

## Thesis Option/Directed Research Guidelines & Requirements for English M.A. Technical Communication

A major project such as a thesis cannot be proposed, researched, written, revised, and defended in a single semester; therefore, you must plan carefully and work in concert with your thesis director. Preparations for a thesis or project are usually begun at least one calendar year before completing this final requirement.

All MA students engaging in thesis research must be continuously enrolled every term, including summer, until they finish their thesis.

### Thesis

The thesis is an in-depth study of an issue in technical communication. The thesis should be 50–75 pages in length.

### Special Project

This project is an in-depth study of a topic in technical communication presented in a format other than that of a traditional thesis. The topic is not limited to, but may focus on, emerging technologies and their significance and application for technical communicators.

A special project may encompass a demonstration of the use of technology to present and manipulate information electronically. The project is grounded in the same in-depth research as a traditional thesis, but may include the development of software, tutorials, and other electronic means of disseminating information. The special project option also requires a three-member committee.

You must complete your project no later than one calendar year after your proposal is submitted and approved.

## University Thesis Requirements

The [Thesis and Dissertation Webcourse](#) is the primary resource for all thesis (and dissertation) information. Students are automatically enrolled in this non-credit course upon enrollment in thesis hours. All thesis students should also review the [College of Graduate Studies Thesis and Dissertation page](#).

All university deadlines are listed in the [Academic Calendar](#). Our program or college may have other earlier deadlines; please check with your program and college staff for additional deadlines.

### The following requirements must be met by thesis students in their final term:

- Submit a properly formatted file for initial format review by the format review deadline
- Submit the Thesis Release Option form well before the defense
- Defend by the defense deadline
- Receive format approval (if not granted upon initial review)
- Submit signed approval form by final submission deadline
- Submit final thesis document by final submission deadline

Students must format their thesis according to the standards outlined in [Thesis and Dissertation Webcourse](#). Formatting questions or issues can be submitted to the Format Help page in the [Thesis and Dissertation Services](#) site. Format reviews and final submission must be completed in the [Thesis and Dissertation Services](#) site. The Thesis Approval Form is also available in the Thesis and Dissertation Services site.

The College of Graduate Studies offers several thesis and dissertation [Workshops](#) each term. Students are highly encouraged to attend these workshops early in the thesis process to fully understand the above policies and procedures.

The College of Graduate Studies thesis and dissertation office is best reached by email at [editor@ucf.edu](mailto:editor@ucf.edu).

## Choosing a Topic Area

Your thesis or directed research should be an in-depth study of an issue in technical communication. The topic you choose should represent an area of sustainable interest for you. It is also essential that you choose a topic for which your coursework has prepared you, and a topic in which a member of the UCF English faculty has expertise. When you have identified the general area you would like to pursue, you should start the process of choosing a thesis director. Your thesis director will help you narrow your area of interest into a workable topic. Your thesis director will also help you figure out whether your topic is best pursued in a thesis or a directed research project.

## Choosing a Thesis Director

Your thesis director must be a graduate faculty member in the M.A. Technical Communication program. Make an appointment with a UCF English faculty member whose area of expertise complements your area of interest. Ideally, you should meet with such a faculty member to begin the process of selecting a topic at least a calendar year before you intend to graduate. A list of faculty appears in the [UCF Graduate Catalog](#); faculty research interests are listed on the [department homepage](#). Be prepared to explain how your interest developed and how it relates to your previous coursework and your professional goals. Together, you and your thesis director will narrow your area of interest into a workable topic. You will also work together to choose the rest of your thesis committee.

## Choosing a Committee

Your thesis director and you will agree upon two other readers with expertise in your topic to compose the required three-person thesis committee. One of these two readers must be a UCF English faculty member; the second reader may be a faculty member from another department. If you plan to have two professors co-direct your thesis, both must be UCF English faculty members.

If no faculty member in the Department of English agrees to direct your project or if you are unable to identify two other experts to form your committee, you must select a different topic.

Your thesis committee must be approved before you can enroll in thesis hours. You may obtain a Thesis Committee Approval Form from the department's Graduate Program Assistant.

## Forms

You will need to complete the [Thesis Advisory Committee Form](#), which is a dynamic form. You can access it here. You'll need your UCF credentials to log in to get to the form. Fill out the parts you know, and then the system will route it to your director and then to your committee, and so on.

You and your thesis director need to complete a Restricted Registration form in order to register you for thesis hours. The Graduate Admissions Specialist has this form.

