



TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY™

SCHOOL OF HUMAN SCIENCE POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR THESIS

The policies and guidelines presented here are to help students understand how to prepare, plan, and complete the thesis proposal and defense. The student's major professor (hereafter referred to as "chair") may have additional requirements, ideas, or advice about how to best proceed with authorizing the student's thesis proposal. Each student should work with their advisor closely in planning each step of the thesis process.

ABOUT THE THESIS

The Master's thesis in the School of Human Sciences is a capstone research project designed to provide students with a rigorous, mentored experience in scholarly inquiry. Consequently, the thesis must conform to rigorous standards of content, style, and format. When students begin their master's program, they are assigned a temporary advisor. Students may work with their temporary advisor to select the most appropriate faculty member to chair the thesis. The thesis chair should be chosen based on research interests and faculty expertise. Throughout the thesis writing process, the student will work under the supervision of their committee chair, who will help divide the thesis tasks into manageable steps, and to plan a realistic timeline, requiring a *minimum* of two semesters.

The primary purpose of the thesis is the generation of new, publishable-quality knowledge that has a clear application to academic, professional, or clinical practice. This project is conducted under the close guidance and mentorship of a faculty advisor. The scope of the project may involve guided independent research, such as 1) an independent contribution to a faculty member's existing bench research, 2) a comprehensive secondary data analysis, or 3) designing and implementing an independent research study. In all cases, the thesis project is structured to be a focused investigation culminating in a manuscript suitable for submission to a professional journal.

Acquired Skills and Learning Outcomes

The thesis is a foundational experience in professional and academic development. Through the structured mentorship of their faculty advisor, students learn to navigate the research process from conception to completion. A key learning outcome is the ability to apply clinical or professional knowledge to a research question and, in turn, use research findings to inform practical application. Students will develop competency in identifying a research gap, formulating a prospectus, conducting a thorough literature review, and executing a research plan.

Furthermore, the thesis project hones critical analytical and communication skills. Students will gain exposure to and experience with appropriate research methodologies and data analysis techniques. A central goal of the thesis is the development of advanced academic writing. By preparing a final manuscript aimed at identified journals, students learn to communicate complex ideas clearly and conform to the professional standards of scholarly publication, providing a tangible demonstration of their competency and expertise.

THE THESIS COMMITTEE

The thesis committee consists of at least three graduate faculty members, including the chair, and two committee members. The chair must be a *full graduate faculty member*, and committee members may be either associate or full graduate faculty members. (Students may find a list of graduate faculty on the [graduate school website](#).) At least two of the three members must be within the student's major.

While not a Graduate School policy, the Graduate School highly recommends that when possible, the Thesis Committee should be formed such that at least one member that has no publishing interest or conflict of interest with the thesis.

Selection of the Thesis Committee

It is highly recommended that students consult with their chair about who to choose to serve on the master's thesis committee. To feel supported and successful in the thesis process, ideal committee members would have overlapping expertise with the proposed thesis (e.g., content, methodology, theory). When reaching out to faculty, students should schedule a face-to-face meeting with a faculty member to request serving on their thesis committee. Once a thesis committee is selected, the student must submit the Thesis Committee Form.

**Faculty may be expected to limit their thesis workload based on departmental or university needs. Students are expected to be flexible based on faculty availability and expertise.*

Roles of the Thesis Committee

The **thesis chair** will serve as the major professor supervising the thesis process. The chair has primary responsibility for the quality and rigor of the thesis and advises the student throughout the process. The thesis chair may have further requirements or policies beyond those contained herein.

The **thesis committee members** are primarily responsible for assessing the quality and rigor of the thesis at the thesis proposal and defense. Committee members provide specialized guidance and contribute to the approval of the student's proposal and completed thesis. It is common for thesis committee members to request further edits or analyses after the thesis proposal and defense. Students may seek consultation from committee members as directed by the chair and as established by the committee. Each committee member serves as a full member of the thesis committee. Successful defense of the proposal and thesis requires approval from each committee member. At least one committee member should have no potential co-author conflict of interest.

