

Master's Thesis Guidelines
School of Graduate Studies
East Central University
Ada, Oklahoma

General Thesis Expectations

A thesis is a graduate student's final written, and sometimes published, proof of subject mastery. Completing a thesis gives students a chance to prove to their professors and the world that they deserve a Master's degree and have mastered the content of the thesis. To complete a thesis, a graduate student will identify an area of interest in the major area of study, research the topic, analyze current literature available about the topic, conduct a study aligned to current literature, and present the findings after successful completion of a large body of writing. A thesis is a larger body of written work than students are normally used to completing and requires self-motivation in order to successfully complete. The length of theses varies depending on the depth of the topic and current literature available, but generally a thesis is between twenty-five (25) and sixty (60) pages in length and contains between twenty-five (25) to sixty (60) references. A graduate student considering the thesis option should consult with the graduate program advisor early in their program for guidance.

Thesis Hours

The maximum number of thesis hours, which may be applied toward any graduate program is three (3) to six (6) hours, see individual graduate program guidelines. Students engaging in the thesis process are advised to speak with their program advisor to discuss when thesis courses should be taken. These standards vary from program to program.

Timing of Thesis

Ideally, students who have completed all coursework would complete their thesis within the following two full academic semesters. A student must submit in writing a request to extend thesis work beyond two semesters to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies (See Appendix B).

A student enrolled in thesis can expect to engage in research, academic writing, and public presentation. The time required to complete this extensive process varies from student to student; however, it is time consuming, requires self-motivation to complete tasks independently, and a desire to complete all necessary steps in the thesis process.

Students may be permitted to enroll in the thesis course (e.g., PSYCH 5691-6) only after the Thesis Committee has approved the student's application for thesis and submitted this approval with the School of Graduate Studies or with permission from their Program Advisor (See Appendix A).

Thesis Grading

Each program offering a thesis option at ECU will vary slightly in regard to how the thesis is graded. As a general guideline, thesis hours completed during the development and preparation of a thesis but prior to its final completion will be assigned either a "P" for passing, an "F" for failing, or an "I" for incomplete by the instructor of the thesis course according to how the student is progressing in the thesis. Once a thesis credit is completed, the thesis instructor will assign a Passing or Failing grade ("P" or "F"). While a grade of "P" will not contribute to the graduate GPA because the grade is not assigned an A, B, C, or D, an "F" grade will negatively contribute to the overall graduate GPA and may prevent the student from continuing other coursework or graduating. In the event that a student does not get final approval for thesis in a semester during enrollment in thesis, a grade of "I" will be given until the thesis is defended.

Thesis Intent & Committee

When forming a thesis committee consult the Thesis Intent form (See Appendix A) and the thesis process, the student should enlist 3 to 5 graduate faculty members to serve on the thesis committee (one committee member must be outside the student's research focus). The

chair of the committee will be the instructor of the thesis course. The other committee members will be determined by the thesis student. If the student needs help in identifying who can serve on the committee, the thesis course instructor can assist in this task. The thesis committee members must hold graduate faculty status as prescribed by the criteria set forth by the School of Graduate Studies. The committee is responsible for supervision of the thesis research, approval of the writing of the thesis, and ultimately the final approval of the thesis. The Thesis Intent form (See Appendix A) must be completed by the student and signed by all committee members. Once the form is completed, it will be scanned and emailed to all committee members and the ECU School of Graduate Studies (gradschool@ecok.edu). The Final Approval (See Appendix C) will be signed by the committee members, Department Dean, and Dean of Graduate Studies. Departments are permitted to establish additional guidelines and processes that are within the ECU School of Graduate Studies' overall thesis policy framework in order to meet departmental and disciplinary instructional needs.

Ethical Review and NIH Human Subjects Training

Any thesis research collecting or analyzing data collected from human participants must be reviewed by the ECU Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that established ethical guidelines are being followed. The Thesis Committee Chair will conduct an initial review of study methodology to determine if the proposal falls into an exempt review category. If the study involves human participants, the student is required to submit a certificate of completion from the NIH training site at <http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>. The cost for completing this training is \$39.99 for each individual; however, if assistance is needed, please contact the thesis course instructor.

