

Student Guidelines for Writing A Master's Thesis

Master's students interested in researching and writing a thesis need to follow the steps listed below for the successful completion of the master's degree. **The points highlighted in bold are Graduate School requirements and must be fulfilled in order to graduate.** For full time students, steps one through five should occur during the first year of the program. Part time students should follow all of the steps but in a more gradual manner.

1. Identify a research area and a faculty member willing to supervise a thesis on this topic. This person will then become your faculty thesis advisor.
2. In conjunction with the faculty thesis advisor, a student will put together a thesis proposal which should include:
 - a. explanation of the topic to be explored
 - b. preliminary bibliography
 - c. identification of the chief primary sources to be used
3. After the completion of the thesis proposal, the student and faculty thesis advisor will select a thesis committee consisting of the faculty advisor and two other faculty members. According to the Graduate School, one person on the committee should be outside the department. If it proves impossible to find such a person, a member of the department from a significantly different area can be selected.
4. **Once the committee has been formed, the Graduate School must be notified and approve the committee selection. This should occur at the beginning of the project not upon its completion.** The petition of approval form can be obtained from the Director of Graduate Studies. It is up to the faculty advisor to notify the Graduate School, but it is important for students to make sure that the petition has been filed either by asking their advisor or checking directly with the Graduate School.
5. After the completion of the prospectus and the formation of the thesis committee, the student should begin work and conduct whatever outside research trips may be necessary.
6. All students should work closely with their advisor and the other committee members, keeping them informed of their progress and providing them with draft chapters of their thesis in a timely fashion.
7. A complete draft of the thesis should be ready by March 1 for a May graduation, November 1 for a December graduation, and June 15 for a summer graduation. At that time, the student should consult with the committee to set up a thesis defense date.

8. Once a defense date has been set, the Graduate School must be informed and approve of the defense. This notification should be sent to the Graduate School no later than two weeks before the actual date of the defense. Make sure that your thesis advisor has sent the petition by asking them directly or contacting the Graduate School.

9. After the defense, the student should revise the thesis based upon the committee's recommendations. At that point, the student should also consult the Graduate School's requirements for the submission of a thesis. A student's thesis will not be accepted unless all of the Graduate School's requirements are met. Students should allow the Graduate School seventy-two hours to read and approve a thesis.

10. The student must turn the thesis into McFarlin Library on the following dates:

- a. April 15 for a May graduation**
- b. December 1 for a December graduation**
- c. last day of summer classes of an August graduation**