

Northern Caribbean University

Graduate Studies & Research

Guidelines for the Submission of Master's Theses and
Doctoral Dissertations

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to help the graduate student to effectively utilize time and resources while completing a thesis or dissertation that will serve as a contribution to knowledge, useful to other students, scholars, and the general public. It is understood that the graduate committee responsible for the respective student will supervise certain crucial aspects of that student's work. This guide is therefore not intended to supersede their instructions, but rather to harmonize the processes involved in the completion of a thesis or dissertation. Among the most important issues outlined in this guide are those relating to the role of the Dissertation Secretary and deadlines for submission of theses and dissertations for defence and final editing.

Definitions of Theses and Dissertations

A thesis is an original, formal, scholarly piece of work that is written as part of the requirements for a master's degree and which presents the writer's position on a proposed topic of his or her own choosing. A thesis is a University endeavour which seeks to maintain a proposition by argument.

A dissertation is an original, formal, scholarly study presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a doctoral degree. Traditionally, the expectation is that the dissertation will present arguments of greater complexity and material more substantial than those presented in the master's thesis; both documents, however, demand effort, excellence, and time. Although in some instances the words "dissertation" and "thesis" are used interchangeably, at Northern Caribbean University the term "dissertation" refers to the formal written presentation required for the Doctor of Philosophy or Doctor of Ministry degree, while "thesis" refers to the written presentation that may be required for the Master's degree.

A thesis or dissertation, a copy of which is archived in the Hiram Walters Resource Centre, represents a candidate's special contribution to the world of knowledge. In essence, the thesis and dissertation are sources which other scholars and researchers may consult. The method of research—whether primary, secondary, or a combination of both—on which a thesis or dissertation is based is usually controlled by the demands of the subject matter and decided upon by the respective departments.

Responsibilities of Advisers and Degree Candidates

There are two sets of requirements which the candidate must fulfil for a graduate degree: the departmental requirements and the requirements of the Office of Graduate Studies and Research. It is the responsibility of the graduate adviser and the department chairperson to

apprise the candidate of these requirements as well as the procedure for completing a graduate degree. It follows, then, that the adviser of the candidate should be thoroughly knowledgeable of the requirements so that he or she may guide the candidate along the most efficient path to his or her degree. The degree candidate must develop an understanding of the functions of scholarly writing through obtaining detailed guidelines that will serve as resources of credible information.

OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR THE DESK OF THE DISSERTATION SECRETARY

Purpose

The Dissertation Secretary is responsible for ensuring that all theses and dissertations conform to the University's ***Standards for Written Work***. Completed theses and dissertations will be examined to ensure that they represent both the student and the University well and that they meet standards that would make them fit for publication.

Scope

The Dissertation Secretary will communicate with the College and School Deans to provide feedback relating to general observations as well as formatting and style issues. Students are advised through email, and face- to-face interaction.

Procedures

Pre-defence

1. Students will work with the committee on a chapter-by-chapter basis until the document is cleared by the committee chair/adviser for defence.
2. After the document is cleared by the committee, the student will submit a "soft" copy of the document to the Dissertation Secretary via email (dissertationsecretary@ncu.edu.jm) at least three weeks before the tentative date for defence.
3. The Dissertation Secretary will perform a comprehensive review of the thesis or dissertation. The document will be examined for format, style, grammar, language and other publication matters. The Document will also be checked for plagiarism using the *Turnitin Plagiarism Checker*.

4. The Dissertation Secretary will submit the report of the comprehensive review to the college/school dean and chair of the defence committee via email.
5. A copy of the report will be sent to the student who will edit the document as necessary.

Post-Defence

1. After defence, the student will submit a complete, corrected soft copy of the thesis/dissertation to the Dissertation Secretary. Any changes recommended by the committee at the defence and implemented thereafter should be pointed out so that a final check for typographical errors or other problems can be done.
2. Upon approval, the Dissertation Secretary will inform the respective dean/chair via email that the thesis or dissertation meets the requirements for publication. A digital file (PDF) of the thesis/dissertation will be stored in the Office of Graduate Studies and Research.
3. No later than 10 days before graduation, the student should submit the requisite bound copies of the thesis/dissertation along with the signed Certification of Completion form to the academic department.
4. The Certification of Completion form will be forwarded to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research for the signature of the Associate Vice President. The Certification of Completion form will then be forwarded to University Registrar to indicate that the student has met the graduate academic requirements for graduation.
5. Finally, the Dissertation Secretary will ensure that the abstracts of theses and dissertations are uploaded to the NCU Graduate Studies and Research website.

Guidelines for Graduate Students

It is the responsibility of graduate students to ensure that they remain informed where changes and developments affecting the thesis/dissertation process are concerned. In addition, graduate students should seek guidance from, and communicate regularly with their faculty research advisers. The Dissertation Secretary, while responsible for ensuring that the student's work meets the University's standards, is not required to physically format, write any portion of or gather any data on behalf of said student. Students may choose to enlist the services of a

professional typist and/or editor should they need same. Should students choose to exercise this option, it would be in their best interest to consult the Dissertation Secretary as to where and how such services may be reasonably and professionally accessed.

Early consultations with the Dissertation Secretary are highly recommended since they reduce the likelihood of errors and will save time. However, each student must seek the approval of the committee chair before such a meeting can be convened. The Dissertation Secretary may also make a request to see students if it is considered necessary.

Deadlines for Submission of Theses and Dissertations

Given the number of students enrolled in the graduate programmes at Northern Caribbean University and the average graduating class size, a systematic approach must be implemented that will guarantee the timely review of all documents. Timelines must be strictly observed in order to facilitate the graduation exercise of that academic year. The Dissertation Secretary will not take responsibility for dissertations submitted late. Students who fail to meet the scheduled deadlines should prepare to graduate the following year.

An average dissertation can take between 5 and 10 days to be proofread and/or edited. This editing time varies significantly with the type of work (i.e., the programme of study) and the nature of the corrections to be made. Against this background, there must be adequate time for the review and editing of the many theses and dissertations that will be submitted. All theses and dissertations must be submitted for pre-defence editing no later than three weeks before the scheduled oral defence in the year of graduation. Documents requiring post-defence changes should be submitted no later than the last week of June of the year of graduation. It is the responsibility of faculty research advisers and committee chairs to ensure that students complete and submit their work as early as possible for final editing.

CONCLUSION

The Office of Graduate Studies and Research and the faculty research advisers will provide their full support to the graduate students although it is the ultimate responsibility of the students to produce theses and dissertations that will satisfy the university's expectations. The graduate students' success is the primary objective of the Office of Graduate Studies and Research.

REFERENCES

Northern Caribbean University Standards for Written Work

Publication Manual of the American Psychology Association (APA)

Turabian: A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations

Council of Science Editors Manual for Authors, Editors and Publishers