

Thesis Preparation and Submission

Thesis Guidelines

A candidate for the Master of Arts degree in the Department of Anthropology can satisfy the university culminating experience requirement with the submission of a thesis. A master's thesis should be based on original investigation and must demonstrate scholarship and critical judgment, as well as familiarity with methods of research and relevant literature in the candidate's field. The thesis should be at a high level of originality and examine a problem in depth. The Graduate Division requires that your thesis meet the highest standards for scholarly publishing and must meet the peer review standards in the discipline of Anthropology.

The Department of Anthropology regards the MA Thesis as an important stage in a student's intellectual development. The purpose of the thesis is to give evidence of a student's abilities in collecting and evaluating information, critically analyzing theories in the chosen area of inquiry, and constructing, testing and defending a coherent argument. The thesis should also demonstrate a student's ability to present research results concisely and in a scholarly form. The University requires that the master's thesis demonstrate that the candidate is capable of original and independent work. In particular, elements of the thesis that are considered to constitute original scholarship and an advancement of knowledge must be clearly indicated.

The MA Thesis is evaluated using the criteria below. It is important for students to realize that the preparation of a thesis is an iterative process. That is, a thesis will undergo multiple drafts and revisions in close consultation with the student's thesis committee. Each draft is evaluated in regard to the criteria below. While it is acceptable for the first draft of a thesis to be deficient in one or more of the categories below, the final accepted draft of the thesis must satisfy all of the criteria. The department does not use a grading scale for the criteria below. Students are required to make revisions until all of the criteria are satisfied. Final determination of acceptability of an MA Thesis is made by the Culminating Experience Chair in close consultation with the other Culminating Experience Committee member(s).

- ❑ **Focus.** A thesis must have relevance to the research problem and argument. It is crucial that the thesis retain a focus on the stated research problem and the proposed argument. It should develop a clear sense of core arguments, establish their relationship to the question or research problem being posed, and sustain a focused development of the argument throughout the thesis. Every paragraph of the thesis should have a clear connection to your stated research problem(s).
- ❑ **Literature.** A thesis must make a thorough and critical use of all of the literature pertinent to the stated research problem(s). The discussion and synthesis of the literature pertinent to the thesis should be both historical and synthetic. That is, you should give the reader a sense of the historical progression of an area of thought and you must also synthesize the overall findings in the previous literature clearly tying that body of thought to your research

problem(s).

The literature review cannot emphasize only a few publications, even those on which their thesis arguments ultimately depend. The entire breadth and depth of the published literature must be considered.

Works used in the literature review must be primary literature. Thesis writers are not permitted to merely acknowledge the existence of primary works by referring to them as works cited by a secondary author. Rather, thesis writers must themselves read the primary literature.

- ❑ **Argument.** It is essential that a thesis take up an independent position in relation to the relevant literature on the topic. The thesis must clearly demonstrate a depth and breadth beyond merely a literature review to establish a clear relation between the literature and the research, drawing conclusions and making connections not immediately evident in the existing literature itself. The research problem(s) clearly stated in the introduction to the thesis must be the common thread that runs through the entire thesis. Each chapter must have a clearly stated relation to the research problem(s) and each chapter must be overtly tied to the other chapters in the thesis.
- ❑ **Research.** A thesis must have an adequate research design and execution with a demonstrated consistency of interpretation. Committees should scrutinize the research design, its appropriateness for the thesis, and the adequacy of its execution. They should look for evidence of an appreciation of the range of different methodologies and of how the chosen research design suits the topic, as well as its possible limitations. It is also essential that the data generated and discussed are consistent with and support the arguments and interpretations put forward.
- ❑ **Presentation.** Spelling, grammar, correct use of citations and construction of a bibliography must be impeccable. The literature cited must accurately represent all sources and reading. Material contained in tables or graphs must be clearly and adequately presented, and sources provided. The thesis must conform to the [University Graduate Division Thesis Writing Guidelines](#). The quality of expression is also very important. The thesis must structure and organize the topic well. The thesis must have *coherence*, that is, successive sentences should relate to each other, as should successive sections of the work, and the grammar should make sense. The thesis must also have *unity*, that is, everything should be clearly related to thesis topic and to the propositions discussed. The thesis must be structured in an appropriate academic style, containing those sub-sections required to organize the material with suitable sub-headings to signify the progression and structure of its arguments. The contents page must correspondingly give a clear indication of the structure of the thesis. The thesis must be more than a collection of manuscripts. All components must be integrated into a cohesive unit with a logical progression from one section/chapter to the next. In order to ensure that the thesis has continuity, connecting texts that provide logical "bridges" between different sections/chapters are recommended.

