Athabasca University
Faculty of Graduate Studies

Timeline for Forms for Master's Thesis Route Program

- For up-to-date form links, please visit the Graduate Handbook, Section 10: Forms. Note that Master's forms are listed beneath the Doctoral forms.

- **Each step that a student or supervisor should take is highlighted in yellow throughout this document. Note that most steps should be taken in the order stated to avoid delays in FGS approval and graduation.**

- Each step explains *in italics* who initiates the form and who is part of the approval workflow. All forms begin with either the student or supervisor, then are automatically sent to the next party in the workflow for approval. FGS is the final recipient of all forms.

1. Enrollment in program; supervisor selected

➢ **Complete form:** Master's Thesis Supervisor Approval

(Initiated by student, then approved by supervisor, graduate program designate, and FGS.)

2. Supervisor approved; annual meetings required

The supervisor shall meet with the student at least once/year regarding progress; this should occur by the anniversary date of the supervisor being approved.

➢ **Complete form:** Student – Annual Progress Report

(Initiated by student and approved by FGS.)

FGS can help: FGS can provide neutral help to the student with any questions or concerns throughout their graduate program.

➢ **Complete form:** Supervisor – Annual Progress Report

(Initiated by supervisor, then signed by graduate program designate and FGS.)

FGS can help: FGS can provide neutral help to the supervisor if a student has been out of contact.

3. Coursework completed; supervisory committee formed

- **Complete form:** Master's Thesis Supervisory Committee Approval

  (Initiated by supervisor, circulated among committee members for their confirmation of acceptance of responsibility, then signed by graduate program designate and FGS.)

  FGS can help: FGS can help suggest committee members. FGS tracks supervisory and committee workloads so can make suggestions to relieve faculty with heavy loads.

4. Proposal completed; oral examination planned

- **3-4 weeks prior to anticipated date of examination:**

  When student and proposal are ready for the Oral Examination, as determined by the supervisor, the supervisor arranges the exam date and time, ensuring that an FGS designate is available at the proposed time in case they must be called in for regulatory support or any other reason. FGS also sends the meeting invitation.

- **Email** fgs@athabascau.ca to ensure FGS availability before finalizing the exam time.

- **Receive invitation.** Once the exam time is finalized, FGS sends the exam invitation with a join link to the student, the supervisor, and the committee.

  FGS can help: FGS can optionally attend the exam to provide technical support and guidance with regulations.

5. Proposal oral examination held

- **Complete form:** Thesis Proposal Oral Examination Report

  (The supervisor completes immediately after the oral examination. Circulated to committee members to confirm their agreement with the adjudication indicated, then FGS approves.)

  FGS can help: If a form gets "stuck" and doesn't seem to be progressing, FGS can check its progress and reissue a forms link if needed.

6. Revisions completed (if applicable)

- **Within 3 months after the exam:**

  The student submits their proposal with any required revisions to supervisor for approval. Supervisor informs graduate program designate and FGS of final approval of proposal revisions and oral examination.

  ➢ **Email:** fgs@athabascau.ca that revisions have been completed.

  The academic unit notifies Registrar's Office of proposal oral examination outcome.

7. Research ethics approval

The student now submits applications for ethics/access approvals and conducts their research.

➢ **Review:** Section 4: Ethics/Access Approval in the Master's Study Regulations.

8. Copyright planned for

Early in the thesis-writing process, the student and supervisor should review the Graduate Handbook to plan for copyright issues such as obtaining written permission from copyright holder(s) for material included in the thesis/dissertation. This can include:

- a substantial extract of another person's work
- a chapter (or chapters) that the student has published as a journal article or as part of a book
- if part of the thesis was written in conjunction with another author (or authors)

Permission for the substantial use of copyrighted material should be sought and secured early to prevent graduation delays.

➢ **Review:** Section 4: Copyright

➢ **Complete form if applicable:** Sample Letter for Copyright Permission

(The student completes and sends the form to all relevant parties. All permissions obtained must be included as an appendix in the thesis with personal information

removed.)

- **Contact with questions if applicable:** AU Copyright Office at copyright@athabascau.ca.

The student and supervisor should also discuss what copyright choices the student plans to make. The student should be made aware that they will eventually be asked to grant a license to Athabasca University and Library and Archives Canada to make their work available to be read by others.

- **Choose:** Copyright and/or a Creative Commons license.

(The student's choice at this stage is preliminary, not binding. If the student fills out the Copyright Declaration Form and wishes to change their choice, they can contact FGS to make a change any time up until the final submission is published. However, once the thesis is released under a Creative Commons license, it cannot be revoked.)

FGS can help: If requirements and choices around copyright are not clear, FGS can provide guidance or direct the student or supervisor to the best resource. Other resources are listed in Section 4: Copyright of the Graduate Handbook. Note that the Copyright Office does not help with license selection.

