


Policy Group	Graduate Studies	Policy Number	ACA-GRA-07	 جامعة زايد ZAYED UNIVERSITY
Responsible Office	Office of the Provost	Distribution	External	
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PROCEDURES

Research Thesis and Dissertation

1. The Master Thesis

- 1.1 A master's thesis is generally equivalent to six (6) or nine (9) credit hours, except for master's programs that are considered terminal degrees in their disciplines, such as the Master of Fine Arts (MFA), where the thesis may be equivalent to 12 or more credit hours.
- 1.2 Student registers for thesis credits for a minimum of two (2) semesters after completing at least twelve (12) credit hours of coursework in the program. Only students in good academic standing can register for thesis credit. Students must be registered in the semester/term in which they defend their thesis. A Continuing Course (CC) grade is recorded by the Registrar until completion of the master's thesis.
- 1.3 Students who do not complete their master's thesis after registering for thesis full credit hours must maintain continuous master's thesis enrollment until their defense of the master's thesis. Students will be charged the tuition rate of one (1) credit hour for each extension they need to complete their thesis. Students must complete the master's degree program requirements within five (5) years from initial enrollment, inclusive of any leave.
- 1.4 Each master student who plans to pursue a research thesis must have a Thesis Committee. The membership of the Committee consists of the student's research supervisor, who has a graduate faculty designation as required by the relevant university policy, a faculty member from the same academic department, who also has a graduate faculty designation, and a third faculty member with the appropriate graduate faculty designation and external to the university. The student's research supervisor serves as the Chair of the Thesis Committee. The Committee is formed by the Department Chair in consultation with the student's research supervisor.
- 1.5 The student develops a research proposal for the thesis and submits it to the supervisor for review and approval by the Thesis Committee prior to registering in any thesis credits. See Section 3 "Research Proposal" for more details.
- 1.6 Graduate students conducting research with human and/or animal subjects are required to seek ethical clearance from the Zayed University Research Ethics Committee and from any other required external entities before starting to collect the data for their research thesis.
- 1.7 The student registers in thesis credits over multiple semesters and conducts the planned research according to the approved proposal and under the direct

supervision of the research supervisor and in consultation with remaining members of the Thesis Committee.

- 1.8 Upon completing the research, the student writes the thesis according to the “Thesis Preparation Guidelines” and submits it to the Thesis Committee for review.
- 1.9 Once the Thesis Committee accepts the thesis and decides the student is ready to defend it, the supervisor communicates the Committee’s decision in writing along with the final copy of the student’s thesis to the Chair of the student’s home academic department.
- 1.10 The Committee Chair makes arrangements for the thesis defense.
- 1.11 An announcement of the thesis defense is prepared by the student’s department and is released to the relevant community within the student’s home college and the university at least one (1) week prior to the scheduled date of the defense.
- 1.12 The defense of the thesis occurs in a public session as described below in Section 4 “Defense of a Thesis or Dissertation.”
- 1.13 The outcome of the thesis evaluation and defense is handled as described Section 4 “Defense of a Thesis or Dissertation.”
- 1.14 Once a thesis is accepted by the Thesis Committee, either initially or after it was modified at the request of Committee, the research supervisor submits a passing grade (P) for the thesis credits for the student. However, if the thesis was “Not Accepted” by the Thesis Committee, the research supervisor submits a failing grade (NP) for the thesis credits. The Thesis Committee’s decision is final and cannot be appealed.

2. The Doctorate Dissertation

- 2.1 A doctorate dissertation is generally equivalent to a minimum of twenty-four (24) credit hours. The exact number of credit hours may vary depending on whether the doctorate program has a research or professional orientation.
- 2.2 A student begins registering for dissertation credits normally after completing a minimum of eighteen (18) credit hours of coursework in the program and/or after passing the doctoral qualifying/comprehensive examination. Only students in good academic standing can register for dissertation credit. Students must be registered in the semester/term in which they defend their dissertation. A Continuing Course (CC) grade is recorded by the Registrar until completion of the dissertation.
- 2.3 Students who do not complete their dissertation after registering for dissertation full credit hours must maintain continuous dissertation enrollment until their defense of the dissertation. Students will be charged the tuition rate of one (1) credit hour for each extension they need to complete their dissertation.
- 2.4 Each doctorate student must have at least two (2) research papers written based on the dissertation research submitted for publication in a SCOPUS Q1 or Q2 journal before the student can defend the dissertation.
- 2.5 Each doctorate student must have a Dissertation Advisory Committee that comprises the student’s research supervisor, who has a graduate faculty designation as required by the relevant policy, and a faculty member from the same academic discipline, and another faculty from a different department or college that is relevant to the student’s research area. The student’s research supervisor serves as the Chair

of the Advisory Committee. The Committee is formed by the Assistant Dean for Research and Graduate Studies (R&GS) in consultation with the student's research supervisor and the Department Chair.

