Master's Project/Major Paper Handbook

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General Information

Introduction

This handbook serves as a guide for graduate students, graduate program staff, graduate faculty and members of the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS). It aims to:

- Clarify the procedures to be followed for students completing a Master's Project or Major Paper.
- Provide and explain the purpose of forms required as part of the process.
- Clarify the roles of SGPS and the individual program/faculty offices, which administer graduate programs.

We welcome your questions, feedback and recommendations and look forward to working with you to establish 'best practices' in this area of Graduate Studies operation.

University Programs with Project/Major Paper Options

The following graduate programs currently offer project/major paper options to students:

Faculty	Program
Faculty of Business and IT	Master of Information Technology Security, MITS
Faculty of Social Science & Humanities	Master of Arts, MA ● Criminology
Faculty of Education	Master of Education, MEd
Faculty of Energy Systems and Nuclear Science	Master of Engineering, MEng ● Nuclear Engineering
Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science	Master of Engineering, MEng ● Automotive Engineering, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Mechanical Engineering Master of Engineering Management, MEngM
Faculty of Science	Master of Science, MSc ● Computer Science, Materials Science, Modelling and Computational Science **Must be accepted into thesis based program
Faculty of Health Science	Master of Health Sciences, MHSc

Definitions

A master's project or major paper normally expects students to combine and apply the knowledge garnered from graduate level courses. It often involves the discussion of a meaningful question within the discipline, including a critical review of the literature or analysis of a theoretical or substantive problem. Students usually complete this requirement under the supervision of a professor. The credit value and length of a project or major paper is less than that of a thesis. Students may be expected to present their work orally to an audience, but they are not required to undergo a formal oral examination.

Note:

Every discipline and program has slightly different requirements for each component of their degree requirements. The program's graduate program director and faculty are the best resources for detailed information about the requirements.

Disclaimer

Some information in this handbook may be available in the [Graduate Academic Calendar](), however, the Academic Policies are the authority. It is the student's responsibility to review these policies and ensure they are being followed.

References and links to the policies used throughout this handbook include but are not limited to:

- [Graduate Project and Major Paper Evaluation Policy]()
- [Graduate Submission of Thesis, Project or Major Paper Policy]()

The Players

Personnel Related to the Master's Project/Major Paper Process

Title	Acronym	Comments/Descriptions
		Roles and responsibilities are outlined in the [Responsibilities of Graduate Program Directors, Faculty Advisors, Research Supervisors and Graduate Students Policy..](#)
Student		With the guidance of a faculty advisor and/or a research supervisor(s), the student conducts research, prepares a written project or major paper The student may present his/her work in an oral format to others, but this is not a formal process like a thesis defence Students can consult the [supervisor-student conversation starter's](#) document to help align expectations with their supervisors.
Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies	DGPS	Approves examiners for graduate students completing a thesis
School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies	SGPS	Information directed to SGPS is referred to the DGPS as suitable The SGPS coordinates a number of administrative processes related to the implementation of project and major paper procedures Accepts final product from program office, checks materials and forwards to the university library if student would like their work uploaded to the university library
Graduate Program Director	GPD	Appointed by the dean of the home faculty in consultation with the DGPS Appoints faculty advisor and assigns reader to student's project/paper In cases where there is one *not acceptable* assessment, meets with student and RS to plan next steps

Graduate Program Staff	GPS	This refers to the administrative staff who support the GPD and graduate faculty in the program
Faculty Advisor	FA	Appointed by GPD

In program options that require projects or major papers students may be guided by a FA throughout their entire program

They monitor student's progress throughout program or until such time as a research supervisor is appointed |
| Research Supervisor | RS | Approved by the dean of the home faculty

In programs which require projects or major papers, students may initially be assigned a FA, but then be assigned a research supervisor when they begin the research for their project/paper

In some cases, a student may have two co-supervisors

Gives permission for student to begin project or major paper

In case of paper or project, reads and submits grade with report that outlines reasons for grade

Where required, ensures that student's work is revised to respond to recommended changes within stipulated time periods |
| Second Reader(s) | | Appointed by GPD from graduate faculty or associate graduate faculty for the program

The reader reviews, evaluates and completes a report on the project/paper and submits a decision |
| University Library | | If the student elects to submit an electronic copy of their project/or major paper to SGPS, it is sent to the Library

This is uploaded to the University's digital repository of the University's research |
| Office of the Registrar | RO | When the project/major paper process is complete and a grade of pass has been entered for the project course, the student is eligible to apply to graduate as per RO procedures |

		The RO conducts a degree audit and, if all is in order, the Registrar will recommend to the university's Academic Council that the student graduate

Master's Project/Major Paper Procedures – Before Review

1. Supervision of Student work

Master's level students working on projects or major papers are assigned a research supervisor (RS) (or co-supervisors) or a faculty advisor (FA) to provide guidance and oversee the work.

2. Research Progress Reports

Student research progress is evaluated at the end of each semester for every student in programs with a thesis, project or major paper, starting when the student is engaged with their work. This is an opportunity for the student to check in with their FA/RS(s) to ensure they are on-track to complete in a timely manner. It is also a chance to identify any academic or non-academic challenges and identify strategies to address them. Policies related to Research Progress Reports are found in the [Graduate Grading System, Research Progress and Academic Standing Policy](#) (see sections 10-12).