Changes to Thesis Committee

At times it may be necessary to change committee members, including the chair, such as when a committee member retires, relocates to another university, or leaves for medical or other reasons. In these circumstances, students may consult with their thesis committee and the director of the School of Human Sciences to select a new committee member. Students must complete the "Change of Committee" form and submit it for approval to the director of the School of Human Sciences.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The student is the author of the thesis. Under the supervision of the chair, it is the student's responsibility to craft and execute all phases of the research project, including writing, data collection, and analysis. More specifically, the student has the following responsibilities:

- Take personal initiative to move the thesis project forward in a timely manner towards completion.
- Schedule meetings with the chair and, as directed, with the committee members, for mentorship and advising.
- Be intimately familiar with the materials found in the student handbooks and graduate catalog (e.g., degree requirements, departmental policies, etc.).
- Ensure the ethical use of AI in the research and writing process by following all guidelines the provided by the university and in the School of Human Sciences AI Use and Disclosure Policy.
- Be aware of and accountable for all deadlines set by the chair, committee, department, graduate school, and university.
- Follow all research ethical codes, policies, and guidelines of the federal government, Texas Woman’s University, the School of Human Sciences, and the student’s major field of study.
- Complete their own, original work. Students should be familiar with policies on academic dishonesty, plagiarism, falsifying records, and cheating. Plagiarism occurs when a student obtains someone else’s work and presents those ideas, words, or results as their own work. Misconduct in these areas can result in dismissal from the university.
- Discuss and notify the chair of any extenuating circumstances that may delay timely completion or progress.
- Recognize that the thesis is an iterative process between the student, chair, and committee that requires many reviews and revisions. As such, it is important to be responsive to feedback and to respect that faculty will often require up to 10 business days to review and respond to manuscript drafts.
- Edit and format the thesis manuscript for graduate school publication by following the [thesis formatting guidelines and technical manual](#).

GRADING INFORMATION

Students should enroll in HDFS 5983 during the thesis proposal process and HDFS 5993 after successfully completing the thesis proposal and submission of the prospectus to the graduate school. Students will receive a grade of “PR” (in progress) in HDFS 5983 until the student has successfully completed the thesis proposal and “PR” in HDFS 5993 until the student has successfully completed the thesis defense, upon which a grade of “CR” (credit received) will be given.

FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION

If the student is accepting Federal Financial Aid, the student must complete additional paperwork beyond the second semester of continual enrollment in either HDFS 5983 or HDFS 5993. When repeating either HDFS 5983 or HDFS 5993 the third or more times, the student must submit verification to the Financial Aid Office that the student is making progress towards completion. The verification form is available under [forms on the graduate school homepage](#), and must be signed by the student’s academic advisor and the director of the School of Human Sciences.

STUDENT RESOURCE INFORMATION

The following resources are available to all students during the thesis process:

- The [Write Site](#) is TWU’s comprehensive writing center. Students may make appointments for individual writing assistance, attend workshops and seminars related to writing, and access the Online Writing Lab (OWL).

- The [Pioneer Center for Student Excellence](#) holds *Dissertation Boot Camps* every May and December from 9:00AM to 5:00PM Monday through Thursday (4 full days) the week after finals. Despite the misleading name, master's students writing a thesis are welcome to attend. The Dissertation Boot Camps are designed for students actively writing any part of the thesis. During these events students can expect to have dedicated time and space for writing, scheduled programming with resource personnel, workshops, and individual consultations with tutors and coaches.
- The [Center for Research Design and Analysis](#) (CRDA) assists students with proposal development, data collection, pre-analysis, analysis, results and discussion, and presentation of findings. The CRDA is staffed by statisticians, graduate research assistants, and analysts. They require at least the first meeting be held with the chair present and may require the chair at subsequent meetings.
- The Graduate School has resources available to students that outline common grammatical, spelling, citation, and other writing errors. Students may access the [thesis formatting guidelines and technical manual here](#).
- Students who are Texas residents and enrolled in their **final** semester of thesis may apply for a reduced tuition rate through the graduate school. Students must complete the [Request for Reduced Tuition- Code 3](#) document and submit it to the graduate school prior to enrollment in the final semester.