9. Thesis completed

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*Note: **Plan far in advance to ensure deadlines can be met for convocation.** Many students defend in March and April, and thesis revisions and review take time once the exam is complete. Aim for earlier in the year whenever possible if students would like to cross the stage in June. **If students do not plan to attend convocation, they can graduate any other month of the year.***

When the supervisory committee feels the thesis is ready to proceed to the final thesis oral examination, the supervisor should ensure that:

- the student's thesis meets the format requirements of the student's faculty and of FGS
- the student has obtained any necessary copyright permissions and is prepared to select their own license

When these requirements are met, the supervisory committee should email FGS a copy of the student's thesis to ensure readiness for publication with Library and Archives

Canada. This step is crucial to prevent graduation delays after the exam.

- **Email:** fgs@athabascau.ca with a copy of the thesis.

  FGS can help: At this stage, FGS conducts an informal pre-check of the thesis to ensure general quality of form and language for publication. If the thesis is not publication-ready, FGS will provide resources for the student to help them edit or revise.

  Once FGS provides informal approval, the supervisor can initiate the form below.

- **4-6 weeks prior to anticipated oral examination date:**

  - **Complete form:** Preliminary Acceptance of Thesis Prior to Final Examination

    (Initiated by supervisor, circulated among committee members, then signed by graduate program designate and FGS.)

10. Final oral examination planned

The supervisor now begins the arrangement of an external examiner.

FGS can help: FGS can help vet a potential external examiner for quality and suitability. This can help prevent surprises or other issues with the external examiner during the exam.

Once an external examiner is selected, the supervisor emails the following to FGS.

- **Email fgs@athabascau.ca:**

  - The external examiner's CV.
  - A conflict of interest statement from the external examiner.

  I _____, confirm that I have not worked closely with (supervisor) during the past five years or supervised or worked closely with (student) in the last five years and have no perceived conflict of interest with either of them.

  At this point, FGS will informally approve the external examiner. Next, the supervisor organizes the exam date and time, ensuring that an FGS designate is available at the proposed time in case they must be called in for regulatory support or any other reason.

- **Email** fgs@athabascau.ca to ensure FGS availability before finalizing the exam time.

  Once an exam time is confirmed, the supervisor initiates the form below to document

formal approval and prompt FGS to send an online meeting invitation.

- **Complete form:** External Examiner and Notice for Final Thesis Oral Exam

  (Initiated by the supervisor; student and supervisor must indicate that no conflict of interest exists; form sent to graduate program designate and FGS for approval.)

- **Receive invitation.** Once the exam time is finalized, FGS sends the exam invitation with a join link to the student, the supervisor, the committee, and the external examiner.

  An announcement of the final oral examination is posted on the FGS website. Potential guests can email FGS for permission to attend the open exam. Guests are not allowed to participate in the exam, and they are excluded from adjudication.

11. Final oral examination held

FGS can help: If present at the exam, FGS can meet with the student ahead of time to prepare them, and provide reassurance and explanation to the student about the recommendation following the exam.

Immediately after the final oral examination is completed, the supervisor initiates the following form.

- **Complete form:** Master's Thesis and Oral Examination Final Report

  (Initiated by the supervisor directly after the exam, circulated among committee members, then signed by graduate program designate and FGS.)

12. Thesis submitted

- **Within 3 months of the final oral examination:**

  The student submits any revisions to the supervisor or their designate for final approval.

- **4-6 weeks prior to the deadline for application for graduation:**

  The supervisor informs the graduate program designate and FGS of final approval of thesis revisions and the adjudication outcome.

  - **Email:** fgs@athabascau.ca

Upon receipt of a Pass adjudication outcome, FGS will work with the student on the final review of the thesis. Once it is confirmed that the thesis complies with requirements, FGS provides:

- **Page to insert in thesis:** Approval of Thesis (this page will be completed by FGS and sent to the student)

  (FGS provides completed form to student; student inserts form directly after cover page of thesis)

- **Form to complete:** Thesis Copyright Declaration

  (Student completes and FGS approves. The student adds the relevant license(s) to their title page.)

The student converts the thesis to a PDF document. The thesis is then submitted by the student to the AUSpace repository (see the Graduate Handbook, Section 7: Electronic Submission of Theses and Dissertations for instructions).

Note: The submission form includes signing of the Library and Archives Canada Theses Non-Exclusive License and the Athabasca University Non-Exclusive Distribution License to make the thesis available for future research. The student retains copyright while granting LAC and Athabasca University to disseminate their work under certain terms. Visit the Graduate Handbook, Section 4: Copyright for the wording of the licenses. Note that these licenses are applied in addition to the license (copyright and/or creative commons) selected for all users outside of LAC and AU.

FGS can help: FGS is the primary contact for the student during this step and can help the student complete any of the items listed.

13. Thesis approved; knowledge dissemination

FGS reviews the thesis for adequate copyright adherence and compliance with FGS and LAC format requirements. If the thesis does not comply with the requirements, the thesis will be returned to the student, informing them of the required changes. **The student will not be able to graduate until the format requirements and copyright compliance have been met and correctly submitted by the student.**

After FGS approves the thesis, FGS will conduct the final submission into the AUSpace repository. FGS will notify the student that the thesis has been approved and electronic submission has been completed. FGS also notifies the program and updates Degree

Works. The program enters the grade in Banner and notifies the Office of the Registrar.

14. Graduation applied for

The student is now eligible to graduate! For information on the process the student needs to complete in order to graduate, refer to the Office of the Registrar's Graduation webpage.