

ELG 9997 Ph.D. Thesis Proposal

University/Faculty regulations

<https://www.uottawa.ca/about-us/leadership-governance/policies-regulations/c-7-thesis>

“If the program requires an official thesis proposal, the student must submit it for approval before commencing their research. It is the responsibility of each program to establish regulations regarding the content of the thesis proposal, and to decide how and when the proposal must be submitted and formally approved.”

<https://www.uottawa.ca/faculty-engineering/leadership-governance/academic-regulations>

“G1.2 Thesis proposal: For PhD programs featuring a thesis proposal, all components of the thesis proposal, including any oral defence, must be completed within nine terms of first enrolment in the program. Failure to complete within nine terms will result in a first failure of the thesis proposal. Students must then enrol for the thesis proposal and complete it in their 10th term. Failure to pass the proposal by the end of the 10th term will result in a second failure and automatic withdrawal from the PhD program.

Completing all components of the thesis proposal within six terms of first enrolment in the program is considered good progress.”

Objective and recommended structure of written document

The purpose of the thesis proposal is to present a critical review of the literature, the research objectives and the proposed method of investigation. The candidate must have acquired sufficient knowledge of the intended thesis topic area to formulate and carry out a viable PhD research plan.

The following general style is recommended for the document:

- Abstract - should summarize the document and not exceed 200 words. It should be self explanatory and not require reference to the document itself.
- Introduction - may include an historical development of the research topic, the reason for current interest and its impact on future developments.
- Critical review of literature - should include a critical assessment of earlier work. Comments should be made on the results as well as the techniques employed. An attempt should be made to bring out the inadequacies and incompleteness of the earlier work so as to justify the need for the present investigation.
- Introduction to Research Topic - having reviewed earlier work and shown the need for further investigation the problem must be carefully presented, outlining the objectives clearly. Wherever possible, an attempt should be made to outline the proposed methods of investigation.
- The proposal may also contain the results of preliminary research work if the student wishes, although it does not have to.
- References - bibliographical references should be numbered and listed at the end of the document.

Pre-requisite

The PhD comprehensive examination must be passed before the thesis proposal can be submitted or examined.

Possible verdicts

The proposal examination consists of an oral presentation and defence of the written proposal before the advisory committee. The possible verdicts are:

- (a) Pass: the student can proceed in their thesis research. To be granted a pass, the candidate must, through the written proposal and the oral examination:
 - demonstrate a critical knowledge of relevant recent literature in the field, including a sound understanding of the fundamental principles and the important phenomena, methodologies (experimental, computational, etc.) and conclusions;
 - demonstrate that the proposed research plan is feasible;
 - demonstrate that they are capable of independent work.
- (b) Fail: the student has insufficient knowledge and preparation to proceed further with their thesis research.

A majority of examiners including the supervisor must agree on the verdict.

If the proposal examination is failed, it may be repeated once only. Repeating the examination will require submission of a new research proposal document. Failure of the second attempt at the proposal examination will result in withdrawal from the program.

Additional information and procedure

The oral component for the thesis proposal is set up by the thesis supervisor(s). No chair is required. By default, the advisory committee remains the same as for the PhD comprehensive exam, but a committee nomination form must be submitted nevertheless with the service request (described below). A new advisory committee membership can also be approved by the graduate coordinator, with the same requirement as for the PhD comprehensive exam: the advisory committee must include at least two faculty members who are not supervisor/co-supervisor, and one of these faculty members must be from Carleton University.

The PhD supervisor is responsible for managing the process and the exam. The steps are as follows:

- The PhD supervisor will reach out to colleagues and assembles a committee.
- Once the PhD student receives the names of the committee, the PhD student submits a service request confirming the exam committee.

Service requests: Research related / Thesis proposal

- Form to attach: “[Nomination of Ph.D. Advisory Committee \(OCIECE\)](#)”

- The service request for the exam committee is verified by the OCIECE graduate coordinator and approved.
- The supervisor schedules the oral examination. If desired, the supervisors will be responsible to reserve a room for the oral exam. (The oral exam is typically taking place through Zoom or MS Teams). The committee must be given enough time to review the proposal, typically 6-8 weeks. The OCIECE academic administrator will need to be informed about the date by email to Engineering Graduate Reception gprecept@uottawa.ca.
- The supervisor will chair the oral exam. The oral exam proceeds by the PhD student presenting the proposal (usually up to 20 mins). The oral exam must give enough time for each committee member to ask clarifying questions to confirm if the student has identified a valid research direction, hence the typical duration for an oral exam is 1-2 hrs. The exam is marked as satisfactory/unsatisfactory. If applicable, the PhD student should receive advice on what to focus on for on-going research.
- The supervisor will fill the form, sign it and submit it to Engineering Graduate Reception gprecept@uottawa.ca cc to all committee members and the student.
 - Form to attach: “[Report of PhD Candidacy Examination](#)”