MENTORSHIP AND GUIDANCE IN PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Unlike other academic projects, the thesis process requires sustained mentorship and collaborative refinement. Committee members—especially the chair—play a critical role in guiding students through:

- **Application of Clinical Knowledge to Research** Students learn to translate clinical insights into researchable questions and, conversely, to apply research findings to clinical practice.
- **Development of Competency and Exposure** Through iterative feedback and structured support, students deepen their understanding of research design, ethical decision-making, and scholarly communication.

This mentorship fosters not only technical proficiency but also professional identity, preparing students to engage in research-informed clinical work and contribute meaningfully to the field.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Several internal and external funding opportunities are available to students who are writing theses. Below are a few internal funding sources available to TWU students.

- [Student Research Grant Competition](#) - TWU Center for Student Research (approx. \$500): This competitive student grant provides students with funds pay for research related costs (e.g., participant incentives/gift cards, equipment, software).
- [Experiential Student Scholars Program](#) - TWU Pioneer Center for Student Success: This two-semester program that allows students to design and conduct original research activities. The program dispenses \$1000 to the student, which can be used for a variety of research related costs.

GIFTS AND REMUNERATION

While students may feel a need to thank their thesis chair and committees members, students are discouraged from giving gifts. Faculty must follow the highest ethical codes of their field of study and those required by law and university policy. Faculty may not receive gifts from students that could potentially affect the faculty-student relationship or give the perception of undue influence. Therefore, if the student chooses to give a gift to his or her chair or committee member(s) the following policies must be followed:

- No gifts may be given prior to graduation.
- The value of the gift may not be more than \$50.
- The chair or committee member may decline or return the gift if the faculty member determines that it has substantial personal value to the student.

THE THESIS PROPOSAL

PREREQUISITES FOR THESIS PROPOSAL

Prior to the formal proposal meeting, the student enrolls in HDFS 5983: Thesis Proposal. During this period, the student produces a complete proposal that undergoes multiple rounds of revision. This iterative consultation between the student, the chair, and the committee ensures the proposal is methodologically sound and ready for the proposal meeting.

ABOUT THE THESIS PROPOSAL

Publication-Based Thesis

To support scholarly dissemination while maintaining academic rigor, students may opt to complete a thesis in the form of a publication-ready manuscript. This format is designed to fit within the 30–45 page requirement and includes adjustments to both the proposal phase and final defense to reflect the developmental level of master's students.

Proposal Phase

The thesis proposal will still include Chapters 1–3, but with a streamlined focus that aligns with the structure and expectations of a publishable manuscript:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction** (4–6 pages) Clearly defines the research problem, purpose, significance, and overview of the study.
- **Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review** (8–12 pages) Synthesizes relevant literature and theoretical grounding, tailored to the scope of the intended journal audience.
- **Chapter 3: Methodology and Analysis Plan** (6–10 pages) Describes the research design, sampling, data collection procedures, measures or interview guides, and planned analysis.

Students will work closely with their chair to ensure the proposal is methodologically sound and publication-oriented. Mentorship is essential during this phase, particularly in shaping the literature review, refining the research questions, and aligning the study with journal expectations.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE THESIS COMMITTEE

Students are expected to meet and consult with their thesis committee members regularly throughout the proposal development process. These meetings provide opportunities to gather feedback, clarify expectations, and incorporate committee expertise to strengthen the quality and rigor of the thesis. Ongoing communication also helps build confidence and prepares students for a successful defense.

