Information for Master’s

This page contains information specific to the Master’s programs offered by the Department of Geography, Environment and Geomatics. Additional important information can be found on the Faculty of Arts’ graduate page and the uOttawa graduate page.

Thesis supervisor(s)

As a master’s student in a thesis-based program you have a thesis supervisor, whose role is to act as your mentor and guide throughout your program. Your thesis supervisor is responsible for both academic and administrative aspects of your progress through the program, from you begin until you graduate, typically even writing reference letters for you as you move on in your career. It is important that you identify a thesis supervisor before you apply. Applicants are not admitted into a thesis-based program without a supervisor.

It is possible, but not common, to have two supervisors. This may be a good idea if your research spans two fields or relies substantially on the expertise of two different professors. If you choose to have two supervisors, at least one of them must be a full-time faculty member at the Department of Geography, Environment and Geomatics.

Thesis advisory committee

In addition to your thesis supervisor(s), a thesis advisory committee (TAC) will be formed by the end of your first term, to provide academic guidance in addition to that given by your supervisor(s). You should consult with your TAC early in your program, and frequently thereafter, to develop your research proposal and conduct your research. The initial formation of the TAC is the joint responsibility of the students and the thesis supervisor(s), and it formalized using this form, which must be signed by all TAC members and yourself. The composition of the TAC must subsequently be approved by the Graduate Chair. In addition to the thesis supervisor(s), the TAC must include:

- At least one other full-time faculty member from the Department of Geography, Environment and Geomatics
- A minimum of three members, including the thesis supervisor(s). In case of co-supervision, supervisors count as a single TAC member.

The composition of the TAC can change during your program, for example if the nature of your work and thus the expertise required to guide it changes from what was originally planned. To change your TAC simply submit a new form.

The TAC members will meet with you at least twice per academic year to review your progress and discuss next steps. These meetings will happen at least:

- Once in the first term
- One additional time before the comprehensive exam
- One additional time before the thesis proposal defense
Progress reports

All graduate students are required to complete a brief annual progress report outlining what you have accomplished in the past year, and what your plans are for the following year. Your supervisor(s) will also contribute to this report. Renewal of internal and some external scholarships depends on a satisfactory report. To complete the report you must fill in section A and B of the form found here, then upload it through uoZone for your supervisor(s) to complete their own section. Your first progress report must be submitted during your 4th term in the program.

Research proposal

In a thesis-based master’s program, most of your time and effort is spent on a research project, and your research proposal is an important milestone in your progress toward completing this project. The research proposal is a written document that typically contains the following components:

- A review of existing literature in your field of research. This must outline relevant concepts and theories, important findings, and should identify a gap in existing knowledge.
- One or more research questions. The answer(s) to each question should serve to fill the gap(s) in existing knowledge identified in the review of literature.
- A proposed methodology for obtaining the data and conducting the analysis to answer your research question(s). This should include any fieldwork, instruments, and software needed to execute the described methodology. It should also include an indication of whether research ethics approval is required before proceeding with the research.
- A plan and proposed timeline for the project.

You should consult frequently with your TAC as you develop your research proposal. When it is ready, your must submit it formally to your TAC, and your supervisor(s) will organize a formal proposal defense. The proposal defense is a formal meeting in which you present your research proposal and your TAC asks you to justify it. In the term that you intend to complete the proposal defense, you must also register for the corresponding course:

- **If you are in an M.Sc. program:** GEG7996 Élaboration et présentation du projet de thèse de maîtrise ès sciences / Preparation and Presentation of the MSc Thesis Project
- **If you are in an M.A. program:** GEG 7998 Élaboration et présentation du projet de thèse de maîtrise ès arts / Preparation and Presentation of the M.A. Thesis Project

Some master’s students start to work on their thesis research prior to a successful defense of their research proposal. This may allow you to gain a better understanding of your proposed methodology, and may even allow you to include some preliminary results in your proposal. However, starting your thesis research before having identified a suitable research question can lead you to waste time. Your TAC can guide you on getting this balance right.

If you are continuing a field of research that you started during your undergraduate degree, e.g. during a Directed Research course, you must clearly demonstrate that your master’s thesis is based on original research completed since beginning your master’s program.

Thesis

In order to graduate from a thesis-based master’s program you must produce and successfully defend your master’s thesis. Your thesis is a written document that constitutes a contribution to knowledge.
You can choose between two different formats for this document, a ‘book format’ and an ‘article format’.

Book format
The ‘book format’ is a single complete document that typically includes the following sections:

- An introduction that outlines the theoretical framework, discusses relevant literature, and defines the research question(s).
- An explanation of the methodology and methods.
- A description of the results, often including maps, diagrams, graphs, and other figures for illustration.
- A discussion of the results in relation to existing knowledge.
- A conclusion that outlines the new knowledge contributed by the research.

Article format
The ‘article format’ consists of one or more articles, formatted as they would be for submission to academic journals in the field. If your thesis consists of more than one such article, the articles in the thesis must have a common theme, and the thesis must, in addition to the articles, include an introduction to the thesis as a whole, as well as a conclusion that outlines the contribution to knowledge provided by the thesis as a whole. The article(s) that appear in an article-format thesis do not have to be published or even submitted for publication by the time you submit your thesis. It is also important to note that the fact that an article has been accepted for publication does not guarantee that the corresponding article-format thesis is acceptable to the thesis examining committee.

In general, there is a tendency for ‘science’ theses to be written in article format, whereas ‘arts’ and ‘social science’, theses tend to be written in the book format. This is by no means universal within any discipline, and the choice of format rests with the student, in consultation with the TAC.

Thesis submission
As your thesis nears completion, you should submit drafts for review by the TAC. When it is ready, as determined in consultation with the TAC, you must formally submit your thesis via uoZone. Your TAC will then read through the final version and provide you with formal comments on it, including a determination of whether it is ready for you to defend or not. This formal evaluation has three possible verdicts:

- The thesis is accepted for defense.
- The thesis requires substantial revision to meet the standards required for the degree; a revised version of the thesis must be submitted to the examining committee before the defense can proceed.
- The thesis fails to meet the standards required for the degree, and the student must withdraw from the program.

When the thesis is ready to defend your supervisor(s) will organize the thesis defense.

Thesis defense
The thesis defense is a formal meeting in which you present your thesis and justify it in front of an examining committee. The examining committee is normally composed of the members of your TAC,
and the defense is chaired by another full-time faculty member from the Department of Geography, Environment and Geomatics. The thesis defense proceeds as follows:

- The defense chair and the examining committee deliberates in private to discuss any important issues related to the thesis and its defense.
- The student presents a brief overview of their work, typically for no more then 10 minutes.
- In turn, each member of the TAC asks the student questions related to the thesis. After this first round of questions a second round may be used to follow up on remaining issues.
- The chair and examining committee evaluates the defense in private.

The thesis evaluation will result in one of the following verdicts:

- The thesis meets the degree requirements, but minor corrections must be made. The student has one month to complete the thesis revisions.
- The thesis meets the degree requirements, but major corrections/revisions must be made. The student has three months to complete the thesis revisions.
- The thesis does not meet the degree requirements. If this is the first thesis defense, the student may make revisions to the thesis and schedule another defense with the same examining committee. If this is the second thesis defense, the student must withdraw from the program.

In the term that you intend to complete the thesis defense, you must also register for the corresponding course: “THM 7999: Thèse de maîtrise / Master’s Thesis”.

**Final thesis submission**

When the thesis defense and the required revisions are complete, the student must submit the final version of the thesis to the uOttawa library. Once submitted and accepted by the library, you have officially completed all degree requirements and can call yourself a master!