- 2.6 The student develops a research proposal for the dissertation and submits it to the research supervisor for review and approval by the Advisory Committee normally prior to registering in any dissertation credits. See Section 3 "Research Proposal" for more details.
- 2.7 Graduate students conducting research with human and/or animal subjects are required to seek ethical clearance from the Zayed University Ethics Committee and from any other required external entities before starting to collect the data for their dissertation.
- 2.8 The Assistant Dean for R&GS schedules and chairs a session for the student to present the research proposal before the Dissertation Advisory Committee.
- 2.9 The student registers in dissertation credits over multiple semesters and conducts the planned research according to the approved proposal and under the direct supervision of the research supervisor and in consultation with all members of the Advisory Committee.
- 2.10 Upon completing the research, the student writes the dissertation according to the "Dissertation Preparation Guidelines" and submits it to the Advisory Committee for review.
- 2.11 Once the Advisory Committee accepts the dissertation and decides the student is ready to defend it, the research supervisor communicates the Committee's decision in writing along with the final copy of the student's dissertation to the Assistant Dean for R&GS.
- 2.12 The Assistant Dean for R&GS, in consultation with the student's research supervisor, recommends the formation of a Dissertation Examination Committee by completing a "Request to Establish a Dissertation Examination Committee Form". The request is recommended by the College Dean and approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies.
- 2.13 The Dissertation Examination Committee must consist of doctorally-qualified experts who include
 - (a) a faculty member from the student's department/college with expertise related to the student's research area;
 - (b) a faculty member outside the student's college; and
 - (c) one member external to Zayed University (see Section 10 on "Selecting an External Examiner" for additional details).The Examination Committee is chaired by the Assistant Dean for R&GS, who is a non-evaluating member of the committee. If the Assistant Dean is the student's research supervisor, then another faculty member is chosen to chair the Examination Committee.
- 2.14 The Dean of Graduate Studies appoints the Examination Committee and communicates the appointment letter to all members of the Committee and the student's college.

- 2.15 Once the Examination Committee is officially appointed, the Chair of the Committee sends the dissertation to the other members of the committee for evaluation along with the corresponding evaluation form.
- 2.16 The Committee members review and evaluate the dissertation and return the evaluation forms to the Committee Chair.
- 2.17 The Committee Chair informs the Deanship of Graduate Studies and the student's research supervisor of the outcome of the committee's dissertation evaluation. If all members of the Committee have recommended that the student proceeds to defense, the Committee Chair makes arrangements for the dissertation defense in consultation with the student's research supervisor. Otherwise, the Committee Chair informs the supervisor that the student's dissertation is not ready for defense and communicates the Committee's feedback from the evaluation to the student to be addressed in consultation with the Dissertation Advisory Committee. Once the dissertation is revised at a later stage, the evaluation process is restarted with the Assistant Dean for R&GS and the same Examination Committee is re-appointed. However, replacement of members is possible only if members are no longer available.
- 2.18 An official announcement of the dissertation defense is prepared by the Deanship of Graduate Studies in coordination with the Assistant Dean for R&GS and is released to the university community at least two (2) weeks prior to the scheduled date of the defense.
- 2.19 The defense of the dissertation occurs in a public session as described in Section 4 "Defense of a Thesis or Dissertation."
- 2.20 The outcome of the dissertation evaluation and defense is handled as described in Section 4 "Defense of a Thesis or Dissertation."
- 2.21 Once a dissertation is accepted by the Examination Committee, either initially or after it was modified at the request of the Committee, the research supervisor submits a passing grade (P) for the dissertation credits for the student. However, if the dissertation was "Not Accepted" by the Examination Committee, the research supervisor submits a failing grade (NP) for the dissertation credits. The Committee's decision is final and cannot be appealed.

3. Research Proposal

- 3.1 A student pursuing a graduate degree with a research thesis or dissertation is required to prepare a concise and complete research proposal that clearly defines the research problem and objectives and outlines the methodology for the planned research.
- 3.2 The research proposal of a thesis or dissertation is a requirement that should be met before the student registers for thesis/dissertation research credits. However, in a doctorate program, the proposal is normally prepared and defended immediately after the student successfully completes the Comprehensive/Qualifying Examination.
- 3.3 The proposal contents and format must conform with the proposal development guidelines that are available from the student's department or college.
- 3.4 Students are advised to check with their research supervisors on the logistics and timeline for the submission and approval of research proposals.

