



# **MASTER OF ARTS IN DISABILITY MANAGEMENT**

## **A Guide to the Thesis Option**

**Disability Management Program  
School of Health Sciences  
College of Arts, Social and Health Sciences**

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**The contents of this document are subordinate to the Regulations of the Office of Graduate Studies; and, the Regulations of the Office of Graduate Studies take precedence over this document.**

**For further information about the Master of Arts in Disability Management Program please access our Website: [www.unbc.ca/health-sciences/disability-management](http://www.unbc.ca/health-sciences/disability-management) or for any further enquiries, after studying this guide, please contact:**

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# MA IN DISABILITY MANAGEMENT THESIS

## A. THINKING ABOUT A THESIS

1. Students should discuss their interests and thesis option possibilities with their Academic Supervisor. Students are initially assigned an Academic Supervisor but once they have some ideas about their thesis they may first negotiate with, and if there is agreement, request a change in supervisor to a faculty person who best fits their interests and needs.
2. Once an area has been worked out a student needs to draft a proposal. This will be written in consultation with the Chair and other members of the student's Supervisory Committee. A Supervisory Committee consists of three members: the Academic Supervisor who chairs the Committee, one member from the Disability Management Program, and one member outside the Disability Management program from UNBC. These details are outlined in the UNBC Calendar. In exceptional cases, the outside member may be a professional from the community with expertise in this thesis topic.
3. The proposal needs to be carefully thought through by the student.
4. The proposal also needs to be approved by the student's Supervisory Committee before formal thesis work begins.
5. For full-time students the thesis normally begins in the spring, after the completion of their course work. Part-time students need to have completed all core courses of the MA in Disability Management before they begin the thesis.
6. Before the research begins, all thesis work involving human subjects must be submitted to the University of Northern British Columbia's Research Ethics Board for approval.

## B. THE PROPOSAL

Before research for a thesis begins, it is necessary to construct a proposal. This is often a very difficult but important task as you are forced to think systematically about the procedures you will utilize in your thesis research.

Below is a suggested outline or guide for writing and submitting a research proposal.

### *1. The Title Page*

The title of the research project should be as specific and descriptive as possible without being too lengthy. The title page should include the name of the student, and the names of the Academic Supervisor and other members of the Supervisory Committee.

## ***2. The Problem***

The introductory pages of the proposal should contain a clear statement of the problem or problems you will be examining in your study. At this point the presentation of the problem should be briefly described in terms of its theoretical, substantive, policy and/or practical significance. How will your study contribute to the above areas?

The following are some examples of the criteria you may use to discuss the significance of your research problem. Note: depending on your approach to your topic, not all of these criteria may be applicable.

1. Its timeliness.
2. Its relation to a practical problem or practice issue.
3. Whether or not it fills a research gap.
4. Whether it relates to an influential, critical or problematic population.
5. The implications of your study for social policy and disability management issues.
6. The extent to which your analysis may sharpen the definition and measurement of important concepts.
7. The contribution of this research to the testing or building of theory.
8. The way this study creates or improves on special measurement techniques or instruments for observing and analyzing data.
9. The extent to which this study explores new areas.
10. The implications of this research for new practice developments.
11. The importance of this study for evaluating a new form of policy or practice.

## ***3. The Literature Review***

Knowledge of the literature related to the issue you are examining is most important. Before writing a proposal it is necessary to conduct a literature search. The literature will tell you what has been done up to now - what theoretical, practice, policy developments, measurement and conceptual issues have been looked at. Knowledge of past research saves you a lot of time. It directs you to the areas which need to be examined and also lets you know what has been done.

In the proposal, the literature review contains a short summary of past studies and findings related to your problem of analysis. It is useful to use this review to show what needs to be done and how past studies have influenced your selection of important variables and the way you will be looking at your problem.

## ***4. Scope and Method***

The research design and the methods used to collect and analyse data are discussed here. The following illustrate some examples of the type of questions that need to be dealt with in this part of the proposal. These will vary depending on your selection of a qualitative or quantitative approach to your issue.

