School of Population and Public Health
Faculty of Medicine, UBC

MSc PPH Thesis Protocol

Prior to any student requesting to hold a thesis defense, the student must have approval from their Thesis Supervisor and Committee. The student’s committee has to determine if the thesis is ready for the defense. The thesis examiner (selected by the supervisor and approved by the Program Director) must review the written thesis and approve the oral defense to proceed.

Once the student has this approval, the first step to booking your defense is to fill out the MSc PPH Thesis Defense Form. This is to be provided to the program staff who will help to book a room and prepare for the announcement email to invite the SPPH community to the defense. It is the responsibility of the student to book in the thesis defense.

The thesis defense itself for a Master’s degree is a public presentation of the student’s thesis, followed by questioning from examiners and the audience.

Step-by-Step Process for the Student

1. Once student finishes writing the thesis - provide a copy of the thesis to all members of your Thesis Supervisory Committee.
2. Fill out the MSc PPH Thesis Defense Form, which includes details about your preference for the date, time and location of the Defense, as well as the names of all examiners and the nomination of the Chair/External Examiner. Submit form to the program staff.
3. The Program Director must approve the selected Examiner.
4. The supervisor and student must ensure a final copy of the thesis is provided to the Examiner at least two weeks prior to the defense date.
5. Approximately one week prior to the defense the school will send out the announcement/invitation for the thesis defense.
6. The student must take a copy of the Masters Thesis Approval form (available on the G+PS website) to the defense, and if the defense is successful, ensure all committee members and the chair sign the form.
7. Scan this form and email a copy to SPPH program staff for your record - the original is submitted along with the thesis cover sheet and cIRcle Non-Exclusive Distribution License to G+PS
8. After the defense, the Thesis supervisor, or the chair, is to inform SPPH program staff and Program Director if the student has passed the defense.
9. Student makes any suggested corrections to their thesis as instructed during the defense.
10. The thesis supervisor approves the revised thesis (if major corrections are required, the thesis may need to be sent to all committee members for final approval).
11. The student submits the final and corrected thesis to G+PS. Note: Students are expected to complete any required revisions to the thesis and submit to G+PS within one month of the oral defense – see G+PS submission guidelines.
12. You apply for graduation (this can also be done prior to the defense).

Structure of the Oral Defense

- Defense chair (student’s supervisor) introduces student and thesis title
- Student makes a public presentation of the dissertation (approximately 20-30 minutes)
- Examining Committee and the Chair/External question the student
- Members of the audience are invited to ask questions of the student
Examining Committee holds an in camera discussion (student leaves the room)
Chair/Examiner conveys the findings of the Examining Committee to the student

Role and Procedures for the Chair (Supervisor)

The role of the Chair is to represent SPPH and G+PS and act as a moderator for the defense proceedings, ensuring fairness. The chair must ensure that the student addresses any questions raised during the question period. The following outlines the procedure the chair should follow:

1. Determine whether a quorum is present (see Quorum section below). Establish the order in which examining committee members will question the student. When the examiner is participating s/he should be called upon first. The research supervisor is normally called upon last.
2. Instruct all present to turn off mobile phones, alarms, etc., for the duration of the defense. Recording of the defense is not normally permitted.
3. Announce that no latecomers will be admitted, and that any member of the audience who leaves the examination room will not be permitted to re-enter. Ensure that the door is closed (in lengthy sessions, the chair may allow a brief recess after the student’s presentation or during the question period).
4. Announce that the meeting has been called for the public examination of (student’s name) for the degree of MSc PPH.
5. Invite the student to present a synopsis of the dissertation research. The student may speak from notes and use audio-visual equipment, but must not read the synopsis. The presentation should last between 20 and 30 minutes (chair to enforce time limits) and should not be interrupted by questions.
6. Call upon each member of the examining committee in turn to question the student. Exercise discretion in managing the question period; intervene if the questioning or behaviour becomes inappropriate or interferes with the proper conduct of the exam. Try to limit each question to approx. 5 mins to allow all questions.
7. Ensure that all relevant questions from the examiner are put to the student.
8. Call for questions from the audience.
9. Call for final questions from the examining committee, and, if necessary, ask the student to address/clarify any points not adequately covered previously.
10. Instruct the student and all persons not on the examining committee to leave the room. Note Evaluation criteria: Discuss the student’s performance in presenting the synopsis, in responding to questions, and in defending the work.
11. Call the student and in the presence of the Examination Committee inform the student if they passed or failed.

Role of the Examining Committee Members

- Represent her/his academic discipline
- Scrutinize the thesis in preparation for the defense
- Formulate an independent opinion of the work
- Question the student at the defense about the contents of the thesis and her/his relevant knowledge
- Participate in the in camera discussion and provide an opinion on the recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Studies

Quorum
A minimum of three faculty are required to be present for the defense, at least two members from the Supervisory Committee. There is usually a minimum of four faculty present at the defense: Thesis Supervisor, two committee members, plus the examiner.

**Evaluating Thesis/Amendments**

The Evaluation criteria for the committee are based on the student’s performance in presenting the synopsis, in responding to questions, and in defending the work. Attempt to reach a consensus on an appropriate category for the thesis based on the following:

**Category 1**: minor revision that is typographical or editorial in nature. Requires approval by supervisor only

**Category 2**: Substantive revision affecting the content of the thesis. Requires approval by the supervisor and supervisory committee.

**Category 3**: The thesis is unsatisfactory in its current form. Major rewriting and rethinking are required to produce a satisfactory thesis. Requires approval by the supervisor, supervisory committee and external examiner.

If it is agreed that the thesis has met approval of the examining committee (category 1 or 2) for recommendation to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance the following form must be signed and submitted [https://www.grad.ubc.ca/forms/masters-thesis-approval](https://www.grad.ubc.ca/forms/masters-thesis-approval)