

## Memorandum

**To:** Members of the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs  
**From:** Carolyn Tuohy  
**Date:** April 9, 2002

### **Item Identification**

School of Graduate Studies: Proposal for the establishment of a thesis option in the Master of Information Studies program.

### **Sponsor**

Carolyn Tuohy, Vice-President, Policy Development and Associate Provost

### **Jurisdictional Information**

The Committee approves major program and curriculum changes.

### **Highlights**

The proposed thesis option replaces the existing research stream option, consisting of one or two reading courses (half-courses) and a research project. The thesis is equivalent to 2 FCE, of a total program requirement of 8 FCE.

### **Action Sought**

Approval of the following motion:

THAT the proposal for the establishment of a thesis option in the Master of Information Studies program, as described in the submission from the School of Graduate Studies dated March 21, 2002, be approved, effective September 2002.



## School of Graduate Studies

University of Toronto

March 21, 2002



Professor Carolyn Tuohy  
Vice-President, Policy Development  
and Associate Provost  
Room 206, Simcoe Hall  
27 King's College Circle  
University of Toronto

Dear Professor Tuohy,

At its meeting of March 19, 2002, the Council of the School of Graduate Studies approved the following program change:

**MOTION ( / ) THAT** SGS Council approve the proposal of the Faculty of Information Studies for a thesis option in the Master of Information Studies program, effective September, 2002.

The motion sheet, proposal and covering letter are attached. These changes will appear in the 2002-2003 edition of the SGS Calendar.

On behalf of the Council of the School of Graduate Studies, I am presenting this item to you for information or approval by Governing Council committees as appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Alderdice  
Secretary to SGS Council  
And Coordinator of Policy, Program and Liaison

Enc.

c.c. R. Branch D. Cormack S. Howson L. Howarth  
C. Johnston V. Makarovska L. Yee

## Motion

### School of Graduate Studies Council Tuesday, March 19, 2002

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Item 7.

#### Proposals to change program requirements:

##### 7.1: Information Studies

**MOTION** ( / ) **THAT** SGS Council approve the proposal of the Faculty of Information Studies for a thesis option in the Master of Information Studies program, effective September, 2002.

*See proposal attached.*

#### **NOTE:**

Division II Executive Committee at its meeting of March 6, 2002 approved this proposal. With SGS Council approval, this item will go to Governing Council committees for approval or for information and to the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies for information.



FACULTY OF INFORMATION STUDIES

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March 11, 2002

SGS Council  
c/o Dean Susan K. Howson, Associate, Division II  
School of Graduate Studies  
University of Toronto  
63/65 St. George Street  
Toronto, ON  
M5S 2Z9

Dear Professor Howson:

I am forwarding a copy of the Faculty of Information Studies proposal for a thesis option in the Master of Information Studies program. The proposal was approved by SGS Division II Executive Committee on March 6, 2002. I would appreciate your bringing this forward as an agenda item for the next SGS Council meeting.

A thesis option is offered in information studies programs at two universities in Canada and at several universities in the US. The thesis option would replace our current research project option and would enable us to attract students who are interested in doing a thesis.

The planned implementation date is September 2002. The proposal is being submitted for SGS Council approval.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joan M. Cherry'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail.

Joan M. Cherry  
Associate Dean

Cc L. Howarth  
File

## Proposal<sup>1</sup> for a Thesis Option in the MIST Program

### Faculty of Information Studies University of Toronto

(Approved by SGS Division II Executive Committee on March 6, 2002)

#### Preamble

The thesis option would replace the existing option for a research stream which consists of one or two reading courses plus a research project, FIS 2030Y. Students recently undertaking FIS 2030Y Research Project have produced work of such a scope as to merit the designation of thesis. It would benefit both students and supervisors to replace this option with a thesis option.

A thesis option is offered in information studies programs in Canada at Dalhousie University and the University of British Columbia. In the U.S., a thesis option is offered at the University of California at Los Angeles, the University of Texas at Austin, and the University of Washington.

