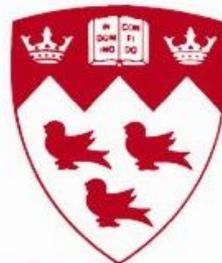


Thesis Writing Workshop

MSc Epi

November 5, 2020



McGill University

Objectives of this workshop

1. To provide information on university and departmental requirements and guidelines related to thesis preparation, submission and examination;
2. To provide guidance on organizing the structural elements of a thesis;
3. To assist students in the written expression of their thesis research in a clear and concise way with regard to discipline norms.

COURSE REGISTRATION

- MSc STUDENTS MUST REGISTER VIA MINERVA FOR **EPIB 690: THESIS COMPONENT – REQUIRED COURSE** (EBOH Student Affairs Office will send out registration procedures for EPIB 690)
- An IP for “In Progress” will remain on transcript until your thesis has been granted a grade

MSc EPI GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

- 45 credits:
 - Minimum 24 course credits;
 - 21 credits for thesis
- Satisfactory Progress reports
- Ethics certificate (TCPS-2 (2018) course on research ethics:www.pre.ethics.gc.ca)
- Ethics approval/certificate for research
 - It is the responsibility of the student and supervisor to discuss and check off the ethics approval box in the May 15th or November 15th tracking form
 - It is recommended that students ask their supervisor to see their ethics approval

THESIS SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Three important dates:

- December 15th
 - April 15th
 - August 15th
- You may submit your thesis any time during the year; however, the three above annual dates have an impact on registration status, fees and graduation date.
 - If you submit your **Initial Thesis** by any of the above dates, the following semester will be considered Thesis Evaluation Session and you will pay reduced fees.

THESIS SUBMISSION DEADLINES and FEES

- Thesis Evaluation Session fees for each semester are as follows (based on fees for academic year 2020/2021):
 - Fall 2020: \$394.67
 - (with opting out of the PGSS Insurance plan)
 - Winter 2021: \$394.67
 - Summer 2021: \$204.34
- If you submit your **Final Thesis** by April 15th, August 15th, or December 15th, your degree will be granted in the following semester.

MSc Epi NOMINATION OF EXAMINERS WORKSHEET

- Worksheet is available on departmental website and must be completed by student and supervisor(s)
- Worksheet and DRAFT Abstract must be submitted two months prior to the expected date of initial thesis submission
- Nominate 4 potential examiners competent in the field of the thesis research
- Proposed external examiners are **NOT** to be contacted by student nor supervisor(s)
- Verify there is no Conflict of Interest with any of them

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

An eligible external examiner **must not** have:

- Co-authored or otherwise carried out research in collaboration with the student or the supervisor within the last 5 years
- Has previously examined or been examined by the student's supervisor (within the last 5 years); e.g., the former student or former supervisor of the student's supervisor
- Has engaged in (or intend to engage in) discussions/negotiations with the student or supervisor relating to future employment or supervision
- Has previously read the thesis, or parts of it, or evaluated the student's thesis research (e.g., as an advisor, supervisory committee member, or evaluator for progress tracking)
- Has a financial interest in an entity that could benefit from the thesis research
- Has a personal or financial relationship to the student or the supervisor, including:
 - A past or present spouse or partner
 - A close family member
 - A past or present business partner
- Has engaged in other activities that could be interpreted as a conflict of interest

MSc Epi NOMINATION OF EXAMINERS WORKSHEET (cont'd)

- Worksheet received and processed by dept SAO and forwarded to the Program Director and Advisor for further review and to secure an examiner
- Student is notified of which examiner has been secured; student can then complete and sign the GPS Master's Nomination of Examiners Form and send to dept SAO
- In order for student to receive the GPS Nomination of Examiners Form with departmental signature, student must first submit a pdf copy of thesis to dept SAO; this MUST be the same version of the thesis that will be submitted to Thesis Office

DRAFT ABSTRACT

- Title of thesis
- Student name
- Structured :
 - Background
 - Objective(s)
 - Methods
 - Results
 - Discussion
 - Conclusion
- 1 -2 pages; 1.0 - 1.15 spacing; 11 or 12 point font
(Note: the text of the final thesis abstract submitted via MINERVA, allows a maximum of 4000 characters)

Draft Abstract: DOs and DON'Ts

- **DOs**

- Indicate if thesis includes manuscript(s)
- Indicate the epi study design clearly
- Include quantitative results

- **DON'Ts**

- Write thesis abstract as a manuscript abstract
- Have grammatical or spelling errors
- Use future tense
- Use personal pronouns

INITIAL E-THESIS SUBMISSION

- Thesis submission is electronic!
- If requested by the examiner, student may be required to provide a hard copy of the thesis.