4. Defense of a Thesis or Dissertation

- 4.1 The defense of a thesis or a dissertation is held in a public session in two parts and in the presence of the Examination Committee. The entire session is presided over by the Chair of the Examination Committee.
- 4.2 The first part consists of a presentation by the student on the thesis/dissertation followed by a brief question-answer period for members of the audience. Then a short break is taken. After the brief recess, the defense session resumes with the second part which is dedicated exclusively for the members of the Thesis Committee for master students or Examination Committee for doctoral students to question the student on all aspects of the thesis/dissertation which includes, but is not limited to, the research and its findings, the results and their validation method, the contents of the thesis/dissertation, etc. Each college will set their own guidelines for examination.
- 4.3 After the defense session adjourns, the Thesis Committee or Examination Committee meets alone in a brief closed meeting. Each committee member completes a “Defense Evaluation Form” individually that reflects the examiner’s own evaluation of the student’s defense. Then, the Committee deliberates the student’s overall performance on the thesis/dissertation and the defense and decides whether the thesis/dissertation is acceptable or not. The final decision of the Committee must be one of the following:
 - a) Accepted: The thesis/dissertation is accepted without any modifications.
 - b) Accepted with Minor Modifications: The thesis/dissertation is accepted with minor modifications that are requested by the Thesis or Examination Committee.
 - c) Accepted with Major Modifications: The thesis/dissertation is accepted with major modifications that are requested by the Thesis or Examination Committee.
 - d) Not Accepted: The thesis/dissertation is considered by the Committee not acceptable.
- 4.5 It is preferred for the Thesis Committee or Examination Committee to reach its final decision by consensus. However, if voting is necessary and results in a tie, the Committee Chair casts his/her vote in order to decide the final outcome.
- 4.6 The Committee Chair completes the “Overall Committee Evaluation of the Thesis/Dissertation and Defense Form” according to the Committee’s final outcome. The form must be signed by all members of the Committee.
- 4.7 The Committee Chair informs the student and the Department Chair of the final decision verbally immediately after the Committee finishes its closed meeting, and in writing within two (2) working days.
- 4.8 If the thesis/dissertation is “Accepted with Minor Modifications,” then the student has ten (10) working days from the official written notification to make all required modifications and to submit the revised thesis/dissertation to the supervisor. At the time of final decision, the Thesis or Examination Committee may request to have the revised thesis/dissertation sent to them for their final review and approval. Otherwise, the revised document is checked and approved by the research supervisor and informs in writing all members of the Committee of the final approval.

- 4.9 If the thesis/dissertation is “Accepted with Major Modifications”, then the student has between thirty (30) and ninety (90) days to address all required changes and to submit the revised thesis/dissertation to the supervisor. The supervisor will in turn forward the thesis/dissertation to the members of the Thesis or Examination Committee who will have fourteen (14) working days to review the revised document. A member of the Thesis or Examination Committee may request for clarification/explanation on any part of the revision from the student. The decision of each examiner after the second review is to be communicated in writing directly to the Chair of the Examination Committee. All members of the Examination Committee must approve the changes in order for the thesis/dissertation to be accepted by the Committee. The Committee Chair communicates the overall decision of the Committee (i.e., Accepted or Not Accepted) to the student’s research supervisor, who will in turn submit the corresponding grade for the research credits.

5. Thesis and Dissertation Preparation Guidelines

- 5.1 Graduate students preparing theses or dissertations must follow the “Thesis and Dissertation Preparation Guidelines” published by the Deanship of Graduate Studies at Zayed University. These guidelines provide general information on the organization of the thesis/dissertation document and specific instructions on the presentation and format of its contents. A thesis/dissertation will not be cleared for final release and printing until it fully conforms with the published guidelines of the university.
- 5.2 It is the individual student’s responsibility to ensure that the final thesis/dissertation meets all requirements stated in the “Thesis and Dissertation Preparation Guidelines” and is approved for release and printing by the published timeline each semester, and the Deanship of Graduate Studies reserves the right to return any thesis or dissertation that does not meet the stated requirements, which may lead to delay in the student’s clearance process for graduation.

