

6.2 Master's Degrees

The study for a master's degree can follow two modes or options as per *Article 33 of the Unified Law Organizing Graduate Studies in Saudi Universities* (2009):

- *Thesis option*: masters' students must take at least 24 credit hours of courses plus a thesis.
- *Course-only option*: master's students must take at least 42 credit hours of courses inclusive of a capstone/ research project.

The duration for obtaining a master's degree is a minimum of four semesters (i.e., 2 years) and a maximum of eight semesters (i.e., 4 years) (*Article 36 of Unified Law*). The academic year has two semesters of at least fifteen weeks each. A summer session is minimally eight weeks (*Article 35 of Unified Law*). A graduate student at Alfaisal University must take at least 70% of the program's credit hours at the University (*Article 38 of Unified Law*). The same course work cannot be used toward two different master's degrees unless it is part of an approved concurrent master's program. Colleges/departments set their own subject requirements for degrees. If colleges/ departments change requirements, they must obtain approval from the *Research & Graduate Council (RGC)*. All affected students must be informed in writing. Colleges/departments also must permit students who entered under the former requirements to elect to follow either the new or old rule

6.2.1 Thesis Option

6.2.1.1 Committee Roles and Responsibilities:

A *Thesis Advisory Committee* will be formed by the Program Coordinator/ Director for each student. The committee will consist of three members with a faculty member as the main academic advisor/supervisor and Chair. The Chair of the Committee must have research and graduate student advising experience and should be an Associate or full Professor as per Article 45 of the *Unified Laws Organizing Graduate at Saudi Universities*. Assistant Professors holding this rank for two years, may supervise masters' theses only on having published two research papers in student's area of specialization in a refereed academic journal. The Committee as per Article 42 of the *Unified Laws* will assist the student in the formulation and approval of the *Thesis Proposal* (see FORM G10 *Structure of Thesis Research Proposal*), and later advise the student in the execution of the research, the Thesis write-up, and help the student to prepare for the oral defense.

After writing a draft of the research proposal, the student must present it to the Thesis Advisory Committee for feedback & comments. The presentation should last about 15 minutes and may be in person or virtual after which the Committee will ask questions. The student should submit the proposal to the committee at least seven days before the scheduled presentation date. Based on the feedback the student will revise the thesis research proposal, if necessary. Once the proposal is approved by the Thesis Advisory Committee, then the main supervisor must submit the proposal along with a completed Form G10. to the program coordinator with copy to College Graduate Office & Graduate School (GS).

According to Article 48 of the *Unified Law*, a faculty member may supervise a maximum of four (4) theses at a time; the number of theses may in urgent cases (on the recommendation of relevant Department Head and the consent of both College and Graduate Councils) be increased to five (5). Theses supervision as the main adviser counts as 0.33 credit hour each in faculty members teaching loads.

On completion of the student's thesis and approval by the *Thesis Advisory Committee* (see FORM G11: *Thesis Submission for Defense*), the GS upon the recommendation of the respective *College Graduate Office* sends the manuscript to an *External Evaluator* (FORM G13: *External Evaluator's Report*) who has two weeks to review it. Once

the *External Evaluator* approves the thesis then the GS informs the respective *College Graduate Office* to set a date for the thesis defense. The Program Coordinator may recommend the names of the proposed voting members of the *Thesis Examination Committee* to the College Graduate Council for approval as per Article 51 of the *Unified Laws*.

The *Thesis Examination Committee* will consist of at least four members: a non-voting chair appointed by the respective College Graduate Office and three voting members recommended by the same Office. One of Committee members should be the Major Advisor, and another may be the *External Evaluator* from an outside university. Proposed committee members from outside the university must submit their CV to the GS before the advisory committee approval. The main advisor should always be consulted before asking someone to be on a thesis advisory committee. The thesis process flowsheet indicating the responsibilities of Program Director/Coordinator, Thesis Advisory Committee, External Evaluator, College Graduate Office, and the Graduate School is described in Figure 6.1. All associated forms are found in Table 6.1 and Appendix A.

