

# **Procedures and Requirements of Master's Thesis Defense at Tsinghua-Berkeley Shenzhen Institute (TBSI)**

## **1. Application Procedures**

### **1.1. Basic Requirement**

Master candidates should carefully check whether they have completed all coursework and other requirements before entering the final year of master Study. See TBSI master program design for details or contact SEO.

### **1.2. Thesis Writing**

The thesis should be written in English and completed at least five weeks before the defense. The format of the thesis should follow the “Guidelines for Graduate Thesis Writing at Tsinghua-Berkeley Shenzhen Institute”. The structure, content, quality, format, and academic norms of the thesis should be carefully examined by the advisor(s).

### **1.3. Defense Procedures**

#### Major Timeline:

- (1) At least 6 weeks before the defense, a master's candidate should submit the review group member list to the SEO, which includes the advisor and one non-advisor member. The group should be approved by Committee of Student Education (CSE).
- (2) At least 5 weeks before the defense, a master's candidate should submit to the review group 1) a complete version of the thesis and 2) an “Academic Achievement Report”, which lists all publications, awards, attendance of conferences or seminars, research outcomes, patents, and other academic achievements obtained during the master study. The review group should evaluate the innovation achievements and thesis quality of the master candidates objectively and impartially, give opinions on whether the thesis should be submitted for review by filling “Academic Evaluation Report”. The evaluation report shall be filed in the master thesis. At the same time, the candidate should consult with his/her advisors and prepare for the required materials for thesis review (including a list of reviewers) and defense. A secretary should be identified and will help coordinate and manage the thesis review and defense (see details below).
- (3) At least 4 weeks before the defense and upon approval by advisor(s), the master's candidate

should submit an application for thesis review and reviewer list which includes 2 reviewers to the SEO and fill in required information in the Info System. These reviewers must satisfy the requirements listed below and be approved by the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC).

- (4) At least 3 weeks before the defense, the thesis must be provided to the approved reviewers for review.
- (5) At least 2 weeks before the defense, the member list of the defense committee proposed by the advisor(s) and the Center Director(s)/Track Chair(s) should be submitted to the SEO for pre-approval and final approval by AAC
- (6) At least 10 days before the defense, the candidate must receive all signed reviews and provide the thesis to defense committee members who are not reviewers.
- (7) At least 1 week before the defense, the candidate must submit the following materials to SEO:
  - 1) the returned reviews and 2) advisor(s)' detailed Academic Evaluation Report.

Note: All the dates described in the above timeline are the last day (hard deadline) for the corresponding actions to be completed. There are no slack times in this timeline. Therefore, it is highly recommended that all the actions be taken much earlier than the dates described above. For example, the candidate should try to submit the thesis to reviewers 6 weeks before the defense.

#### Requirements for Thesis Review:

To initiate the thesis review process, a master's candidate should first get approval from review group and then apply to SEO for thesis review at least 4 weeks before the defense by submitting the thesis and a list of reviewers (including names, contact information, and proofs of qualification). The list of reviewers must be approved by the AAC. The thesis must meet the formatting requirement before being submitted for review. The candidate should submit related information of thesis review and defense to Info System at least 4 weeks before the defense.

In addition to being comprehensively reviewed by the review group, the thesis must also be reviewed by 2 invited experts who have a master's supervisor qualification or professional title. Generally, at least one reviewer should be an expert from another center or even outside TBSI. The reviewers should evaluate the thesis and return discreet comments at the latest 10 days before

the defense.

If reviewers cannot reach a consensus, AAC shall organize a meeting to make a final decision on the student's defense application.

## **2. Defense Process and Requirements**

### **2.1. Approval by the Chair of Academic Advisory Committee (AAC)**

At least 1 week before the defense, the candidate must submit all remaining application materials for thesis defense to the SEO for approval by the AAC chair, including 1) two returned thesis reviews, 2) advisor(s)' detailed evaluation report of candidate's academic achievement, and 3) a list of defense committee members.

