates should also check with their supervisors for specific requirements as to style. Once the Oral Defence is completed and the Examination Committee has approved the revised thesis, the student is required to submit two digital copies and three bound copies of the revised thesis to the School of Graduate Studies as outlined in the [MEd Thesis Final Submission Process](#).

Bound submissions should be original or superior copies of the thesis. Characters should be black, evenly spaced, neat, and dense. Faint or broken lettering will not reproduce well in the digital version. For best reproduction results, use a laser printer or a letter-quality printer where the dots cannot be seen with the naked eye. Correcting liquid and other impermanent methods of correction must not be used.

Good-quality white bond paper, thick enough to be opaque, should be used (20lb. base is acceptable). The opacity is important to prevent the typing on the following page from showing through when reproduced.

Font size must be a minimum of 10 points and 10-15 characters per inch. You may use a smaller font size for graphs, formulas, and appendices (avoid italics). The spacing of the printed lines must be at least one-and-a-half spaces, on one side of the paper only. Spacing should follow the latest version of APA guidelines. Decisions as to the form and location of footnotes and the presentation of references and bibliography are to be made by the student and supervisor at an early stage in the writing of the thesis. The preferred location for footnotes is either at the bottom of the page or at the end of the chapters to which they refer. An agreed upon style manual should be consulted in conjunction with these guidelines. For questions not answered in these guidelines, students are urged to consult their supervisor and to use their discretion in maintaining a consistent style. The size of the pages should be 8 ½" x 11" (21.5 cm x 28 cm), the text reading across the 8 ½" (21.5 cm) dimension. The left-hand margin should be at least 1 ¼" (32 mm), and the remaining three margins should be at least ¾" (20mm) to the main text.

Check that all pages are present, in sequence, and correctly numbered. **Every page in the thesis must be numbered, except for the title page, the Certificate of Examination.** The preliminary portion of the thesis should be numbered with small Roman numerals placed in the centre of the page, about half an inch from the bottom. Numbering begins with the Abstract as iii. The Title Page, the Certificate of Examination count as pages i, and ii respectively, but the number does not appear. The remainder of the thesis, starting with the first page of the Introduction or Chapter One, should be numbered with Arabic numerals. Preferred placement of the Arabic numerals is in the upper right-hand corner (about half an inch from each edge) with the exception of the first page of every chapter, including the first page of the reference or bibliography and appendices. For these, the page numbers should be placed in the centre, half an inch from the bottom edge of the page.

**Illustrations** should be positioned the same as the main text, if possible. Illustrated material will reproduce well if drawn in dark, opaque ink. Colours will appear as varying shades of grey on a digitalized reproduction; therefore, labels and symbols rather than colours should be used to identify the lines of graphs. Cross-hatching rather than colours will provide a sharper contrast for shaded areas.

For reproduction purposes, **black-and white photographs**, with a matte, non-glossy finish, are recommended for submission with the unbound thesis; all photographs should be dry-mounted/permanently fixed within the thesis. If necessary black-and-white photographs reprinted by a photographer from colour photographs used in the bound copies of the thesis (black-and-white photographs with a full range of contrast reproduce well). Photographs with dark backgrounds should be avoided. Slides are not acceptable.

**Charts, graphs, maps, and tables** that are larger than the standard page should be avoided unless absolutely necessary as they complicate reproduction. Oversized pages shall be digitally reproduced in sections, with sections numbered and arranged so that they read from left to right, top to bottom. It is recommended that oversized pages (large charts, graphs, and plates) be reduced, if possible, but notations or writing on them must be easily legible and no smaller than 12 characters per inch. **Transparent overlays** must be carefully aligned with underlying maps or charts. The underlying sheet will be filmed first and then the overlay and the underlying sheet together.

[MEd and SGS Thesis Final Submission Guidelines](#)