6.2.1.2 Thesis Registration Process and Milestones

In the third semester of a master's program (i.e., second yr, first semester) a student must register for *Thesis A* (9 cr) in the online system. During this semester the student should submit and pass a Thesis Research Proposal (FORM G10). In the fourth semester (i.e., 2nd yr second semester) the student must register for *Thesis B* (9 cr) in the system. The student should write up & defend the thesis in this period. If a thesis is incomplete at the end of the second year, then the student must register for *Thesis C* (0 cr) to indicate a continuation. There are no credits attached to *Thesis C*. The thesis registration process flowsheet is described in Figure 6.2. The process for completing a master's degree is a minimum of four semesters (i.e., 2 years) and a maximum of eight semesters (i.e., 4 years) (Article 36 of Unified Law). (see section 6.2.6 Time in Candidacy).

6.2.1.3 Compensation for Examination Committee Members:

The External Evaluator is paid one thousand Riyals for review & assessment of a master's thesis (FORM G12: PAYMENT TO EXTERNAL EVALUATOR).

6.2.1.4 Thesis Defense:

Once the thesis has been approved by the *Advisory Committee* (see *Form G11: THESIS SUBMISSION FOR DEFENSE*) and the External Evaluator (*FORM G13: EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S REPORT*), the College Graduate Office or the Program Coordinator/Director will convene the *Thesis Examination Committee*.

At the defense, the Chair is non-voting and is present to ensure that proper procedures are followed. The initial part of the defense is open to the public including a brief question period. Thesis presentation suggested being 15-20 minutes followed by 5-10 minutes of questions from audience. After this the public will be asked to leave by the Chairperson. The *Thesis Examination Committee* will continue asking questions for up to 30 minutes. The candidate is then asked to leave the room by the Chair. The Committee after deliberation decides by majority vote on one of four decisions: Pass, Pass with Minor Revisions (corrections to be confirmed by the Chair/Supervisor), Pass Pending Major Revisions (corrections to be confirmed by the Advisor & the Chair), Not Passed. Decisions will be based on a majority (i.e., at least 2/3) vote as per Article 55 of the *Unified Law Organizing Graduate Studies in Saudi Universities* from the Ministry of Higher Education (MOE).

Figure 6.1.