PREPARING FOR THE THESIS PROPOSAL

Preparing for the thesis proposal can feel overwhelming. The following has been found to help students prepare for the thesis proposal:

- Identify areas of interest early in your studies and use coursework and assignments to explore interest areas, deepen understanding, and identify gaps in current literature.
- Attend thesis proposals of other students.
- Begin very early to coordinate and schedule the date and time for the proposal. Faculty and chairs can often have very busy schedules. The earlier this is done, the easier scheduling can be accomplished.
- Make sure that the document has been reviewed for format and grammar that adheres to both graduate school and APA standards.
- Maximize the opportunity to identify committee member concerns by meeting with committee members throughout the preparation process.
- Meet with the thesis chair to identify and prepare for questions or issues that might be raised by committee members during the defense.
- Organize the presentation in a manner that clearly and succinctly explains the proposed research study, the methodology being proposed, the analysis plan, and how it fits with other scholarship within the student's field of study.

SCHEDULING THE THESIS PROPOSAL

When the chair approves the thesis proposal, the student will schedule a thesis proposal. It is the student's responsibility to find a date and time that all committee members can attend. The thesis proposal requires the presence of all three committee members. When setting a date for the thesis proposal, the following policies must be followed:

- All thesis committee members must have **at least 10 working days** to review the final proposal approved by the chair. Therefore, the thesis proposal cannot be set less than 10 working days prior to the final thesis proposal being sent out to committee members. Some committee members require a hard copy and others an electronic copy of the final proposal. It is the student's responsibility to give the final proposal in the form (electronic or paper) preferred by the committee member.
- No thesis proposal may be scheduled during finals week, university or student holidays, or between regular semesters.
- Thesis proposals can only be scheduled during Summer semesters if all thesis committee members have a university appointment during the regular Summer semester.

Once a thesis proposal meeting date is selected, the student will work with the chair to reserve a room with any audio-visual equipment required for the thesis proposal. The student is responsible to send a reminder email to all committee members 24 hours prior to the meeting time.

THE THESIS PROPOSAL PRESENTATION AND DEFENSE MEETING

Students are encouraged to dress professionally for this event. Business attire is appropriate. Jeans, open shirts, sport shoes, shorts, etc. are not appropriate. The student is also responsible to test all audio-visual equipment prior to the meeting. The student should arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled time to test all equipment. The public is welcome to attend the thesis proposal, including friends, family, and colleagues. As a reminder, the thesis proposal is a professional presentation and oral examination of the student's thesis document. All those in attendance are expected to maintain professional academic decorum.

The thesis proposal typically lasts about 2 hours and involves the following:

1. **Proposal Presentation** (15-30 minutes; open to public)

- Using presentation software (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi, Sway), the student will provide an overview of the thesis proposal. The purpose of the presentation is to demonstrate that the student can clearly and succinctly represent the proposal to other professionals. The presentation should provide a succinct, yet thorough, overview of the relevant literature, theoretical underpinnings, proposed methodology, and analysis plan. The student should also have a slide reviewing at least 2 peer-reviewed journals they plan to target with their thesis (comparing their scope, word limits, indexing, and review timelines).
 - Following the proposal demonstration, the chair will invite those in attendance to ask questions to the student.
2. **Public Defense** (5-15 minutes; open to the public)
 - The chair will ask the audience for any questions or comments related to the presentation and thesis document. At the conclusion of this section, the chair will ask that attendees leave the room.
 3. **Proposal Defense** (45-60 minutes; open to current students, faculty, and administrators)
 - The proposal defense is an opportunity for students to defend their science. This is achieved through committee members asking questions pertaining to current literature on the topic, methodological decisions, and implications of the work for the field.
 - Students are expected to present with advanced knowledge in their area of the thesis (literature, methodology, implications) and be prepared to defend this area and to support research decisions using scholarly resources. Students should be prepared to justify decisions, synthesize information, and explain the research content, methodology, and analysis.
 - Students should be able to independently respond to the questions posed by committee members in a professional, academic manner. At times committee members may give differing or even opposing suggestions and critiques. It is students' responsibility to consider these suggestions and justify or explain their decisions to incorporate or not incorporate feedback from committee members.
 4. **Thesis Committee Evaluation** (15-30 minutes; closed to public)
 - The thesis committee dismisses the student from the room to discuss the merits of the thesis proposal and the student's responses to concerns raised by the thesis committee. The committee will decide whether the student's thesis proposal is: (a) Accepted, (b) **Revise with Minor Revisions**, or (c) **Revise and Re-Defend**.
 - **Accepted** signifies no revisions or edits are required. The student may proceed to finalize the thesis proposal (outlined below).
 - **Revise with Minor Revisions** signifies that the requested edits are minor in nature. There may be a small or large number of minor revisions requested. The changes will be reviewed by the chair and may also be required to be reviewed by committee members. Once the chair has approved the requested revisions, the student may proceed to finalize the thesis proposal (outlined below).
 - **Revise and Re-Defend** signifies that there are substantial revisions that must be completed. The changes must be reviewed by the chair and the thesis committee member(s) who requested the changes. The student must

