

University Definition of Thesis

A thesis is defined as the written product of a systematic study of a significant problem. It identifies the problem, states the major assumptions, explains the significance of the undertaking, sets forth the sources for and methods of gathering information, analyzes the data, and offers a conclusion or recommendation. The finished product demonstrates originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate organization and format, and thorough documentation. Normally, an oral defense of the thesis is required.

An oral defense of either a thesis or a project normally includes a presentation by the master's candidate to a group of faculty capable of assessing the quality of the student's work, and/or a period of questioning directed to the master's candidate by said group of faculty. Oral defenses should include not fewer than three such faculty members, two of whom should be the student's supervisory committee chair and one other committee member, though they may include more than three faculty members, even the entire program faculty. The defense will be held in an appropriate academic environment, normally on campus. Program faculty may approve oral defenses undertaken partly or wholly in mediated environments, including via conference call or online, provided that the defense takes place in "real time." The oral defense, normally a graded pass/fail event, is recorded either by audio or videotape, or through another medium. Such records must be complete enough to afford protection for both the student and the faculty members involved.