1. Program Director/Coordinator assigns a *Thesis Advisory Committee* to student



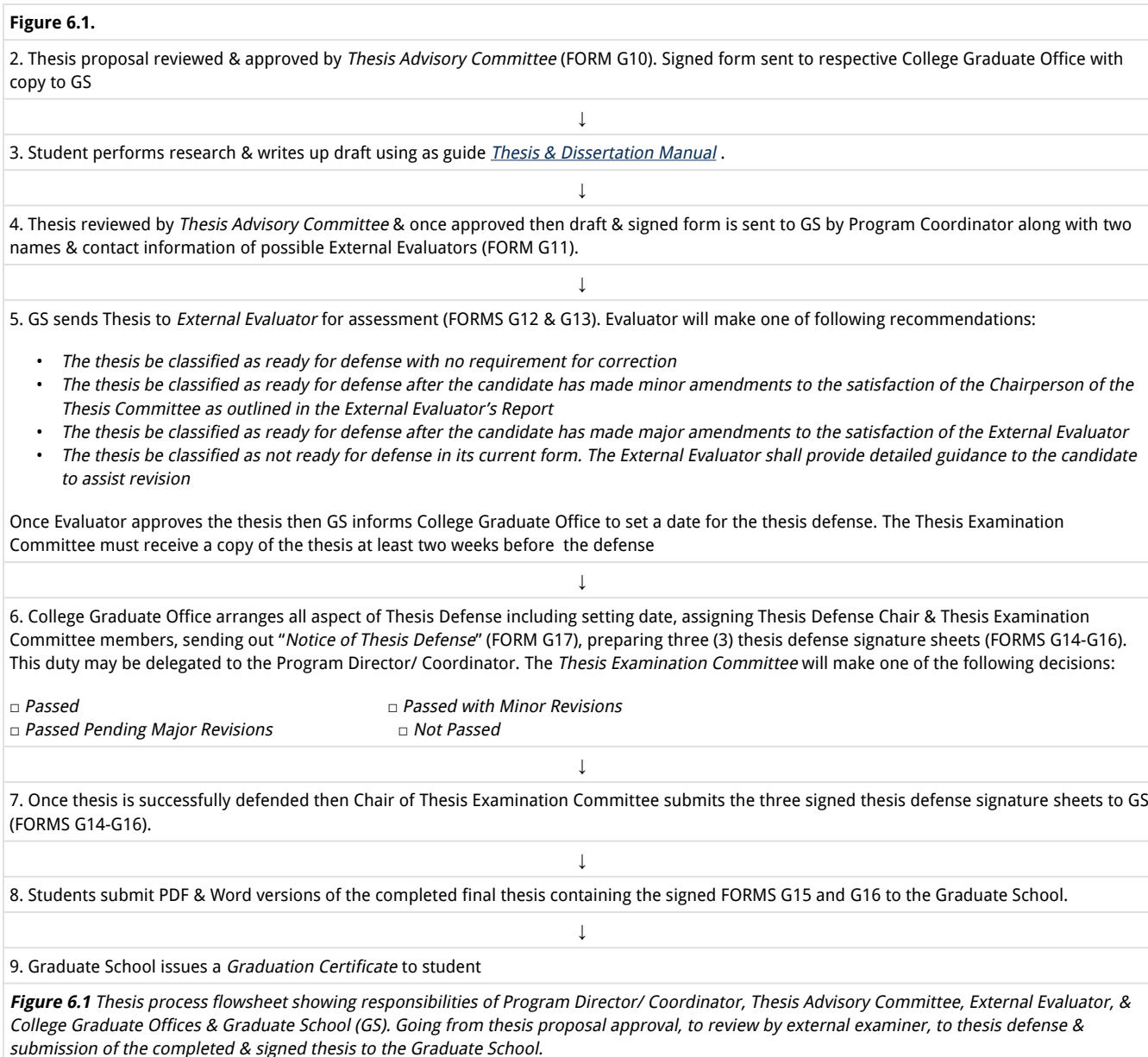
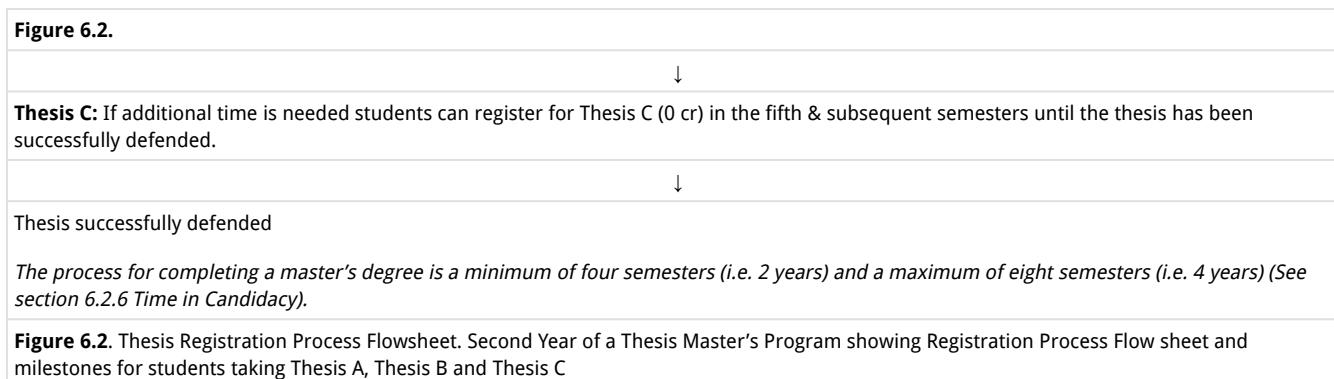