then re-defend his or her thesis proposal in a subsequent thesis proposal meeting.

5. **Thesis Committee Decision** (10-20 minutes; closed to public)
 - The chair will invite the student back into the room to inform the student of the thesis committee's decision and to clarify any revisions that are expected.

COMPLETING THE THESIS PROPOSAL

The thesis proposal meeting is just one part of the thesis proposal process. Data collection cannot begin until the following tasks are completed and the thesis proposal process is complete. The student will not be permitted to graduate without completion of these tasks.

1. **Thesis Proposal Edits**

Working with the thesis chair, the student must respond to edits or changes requested by committee members at the thesis proposal meeting. All edits and changes must be approved by the committee members.

2. **Human Subjects Training**

Once the thesis committee has approved all edits to the thesis proposal, both the chair and the student must complete two online trainings, [Responsible Conduct in Research](#) (RCR) and the IRB's required [Human Subjects](#) training.

3. **Institutional Review Board**

The student is responsible for following the guidelines to obtain approval from the [Institutional Review Board](#) (IRB) of the university. Students must determine the level of review necessary for the thesis study (exempt, expedited, or full) and complete the appropriate application form on the IRB's [website](#). Once completed, the IRB application must be approved by the thesis chair and the director of the School of Human Sciences prior to submission to the IRB. The student's and thesis chair's NIH training certificates must be submitted with the IRB application.

If at any time the student, in consultation with the chair, decides to make any modification to the study (e.g., changes to data collection sites, consent forms, questionnaires, or interviews), the student must submit a [Modification of an Approved Study](#) to the IRB and receive approval from the IRB *before* any changes are implemented.

4. **Department Chair Approval**

The prospectus must be approved by the director of the School of Human Sciences before it is submitted to the graduate school. The SHS director requires at least 10 work days to review the prospectus, and may require further edits before approving the prospectus. Any edits requested by the SHS director must be approved by the thesis chair before resubmitting the document to the SHS director.

5. **Graduate School Approval**

The final step of the thesis proposal is to receive approval from the graduate school. *Data collection cannot begin until the graduate school approves the thesis proposal. In order to receive approval, the student must submit the following to the graduate school:

- Prospectus Cover Sheet (see [graduate school forms](#) for a copy)

- Prospectus (A **10- page maximum** condensed version of the thesis proposal)
- Copy of the IRB Approval Letter
- RCR Training Certificate (student and chair)
- External Agency Approval Letter (if applicable)

**Failure to receive approval from the graduate school prior to data collection may result in the student's graduation being delayed, including rejection of the completed thesis requiring recollection of all data.*

Once graduate school approval is received, students may begin enrolling in HDFS 5993 Thesis and begin data collection, analysis, and writing the final chapters of the thesis document. Students must be enrolled in HDFS 5993 while collecting data and working on the thesis document. If they are not enrolled in HDFS 5993, the student may not receive guidance from the chair.

