

Thesis Guidelines

You will work with Dr. Williams in identifying an area you want to do your thesis on. When you have an area – and probably a general idea of what your question might be – with Dr. Williams help you choose a committee. Committees are made up of 3 people – 1 will be the chair (must be a U of M full faculty member), the 2nd must be a U of M full faculty member, and the 3rd can be a community person (may or may not be a U of M faculty member) but must have a master's degree so that they qualify for graduate faculty status.

You are responsible for contacting the committee members (in person, by e-mail, or by phone) and asking them if they will be on your committee. Generally it's good to give them an idea of what your research area will be. When they accept, let them know about when they can expect to hear from you to set up the 1st meeting.

First Committee Meeting

You are responsible for setting up the 1st meeting. Generally you will get with your chair to figure out 2 or 3 days and times that the two of you can meet, then contact the other committee members to ask which of those times will work for them. You need to figure out where to meet. Most times we can meet in the area behind the Nutrition offices but you need to make sure with your chair that that area will be available. If not you should contact Ms. Mary Tate-Evans (mtatevns@memphis.edu or 678-4871) to reserve another room. You may also meet in Dr. Williams offices, but check with her first.

At the 1st meeting you and the committee will come to an agreement about what your research question is and what your review of literature should cover. Make sure you understand exactly what you are doing before that meeting is over. If you or one of the committee agree to do something, take careful notes as to what and when.

Developing Your Proposal (also called Prospectus)

Write out the purpose of the Proposal. E.g. The purpose of the Proposal is to give your committee an idea of your thesis plan. Once your committee understands your thesis idea/plan, they will either approve or disapprove. If your committee approves of your thesis idea, you will then go on to submit your thesis idea (using official documents) to the University for approval (called the IRB).

You will work primarily with your chair in getting your proposal in shape. The proposal includes: the review of literature and purpose (Chapter 1), your methods (Chapter 2), your references, and any tools you will be using to collect your data. The 1st draft is due to your chair in November. You will probably go through a couple of revisions with your chair before the proposal is sent to the full committee. As with any professional meeting, you will need to send a copy of your Proposal document to your committee members at least one week before the scheduled meeting. Also, it is a good idea to plan a Power point presentation to present at your proposal. The power point may be a brief overview of your Proposal document.

Parts of the proposal:

Literature review - your lit review should lay the foundation for your study. It should outline what has been done and what needs to be done. Use subheadings to make your paper easier to follow. You should start with an overview of what will be covered and end with the objective (purpose) of your study.

Methods - your methods should be detailed enough that another person could pick it up and replicate what you do in your thesis. Any tools you'll be using should be described in the methods section, then a full copy should be in your appendix. Generally, you describe it and write "survey is attached as Appendix X".

References - we use ADA style of referencing. You can look at a *JADA* and follow the style or find particulars on our website under *Thesis*, then *style*. In ADA style references are numbered and listed chronologically as they appear. Since you will go through multiple drafts and may move text around, **do not number your references until the very end of the thesis process**. My recommendation is to leave the references as (author and year) until your final thesis draft. Many teachers require the use of **RefWorks**, an online reference management system. The purpose of this requirement is to help you manage your references more easily once you start writing.

Miscellaneous – always number the pages of your proposal so that your committee finds it easier to follow.

Defending Your Proposal

You are responsible for scheduling your proposal defense. Again, find some times you and your chair are available, then contact the rest of the committee. Scheduling your defense should occur 2-3 weeks before you want the meeting.

The committee must have your full proposal at least 1 week before your defense meeting. If it has not been received 1 week before the scheduled date, you will have to re-schedule the meeting—no exceptions, so don't request one.

Forms you will need to have printed and bring to the proposal defense are on the Graduate School website (GSW) (<http://www.memphis.edu/gradschool/> under Forms:

Proposal Defense Form
Thesis/Dissertation Faculty Committee Form

You will need a title page for your proposal. Use the Sample Title Page on the GSW. The cover page for your proposal will say *prospectus* and will be dated the month and year you are defending your proposal.

The proposal defense meeting is fairly informal. You will briefly describe what you're doing (very briefly since everyone has read the proposal and already worked with you on the idea). Then the committee will go through the proposal and provide suggestions to make it better. The goal of this meeting is to get the proposal in good shape and to nail down exactly how your study will be done. It should have a very collaborative 'feel' to it. As the committee is talking through their suggestions, your chair will be making notes of changes they want. This is so you can listen and talk with the committee members about what they want and get really clear. After the meeting you and your chair will go through the changes to make sure you understand exactly what changes are needed. Committee members will also have made editing suggestions on their copies of your proposal and we usually don't go over those at the meeting, since they are so straightforward. Committee members will give you the proposal copy they have made those suggestions on.

The committee will decide whether or not they want to see your changes before they sign the approval form or whether they are OK with you and your chair working on the changes without coming back to them – in which case they will sign the forms before they leave the defense. If changes are very substantial, they may want to see it again. If not, they will sign your forms and their part in the proposal defense is finished. Either way, you will make the changes and get a clean copy back to your chair. You will submit that copy, with your signed forms, to the Graduate School.

IRB Submission

IRB submission follows the format you were given in the EDPR class. If you are working through another site (e.g., St. Jude, a renal clinic) you must also go through their IRB. We almost always obtain IRB approval from the site where the data is collected 1st, then from the U of M. This process is sometimes very lengthy so it is best to start it as soon as you have a good idea what your

methods will be. This should be done after your proposal defense but before the end of February.

