

# TRANSFOR-M Master of Forestry (MF)

## FRST 548A/B MAJOR ESSAY Procedures and Grading Rubric

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### Purpose and Content

The purpose of the Major Essay is to provide an opportunity to undertake independent study under direction of a UBC Forestry faculty member, in a subject area of interest.

A substantial effort is expected of every student. The quality of the work must be good, the English must be acceptable and statements must be substantiated by references or data where appropriate.

The essay is an important opportunity for training in rigorous thinking and effective writing. Unlike a thesis project, the Major Essay does not involve original research and is not overseen by a supervisory committee.

**For the 3-credit essay, the minimum length requirement is 5,000 words. The six-credit essay should be approximately double.**

The Major Essay may take the form of a Case Study or Normative essay. Refer to the [Forestry Writing Guidebook](#) for more details.

### TRANSFOR-M Transfer Credit Policy

None of the course work or thesis research completed as part of the TRANSFOR-M European degree is eligible for use as credit towards the UBC Master of Forestry (MF) degree. However, UBC MF degree credits may be transferrable toward the European degree, if permitted by the European institution.

### Major Essay vs Directed Study

As part of the UBC MF course requirements, students may register in up to 6 credits of [Directed Study](#) under the supervision of a UBC faculty member. This is *in addition* to the MF Major Essay. Major Essay and/or Directed Study may be based on the same topic as the thesis component of the student's European degree. However, all work submitted to UBC for credit within the MF program must be based on original material written under supervision by a UBC faculty member.

### Major Essay Procedures

1. Before beginning work on the major essay, each student must decide on the general nature of their essay subject and secure an Essay Advisor from the Faculty of Forestry. **Advise the Forestry Graduate Program office of this decision by submitting the [Major Essay Notification form](#) no later than the end of your first term at UBC.** A Second Reader must also be secured, once the essay is completed (selected by the student and their Essay Advisor).

2. **Each student should consult their Essay Advisor periodically.** Weekly or bi-weekly meetings, at a time mutually agreed upon, are recommended. It is essential for a good learning experience that a healthy collaboration be developed between the faculty member and student. Frequent contact and stimulating dialogues will help make the essay a rewarding experience for all parties.
3. **Registration and Program Completion Date.** Students are required to register into the essay (FRST 548 A or B) each term, from program start to completion. The degree completion date will be determined based on when the final essay grade is submitted, or the end of the term in which all program course work is completed, whichever is later. Refer to the Essay Deadlines document in the Forestry [Gradbook](#) appendix.
4. **It is the student's responsibility to set an agreed-upon essay submission date with their Essay Advisor and Second Reader, inform them about grading deadlines, and supply them with the grading rubric.**
5. **Submission of Major Essay to UBC Library Digital Suppository.** While not a requirement, MF students are welcomed and encouraged to submit the final version of their Major Essay to cIRcle, the UBC Library digital repository. More info: <https://circle.ubc.ca/submissions/submit-content/graduate-research-non-thesis/>

## Marking Process

The essay will be read, marked and commented upon by the Advisor and by a second faculty member (Reader). One copy will be returned to the student with the Advisors' comments. **Students are reminded that plagiarism constitutes serious academic misconduct and that it can result in penalties up to and including permanent withdrawal from the University.** Students are encouraged to learn about what plagiarism entails and to discuss ways of avoiding it with their essay advisor or the Associate Dean. Refer to UBC's [Scholarly Integrity policy](#).

## Essay Submission

It is the student's responsibility to ensure their essay is submitted to both their Advisor and the Second Reader by the agreed upon deadline. The student must also confirm whether they require an electronic or hard copy.

Treat the formal submission of your essay as final. However, essays deemed unacceptable for a variety of reasons may be returned to the student for modifications prior to assigning a final grade. Advisors should discuss the situation with the Associate Dean before a decision is reached. The usual consequence of an essay being returned for modifications is a delay in when a student can graduate.

## Grade Submission

The Second Reader will submit their review to the Essay Advisor, who will determine the final grade. The Essay Advisor should email the final grade to [julie.morey@ubc.ca](mailto:julie.morey@ubc.ca) for uploading to the student's transcript.