Thesis Proposal

- ❑ All students in the Anthropology MA Program must file a formal accepted thesis proposal with their Thesis Chair before enrolling in ANTH 898 (*Master's Thesis*). **Final accepted** proposals are due **October 1** (for Spring enrollment in Anth 898) or **March 1** (for Fall enrollment in Anth 898). A **final accepted** proposal is one that has already undergone extensive review and revision by your entire committee. Do not hand in a first draft of your proposal at the above deadlines. **First** drafts of your proposal are due to your committee by February 1 in your first year of graduate study.

- ❑ The Thesis Proposal must conform to the guidelines below. Proposals should be double-spaced and printed in 12 point font. The entirety of the proposal must contain appropriate citation. The citation style should conform to the style stipulated by your thesis committee.

Required Elements of the Thesis Proposal

The following are the required components of your thesis proposal. Follow this outline exactly. Use the exact headings indicated here.

- ☐ **Abstract.** This section is a brief **250** word statement summarizing your research proposal. It must include: (1) a clearly defined research question; (2) a declaration of why this research is relevant; (3) a statement on how you will examine this research question; and (4) a summary of your expected findings.
- ☐ **Introduction.** This section introduces your proposed research.
 - What are your major research goals and why are they important?
 - What specific aspects of the general problem will you address?
 - What is the relevance of this inquiry to the broader discipline of anthropology? Stating that an area of inquiry has not been pursued before **is not** a valid argument of significance.
 - Specifically state your hypothesis(-ses)/research question(s) and how you will test it (them).
- ☐ **Background.** This section outlines the theoretical framework in which you undertake your research.
 - What information or data will you bring to bear on your research problem?
 - Briefly *review* (not just a list) the literature in terms of your line of inquiry.
 - *Discuss* this previous research and its impact on your research.
- ☐ **Methods.** This section describes your methodology for data collection and analysis.
 - In terms of your goals and the previous research undertaken, define your specific research questions or hypotheses. How are these questions relevant to your research problem?
 - What sort of data or observations will you use to answer these questions (you must be very specific)?
 - Outline your general research methodology for data collection.
 - If your research involves NAGPRA collections (human remains or NAGPRA associated cultural material) you must provide **specific** documentation that you have obtained the permission of the institution or museum that houses the material and that all NAGPRA procedures have been followed including appropriate contact with Native American representatives. Simply stating that you have made these contacts **is not** sufficient. You must include copies of the **permission letters** from the appropriate institution(s) and/or Native American representatives.
- ☐ **Expected Findings.** This brief section outlines your specific steps of research.
 - What do you expect to find as a result of your research?
 - What are some other possible findings that you do not expect?

- Present any preliminary results or pilot studies that you have conducted.

Schedule. This section tells what you have accomplished so far and gives a tentative schedule of the things you have yet to do. The University Graduate Division requires that you specify a two-semester schedule for thesis completion.

- Discuss your schedule for field work/data collection. When will this happen?
- Discuss your schedule for data analysis. When will this happen?
- When will you write your thesis?
- Include a detailed budget (travel costs, duplication, etc.).

Committee. Include the names of your major advisor and second reader. One other committee member may be from outside the department if this is appropriate to your research.

