

## **The Master's Thesis Option in Speech & Hearing Sciences**

Why do a Master's thesis project? There are several good reasons. First, it's an opportunity to do research and discover if it is something you enjoy. Second, it affords you the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of a particular topic. Third, you will have the opportunity to work closely with a faculty member. And fourth, you can use the thesis as an alternative to the comprehensive exam.

### Steps for completing a Master's Thesis

- I. Successfully complete SHS 506
- II. Choose the thesis track (as opposed to comprehensive exams) and engage a thesis advisor.
  - A. As partial fulfillment of the Master's degree, students need to choose between (1) a comprehensive exam, or (2) a thesis. While any student can choose the comprehensive exam, not all students can choose a thesis.
  - B. Students who would like to do a thesis should identify their area(s) of interest and talk with a faculty member who has an interest in the area(s). As a result of this discussion, the faculty member may choose to serve as the thesis advisor.
    1. You may not do a thesis if you cannot identify a thesis advisor.
  - C. Occasionally a faculty member will invite a student to do a thesis under their advisement.
  - D. Once a faculty member agrees to serve as a thesis advisor, the student should inform the graduate advisor that they will follow the thesis track.
- III. Meet with your thesis advisor and identify an area of research
  - A. The student and thesis advisor will jointly identify a thesis topic.
  - B. Students may inquire about faculty research projects to see if there is a project that interests them OR the student may propose a thesis project.
    1. The Master's student is not required to gather new data. The student may be able to use existing databases or recordings, etc., as long as they are addressing a distinct independent question.
- IV. Select a thesis committee
  - A. The thesis advisor and student identify appropriate committee members. The

student extends an invitation to the potential committee members.

B. The student must follow current OGS policies for committee members. A thesis committee must be composed of a minimum of 3 members.

1. At least two members need to be tenured or tenure-track faculty members from the SHS department.
2. One committee member can be an adjunct faculty member, an SHS clinical supervisor, or a tenured or tenure-track faculty member from another department or from another University. For this last category, you will need to check with OGS to see if this potential member qualifies for thesis committee service.

C. For all committee members that are not tenured/tenure-track SHS faculty, the student must complete an *Approval Request for Committee Service* and may choose to file a *Proxy Signature Form*.

1. All forms can be downloaded from the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) website
  - a) <http://www.unm.edu/grad/index.html>
2. *Approval Request for Committee Service*
  - a) Once the *Approval Request for Committee Service* is completed, the application must be approved by the department chair. Note that this application requires attachments.
  - b) The student must deliver the *Approval Request for Committee Service* to the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences for approval
  - c) The student must then bring *Approval Request for Committee Service* to OGS for final approval
3. *Proxy Signature Form*

- a) On certain thesis documents, OGS requires an original signature from each committee member. A member of the committee who participates via video/teleconference, but is not physically present, may request that OGS allow another member of the committee to sign the required form in his/her absence. This is accomplished by filing a *Proxy Signature Form*.
- b) The student is responsible for mailing and distributing the form as needed.
- c) The form is submitted to OGS with the *Announcement of Examination*

D. The student submits the names of the thesis committee in a written document for departmental approval. This and all other forms requiring departmental approval should be submitted to the administrative assistant who will arrange for chair approval. This procedure will permit the department to monitor accurately the progress of all master's thesis projects. Once this is signed by the dept chair it will be placed in the SHS department student file.

#### V. Prepare a thesis proposal

A. The thesis proposal is an overview of your project, with particular attention to the questions being addressed and the methods to be used. The length and structure of the proposal will be at the discretion of the thesis advisor, with the goal of reflecting the student's understanding of the topic, research question, the methods, and how the data will be used to answer the questions. It should follow APA formatting guidelines. Although the proposal itself is your work, it is based on discussions with and guidance from your thesis advisor, who will determine when it is ready for distribution to your committee. The format below may be useful for organizing the proposal.

1. Aims of the investigation (1 or 2 paragraphs)
  - a) This is a brief overview of your question(s) and why you think your question is interesting.
2. Literature Review (approximately 1-2 pages)
  - a) Provide brief support for your question using the current literature.
3. Methodology
  - a) Include selection and/or exclusion criteria for subjects, number of subjects to be recruited, and how they will be recruited.
  - b) Include data collection and data analysis procedures.