Will you be collecting new information or using secondary sources? What is the unit of study (e.g. government documents, social welfare clients)? What data gathering techniques will be used (e.g. an interview schedule, questionnaire, content analysis, documentary analysis)? What is the universe or population to be studied? Will you be collecting a sample?

What are the important concepts? How will they be looked at? What nominal and operational definitions will be used to define these concepts?

How will your findings be classified and presented? Will your analysis be qualitative or will you rely on descriptive and/or inferential statistics? Will you be testing hypotheses? What are your hypotheses and what level of significance will be used in these tests?

### ***5. Budget and Time Schedule***

This section involves a brief, but realistic account of the amount of time you expect will be needed to complete the study. Be specific in terms of the time required for information and data collection; analysis and writing.

The budget gives a step-by-step item analysis for costing this research. It is a good idea to realistically work out these details.

### ***6. References***

As with all formal proposals, be sure to include references with your presentation.

## **C. EVALUATION**

### ***1. The Proposal***

It is normal for students to submit one, two or more drafts of a thesis proposal to the committee for approval.

### ***2. The Thesis***

When the student's Supervisory Committee is satisfied that the thesis is ready for defense they complete and sign the Request for Oral Examination and Appointment of an External Examiner Form. The Disability Management Secretary submits this form to the Dean of Graduate Studies along with two copies of the student's thesis.

## **D. EXTERNAL EXAMINER**

The Supervisor makes a recommendation of an External Examiner on the Request for Oral Examination and Appointment of an External Examiner Form. The Office of Graduate Studies is responsible for sending a copy of the thesis to the Examiner (one of the two copies submitted with the above form). Examiners are normally faculty of other universities or faculty members from other programs at UNBC.

According to Section 4.5.2 of the UNBC Graduate Calendar, the role of the Examining Committee is to assess the dissertation or thesis and to conduct an oral examination based on that thesis. The Examining Committee will consist of the Supervisory Committee and at least one other examiner, called the External Examiner, who must be from outside the Disability Management Program and who has had no previous involvement with the student or the thesis research.

Six weeks prior to the proposed defense date the Supervisor must submit “The Request for Oral Examination and Appointment of External Examiner Form” and at least two copies of the thesis to the Office of Graduate Studies.

The date and time for the proposed defense should be noted on the form and the Supervisor, not the student, should have made contact with the proposed External Examiner to ensure that she or he is available either to attend in person or via conference call. The Supervisor should also make it clear to the External Examiner that their name has been recommended to the Dean of Graduate Studies and is subject to decanal approval.

***Qualifications of the External Examiner:***

The External Examiner should be experienced and well-qualified. Examiners should have established reputations in the area of the thesis research, and should be able to judge whether a thesis is acceptable at a university comparable to UNBC. Ideally they should be at Associate or full Professor rank if they are at a University, or be of comparable stature if they are not at a University.

***Personal Contact with the External Examiner:***

To ensure that an arm’s length, independent review is possible the External Examiner should not have participated directly in supervising the student or directing the work or have worked with the Thesis Supervisor. Any contact initiated by the External Examiner should be directed either to the Office of Graduate Studies or to the Thesis Supervisor. The Thesis Supervisor should not communicate views of the External Examiner to the student prior to the defense.

Two copies of the student’s thesis must accompany the above mentioned forms. One copy is for the Chair of the Oral Defense, the other is for the External Examiner. In the event that the recommended External Examiner is approved, the Office of Graduate Studies will courier a copy of the thesis to the individual. If the recommended External Examiner is not deemed suitable by the Dean of Graduate Studies, the supervisor will be notified with reasons and another name will be requested.

Once the External Examiner is approved and the date and time of the defense are confirmed, the Office of Graduate Studies will book a room and any required AV equipment, and a Chair, either the Dean of Graduate Studies or designate, will be selected. The Office of Graduate Studies will also post an announcement of the defense on e-mail to faculty and graduate students. Any additional advertising of the defense is the responsibility of the Program, the Supervisor, or the student.