The research progress report should be completed in full between the student, and their FA/RS(s). It is reviewed by the GPD and submitted to the SGPS.

The student is responsible for commenting on their academic and/or research progress. The RS and/or committee is responsible for evaluating the student's progress in relation to the student's overall work plan across 5 areas including: research progress, research plan, requisite knowledge, research skills, and motivation and work ethic. Students may receive an overall evaluation of Satisfactory Research Progress, Difficulties with Research Progress or Unsatisfactory Research progress.

Failure to meet objectives on progress reports may be cited as ground for a warning, probation or dismissal from the program of study.

Progress reports should be evaluated **at the end of each Semester, as noted in section 10.1 of the** [Graduate Grading System, Research Progress and Academic Standing Policy](#).

Link to website/form:
- [Graduate Research Progress Report](#)

3. Establishment of Second Reader for Project/Major Paper

When the FA/RS(s) feels that the student's project/major paper is ready for review, and all course requirements have been met, the RS(s) or FA notifies the GPD that the student's work is ready for review.

The review team consists of the FA/RS(s) and at least one other reader. As per, section 5.3 of the [Graduate Project and Major Paper Evaluation Policy](#), the GPD appoints a reader from the student's home program (member of graduate or associate graduate faculty) to assess the student's work.

The FA/RS(s) and Second Reader complete the Establishment of Second Reader for Major Project or Major Paper form. The GPD approves the form. The GPS forwards the original form to SGPS.

NOTE: External assessors are NOT required and approval of the reader is NOT required from the DGPS.

The GPD and review team establish a deadline for completion of the review at least 5 weeks before the last day for completion of project.

Link to website/form:
- Form: [Establishment of Second Reader for Major Project or Major Paper](#)

4. Preparation and Submission of Materials by Student

The student assembles and submits materials to be reviewed in accordance with deadlines and guidelines established by the individual faculty and SGPS (see recommended Project/Major Paper template). The criteria for assessment are determined by the faculty and provided to the RS/FA and the reader by the GPD.

Students are to submit their material to the program office at least 4 weeks prior to the last day for completion of project.

NOTE: The student may be instructed to submit a copy of the work directly to the FA/RS(s) and reader OR to the GPS who will then distribute the materials to the assessors.

Link to website/form:
- [Project/Major Paper template](#)

5. Assessors Report and Certificate of Approval

The assessors review the work and render at one of four decisions as outlined in section 6 of the [Graduate Project or Major Paper Evaluation Policy](#)) and prepare a report which justifies the decision. The decision will be one of the following:

       a. Acceptable without Required Revisions
       b. Acceptable with Minor Revisions
       c. Major Revisions required or
       d. Not acceptable

Minor revisions must be completed within four weeks. Major revisions must be completed within six months.

The GPD ensures that the review team members meet to summarize their findings and prepare the Certificate of Approval – Master's Project/Major Paper form. If required, next steps are determined and shared with the student.

If student revisions are required, the RS(s) is required to sign off at the bottom of the Certificate of Approval – Master's Project and Major Paper form to verify that the required work has been completed.

Link to website/form:
- Form: [Certificate of Approval – Master's Project or Major Paper](#)

Summary of Outcomes and Levels of Response

First Review of Work

Decision	Level of Response	Grade to be Assigned
All decisions are **Acceptable without Required Revisions**	No further actions required	**Pass**
At least one decision is **Acceptable with Minor Revisions** and there are **no Major Revisions Required or Not Acceptable** decisions	Student makes recommended revisions (normally within 4 weeks) FA/RS(s) ensures that a student's work is revised to respond to recommended minor changes. FA/RS(s) signs off on Certificate of Approval form to confirm that completion of revisions is satisfactory The RS/FA enters grade	Pass
At least one decision is **Major Revisions Required** and there are **no Not acceptable** decisions	FA/RS(s) ensures that student's work is revised to respond to recommended changes (normally within 6 months) Proceeds to **Second Review** Paper is re-circulated to FA/RS(s) and new reader appointed by the GPD (not the same as the first reader)	No grade assigned until completion of Second Review
Only 1 **Not acceptable** decision	Within 2 weeks of decision, GPD meets with FA/RS(s) and student and chooses 1 of 2 options: **Option 1** GPD sends project or paper to another reader within 4 weeks. The project or major paper may only incorporate minor revisions. If the new reader determines that the project or major paper is either **acceptable without change, acceptable with minor change,** or **acceptable with major change**, the assessment of the work continues with the appropriate level of response as outlined above for the decision that requires the greatest revision. If the new reader assesses the	Depends on option chosen and outcome

	work as **not acceptable**, then the student has received a second **not acceptable** decision and is given a grade of fail **Option 2** GPD follows the procedures associated with **Acceptable with major change** (see above)	
At least 2 **Not acceptable** decisions	No further actions taken	Fail

Second Review of Work (if applicable)

Decision	Level of response	Grade to be assigned
All decisions are **Acceptable without Required**	Processed as per description in chart above	Pass
At least one decision is **Acceptable with Minor Revisions** and there are **no** **Not acceptable** decisions	Processed as per description in chart above	Pass
Any decisions of **Major Revisions Required**	No additional chances are given to student	Fail
Any decisions of **Not acceptable**	No additional chances are given to student	Fail

Master's Project/Major Paper Procedures – After Review

1. Post-review Revisions and Sign Off by Faculty Advisor/Research Supervisor(s)

The FA/RS(s) ensure the student makes all required revisions (if applicable) to the project/major paper by the deadline and signs off on the lower section of the Certificate of Approval to verify that the required work has been completed.