REQUIRED THESIS SUBMISSION DOCUMENTS

- GPS Master's Nomination of Examiners Form
- myProgress Worksheet (SAO will send to student along with GPS MSc Nomination of Examiners Form)
- Thesis: E-theses must be submitted in a single PDF document from your official McGill e-mail address

EXAMINATION PROCESS

- Thesis Office recommends a four week turn-around time for return of examiner's report (flexible)
- MSc Examiner's Report is sent from the Thesis Office by e-mail to the student, supervisor(s) and department
- Student and supervisor(s) meet to make corrections for final e-thesis submission

FINAL DEPOSITION

- It is highly recommended that students submit their final e-thesis **at least one week in advance** of the deadline. This is to allow supervisor(s) sufficient time to approve the final e-thesis on-line by the deadline date
- Remember that for the text of the final thesis abstract, MINERVA allows a maximum of 4000 characters
- These students do not need to apply to graduate as their thesis submission prompts the Thesis Office to automatically add their name to the graduation list

CONVOCATION DATES

- Spring
- Fall
- February Granting of Degrees





Questions?

MSc Epi Thesis Requirements

- An exhaustive review of work in the particular field of study is not necessarily required. Expectation for the level of original scholarship at the Master's level *varies with the discipline.*
- The thesis must be written in compliance with norms for academic and scholarly expression and for publication in the public domain...

Criteria for Evaluation of MSc Epi thesis

- Is in line *with disciplinary norms*
- Is situated in a broader context and appropriately acknowledges the larger field of research
- Details methodology and methods
- Reports results clearly
- Justifies analyses and conclusions
- Discusses implications
- Is presented appropriately *for disciplinary norms* (grammar, style, coherence, cohesion)
- Complies with McGill's guidelines for thesis preparation

Rating: *Excellent (top 10%); Very good; Good; Satisfactory; Unsatisfactory*

Preparation of a thesis

- Traditional or manuscript-based (**minimum for MSc: 1; for PhD: 2**)
- Title page
- Detailed table of contents
- Brief *abstract* in both English and French
- Acknowledgements
- Preface and Contribution of Authors
- An *introduction*
- A comprehensive review of the relevant *literature*
- Body of the thesis – *methods, results*
- A comprehensive scholarly *discussion* of all the results
- A final *conclusion* and summary
- A thorough *bibliography* or reference list

- Not to exceed 100 pages (normally); conventional font, 12-point, 12 characters per inch, double or 1.5 spaced. Left and right margins 1 inch. Page numbers required.

Supervisor's role in thesis preparation

- Your supervisor must read, edit, and comment on your thesis before initial submission – this is a main responsibility of a supervisor. Your supervisor signs off approval on the thesis content and format at submission.
- If you have a co-supervisor, the same rules apply.

Traditional and Manuscript-based MSc theses

- **Traditional**
- No manuscripts
- Entire thesis describes all elements of the thesis research
- May be suitable for publication at a later date
- **Manuscript-based**
- ✓ Minimum of 1 manuscript
- ✓ Organizes results efficiently
- ✓ Provides timely peer-reviewed results dissemination
- ✓ Saves time
- ✓ Important for CV
- ✓ Important for future studies
- ✓ Important for funder

MSc Epi thesis topics

- A methodologically rigorous research study which incorporates the epidemiological and biostatistical knowledge base mastered over the course of training in the program.
- This will generally include one (or more) specific hypotheses or research questions which will be investigated using either primary or secondary data, and a detailed analysis. Results will be interpreted thoroughly and prompt a discussion of the scientific contribution made in the context of past evidence and future implications of the research.
- While no specific research design is prohibited, students are advised to consult with their supervisor and thesis supervisory committee early in the program in order to submit their research protocol for dept review by August 31 of year 1.

[msc_epi_thesis_research_proposal-fall_2020-final.pdf](#)

[discipline-specific_thesis_guidelines-24-apr-2020-updated.pdf](#)

Organization of the thesis (before page 1!)