#### Purpose

The MIST thesis allows students to gain experience in developing and executing a research project from beginning to end. The thesis represents an independent and original contribution to scholarship in the field and is of such quality that it may merit publication in a refereed scholarly journal. The thesis option is ideal for those students interested in undertaking original academic research under the supervision of a faculty member. Some students who complete a thesis in the MIST program will continue their education at the Ph.D. level. Other students will view the MIST thesis as the capstone of their academic career. The thesis option is designed for both full-time and part-time students.

#### Proposal

The MIST thesis is equivalent to four elective half-courses<sup>2</sup>. Students must successfully complete at least eight half-courses before they can be considered for acceptance in the thesis option. They must have completed FIS 1240 *Research Methods* with at least a grade of A minus.

Students must secure the consent of a supervisor and a second reader. The supervisor and the second reader constitute the student's Thesis Committee. Both the supervisor and the second reader must be members of the Graduate Faculty, University of Toronto. The supervisor must be a regular faculty member at FIS. The second reader may be a regular or adjunct faculty member of FIS, or a regular member of another department at the University of Toronto. Both the supervisor and the second reader must give their written approval to a 7-8 page written proposal summarizing the intended research.

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<sup>1</sup> This proposal is modeled on the proposal for a thesis option in the Master of Social Work program, approved by SGS in May 2000

<sup>2</sup> To fulfill the requirements for the MIST degree, students who select the thesis option must successfully complete the three core courses (FIS1210, FIS1230, FIS1240), the four required courses for their stream (Archives, Library and Information Science, or Information Systems), five elective courses, and a thesis.

The research proposal must then be presented to the FIS Degree Committee for approval. If the research involves human subjects, a protocol for the research must be approved by the Social Sciences and Humanities Review Committee (Human Research) at the University of Toronto.

The thesis option is typically carried out in the second year of the two-year MIST program. Students normally complete data collection and data analysis for their thesis during the Fall term of their second year (September to December). In the first part of the Spring term of their second year (January to March), they write their thesis and submit written drafts to their supervisor and second reader. Students pursue their thesis work concurrently with their four remaining courses. Timeframes for part-time students are arranged on an individual basis in consultation with the proposed supervisor after the student has successfully completed eight half-courses. Timeframes will be such as to allow part-time students to finish their degree requirements within the allotted period of six years.

The final product of the MIST thesis option is a work of about 80-100 pages. The student should expect that the thesis will go through a number of drafts and revisions before it is finally acceptable to the supervisor. When the supervisor is satisfied with the quality of the work presented by the student, the student submits the thesis to the second reader for comments. A period of two weeks should be allowed for the written comments of the second reader. The second reader submits her/his comments to the supervisor, and the supervisor advises the student about necessary revisions to be made to the thesis. After the thesis has been revised to the satisfaction of the supervisor and the second reader, the student must defend the thesis at an oral final examination before the Thesis Examination Committee.

The Thesis Examination Committee includes the supervisor, second reader, an external examiner, and a non-voting Chair. The external examiner will normally be external to the Faculty of Information Studies, e.g., a faculty member from another department at the University of Toronto, a qualified senior practitioner, or an individual holding an appointment at a local academic or research institution. This individual must be arms-length from the candidate and the thesis project, and must be a recognized expert in the field. The external examiner submits a written report (1-2 pages) to the supervisor two weeks prior to the examination. The supervisor will make the report available to the student.

The quorum for the oral final examination is two voting members. The oral final examination consists of a 10-20 minute presentation by the student, followed by a question period not exceeding 60 minutes. At the conclusion of the oral examination, the Thesis Examination Committee makes a Pass, Pass with Modifications, or Fail recommendation based on the performance of the student during the oral examination and the quality of the written thesis. If modifications are required, the student is informed in writing and a member of the Thesis Examination Committee is appointed to review the modifications.

In the case of a Fail recommendation, the student will be provided with reasons in writing. The student may schedule a second examination within six months. Only two examinations are permitted. A student who fails the second examination will fail the thesis option and may not repeat the thesis option. A student failing the thesis option may have his/her registration terminated. However, on the recommendation of FIS and the approval of SGS, four elective courses may be substituted.