## **E. ORAL EXAMINATION**

Once an External Examiner is approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies arrangements are made by the student's Thesis Supervisor for the defense of the thesis.

1. The defense is attended by the Supervisory Committee, the External Examiner and the Dean of Graduate Studies or designate. The defense may also be attended by the Disability Management Program Chair, other faculty, students, interested professionals, and individuals from the community.
2. The oral defense is normally chaired by the Dean of Graduate Studies or designate.
3. The defense consists of a brief presentation of the thesis (this must not exceed 20 minutes) followed by questions from the Examining Committee (External Examiner and members of the Supervisory Committee) and may be followed by questions from other individuals present at the defense if the Chair of the defense permits and there is sufficient time to allow.
4. Immediately after the presentation and question period the student and guests (those not directly involved in the supervision of and examination of the thesis) are asked to leave. The Examining Committee consists of the External Examiner and the student's Supervisory Committee. This adjudication procedure is chaired by the Dean of Graduate Studies or designate who is responsible for the adjudication documentation. The decision of the Examining Committee shall be based on the content of the scholarly work or thesis as well as the candidate's ability to defend it. The different decisions that can be made by the Examining Committee are found in Section 4.5.4 of the UNBC Graduate Studies and Admissions Regulations.
5. Once a thesis is passed, two copies must be submitted for hardcover binding to the Office of Graduate Studies. Once bound, both copies will be submitted to the UNBC Geoffrey R. Weller Library. One copy will go into the General Collection and the other will go into the Special Collection in the University Archives. Students must also submit an unbound copy for submission to the National Library of Canada.



## **Results of Oral Examinations (Thesis)**

The decision of the Examining Committee shall be based on the content of the scholarly work or report as well as the candidate's ability to defend it. After the examination, the Committee shall recommend one of the following results:

1. ***That the report or scholarly work is acceptable as presented and the oral defense is acceptable:***

All members of the Examining Committee shall sign two copies of the title page, two copies of the abstract page, and one copy of the Program's letter of recommendation.

2. ***That the report or scholarly work is acceptable subject to minor revision and the oral defense is acceptable:***

All members of the Examining Committee, except the Academic Supervisor, shall sign the documents listed in Section 4.5.4. The Academic Supervisor shall sign the documents when the report has been amended to her/his satisfaction.

3. ***That the report or scholarly work is acceptable subject to major revisions and the oral defense is acceptable:***

No member of the Examining Committee shall sign the documents listed in Section 4.5.4. The Academic Supervisor shall supervise the revision of the report. When the report is acceptable to the Academic Supervisor, the Academic Supervisor shall distribute it to the rest of the examining committee. If it is acceptable to the Committee, the Academic Supervisor shall ensure that each committee member signs the documents listed in Section 4.5.4.

4. ***That the examination be adjourned:***

(This result should not be confused with failure, see failure on next page).

Examples of reasons to adjourn the examination include but are not limited to: further research or experimentation is required; the report is acceptable but the student has failed the oral defense; the external examiner casts the lone dissenting vote. In the case of an adjourned examination the candidate shall not be passed and no member shall sign the documents listed in Section 4.5.4.

When an examination is adjourned, each member of the Examining Committee shall make a written report to the Chair of Disability Management within 14 calendar days of the date of the oral examination. After reviewing these reports the Chair sets a date for reconvening the examination. The Chair shall also determine whether or not the composition of the original Committee is appropriate for the reconvened examination. The date for reconvening shall be no later than six months from the date of the first examination.

**5. Failure:**

If two or more members of the Examining Committee are opposed to passing the student, the student will not be recommended for the degree. In this case, the Committee shall make a written report to the Dean within 14 calendar days of the date of the oral examination outlining the reasons for this decision. A student who fails the oral examination has the right to appeal and should consult with the Dean of Graduate Studies regarding the appropriate procedures.