(1) Describe the procedures you will follow. If there is a treatment phase, describe the treatment in detail.

(2) Support your choice of methodologies (including treatment procedures) with current literature

#### 4. Timetable

a) Indicate in a table what you will accomplish each semester and how many credits you will register for each semester

(1) Student must register for 6 credits of SHS 599 under the thesis advisor's section number.

(2) The department recommends that students plan on a minimum of three semesters (12 months) to complete a thesis.

#### 5. Resources

a) Indicate what resources you will utilize.

(1) Examples

(a) The data collection procedure may require instrumentation that is not contained within the SHS department. What resource outside the department will be utilized to complete your data collection?

(b) The subject inclusion criteria may be disorder- or disease-based. Will you recruit from a disorder- or disease-specific clinic? If so, indicate that clinic as a resource.

#### 6. Approval statement

a) The following statement should be included at the end of the proposal, followed by signature lines.

(1) The signature(s) below indicates approval of the proposed thesis

b) The thesis proposal needs to be approved by all members of the thesis committee. Their signatures on the proposal serve as a contract between the student and the committee.

c) The thesis proposal is signed by all members of the committee once the document incorporates all the proposed changes as noted

during the thesis proposal meeting.

d) In the case that IRB paperwork has been filed prior to the thesis proposal meeting, the thesis advisor can sign the proposal to be submitted with the IEB paperwork. However, when this occurs a modified proposal or proposal addendum should be completed after the proposal meeting. This addendum will incorporate any changes to the proposal based on IRB review as well as the signatures of all the committee members.

(1) If changes are made to the data collection methods as a result of the proposal meeting, you may need to complete an IRB modification

B. The student must provide the departmental administrative assistant with a copy of the signed thesis proposal along with the thesis proposal addendum to be placed in the SHS department student folder.

#### VI. Schedule proposal meeting

A. The student schedules a meeting time for all members of the thesis committee to meet and discuss the thesis proposal.

B. The thesis proposal should be distributed to committee members at least 2 weeks prior to the proposal meeting.

#### VII. The proposal meeting

A. The goal is to clarify everyone's understanding of the research proposal, and to provide suggestions for modification if needed.

B. The proposal meeting also provides an avenue for the student to identify areas where help is needed.

C. Other appropriate professionals may be invited to the thesis proposal meeting.

D. The committee may recommend changes to the thesis proposal.

1. The student should document any changes noted during the thesis proposal and include those changes in the updated thesis proposal or in a proposal addendum.

E. Write up a summary of the thesis proposal meeting to serve as an addendum to the proposal. The thesis committee may ask you to write up a revised thesis proposal as opposed to a proposal addendum.

1. If you write a proposal addendum:

a) In a written document list the issues discussed. Indicate any changes to your proposal.

b) Distribute the addendum for comments to all committee members.

(1) The committee may require the addendum to be rewritten until all the proposed changes are clear.

c) Once an approved draft is completed, the proposal addendum must be signed by all members of the thesis committee. This indicates that each committee member agrees to the project's aim(s) and methodology.

d) A copy of the signed addendum document should be attached to the original thesis proposal and given to the departmental administrative assistant to be placed in the SHS department student file.

2. If you write a revised thesis proposal, follow the guidelines noted above. The committee will require you to rewrite the proposal until all members agree to sign the document.

F. In some cases additional proposal meetings may be required.

## VIII. Submission of IRB application

A. The student will complete and submit an IRB application. This can be done after the thesis advisor approves the thesis proposal, prior to the thesis committee proposal meeting. It must be submitted and approved prior to any subject recruitment or data collection.

1. An IRB modification must be submitted and approved prior to any change in subject recruitment or data collection procedures.

2. If IRB paperwork is submitted prior to the thesis committee proposal meeting, and during the proposal meeting the thesis committee recommends changes to the subject recruitment procedure, data collection procedure or in the case of a treatment phase, the treatment procedure, an IRB modification must be submitted.

B. Proof of Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI) needs to accompany your IRB

1. Student must complete CITI training prior to the submission of IRB paperwork.

2. CITI training can be done online at

<http://research.unm.edu/recs/CollaborativeIRBTrainingInitiative.htm>

- C. A copy of the signed thesis proposal must accompany the IRB paperwork.
- D. In the event that your thesis takes longer than one year, you may need to submit a progress report to IRB.
  - 1. IRB may request copies of completed consent forms, HIPPA forms and completed data collection forms.