THE THESIS DEFENSE

PREPARING THE THESIS DOCUMENT

The thesis document should reflect the highest standards of research, scholarship, and professional writing. Students must follow the formatting guidelines outlined in the “**Formatting Navigator**” and the “**Guide to Thesis and Dissertation Preparation**” available on the Graduate School Forms website. All headers, tables, figures, and writing style should be consistent with **APA standards** and aligned with conventions in the student’s major field of study.

Most commonly, the thesis is organized into **three chapters with a corresponding manuscript draft and written addendum**, corresponding to the major sections of an empirical research article:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction** (4–6 pages) Clearly defines the research problem, purpose, significance, and overview of the study.
- **Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review** (8–12 pages) Synthesizes relevant literature and theoretical grounding, tailored to the scope of the intended journal audience.
- **Chapter 3: Methodology and Analysis Plan** (6–10 pages) Describes the research design, sampling, data collection procedures, measures or interview guides, and planned analysis.

The final thesis submission will consist of two components:

1. **Publishable Manuscript (20–25 pages)** A polishable article that includes abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, results, and discussion. Formatting should follow the guidelines of a selected peer-reviewed journal.
2. **Expanded Addendum (5–10 pages, optional but encouraged)** Provides additional context and reflection, including:
 - Extended discussion of clinical relevance and limitations
 - Integration with coursework or field experience
 - Tables, figures, or supplemental materials
 - Reflections on the research process and professional development

During the final defense, students will present the manuscript as the core product. Committee questions may focus on methodological decisions, ethical considerations, clinical implications, and readiness for submission. The defense should be framed as both an academic milestone and a professional development opportunity.

The total length of the thesis should fall between **43 and 65 pages**, inclusive of all **three chapters with a corresponding manuscript draft and written addendum**. This page range supports both depth and clarity, encouraging students to present their work in a focused, publication-ready format. The thesis should also include a **table of contents** and **appendices** for relevant materials such as tables, figures, consent forms, interview guides, or questionnaires.

Importantly, the thesis process requires **sustained mentorship**. Students are expected to work closely with their chair and committee throughout the development of the thesis. This mentorship supports not only technical refinement but also the integration of clinical knowledge into research design, the development of scholarly competency, and exposure to professional standards of inquiry and dissemination.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE THESIS COMMITTEE

The student should meet and consult with committee members throughout the completion of the thesis for assistance with struggles and obstacles in data collection, analysis, and reporting. This is an opportunity to utilize committee member expertise to enhance the quality and rigor of the thesis document. Regular communication with committee members can help build confidence in preparing students for successful defense.

PREPARING FOR THE DISSERTATION DEFENSE

Preparing for the thesis proposal can feel overwhelming. The following has been found to help students prepare for the thesis proposal:

- Attend thesis defenses of other students.
- Begin very early to coordinate and schedule the date and time for the proposal. Faculty and chairs can often have very busy schedules. The earlier this is done, the easier scheduling can be accomplished.
- Make sure that the document has been reviewed for format and grammar that adheres to both graduate school and APA standards.
- Maximize the opportunity to identify committee member concerns by meeting with committee members throughout the preparation process.
- Meet with the thesis chair to identify and prepare for questions or issues that might be raised by committee members during the defense.
- Organize the presentation in a manner that clearly and succinctly explains the completed research study, including: the theoretical underpinnings, the methodology that was implemented, any changes made after the thesis proposal, analysis results, and how the findings fit with other scholarship within the student's field of study.