**Grading Rubric for Essays - Master of Forestry Students**

Level of achievement	Criteria
<b>(35 %) Quality of Analysis</b>	
Outstanding (90-100)	An excellent understanding of the relevant issues is demonstrated. Very good critical thinking and/or analysis skills are evident. In addition, the argument of the paper contains originality, the assertion of ideas that go beyond those offered in the supporting documentation.
Excellent (80-89)	An excellent understanding of the relevant issues is demonstrated. Very good critical thinking and/or analysis skills are evident.
Good (68-79)	A good understanding of the relevant issues is demonstrated. Some critical thinking and/or analysis skills are evident, but the thrust of the paper is primarily descriptive.
Fair (55-67)	A marginal understanding of the relevant issues is demonstrated. Evidence of critical thinking and/or analysis is minimal.
Unacceptable ( $\leq 54$ )	A very poor understanding of the relevant issues is demonstrated. There is little or no evidence of critical thinking and/or analysis.
<b>(35 %) Quality of documentation, supporting evidence, and use of data</b>	
Outstanding (90-100)	The topic is very well-researched. The author has selected the most appropriate and up-to-date materials and applied them very effectively to support the main arguments of the paper. If data are presented, the data support the arguments and are well documented. Potential ambiguities are identified and dealt with.
Excellent (80-89)	The topic is well-researched. The author has selected appropriate and up-to-date materials and applied them effectively to support the main arguments of the paper. If data are presented, the data support the arguments and are well documented. Potential ambiguities are identified and dealt with.

Good (68-79)	One of the characteristics of an excellent answer is omitted or poorly done.
Fair (55-67)	Two of the characteristics of an excellent answer are omitted or poorly done.
Unacceptable ( $\leq 54$ )	Three of the characteristics of an excellent answer are omitted or poorly done.
<b>(10%) Organization</b>	
Outstanding (90-100)	The paper addresses its topics in a logical order. Each paragraph has one major idea. All main ideas are supported by well-explained evidence. Connections between paragraphs are clear. There is an introductory and concluding paragraph. Overall, the content and flow of the argument is extremely clear from the beginning to the end of the paper.
Excellent (80-89)	The paper addresses its topics in a logical order. Each paragraph has one major idea. All main ideas are supported by well-explained evidence. Connections between paragraphs are clear. There is an introductory and concluding paragraph.
Good (68-79)	One of the elements of logical development is poorly done.
Fair (55-67)	Two of the elements of logical development are poorly done.
Unacceptable ( $\leq 54$ )	Organization unclear; paragraph structure poor; transitions poor; the essay is hard to follow.
<b>(10%) Writing Style and References</b>	
Outstanding (90-100)	The paper can be read quickly, with no pauses to puzzle out the meaning at any point.
Excellent (80-89)	Uses appropriate vocabulary, sentence length, and punctuation. Language is clear and concise. It exhibits a clear awareness of audience (preference for third person or first person, no use of second person). Active voice dominates. Sources are clearly identified and consistently cited.

Good (68-79)	Some sentences are too long; others have passive voice when active voice would work. Word usage is not always correct, and some sentences are unclear.
Fair (55-67)	Contains many inappropriate uses of the features of this category, such as too many words, addressing a vague audience, and misused words.
Unacceptable (≤ 54)	The author seems completely unaware of audience, sentences are clumsy, and meaning is obscured.
<b>(10%) Grammar</b>	
Outstanding (90-100)	Absolutely no errors in grammar.
Excellent (80-89)	Consistently correct subject/verb agreement. Correct sentence structure, consistency in person, tense, and number, and clear pronoun references. Spelling is correct.
Good (68-79)	A few errors in grammar
Fair(55-67)	Many errors in grammar.
Unacceptable (≤ 54)	Grammar is below any reasonable standard of acceptance at a post-secondary institution.

**Grading Sheet for Master of Forestry**

**MAJOR ESSAY (FRST 548A/B)**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Criterion	Levels of Achievement					Points Achieved
	Outstanding (90-100)	Excellent( 80-89)	Good (68-79)	Fair (55-67)	Unacceptable (54 and lower)	
<b>Quality of Analysis (35)</b>						
<b>Quality of Documentation (35)</b>						
<b>Logical Development (10)</b>						
<b>Writing Style (10)</b>						
<b>Grammar (10)</b>						

Graded by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Essay Credit Level (3 or 6 credits): \_\_\_\_\_

Grade (%): \_\_\_\_\_

**Master of Forestry**  
**MAJOR ESSAY (FRST 548A/B)**

**Overall Comments**

<b>Quality of Analysis:</b>
<b>Documentation and supporting evidence:</b>
<b>Logical Development, Mechanical Style, and Grammar:</b>