#### IX. Collect & analyze the data

- A. The student organizes data collection.
  - 1. The student maintains communication with the thesis advisor regarding any concerns or comments related to data collection
- B. Although the student is responsible for data analysis, the thesis advisor may provide guidance and assistance.
  - 1. In addition to the thesis advisor or committee members, students may seek statistical advice from the Stats Clinic offered through the Department of Math & Stats.

#### X. Write up your thesis

- A. Writing of the document typically occurs in stages throughout the course of the thesis project. There is a helpful section on writing theses and dissertations in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), Fifth Edition (but note that the new Sixth Edition is better on reference citations, how to report statistics, and other mechanics).
- B. The thesis document is divided into chapters. Suggested chapters for the thesis document are described below. However, the final selection of chapter contents will be at the discretion of the thesis advisor.
- C. The first two or three chapters are typically drafted early in the thesis timeline and include the following
  - 1. Introduction (may be combined with the literature review into one chapter)
    - a) The introductory chapter generally introduces the problem and indicates its importance and validity. It sets forth the context, the hypotheses to be tested (or the question to be addressed) and the research objectives to be attained.
  - 2. Review of the literature

a) This is a critical review of literature related to the topic. It is meant to act as a base for the experimental/analytical section of the thesis. Literature selected must be up to date, analyzed and synthesized logically. It is not a mere summary of works of different authors. The research questions/hypotheses should be supported by the literature review and should be stated explicitly at the end of this section.

3. Materials & methodology.

a) It describes the methods and techniques used. It may also contain validation of methods used, and an explanation of data analysis methods (statistics) to be used if they are complex or unusual.

D. The remaining two chapters are completed at the end of the thesis process (after the completion of data collection and data analysis) and include the following.

1. Results

a) This chapter presents a complete account of results and analyses of the study in the form of figures, tables and text so that the key information addressing each of the research questions is highlighted.

2. Discussion

a) This chapter discusses the results of the study in relation to the hypotheses. It highlights the main findings, their significance and implications. Conclusions and recommendations may be presented here or under a separate chapter. Limitations and ideas for future research should be included.

E. Document format should follow the OGS thesis guidelines

1. It is recommended that students attend the free OGS seminar in formatting of the thesis document.
2. The student is responsible for the formatting and all required forms (aka. front matter).

XI. Complete your document and submit it to the thesis committee for review at least 2 weeks prior to the defense.

XII. Defense

A. Set up a date for defense

1. You must be registered for at least 1 credit of SHS599 during the semester in which you defend your thesis.
- B. Provide notice of the defense date and topic in writing to the administrative assistant at least 3 weeks prior to the defense date
1. At least two weeks before the defense date, and no later than November 1 for Fall graduation, April 1 for Spring graduation or July 1 for Summer graduation, the department must notify OGS of the defense date using the *Announcement of Examination* form. The administrative assistant will also prepare the *Report of Examination* and *Report on Thesis* forms and will give those to the thesis advisor prior to the defense.
  2. The defense date can not be later than November 1 for a Fall graduation, April 1 for a Spring graduation and July 1 for a Summer graduation.
    - a) In the event that a student defends late in the semester in which they plan to graduate, and the thesis committee requires manuscript revisions, the graduation date may be altered.
- C. All thesis committee members must be present at the defense.
1. In the event that committee members do not reside in Albuquerque, an audio- or video-conferencing system may be utilized. In this case, the student is responsible for arranging the teleconference equipment.
- D. The thesis defense is a public meeting except for selected portions.
1. The department administrative assistant will notify the department faculty, staff and student via email about the date and topic of the defense.
  2. The student should distribute/hang flyers announcing the date and topic of the defense.
- E. Thesis defense format (approximate times with a total max of 60 minutes for the entire defense)