Table 6.1. Forms Associated with Thesis Masters and Graduate Courses
FORM G10: APPROVAL OF THESIS RESEARCH PROPOSAL
FORM G11: THESIS SUBMISSION FOR DEFENSE
FORM G12: PAYMENT TO EXTERNAL EVALUATOR
FORM G13: EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S REPORT
FORM G14: CHAIR'S REPORT ON THESIS DEFENSE
FORM G15: THESIS DEFENSE SIGNATURE SHEET
FORM G16: THESIS, PROJECT, DISSERTATION RELEASE FOR LIBRARY
FORM G17: NOTICE OF THESIS DEFENCE
FORM G20: UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT PERMISSION TO TAKE GRADUATE COURSES

Figure 6.2.

Thesis A: In third semester students register for Thesis A (9 cr). Thesis proposal must be submitted and approved by Thesis Advisory Committee (FORM G10). Research work must be started.



All Thesis Examination Committee Members sign two report sheets (see *FORM G15: THESIS DEFENSE SIGNATURE SHEET* and *FORM G14: CHAIR'S REPORT ON THESIS DEFENSE*). The candidate is then asked to come back into the room and is informed of the decision. The

Chair will submit the reports to GS. The Chair may add a page of comments, if necessary.

Students must submit a PDF version online of the completed thesis containing the signed FORMS G15 and G16 to the University Library using the link (TBD). Once this is done then GS will inform Student Affairs that the student has passed the defense & that a Graduate Certificate can be issued

Students whose Theses are *Not Passed* may repeat the defense one more time but not earlier than two months after the first defense.

6.2.2 Courses-only Option

This option is ideally suited to, for example, people holding full time jobs in the public or private sectors who want to enhance their careers through continuing education. Students in this track will have a Graduate Advisor appointed by the respective *College Graduate Office*. Master's students must take at least 42 credit hours of courses inclusive of a capstone/research project

6.2.3 Transfers of Credit toward the Master's Degree

A master's student may transfer up to 6 semester credit hours or 6 quarter credit hours of course work completed as a graduate student at another institution. The units must be equivalent to courses in the student's graduate program at Alfaisal University, and the student must have received at least a B in the course(s). However, students cannot use units from another institution to satisfy the minimum requirement courses or the minimum academic residence requirement. In addition, they may not present course work previously used to satisfy requirements for another degree program at Alfaisal University or at another in another institution.

6.2.4 Changes in Thesis Advisory Committee Membership

Before planning to file their theses, students who wish to change the membership of their Thesis Advisory Committee must be sure that such a change has been approved by the *College Graduate Office* and the *Graduate School (GS)*. A student may request a change in committee by submitting a written request to their Graduate Adviser. The Graduate Adviser should consult with any faculty members as appropriate to assure that they are aware of membership changes. However, the Graduate Adviser, rather than any committee member, has the final authority to recommend approval of the changes.

6.2.5 Completion of Courses for the Degree

Master's students must finish all courses required for the degree by the last day of the semester in which they expect the degree to be conferred. If students have Incompletes, No Reports, or In Progress grades, the college/department must indicate on the list of courses-only master's candidates whether the courses are required for the degree. After completion of requirements for the degree for which they were admitted, students may not register and enroll for a subsequent semester unless they have been previously approved for a new degree goal or a new major.

6.2.6 Time in Candidacy

The duration for obtaining a master's degree is a minimum of four semesters (i.e. 2 years) and a maximum of eight semesters (i.e. 4 years) (*Article 36 of Unified Law*). If they do not finish in that period, their candidacy will lapse unless the Major Adviser/Supervisor requests an extension of time from the *Graduate Council (GC)*.