SCHEDULING THE THESIS DEFENSE

Once the student's chair has approved the thesis document, the student will schedule the thesis defense. It is the student's responsibility to find a date and time that all committee members can attend. The thesis defense requires the presence of all three committee members. When setting a date for the thesis defense, the following policies must be followed:

- All thesis committee members must have **at least 10 working days** to review the final proposal approved by the chair. Therefore, the thesis proposal cannot be set less than 10 working days prior to the final thesis proposal being approved by the chair and sent out to committee members. Some committee members require a hard copy and others an electronic copy of the final proposal. It is the student's responsibility to give the final proposal in the form (electronic or paper) preferred by the committee member.
- No thesis defense may be scheduled during finals week, university or student holidays, or between regular semesters.
- The thesis defense can only be scheduled during Summer semesters if all thesis committee members have a university appointment during the regular Summer semester.

- The student will contact the Department of Family Sciences office to schedule a room with a capacity of at least 15 people.
- The student will contact the Department of Family Sciences *at least 2 weeks* prior to the defense date to post public announcements of the thesis defense.
- The student will send a reminder to all committee members one to two days prior to the meeting time.

Reminder of Graduation Deadlines

When scheduling the thesis defense, students must be mindful of the [graduation deadlines](#).

Oftentimes, in order to graduate in the same semester as the defense, a student must schedule the thesis defense prior to mid-semester. The student should work very carefully with the chair in determining the most appropriate time for the thesis defense. As is outlined below, the thesis defense meeting is just one step of finalizing the thesis document. Therefore, **the thesis defense must be scheduled at least 5 weeks prior to the due date for the certificate of final examination**. It is the student's responsibility to be sure all forms and deadlines are met. If appropriate thesis deadlines and approval forms are not met, graduation may be delayed.

THE THESIS DEFENSE

Students are encouraged to dress professionally for this event. Business attire is appropriate. Jeans, open shirts, sport shoes, shorts, etc. are not appropriate. The student is also responsible to test all audio-visual equipment prior to the meeting. The student should arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled time to test all equipment and bring a copy of the [Certificate of Final Examination](#). The public is welcome to attend the thesis defense, including friends, family, and colleagues. As a reminder, the thesis defense is a professional presentation and oral examination of the student's thesis document. All those in attendance are expected to maintain professional academic decorum. **Celebrations are to be delayed until after the Graduate School has accepted the document.**

The thesis defense typically lasts about 2 hours and involves the following:

1. **Introductions** (5-10 minutes; open to public)
 - The chair will introduce the student and thesis committee members to those in attendance.
2. **Thesis Presentation** (20-30 minutes; open to public)
 - Using presentation software (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi, Sway), the student will provide an overview of the thesis. The purpose of the presentation is to demonstrate that the student can clearly and succinctly represent the completed thesis to other professionals. The presentation should provide an overview of the conceptual framework, methodology, analysis, implications, and how the findings fit with other scholarship within the student's field of study.
3. **Public Defense** (5-15 minutes; open to the public)
 - The chair will ask the audience for any questions or comments related to the presentation and thesis document. At the conclusion of this section, the chair will ask that the audience leave the room.
4. **Thesis Defense** (45-60 minutes; open to current students, faculty, and administrators)
 - The thesis defense is an opportunity for students to defend their science. This is achieved through committee members asking questions pertaining to any part of the thesis, such as: current literature on the topic, methodological decisions, analyses,

representations of findings, study limitations, and implications of the work for the field.