1. oral presentation not to exceed 20 minutes
  2. 10 minutes of questions from the public
  3. Public is excused from the defense
  4. 15 minutes of questions from the thesis committee
  5. Defending student is excused for approx 10 minutes
  6. Thesis committee meets and determines the outcome of the defense: Pass, Conditional Pass (normally meaning that some revision of the thesis is necessary but not an additional defense), or Fail
  7. The student is called back in and the results are shared
  8. The thesis advisor completes the *Report of Examination* (all committee members sign it)
- F. After the defense, the thesis advisor completes a *Report on Thesis* and all committee members complete and sign their portion of the document.
- G. The thesis advisor distributes the *Report of Examination* form for completion and signatures by each committee member.
1. In the event that the student **Fails** the defense, or the student receives a **Conditional Pass**, a plan will be clarified by the thesis committee and shared with the student.
    - a) For a conditional pass, the conditions should be clarified on the *Report of Examination* and the report should be signed by all committee members. For relatively minor revisions, the committee may delegate responsibility for approving the revised version to the advisor. The form is then given to the department administrative assistant within two days of the defense. Once a conditional pass has been satisfied, a Conditional Pass memo must be sent by the committee chair to OGS to change the report to "Pass."
    - b) A failed defense or a conditional pass may result in a delay in the graduation date.
    - c) The results of the thesis defense (via the *Report on Examination*) must be submitted to OGS by the administrative assistant no later than two weeks after the announced date of the thesis defense.
    - d) Once the student passes the defense and thesis, the thesis advisor distributes the *Report on Thesis* form to each committee

member (one form per committee member). These forms are completed by each member and given to the thesis advisor who seals them in a confidential envelope and gives them to the administrative assistant to deliver to OGS.

2. In the event that the student receives a **Pass** for the defense and manuscript

a) The thesis advisor distributes the *Report of Examination* form for completion and signatures by each committee member. This form is then given to the departmental administrative assistant within two days of the defense. This form must be returned to OGS by the administrative assistant no later than 2 weeks after the defense.

b) The thesis advisor distributes the *Report on Thesis* form to each committee member (one form per committee member). These forms are completed by each member and given to the thesis advisor who seals them in a confidential envelope and gives them to the administrative assistant to deliver to OGS.

(1) The results of the thesis defense must be submitted to OGS no later than two weeks after the announced date of the thesis defense.

### XIII. Thesis submission and graduation requirements

A. Once the thesis is approved by the committee, it is submitted to OGS by the student for final electronic submission/review. Students may contact the OGS graduate manuscript coordinator for guidance to submit the thesis manuscript electronically to the DSpace digital repository. As of Summer 2009, paper manuscripts are no longer acceptable to satisfy the degree requirement.

B. Students should follow manuscript format guidelines which are available at the OGS Website: [www.unm.edu/grad](http://www.unm.edu/grad). Click on the Thesis/Dissertation icon and read the Manuscript procedures Electronic Manuscripts link. Students should also view the forms available at OGS-Forms-Manuscript block. These forms are reviewed in the Master's Electronic Thesis Graduation Checklist form will help students understand the steps to submit the electronic manuscript. A Format Highlights form is at the Manuscript block to understand some specific format guidelines.

C. Students must submit specific manuscript forms to the OGS manuscript coordinator for review before they will be able to submit successfully the thesis to the DSpace repository. The manuscript forms to submit to the OGS manuscript coordinator are:

1. Information Cover Sheet
2. Certification of Final form (Author/Committee signatures)
3. ETD Release form (Author signature)
4. Copy of the Red Border Signature Page (p.i of the Front Matter) with Committee signatures. The student will need to scan this page to the electronic manuscript file.
5. Copy of the Red Border Title page (p.ii of the Front Matter)
6. (OPTIONAL) ProQuest UMI agreement/registration form submitted electronically.

D. Students must submit the thesis manuscript electronically to the DSpace digital repository for approval by the Dean of Graduate Studies by the degree requirement deadlines of November 15 for Fall graduation, April 15 for Spring graduation, and July 15 for Summer graduation. One bound paper manuscript should also be submitted to the Speech & Hearing Sciences department.

XIV. Students should be aware that under certain circumstances it is possible to obtain extensions on the deadlines mentioned above under the Courtesy Policy option. However, requests for such deadlines must be made through the department, with the assistance of the departmental administrative assistant, and approval is not guaranteed. Students and their advisors should make every effort to meet department and OGS deadlines, as substantial delays in completing the thesis and degree may result otherwise.