The completed Certificate of Approval is returned to the GPD/GPS. A copy of the completed form are provided to the student. The original form is sent to the SGPS.

The GPS office checks the student's registration record to see if the student is registered in the appropriate project course in the term they completed the project/paper. If not, SGPS will register the course for the term they completed their project/major paper.

Note: As outlined in the Fees and charges section of the [Graduate Academic Calendar](#), students with fees outstanding beyond the due date will be assessed a late payment fee and will be subject to the university's hold policy. Students **on hold** cannot be registered in the final thesis course or apply to graduate. An oral examination may be postponed if a hold is not cleared.

2. Requirements Completed and Mark Entered

When the requirements for the project/major paper are complete and submitted to SGPS, the GPD or RS enters the mark of pass or fail for this thesis course.

As per [section 6.1-6.4 of the Graduate Grading System, Research Progress and Academic Standing Policy](#), final grades are not available until they are approved at the end of semester.

The student is advised by SGPS that they can apply to graduate in accordance with directions and deadlines provided on the [Office of the Registrar website](#).

Master's Project/Major Paper - Deadlines

Each term there are set deadlines for the submission of all required documentation in the project/major paper process. The deadlines specify the last day in a given term for documentation to be submitted or reviews to be conducted in order for students to be eligible to complete their projects or major papers in a given term. Submissions/reviews after these dates require registration in the following term; deadlines for tuition and eligibility for partial tuition refunds are posted on the [SGPS website](#).

Documentation may be submitted or reviews conducted at any time prior to these deadlines, provided the periods specified in the Graduate Studies Policies and Procedures are observed.

Master's Project/Major Paper – Example Timeline

A master's student looking ahead to have their project/paper reviewed, may use the example [Timeline document](#) found on the SGPS website to help plan accordingly.

Master's Project/Major Paper – Time Limits

The minimum time allowed for full-time students to complete all requirements for a master's program is one year, and the maximum is three years from the time of initial registration as a full-time student. Students registering on a part-time basis have a maximum of six years to complete the degree.

Students needing to exceed the normal allotted time for completion of their program must formally [Request for program extension](#). Extension requests are to be made after the normal program length to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

For more information on time limits and extensions, [see section 7 of the Graduation and Conferral of Degrees Policy](#).

Other Information

1. Applying to Graduate

The RS or program office should advise students who have completed degree requirements that they will be required to apply to graduate in accordance with directions and deadlines provided on the [Office of the Registrar website](#).

All students completing degree requirements in a given semester are required to apply to graduate using the online application to graduate. Applying to graduate enables the RO to perform the steps required to grant the degree. If the student does not apply, the degree audit process will not occur. The application to graduate is located on MyCampus and is open to students during the time periods specified on the main universiy [website](#).

2. Tuition Refunds

Students who complete their projects/major papers by a specified date in the term may be eligible for a refund of a portion of their tuition. To be eligible, the original form of the Certificate of Approval – Master's Project or Major Paper must be received by the SGPS by the deadline posted on the [Graduate Studies website](#) and they must have met all other program requirements.

Students that may be eligible for this refund, will be advised by the program office to complete an Early Completion Tuition Refund Form and to submit it to the SGPS. All forms are available on the [Graduate Studies website](#).

Students with a [credit balance](#) due to scholarships, awards or tuition overpayment will receive their refund according to the regularly scheduled refunds for tuition fees each term. Students should contact gradfinance@ontariotechu.ca for more information and request a copy of the Refund Request Form. Domestic students eligible for a refund as a result of early completion may have any applicable refund amounts returned to the National Student Loan Service Centre, if tuition balance was cleared using OSAP funding. Please contact Student Awards and Financial Aid at connect@ontariotechu.ca for more information.

Link to form/website:
- Form: [Early Competition Tuition Refund](#)

3. Library Copies

Students **do not** submit paper copies of their projects/major papers to the library for binding and the submission of electronic copies of their work is **optional.**

If they wish to have a copy of their project/major paper placed in the Library's digital collection of the university's research, they must inform SGPS and submit documents through a shared google drive folder provided by SGPS.

The folder must have three files, each in a pdf format:

- The project or major paper
- The completed form – Certificate of Approval – Master's Project or Major Paper
- The form [Submission of Thesis/Dissertation/Project/Major Paper](#): This form must contain an abstract of the project/paper (not more than 100 words) and 5 key words which can be used by researchers to search for the document.