## Writing and Submitting a Proposal

During your first semester of thesis hours, you will write a proposal and obtain formal approval of that proposal from your committee. A copy of this proposal, along with the signed approval form, is filed with the Graduate Studies Director. If an approved proposal is not filed with the Graduate Studies director before the end of your first semester of thesis hours, you will ordinarily receive a "U" for those hours.

Proposals for a thesis or an directed research project, are at least eight to ten pages long and must contain these elements:

- A working title that clearly states the proposed idea, hypothesis, or central questions that guide the project
- A statement of purpose and scope that provides context for the project
- An outline of the proposed chapters (or methodology for special research project)
- A preliminary bibliography
- A committee section (described below)
- A timeline for completing the project

Individual committees may require additional elements. For example, a proposal for research involving human participants should include an Institutional Review Board application.

A more extensive list of Works Cited and Works Consulted (neither annotated) will become part of your final completed thesis.

The Technical Communication thesis is an in-depth study of an issue in technical communication. The thesis, which involves the use of both primary and secondary sources, should be 50-75 pages. The final draft of your thesis must be available to all committee members no less than three weeks before the defense.

The committee section of the proposal outlines the role of each member of the committee, including how each member's specialty helps to form a coherent committee, and for which particular concerns or sections of the thesis each committee member will be consulted. The section also outlines the involvement of the readers in the thesis, addressing such questions as when the readers will see drafts of chapters. (e.g., Will the two readers on the committee read chapters at the same time as the director of the committee? Or will they read each chapter only after the director has reviewed each chapter?)

No more than two weeks after you have submitted your proposal, your committee will either approve or disapprove it. However, your proposal may go through a series of revisions until both you and the director find it acceptable. Be sure to plan carefully and communicate effectively with your committee so that you have time to complete an approved proposal before the end of your first semester of thesis hours. Do not begin writing your thesis until your proposal has been approved by all three committee members and the Graduate Studies Director.

If your committee rejects your proposal despite all your revisions, you must select a different topic and/or a different committee.

## **Defending Your Thesis**

You will defend your thesis at a public meeting lasting at least one hour. Your committee members will attend along with any other interested members of the general public, including faculty members, graduate students, and your friends and family.

This defense must be scheduled at least six weeks ahead of time, and a public announcement of the defense must be posted at least two weeks ahead of time. At the defense, faculty members will ask questions that call on you to discuss the theoretical, methodological, and substantive aspects of your research.

To schedule your defense, establish a mutually convenient date and time for you and your committee. After conferring with the committee members, you will need to contact the Program Assistant in order to schedule a room. Notify your committee and the Graduate Studies Director of the place, date and time. If you are doing a project, notify the Graduate Studies Director at least two weeks in advance of the date and place of your defense.

**FORM:** You must bring the completed Thesis Defense Approval Form with you to your defense.

While you may schedule a defense in the summer, many faculty members are not available for extensive thesis work from April 1 to September 1. Faculty who do not teach in the summer and therefore are not under contract during the summer may not direct a summer defense.

Please plan carefully and consult frequently with your thesis or project director about schedules and deadlines.

No later than three weeks before your defense (or earlier, if called for in your thesis proposal), submit four copies of the final draft of your thesis: one for your director, one for each committee member, and one for the Graduate Studies Director. These copies will be shared with other faculty members who may wish to attend the defense.

In addition to copies of your thesis, you'll need to prepare two documents:

- A thesis announcement, which is emailed to the Graduate Program Assistant for distribution. Contact the Graduate Program Assistant for examples.
- Refer to **Module 4: Defense** in the [Thesis and Dissertation Webcourse](#) for instructions on submitting your release option information and printing your Thesis Approval Form.

Follow all requirements specified by [UCF Graduate Studies](#). The Thesis Approval form will be signed by your thesis committee at the end of the defense, assuming that your thesis was successfully defended. You are responsible for securing all other program and College of Arts and Humanities representative signatures and submitting all required documents, electronic and paper, to the College of Graduate Studies office.

Your thesis must be submitted by your thesis director to [iThenticate.com](#). Before a student can submit a final version of the thesis to the University, the thesis chair must indicate that the Review for Original Work through iThenticate was performed by signing the Thesis Approval Form.

Your director can and should refrain from signing the final forms until all revisions called for by the committee have been accomplished.

When you submit your final e-document to the university for graduation, you must also submit a copy to the department Graduate Program Assistant.