Conducting Your Research

You will work closely with your chair in completing your thesis research. Your goal is to get data collection completed before May. While there are circumstances beyond your control sometimes, this can almost always be done. The best strategy is to sit down and work out a timeline with your chair and then make sure weekly that you are following that timeline. Keep your chair informed about what is going on, especially if there are problems. Part of learning the research process is to learn how to get around problems and attacking them as soon as they arise is the best way to get done.

When you have completed data collection, you will usually input your data into SPSS. The SPSS instructions you were given in EDPR 7523 will help you to do that. You will schedule a time to do analyses with your chair. At that time you and your chair will also outline what your Results and Discussion sections will look like. You will work on those sections and come back to your chair when you are stuck or when you need to make sure you are heading in the right direction. It is easy to get stuck on these sections – always better to check back in your chair rather than spin your wheels. (If you are doing your thesis with data from a site, you might do part of this process with the committee member at that site. Just keep your chair informed of progress.)

You will probably go through 2-4 revisions of your Results and Discussion sections with your chair before you are ready to defend your final thesis. When Results and Discussion are ready, you put your final thesis together. It will include an abstract (see sample abstract on the GSW), a title page (GSW), a table of contents, and all of the pages that come before the actual thesis. Best way to know what to include is to print the Checklist for Students Using Non-APA Style Manuals/Journals from the GSW and follow that list.

Defending your final thesis

- You must defend your thesis at least one week BEFORE your residency or you will not be allowed to do your residency. Because of rotation scheduling constraints, it might be possible that some of you will have residency before your externship/staff relief. In this case, your thesis must be defended no later than one week BEFORE your scheduled externship.

- Check the Graduate School guidelines for anything pertinent to the final thesis. Guidelines change and you don't want to find that out when you submit your thesis to the Grad School.
- Send committee members your complete thesis with cover pages, lit review, methods, results, discussion and references and all appendices.
- Bring a completed 2 copies of *Proposal Defense Form* (found on GSW thesis forms).
- Bring 2 copies of a completed *Comprehensive Exam Results Form* (found on GSW graduation forms) – since we got rid of written comprehensive exams, your form will be completed by committee members at your defense.
- Bring 2 copies of *Thesis Approval page* (use example on GSW thesis forms) – this must be personalized for your thesis – make sure you know the abbreviations which go behind each of your committee member's names. It is usually best to e-mail the committee with the spelling and abbreviations you think are correct and let them OK it. Also this page needs to be printed on cotton paper.
- You will keep one copy of all these forms to turn into the school of education and give one copy to Dr. Williams.
- Prepare a powerpoint to describe your research (~15 slides). Your chair can help with this, schedule a room where you can defend your proposal to your committee.
- On the day of your defense you will give a 15 minute presentation that outlines your literature, problems (what do you mean by problems?), methods, results, discussion and conclusions. After your presentation the committee will ask questions and make comments.
- After your defense your committee shall sign the thesis page and all the forms. If there are major changes, they may want to see your thesis again before they sign it.

After defense:

- You will use the *Checklist for Students using Non-APA Style Manual/Journals* (on GSW thesis forms) to make sure you have done everything it says.

- You will make corrections, then go over the checklist with your completed thesis with your chair, then take your completed and corrected thesis and the signed (by you and your chair) checklist to Michelle Stout in Admin 215 (678-3560; mstout@memphis.edu). There is a strict deadline for when these are due in Michelle's office each year – make sure you know what the deadline is for your year. No exceptions are made if you want to graduate in December. Michelle will contact you to pick up your thesis when she has marked what you need to correct. She is really only looking for formatting issues and doesn't deal with content at all.
- When you pick up Michelle's corrections, you make those then print a copy of your entire thesis. Take that copy to a copy machine and print the entire thesis on cotton paper. Check the GSW guidelines to find out how many copies you need to bring back to Michelle and what date the final copy/s are due. Again, no exceptions are made to the deadline.

Tips for Dealing with Formatting

The first part of the thesis is numbered differently from the rest. For the first part insert your page numbers. Then go to the end of the section that is numbered with Roman numerals and insert a section break (next page). Then when you are on the 1st page of Chapter 1, insert page numbers again but with regular (Arabic?) numbers this time and tell it not to continue from the last section. That should make the 1st page of chapter 1, page #1. Sometimes you have to fiddle with it to get it to do that. Come and let me look at it if it's giving you trouble.

Your appendix page numbers should continue from the body of your thesis. Every page (except separation pages usually, but check the GSW guidelines) is numbered. That means parts of your appendix that aren't in your computer will have to be numbered separately. After you figure out what number each page needs you can find a typewriter and just type them in (doesn't matter if the font is different). Or you can number a blank document, put the pages in the printer and run them through so that the page numbers are printed on them. If you do the latter, make sure you do trial runs and have some white-out.

SUGGESTED TIMELINE

Fall of 1st year – use your thesis subject for the lit review project in EDPR 7523

November 5		draft of full lit review due
January 20		defend proposal with full committee
2 nd Monday in February		submit U of M IRB
Late February of spring semester		final draft of lit review and methods
March – April		collect data
May – June	if you sign up for summer credit	{ analyze data and write results and discussion defend final thesis with full committee
July		submit to graduate school
May – August	if you sign up for fall credit	{ analyze data and write results and discussion defend final thesis with full committee
September-October		
October		submit to graduate school, must be submitted one week before you can begin your week residency. Because of rotation scheduling constraints, it might be possible that some of you will have residency before your externship/staff relief. In this case, your thesis must be defended no later than one week BEFORE your scheduled externship