Kent State University
Guidelines
Thesis Final Examination

POLICY STATEMENT
The writing of an acceptable thesis is mandatory or an option in certain master's degree programs.

THESIS COMMITTEE
When the student has developed a thesis topic acceptable to the advisor, a thesis committee is convened, responsible for overseeing the progress of the candidate's thesis. The graduate/program coordinator appoints the members of the committee in consultation with the student and the student's advisor. This group will consist, at minimum, of three members:

1. The advisor, who chairs the committee
2. Minimum two additional members from the candidate's academic unit
3. If appropriate, one or more committee members also may be selected from other academic units. However, the majority of the committee members must be from the student's home academic unit.

The advisor must be a member of the graduate faculty who has been approved to direct theses. The other members of the committee must have associate or full graduate faculty status and be approved to serve on a master's committee. A co-advisor, if is used, will count as one of the required members from the student's academic unit.

Special permission must be obtained from the college dean for anyone on the thesis committee who does not meet the qualifications stated above.

The graduate/program coordinator, in consultation with the graduate studies committee will, as necessary, review the composition of the proposed committee for appropriate balance, and the topic for strength and suitability.

FINAL EXAMINATION (ORAL DEFENSE)
In some academic units, a final examination (oral defense), open to the university community, may be required of candidates writing a thesis. This examination is directed primarily toward the thesis but may contain other topics with which the committee feels the candidate should be familiar. The procedures for the final examination are detailed in the procedures section below.

PROCEDURES FOR THE FINAL EXAMINATION (ORAL DEFENSE)
When the thesis has been accepted by a student's advisor, the advisor will arrange for the final examination, and the student will distribute the thesis to members of the thesis committee. The advisor will designate the time and place of the oral defense and notify the student and all members of the thesis committee. The oral defense should be scheduled to allow a minimum of 10 days for all members of the thesis committee to review the thesis. The college dean will be kept informed of the time and place of the examination and the composition of the examining committee.

In the absence of the advisor, the graduate/program coordinator will postpone the oral defense. In the case of long-term absence or enduring illness of the advisor, the lead administrator of the academic unit, in consultation with the graduate studies committee and the original advisor, should make arrangements for a substitute.

The oral defense will be open to the university community. The advisor should notify the academic unit of the time and place of the so that it may be announced in a suitable way. The student should provide copies of the thesis abstract to the academic unit so that it will be available to interested individuals prior to the defense to familiarize members of the graduate faculty with the methodology and findings. The final oral defense will be open to the university community. The advisor should notify the academic unit of the time and place of the so that it may be announced in a suitable way. The student should provide copies of the dissertation abstract to the academic unit so that it will be available to interested individuals prior to the defense to familiarize members of the graduate faculty with the methodology and findings.

Students may participate in the oral defense in a different location than the committee members (i.e., by web conferencing) if they are declared in a fully online degree program or have obtained permission in advance from the committee chair. See the policy on remote participation in a thesis or dissertation defense in the University Catalog.

The thesis advisor will act as the moderator at the oral defense. The duties of the moderator are to preside and ensure that all participants act in a civilized, polite and proper manner. The advisor should be familiar with the

procedures of the oral defense and has the authority to suspend proceedings should a situation arise that would not be conducive to a fair examination. The student will open the defense with a brief presentation of the thesis findings, after which the members of the thesis committee will question the student in an order determined by the advisor. Questions dealing with the substance, meaning and usefulness of the research in the thesis are of greatest priority. Inquiries or comments dealing with punctuation, grammatical minutiae, spelling, etc., are out of order and should be written out and privately submitted to the student and the advisor.

When, in the judgment of the advisor, members of the thesis committee have had an adequate opportunity to question the student, the advisor may open the examination to non-committee members of the graduate faculty, then, as the advisor deems appropriate, to others present. If, in the opinion of the advisor or upon a motion duly passed by a majority of the committee, it is deemed desirable to discontinue the oral defense, the advisor may recess the oral defense until a time mutually agreeable to the advisor, the student and the thesis committee.

When the questioning has run its course, the advisor will excuse everyone except members of the thesis committee and, if in attendance, the graduate/program coordinator and lead administrator of the academic unit. Parliamentary procedure will be followed to determine the success or failure of the student, with the advisor serving as chair. The student should be evaluated upon both: (a) the overall quality and significance of the thesis, and (b) the oral defense of the findings.

The advisor and members of the thesis committee will sign the Report of Thesis Final Examination form, and all register their vote of “pass” or “fail.” Thesis committee members may not abstain in this vote. A student passes the oral defense and becomes a “candidate” for the degree if there is no more than one dissenting vote. The graduate/program coordinator and lead administrator of the academic unit also signs the report, and the document is forwarded to the college for the signature of the dean. The college returns a copy of the completed form to the academic unit.

Following any revisions required by the committee, the advisor and the lead administrator of the academic unit must approve the final version of the thesis document by signing the signature page of the Thesis and the Thesis Preparation Approval Form when the student submits the thesis.

For more information please visit:

https://www.kent.edu/cas/graduate-forms

https://www.kent.edu/graduatestudies/guide-to-graduate-education/section-6.2

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