All thesis involving human participants must be reviewed by the ECU's IRB Committee. IRB policies, documents, and forms are located in MyECU. To access information about ECU's IRB, visit www.ecok.edu and click on Login. Then click on MyECU and login using username and password information. Search for "IRB" in the search area on the left side of the page. The direct web address is

https://myecu.ecok.edu/ICS/ECU_INFORMATION/Academic_Affairs/Sponsored_Programs_and_Research/Documents_Page.jnz?portlet=Forms, but a student must be logged into MyECU to access this information.

Thesis Format Requirements

The format of the thesis, as well as the writing style, will vary from program to program and possibly student to student depending on the topic of the thesis and the type of data analysis required or program requirements. Students should speak with their committee chair or reference their thesis course materials for documents to determine the final format required for their discipline. Below is a generalized suggestion for overall thesis format based on APA Guidelines.

Example of Thesis Sections:

1. Title Page
2. Approval Page (Appendix C)
3. Table of Contents (optional)
4. Acknowledgements (optional)
5. Abstract (less than 350 words)
6. Introduction and/or Review of Literature
7. Methods and Procedures
8. Discussion and/or Conclusions
9. References
10. Tables, Figures, Appendices (if included in the thesis)
11. Author's Vita (optional)

This may vary based on the study and the department or college expectations.

Thesis Defense

A graduate student who submits a thesis must publicly defend the thesis to the committee and the public. The thesis defense should have a representative present from the ECU Graduate Committee, who is not on the student's thesis committee. Public thesis defenses should only be scheduled with approval from the student's Thesis Chair. All thesis committee members should receive a copy of the thesis at least two weeks prior to the defense presentation. In order to defend prior to the end of the semester, it is advisable that students send their thesis to their committee members at least three weeks prior to the end of the semester.

Thesis Presentation

Prior to the thesis defense, the student should prepare a Thesis Presentation for use in the thesis defense. Before the defense, students should email a copy of their presentation to the thesis chair for review. The intent of this process is to allow thesis students to verbalize their rationale for key research decisions and thus assist the student in defending those rationales before the committee. In order to comprehensively review the student's thesis, the student will create a Microsoft PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation. During a Thesis Defense, students can expect to spend time thoroughly explaining the work to their committee members. In addition, those present may also inquire further about the student's topic at the end of the presentation. Finally, once the defense is complete, the committee, if in agreement, will sign the Thesis Approval form (See Appendix C).

Thesis Submission Requirements

Following a successful defense of the thesis, students must submit the final thesis copies in electronic formats.

A minimum of three (3) copies saved in the PDF format shall be emailed to the following people:

- The School of Graduate Studies (gradschool@ecok.edu);
- The Linscheid Library; and
- The student's thesis committee chair.

All copies shall be sent to those mentioned above no later than the last day of classes the same semester in which the student defends the thesis.

Additional Opportunities

After students have completed their thesis, there are opportunities to further their research experience by presenting at a local, state, or national conference or through submission to a peer-reviewed journal for publication. If students wish to pursue a doctorate degree, including their thesis may be beneficial during the application process. It may also be used as part of a resume or vita when looking for employment.



Appendix A

Thesis Intent
School of Graduate Studies

Student: _____ ID #: _____

Area: _____ Date: _____

*Thesis Chair _____

Members: _____

Thesis Title (may be tentative): _____

APPROVALS:

Thesis Student Signature

Date

Approved by Thesis Chair

Date

Approved by Program Chair/Coordinator/Dean

Date

Approved by Dean, School of Graduate Studies

Date

*May be a Member or Associate Member of the Graduate Faculty.

NOTE: If this is a three-member committee, it is permissible to include an outside member. In this case, however, there should still be at least three members of the graduate faculty on the committee.



Appendix B

**Thesis Time Extension Request
School of Graduate Studies**

Student's Name: _____ Student's ID#: _____

Program: MSA ___ MiM ___ MSWRPM ___ MEd ___ MSHR ___ MSPS ___ Option: _____

Reason and justification for requesting a time extension:

Student

Date

Thesis Chair

Date

Approved Disapproved

Program Chair/Coordinator/Dean

Date

Approved Disapproved

Dean, School of Graduate Studies

Date

Approved Disapproved

Appendix C



**Thesis Approval
School of Graduate Studies
Master's Thesis Approval for:**

This student has successfully completed all of the requirements
for completion of a graduate level thesis.

Thesis Committee

Committee Chair Date

Committee Member Date

Committee Member Date

Committee Member Date

Committee Member Date

Dean of the College of Date

Dean of the School of Graduate Studies Date