### **Procedures for Arranging Oral Final Examinations**

Planning for the thesis oral final examination should take into account the School of Graduate Studies deadlines for convocation and fees. Note that difficulties in oral final examination scheduling may be compounded by holiday schedules, especially in August and December.

#### **I. Deadlines**

Request for Oral Final Examination to the Associate Dean, FIS  
Last Scheduled Oral Final Examination  
Completed Thesis and Degree Recommendation  
Expected Convocation

Second Friday in July  
Last weekday of August  
Last weekday in September  
November

Second Friday in November  
Last day of Fall Session  
Last weekday in January  
March (in absentia) or June

First Friday in March  
Last weekday of March  
Last weekday in April  
June

## II. Prior to the Oral Final Examination

### Supervisor's Role

When the supervisor and the second reader (candidate's thesis committee) agree that the thesis is complete and ready for Final Oral Examination:

1. The Supervisor consults with the Associate Dean, FIS regarding the external examiner for the Final Oral Examination.
2. The Supervisor then completes a *MISt Committee for the Final Oral Examination* form and submits the form to the Associate Dean, FIS.
3. Other members of faculty and students may be invited to attend with permission of the candidate. These individuals are ineligible to vote.

### Associate Dean's Role

Ensure that student has completed all other degree and course requirements. (**Note: No oral final examination can be scheduled if there are any outstanding grades.**)

1. Confirm that the external examiner is willing to serve on the examination committee and inform the external examiner of his/her role including the need to prepare a written critique.
2. Finalize composition of examination committee by appointing an independent, non-voting chair.
3. Arrange for booking a room and equipment and distribute notices.
4. Familiarize the student with the examination process and expectations.

### Student's role

*After approval of the Committee for the Final Oral Examination by the Associate Dean, FIS,* the candidate and/or the supervisor will contact all members of the examination committee and schedule a time for the oral final examination. The Associate Dean, FIS must be notified of the

date and time.

1. Ensure that the thesis follows the format required by the University of Toronto and the National Library.
2. Distribute the thesis to all examination committee members at least four weeks prior to the oral final examination.
3. Provide an extra copy of the thesis to the Associate Dean, FIS at least four weeks prior to the oral final examination.

### **III. At the Oral Final Examination**

- a. The quorum for the oral final examination is two voting members. Participation by telephone conference call or videoconferencing is permitted.
- b. The Chair appointed by the Associate Dean, FIS follows clearly established Examination procedures. Please see *Procedures for the Final Oral Examination for the MIST Thesis*.
- c. The Examination Committee votes on the acceptability of both the thesis and the oral final examination.
- d. Should modification in the text of the thesis be required, the Supervisor informs the student in written form.

### **IV. After the Oral Final Examination**

- a. Student makes modifications to the thesis as required. These are reviewed by the Committee member(s) designated at the end of the Oral Final Examination.
- b. Supervisor informs the Associate Dean, FIS in writing that the student has made revisions/corrections.
- c. Student secures the signatures of the supervisor, second reader, external examiner, and the FIS Associate Dean on a MIST Thesis Completion form. The student then submits this form to the FIS Registrar.
- d. Student picks up and signs forms (see below) from the FIS Inforum and SGS.
- e. Student submits two unbound copies of the thesis to FIS Inforum together with a signed FIS "Authority to Distribute Form" and a copy of the Thesis Completion form.
- f. Student submits one unbound copy of the thesis to SGS together with the SGS "Authority to Distribute" form and the "Non-exclusive License to Reproduce Theses" form of the National Library of Canada (NLC), and the "UMI Subject Category" form. The thesis is sent by NLC to University Microfilms, Inc. for microfilming and for listing in Masters Abstracts International. The thesis submitted to SGS must be accompanied by a 150-word abstract and payment of a fee (approximately \$35) to cover NLC expenditures.
- g. The Associate Dean, FIS prepares the degree recommendation for the School of Graduate Studies. A degree recommendation cannot be made until the unbound copy of the thesis as described above is received by SGS.
- h. Students failing to complete all steps by the above deadlines will be required to register and pay



additional fees.

- i. The School of Graduate Studies notifies students about convocation arrangements about 4- 6 weeks in advance.