Title page	
Abstract	i
Résumé	ii
Preface	iii
Contributions of Authors	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Table of Contents	ix
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xii
List of Appendices	xiii
List of Abbreviations/Acronyms	xiv

Organization of the thesis

Abstract: max 4000 characters

Résumé: Dictionnaire d'épidémiologie (2004)

Preface: explains how thesis is organized

Contributions of Authors: primary author (you!)/co-authors
(you and supervisor decide)

Acknowledgements: remember examiners really do read this!

Table of Contents: must be exactly as in the body of the thesis

List of Tables: by chapter, with titles and page numbers

List of Figures: by chapter, with titles and page numbers

List of Appendices: questionnaires, detailed methods; formulae,
codes

List of Abbreviations: be complete

List of Acronyms: be complete

manuscripts and journal norms

- Discuss with your supervisor how many manuscripts can be written from the research you have conducted.
- If you have more than one manuscript formatted for different journals with different formatting requirements (e.g. British vs American spelling; reporting p values), explain this in your Preface or in the bridging text preceding the manuscript.

Table of Contents

Chapter

1. **Introduction:** Write at the end?
2. **Literature Review:** if *manuscript* is part, or all, of this chapter, bridging text is required before and after!
3. **Study Objectives:** usually 1 or 2 pages; overall, primary, secondary
4. **Study Methodology:** more details than provided in the manuscript(s)
5. **Study Results:** if *manuscript(s)*, bridging texts are required
6. **Discussion:** how does your study add to the evidence base?
7. **Conclusion:** main messages based on your study; can include future research/next steps
8. **References:** be complete, be consistent, include ALL references

APPENDICES

Manuscripts = from cover page to references, tables and figures! Formatted for each journal



Thesis Titles

are always important!

Provide accurate representation of the core content.

DO's	DON'Ts
Do ... be parsimonious	Don't ... be wordy
Do ... be clear	Don't ... be misleading
Do ... be precise	Don't ... be 'cute'
Do ... know your audience	Don't ... include abbreviations/acronyms

Additional text in manuscript-based theses

- Can be included as text in the section preceding and following the manuscript
- Can be included as a separate preface to each manuscript
- Usually not more than 2 pages
- Ideally include the journal to which manuscript has been (will be) submitted
- Informs the reader of the rationale for the manuscript and explains its context within the whole thesis, linking previous and next sections

Regulation on the Conduct of Research

Authorship

A Researcher shall ensure that where a co-authored publication is based primarily on the work of the Student including a dissertation or thesis the Student is granted pre-eminence in the list of co-authors *in accordance with established practices of the discipline.*

http://www.mcgill.ca/research/files/research/conduct-of-research-regulation-on_4.pdf
(see page 6; accessed Oct 19, 2020) Regulation on the Conduct of Research
Last revised September 22, 2011 (Senate); September 27, 2011 (Board of Governors)

GPS rules take precedence if there is confusion/contradiction on the McGill website!

 In the case of multiple-authored articles, the student must be the **first author**. Multiple-authored articles cannot be used in more than one thesis. In the case of students who have worked collaboratively on projects, it may be preferable for both students to write a traditional format thesis, identifying individual contributions.

<https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/thesis/thesis-guidelines/preparation> (accessed Oct 19, 2020)

Publication waivers

- Please Note: When previously published copyrighted material is presented in a thesis, the student must obtain signed permissions/waivers from the publisher(s). Permission must also be obtained from co-authors of manuscripts submitted or in preparation for inclusion in the thesis; an email to that effect should suffice. The individual contributions of the student and other authors must be stated explicitly in the “Preface” to the thesis.
(<https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/thesis/thesis-guidelines/general-requirements>) accessed Oct 19, 2020
- This applies to those manuscripts which have been included in the thesis at the time of the initial e-submission. (Even though the state of a manuscript may change between the initial and the final e-submission, it is the state at initial submission which dictates whether a waiver is to be obtained, or not.)

Other helpful tips

- Begin writing early.
- Write something every day! (even if only a roman numeral page)
- Check and re-check spelling, grammar, citations...
- The abstract for the worksheet (to be submitted 2 months *prior to* submission of the thesis)..need *not* be the absolute final abstract.
- A thesis abstract is *not* a manuscript abstract...it is more!

Tips...

- Give sections to your supervisor as you write them...for early feedback and to keep you on track.
- Give sections to your thesis committee member...as appropriate.
- Give sections to a friend, colleague,...
- Consider participating in thesis preparation activities like TLS offerings!

