

Format of Thesis Exams (MScF & Departmental PhD)

Internal thesis exams in forestry (MScF and Departmental PhD) have two components; the thesis seminar and the thesis defense. The thesis seminar takes place in a public format while the thesis defense is a question period conducted with only the student and the thesis examination committee members. The chair of the exam and the supervisor(s) must attend both the thesis seminar and thesis defense, while exam committee members are required to attend the thesis defense only.

a) Thesis Seminar:

For the thesis seminar, students are required to present a public overview of their thesis which is open to all members of the Faculty/University. The seminar for PhD students should be 30-40 minutes long and that for MScF students 20-25 minutes in length.

In preparation for this seminar, students are advised to emphasize not only their results and implications, but more importantly the rationale and forestry context of their work (introductory section) and the significance of their findings to forestry (conclusion section). In this way, the thesis seminar will be of broader interest to those outside of the student's immediate research area.

A brief question period from the general audience will follow (10-15 minutes). During this time, exam committee members can ask questions, however, the intention here is not for them to challenge the thesis work, but rather to explore its scope and significance.

b) Thesis Defense:

The thesis seminar will be followed by a short 10-15 minute break while the exam committee convenes and discusses the up-coming format of the formal thesis defense. Once decided, the student will be asked to enter the exam room and proceed directly to answer questions from the committee. Questions in this context are meant to challenge the substance of the thesis (including but not limited to; its assumptions, hypotheses, experimental design, methodology, data presentation & analysis, interpretation, synthesis and implications).

This formal component of the final exam represents the true defense component of the thesis and the student is evaluated both on the thesis itself (format, structure, literature) and their ability to defend it when challenged by the exam committee. The thesis defense normally will take one to three hours depending on the nature and quality of the work.

Responsibilities

The Faculty (via the Graduate Coordinator & Graduate Administrator) is responsible for arranging a Chair to conduct both the thesis seminar and thesis defense. However, this cannot happen until a Release Form for the exam has been signed by the supervisor recommending that the student proceed to his/her defense.

When students think they are ready to defend their thesis, they should contact the Graduate Administrator for the Release Form, take it to their supervisor(s), and in consultation with both their supervisor and exam committee members arrange for a defense time and date. Students should also reserve the necessary rooms for both components as well as the audiovisual projector for the thesis seminar.

Whenever possible, the thesis seminar should be conducted in a room of sufficient size to accommodate 10-20 people, while the thesis defense either can be in the same room or one smaller, depending upon availability. If teleconferencing (Room 1016B) or videoconferencing (Room 4001) are involved for one of the exam committee members, then the student should also arrange the appropriate room and facilities for these requirements.

Once the defense date, time and location have been arranged, the student should return the signed Release Form to the Graduate Administrator with this information so that a Chair can be arranged. They should also provide a copy of both their thesis abstract and title at this time. *Please Note: There must be a **minimum of 2 weeks** between submission of the signed Release Form and the Exam Date.* The Faculty will issue a formal notice to the Chair, supervisor and exam committee members, with a copy to the student, announcing the thesis seminar and defense date, times and locations.

Students must provide all examination committee members with a hard copy of their thesis a minimum of 2 weeks before the examination date. Failure to distribute the thesis in accordance with this two week deadline could result in the examination being cancelled.

At least one week before the defense, students must prepare a poster announcing the thesis seminar. The poster must include the student's name, degree candidacy, supervisor, title, brief abstract (readable by the general faculty) and time and place. Electronic and hardcopy templates of the poster should be requested from the Graduate Administrator for this purpose. About 10-12 copies of these should be posted throughout the faculty (preferably on coloured paper at the elevators, lounge & admin areas, and the central rotunda). The Graduate Administrator will send out an email notice announcing the thesis seminar at least three days before the date.

Where the thesis seminar and thesis defense will be conducted in different rooms, it is recommended that students remind their exam committee members of the correct times and locations. As in all SGS defenses, exam members must have read the thesis before the exam and be prepared to ask questions directly upon entering the thesis defense. Students should bring a copy of their thesis with them to the examination.