6. Copyright

- 6.1 The copyright of a thesis or dissertation is by the student, who is the author of the document. However, students are required to grant rights to Zayed University in order to make their theses/dissertations in both print and digital format. A complete “Declaration of Copyright License” statement is provided in the “Thesis/Dissertation Preparation Guidelines” document. The signed original of the “Declaration of Copyright License” must be submitted as a separate sheet along with a bound copy of the thesis/dissertation to the university library. A digital copy is also required to be submitted to the university library to be deposited into the University’s Institutional Repository.
- 6.2 A student who wishes to delay the release of his/her thesis/dissertation to the public for intellectual property reasons must submit a request to impose an embargo for up to two (2) years. Upon the approval of the request by the Dean of Graduate Studies, the form is submitted to the library along with the “Declaration of the Copyright License” for implementation.

7. Declaration of Original Work

The student author of a thesis/dissertation is required to declare that the thesis/dissertation is an original research work that was done and prepared by the student under the guidance

of his/her research supervisor. A complete “Declaration of Original Work” statement is provided in the “Thesis/Dissertation Preparation Guidelines” document.

8. Finalizing a Thesis or Dissertation after the Defense

- 8.1 The student submits the final draft of the accepted thesis/dissertation in hard-copy, spiral-bound format to the Deanship of Graduate Studies for a final review.
- 8.2 The Deanship of Graduate Studies checks the format and presentation of the document to ensure conformance with the published preparation guidelines and returns it to the student.
- 8.3 The student makes requested changes, if any, and proceeds to print and bind a minimum of four (4) copies of the thesis/dissertation according to the specifications and instructions in the “Thesis/Dissertation Preparation Guidelines.”
- 8.4 Bound copies of a thesis/dissertation are to be signed by the student’s research supervisor, the Chair of the Examination Committee, the College Dean and the Dean of Graduate Studies.
- 8.5 The bound copies are to be distributed as follows: a copy for the student, a copy for the student’s research supervisor, a copy for the student’s department and a copy for the university library.

9. External Member of an Advisory Committee

A person external to Zayed University, such as from another academic institution or a business or governmental entity, who is deemed to have the appropriate academic qualifications and certain expertise or experience, may be nominated to serve as an external member on a student’s Thesis Committee or Dissertation Advisory Committee only as an additional member. The nomination, as a “Request to Appoint an External Member to a Thesis/Dissertation Advisory Committee,” which is signed by the nominee and includes clauses on terms of research confidentiality and intellectual property, is submitted to the Deanship of Graduate Studies along with the nominee’s CV and a copy of the nominee’s terminal degree. The request must be approved by the Graduate Council before the external member can serve on the Thesis Committee or Dissertation Advisory Committee. The external member of the advisory committee will receive one thousand five hundred dirhams (AED 1,500) as compensation for their work on the committee.

10. Selecting an External Examiner

10.1 Qualification of the External Examiner

The external examiner must:

- a) Be a qualified, objective individual who is not associated or affiliated with Zayed University (see 10.2 “Conflict of Interest” below).
- b) Hold a terminal degree in a discipline area that is the same or closely related to the student’s area of specialization.
- c) Hold (or had held) the rank of Associate Professor, Professor or Emeritus Professor at a higher education institution that offers a similar degree as the one being sought by the student.
- d) Be a scholar with an established reputation and competence in the student’s research field demonstrated by the examiner’s research track record and publications.
- e) Have prior experience supervising academic research.

- f) Have not served as an external examiner for another student of the same student’s research supervisor in the last two (2) years. Exceptions may be made in special circumstances after the approval of the Assistant Dean for R&GS.
- g) Be at an academic institution that has a higher world ranking than Zayed University.

10.2 Conflict of Interest

The external examiner is a person who is an expert in the field but is not affiliated with the student, the supervisor or their research. Therefore, the examiner must have no potential conflict of interest with the student, his/her research supervisor, another examiner on the Examination Committee or Zayed University that may compromise the integrity of the evaluation process or the potential intellectual property rights of the student or the university. Areas of conflict of interest include but are not limited to:

- a) Personal relationships (e.g., be a relative of, be a friend of, is emotionally attached to, has a dispute with, etc.)
- b) Working and professional relationships (e.g., be a co-author, be a collaborator, be a partner, has a business interest or ownership, has direct funding, be a supervisor/supervisee, be a referee, be an examiner/examinee, etc.).

11. Revision History

Date	Revision
27 October 2021	President’s Decision issued (PD#69 of 2021).
25 October 2021	Approved by the Academic Council.
11 October 2021	Revision endorsed by the Provost’s Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added AED 1,500 compensation for external member of advisory committee (Section 9).
22 June 2021	Vice-President’s Decision issued (VPD#25 of 2021).
21 June 2021	Revisions approved by the Academic Council.
11 June 2020	Added to Public (External) website.
15 July 2019	New procedures approved by the Vice-President (VP Decision #106 of 2019).