Thesis Preparation and Submission

- ❑ It is very important for students not to underestimate the amount of time that the entire thesis writing project will require (research, analysis, and editorial process). The entire process will take between **12 and 18 months**.
- ❑ [University Policy](#) allows a student two semesters for the completion of Anth 894 or Anth 898. Students must enroll in the CEL course Hum 449 during this probation semester. Failure to complete Anth 894 or Anth 898 within one semester after being placed on Administrative Probation may result in Declassification from the MA Program.
- ❑ Culminating Experience supervisors should enter a grade of RP for a student who has not completed their culminating experience. A grade of CR should not be entered until the culminating experience is complete.
- ❑ Completion of the MA Thesis is an iterative process. That is, students should expect to prepare and revise multiple drafts of their thesis before final approval. A thesis is considered to be in **draft** form until final approval by the University Graduate Division. In other words, your thesis is subject to required revisions until your committee signs your final approval page **and** the University Graduate Division gives final approval of your formatted thesis.
- ❑ Before preparing a draft of your thesis, download a copy of the [University Graduate Division Thesis Writing Guidelines](#). **Do not use a previously prepared thesis as an example of the approved style or format.**
- ❑ After significant progress has been made toward your thesis development, your committee will request a **First Complete Draft** of your thesis. The **First Complete Draft** must be in the hands of your entire committee by no later than the eighth week of classes of the semester prior to your planned semester of graduation (e.g., for Spring graduation this draft must be in the hands of your committee no later than the second week of October).
- ❑ **Faculty members are contracted to the university on a nine-month appointment. Students should be aware that, in general, faculty members are not available to provide guidance with the Culminating Experience during Winter Break or during the summer months. Students should plan for completion of the Culminating Experience during the regular semester period. Agreements for review of drafts or defense hearings held outside of semester weeks should be obtained in writing.**

Directions for the First Complete Draft of the Thesis

- ❖ The first draft should be a **complete draft** (including all chapters, figures, literature cited, etc.).
- ❖ Students should check with their committee members for preference between electronic drafts or hard-copy drafts.
- ❖ All pages should be numbered in accordance with the [University Graduate Division Thesis Writing Guidelines](#).
- ❖ All chapters should start with the number and title of the chapter.
- ❖ Organize your thesis into logical chapters that have clearly stated relationships to one another.
- ❖ Your committee members are not copy editors. **All** of the following should be completed **before** you turn in the first draft:
 - ◆ Check and double-check to make sure that all of your citations have a corresponding entry in the literature cited.
 - ◆ Spell check and **proofread** before giving your draft to your committee.
 - ◆ Before you begin writing you should get the two essential writing manuals listed below. Get them and read them. Keep them where you write for reference.

Turabian, Kate L. 1996. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 6th edition* (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing). University of Chicago Press.

Strunk, William Jr., E. B. White, Charles Osgood, and Roger Angell. 2000. *The Elements of Style*. Allyn and Bacon.

Failure to follow any of the above guidelines may result in your first draft being returned to you without comment.

Complete Final Draft of the Thesis

- ❑ A **Complete Final Draft** (NOT a first draft or a partial draft) of the thesis must be in the hands of all thesis committee members by **at least** the eighth week of the semester that you plan to graduate (second week of October for Fall graduation or second week of March for Spring graduation). These due dates allow adequate time for any final corrections before delivering to the Graduate Division for format checking.
- ❑ The **Complete Final Draft** is a draft that has already been extensively edited in its entirety by your **entire committee** and includes all pages (chapters, tables, figures, references, table of contents, cover pages, appendices, etc.). The **Complete Final Draft** should be at a stage where at most minor corrections may be required by your committee. **Do not** under any circumstances turn in a first or incomplete draft the semester that you plan to graduate.
- ❑ Faculty members are contracted to the university on a nine-month appointment. They are therefore not available for consultation, thesis reading or similar activities during the summer or winter breaks. Students should schedule consultations and submissions of drafts accordingly.

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	Inadequate	Minimal Pass	Adequate Pass	Pass with Distinction
FOCUS				
Thesis develops a clear sense of core arguments				
The relationship between the core arguments and the question or research problem being posed is clearly established				
A focused development of the argument is sustained throughout the thesis				
LITERATURE				
Thesis demonstrates a thorough and critical use of all of the literature pertinent to the stated research problem(s)				
Discussion and synthesis of the literature pertinent to the thesis is both historical and synthetic				
The entire breadth and depth of the published literature is considered				
ARGUMENT				
The thesis takes up an independent position in relation to the relevant literature on the topic				
The thesis establishes a clear relation between the literature and the research, drawing conclusions and making connections not immediately evident in the existing literature itself				
RESEARCH				
The thesis demonstrates an appreciation of the range of different methodologies and of how the chosen research design suits the topic, as well as its possible limitations.				
The data generated and discussed are consistent with and support the arguments and interpretations put forward				
PRESENTATION				
Spelling, grammar, correct use of citations and construction of a bibliography is free of errors				
Material contained in tables or graphs is clearly and adequately presented, and sources provided				
All components are integrated into a cohesive unit with a logical progression from one section/chapter to the next				