### **2.2. Defense Committee**

The master's thesis defense is generally collectively organized based on disciplines/tracks. The defense committee shall consist of 5 to 7 members, who are either faculty with master's supervisor qualification or experts with senior professional titles. If the defense cannot be organized collectively, the defense committee shall consist of 3 to 5 members (the first three members cannot be the advisor(s)). All requirements for the defense committee are listed in the following:

- (1) More than half of the members should have senior professional titles, and the chairman should be an expert with senior professional title;
- (2) It should have one member from the Degree Sub-Committee of each matching major or one member from the Interdisciplinary Degree Working Committee;
- (3) At least one AAC member should be included (for special cases, the AAC can designate a faculty member to join the defense committee on behalf of AAC).

The secretary for the thesis defense committee should be a professional with an elementary title or above or with a master's degree in related disciplines. The secretary should help check the eligibility of thesis reviewers and organize the defense committee. In addition, the secretary also needs to schedule the defense meeting and prepare all the materials for the defense.

The advisor(s) may attend the defense as a committee member, but not as the chairman. When the

defense is spot-checked (randomly selected for quality check), the advisor(s) cannot be a member of the defense committee.

No relatives of the candidate can serve as a reviewer, member, or secretary of the defense committee.

### **2.3. Defense Procedure**

The procedure of the defense should include the following steps:

- (1) AAC representative reads out the AAC approved defense committee members, including the chair and other members (this list of members should be officially sealed with AAC stamp).
- (2) The chair of the defense committee announces the commencement of the defense.
- (3) The secretary of the defense committee briefly introduces defender's background information including bibliography and transcript obtained after joining TBSI.
- (4) The defender defends the thesis (about 20 ~ 30 minutes).
- (5) The defense committee and other general participants ask questions ( 10~40 minutes ) .
- (6) The defense committee holds a closed-door meeting after the Q&A part to evaluate and discuss the defense:
  - a) The secretary of the defense committee reads out the summary comments from peer reviewers and the advisor;
  - b) The defense committee evaluates the thesis and the defense quality;
  - c) The defense committee evaluates whether the defender has met the degree requirements of the matching master academic degree; the faculty member representing the Degree Committee of the matching major or Interdisciplinary Taskforce Committee fills out the "TBSI Degree Matching Evaluation Form";
  - d) Vote;
  - e) Discuss and approve the Defense Resolution;
  - f) Sign the TBSI Degree Matching Evaluation Form.
  - g) Sign the Defense Resolution.
- (7) The defense is re-opened and the chair of the defense committee announces the voting result

and the Defense Resolution;

(8) The chair declares that the defense is over.

If the thesis defense is spot-checked, the defense procedure follows the rule of “The Implementation of Sampling Inspection of Graduation thesis and thesis Defense”.

### **3. Submission of Thesis and Defense Materials**

Master’s students should submit all required materials within the stipulated time.

#### **3.1. Defense Related Materials**

After the defense, the master’s student should assist the defense secretary to sort out the required materials, including:

- Transcripts
- Application form of master's thesis defense
- Advisor's Academic Evaluation Report
- Copies of two returned thesis reviews
- Copy of the resolution of defense committee

#### **3.2. Online Degree Declaration**

Master’s students should submit thesis related information through the online system of “Graduate Degree Application System”, including the following relevant information:

- (1) Thesis: thesis information and both Chinese and English abstracts;
- (2) Published papers: information of published and accepted papers;
- (3) Published monographs: information of published monographs;
- (4) Scientific research achievements: information of participated scientific research projects;
- (5) Employment information: job-placement information

#### **3.3. Submission of Thesis**

All students should submit a complete version of the thesis (both electronic and printed copies) after the defense.

- (1) For confidential thesis: A printed copy should be sent to the school archives. The electronic version must be copied to the school archives directly through a designated medium and not be transmitted via the Internet.

- (2) For non-confidential thesis: two printed copies should be delivered to the Education Office. One of the printed copies will be forwarded to the school library. If the thesis is appraised as the school's outstanding thesis, one copy should be sent to the school archive. The electronic version shall be submitted through the Degree Declaration System.

Note: To complete the formal departure procedure for leaving the school, two printed copies and the electronic version of the thesis need to be submitted to the Shenzhen University Town Library.

#### **3.4. Outstanding Master Thesis Award**

Master's students can apply for the University Outstanding Master's Thesis Award upon advisor(s)' approval and under the nomination of defense committee. The AAC is responsible for selecting award candidates from all eligible theses within the same underlying discipline and submitting them to the Graduate School. For details, please see the "Evaluation Methods of Tsinghua University's Outstanding Graduate Theses".