- Students are expected to present with advanced knowledge in their area of the thesis (literature, methodology, analysis, implications) and be prepared to defend this area and to support research decisions using scholarly resources. Students should be prepared to justify decisions, synthesize information, and explain any part of the thesis document.
 - Students should be able to independently respond to the questions posed by committee members in a professional, academic manner. At times committee members may give differing or even opposing suggestions and critiques. It is students' responsibility to consider these suggestions and justify or explain their decisions to incorporate or not incorporate feedback from committee members.
5. **Thesis Committee Evaluation** (15-30 minutes; closed to public)
- The thesis committee dismisses the student from the room to discuss the thesis document and student's responses to concerns and questions from the thesis committee. At this time the thesis committee will discuss the merits of the completed work, including the student's presentation, and decide whether the student's thesis defense is: (a) **Accepted**, (b) **Revise with Minor Revisions**, or (c) **Revise and Re-Defend**.
 - **Accepted** signifies no revisions or edits are required. The Certificate of Final Examination and Signature Page may be signed at the time of the thesis defense.
 - **Revise with Minor Revisions** signifies that the requested edits are minor in nature. There may be a small or large number of minor revisions requested. The changes will be reviewed by the chair and may also be required to be reviewed by committee members. The Certificate of Final Examination and Signature Page may be signed at the time of the thesis defense.
 - **Revise and Re-Defend** signifies that there are substantial revisions that must be completed. The changes must be reviewed by the chair and the thesis committee member(s) who requested the changes. The student must then re-define his or her thesis document in a subsequent thesis defense. The Certificate of Final Examination and The Signature Page will be signed by all committee members after the student has received **Accepted** or **Revise with Minor Revisions** at a subsequent thesis defense.
6. **Thesis Committee Decision** (10-20 minutes; closed to public)
- The chair will invite the student back into the room to inform the student of the thesis committee's decision and to clarify the revisions that are expected.

FINALIZING AND SUBMITTING THE THESIS DOCUMENT

The thesis defense meeting is just one part of completing the thesis. After the student has satisfactorily passed the thesis defense, the student must complete the tasks below. The student will not be permitted to graduate without completion of these tasks.

1. **Thesis Edits**

Working with the thesis chair, the student must respond to edits or changes requested by committee members at the thesis defense meeting. All edits and changes must be approved by the committee members.

2. Certificate of Final Examination

Once the thesis committee approves the thesis as “Accepted,” the student will prepare the [Certificate of Final Examination](#) and obtain signatures from all committee members and the School of Human Sciences chair. The student will then forward the document to the graduate school.

3. Signature Page

After all revisions have been completed and approved by the thesis committee, the student will prepare the [Signature Page](#) (located in the Formatting Navigator on the graduate school forms website) and obtain signatures from all committee members and the School of Human Sciences chair. The student will then forward the document to the graduate school.

4. Department Chair Approval

The completed thesis document must be approved by the director of the School of Human Sciences before it is submitted to the graduate reader. The SHS director requires at least 10 work days to review the document, and may require further edits before approving the thesis document. Therefore, the student must submit the completed thesis document to the SHS director [in accordance with the academic calendar and in the format \(hard copy or electronic\) preferred by the SHS director](#). Any edits requested by the SHS director must be approved by the thesis chair before resubmitting the document to the SHS director.

5. Graduate School Approval

The graduate school requires that all theses are reviewed by professional editors for grammar, structure, and formatting. The graduate school readers may require substantial edits before the graduate school will accept the final thesis. It is the student’s responsibility to complete any requested edits in the timeframe required by the graduate school.

6. **Filing the Thesis with the Graduate School**

The Graduate School requires electronic filing of the thesis document. Directions for submitting the thesis document to the graduate school are found on the [graduate school website](#).

7. **Graduation Checklist**

The graduate school has several final requirements that all master's students must complete before they will be permitted to graduate, many of which have deadlines. All students must submit the [Thesis Fee Form](#) in addition to filing the thesis with the department and graduate school. Students are encouraged review the [Graduation Checklist](#) for any additional graduation requirements not included in this document and review the [graduation deadlines](#).

FINALIZING AND SUBMITTING THE THESIS DOCUMENT

Students are encouraged to publish their thesis in a peer-reviewed journal after the graduate school has accepted the final thesis document. Depending on the extent and length of the thesis document, the student may even be able to divide the thesis into more than one publishable paper. The student, as the chief author of the thesis document, has the right for primary authorship on any publications. Students are encouraged to discuss publication credit with their chair and committee members as early as possible. Merely holding an academic position, such as chair or committee member, does not justify authorship credit. Authorship must accurately reflect the relative scientific or professional contributions of the individual to the manuscript.