Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines

Master's Thesis

If a student chooses or is required to complete a master's thesis, he or she must enroll for six credits of thesis research as prescribed by the program (see §5.3.1 in the GSAS Academic Policies and Procedures Guidebook).

A master's thesis committee must consist, at minimum, of a thesis director (mentor) and one reader. Committee members are specified, along with the thesis topic, on the Thesis Title Approval form, which is submitted to us by the department chairperson or program director. The department chairperson or program director is responsible for ensuring that the committee is professionally appropriate.

When a thesis title and committee have been approved, the student's program will be notified. For any changes made to the thesis title or thesis committee membership, a new form must be prepared and sent to dean's office for approval.

An oral defense of the master's thesis is not required by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, but may be a program requirement. If this is a program requirement, the student must be physically present at the defense, and may not participate by any means of distance communication (such as Skype, teleconferencing, phone, etc.).

Students should note that the presentation of the thesis to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences is the last requirement that is necessary for the degree. All other requirements for the master's degree must be completed before the thesis is submitted to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

Some departments require master's research papers, projects or internships. These papers are not always presented to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, though the approval forms for these projects are presented to the school as part of the last requirement for the degree. Students in these departments should consult their departments about requirements for these projects.

Presentation

Please note that we are making the following changes to the procedures by which the GSAS policy on the Presentation of the Master's Thesis to GSAS is implemented (see 7.7.2 GSAS Academic Policies and Procedures Guidebook).

If you choose or are required to submit a Master's thesis, you are now required to upload the thesis to ProQuest/UMI. While the final thesis paperwork should still be submitted to GSAS, a physical copy of the thesis is no longer needed. Capstone papers, long papers, final project papers, research papers, etc., should not be uploaded to ProQuest/UMI. Only those final requirements officially described as a "Master's thesis" should be uploaded.

Students are not required to present their Master's theses in person to GSAS. Instead, the presentation of the Master's thesis to GSAS will be conducted "in absentia": after uploading the thesis to ProQuest/UMI, students must submit the final thesis paperwork to GSAS for review. Once the thesis and the paperwork have been reviewed, students will be cleared for graduation.

In programs where capstone papers, final project papers, and the like are required, students should follow that program's process for submitting the project and then file the final paperwork with GSAS. Again, no appointment is required.

The uploaded thesis should be in its final version, including any changes required by the committee and in the proper format as indicated in Appendix E of the GSAS Academic Policies and Procedures Guidebook.

Please follow the deadlines posted in the Academic Calendar.

Guidelines

These guidelines below are for programs in which an "official thesis" is an option or requirement. Please check with your program director to make sure your program requires the official thesis or has it as an option.

1. Register
   When all required coursework (and required exams in some programs) is finished and the master's thesis option is approved, students are enrolled in six credits of thesis research. Students should be in contact with the program director program specifics.

2. Membership of the Thesis Committee
   The Thesis Committee must consist of at least one thesis mentor and one reader. The mentor must be a full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty member.

3. Timetable of the Thesis
   Generally the thesis should be finished in no more than one academic year. During the first registered semester, the student should have the thesis topic approved by the mentor and a plan for completion of the thesis. During the second registered semester, the student should finish researching and writing with the direction of the committee.

4. Topic of the Thesis
   Each program has different ways in advising a student to select a research topic. The topic may be one of the student's interests, from coursework, be an extension of a course project, or a project developed with a faculty member. When the title of the thesis has been approved by the committee, two copies of the Thesis Approval Form should be submitted to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Dean's Office. If the program requires a proposal of the thesis, then the two copies of the Thesis Approval Form will be submitted to the Dean's Office of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences after the proposal is approved by the thesis committee.

5. Thesis Proposal
   Some programs request a written proposal or a statement of the thesis at the first stage of the thesis development. This process is established by the program, so students should consult the program director for information. The proposal will be approved by the thesis committee. Then the program should submit two copies of the Thesis Approval Form to the Dean's Office of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

6. Thesis Completion (Final Thesis)
   The Thesis is complete when both the mentor and reader(s) approve the manuscript or approve with minor revisions. It must be submitted to the mentor and the reader(s) before the program's submission date. The student should check with the program director for program deadlines. Some programs may also require special forms to be attached to the thesis when the student submits his/ her thesis to the program. The student should check with the program director to determine the program's process. After the thesis has been approved by the committee, the program office should prepare the official
thesis paperwork that must be submitted to the Dean. Paperwork can be emailed to the Dean for approval.

7. Format of the MA Thesis
The format of the Master’s Thesis document is the same as for the doctoral dissertation, but the required forms and copies are fewer than for the doctoral dissertation. Typically, the program office helps the student to prepare the thesis documents. Students should check with the program director or follow the program’s guidelines if there are any questions.

8. Policy for Committee or Title Change
Any changes including mentorship, committee membership, or title of the thesis must be reported to the Dean’s Office at least two weeks prior to the official submission date using the Thesis Approval Form marked “Revision” which should be signed by the program director. Late reporting of a change may cause a delay in graduation. Therefore, the student should take care in making sure all changes have been reported.

9. Failed Thesis
If a student fails to complete the thesis on time and/or conduct a Thesis at an adequate academic level, he or she may be in danger of failing the Thesis requirement and therefore the master’s degree. It is very important for students, mentors, and program directors to map out the completion of the thesis so that expectations are clear.

PhD Dissertation
All requirements for the doctoral degree must be completed within eight years of the first semester of matriculation in the graduate school for those students who enter with a master’s degree from another institution, or within ten years of the first semester of matriculation for those students who are direct doctoral students (students who receive a master’s degree in curso from Fordham) or who complete a master’s degree from another institution, or within ten years of the first semester of matriculation for those students who enter with a master’s degree from another institution, or within ten years of the first semester of matriculation in the graduate school. All requirements for the doctoral degree must be completed within eight years of the first semester of matriculation in the graduate school.

The requirements for doctoral students are typically as follows:

1. Completion of the appropriate number of graduate credits (see §7.1 in the GSAS Academic Policies and Procedures Guidebook).
2. A language and/or research skills requirement (see §7.5 in the GSAS Academic Policies and Procedures Guidebook).
3. Comprehensive examination (see §7.6 in the GSAS Academic Policies and Procedures Guidebook).
7. Presentation of the dissertation to the dean

Individual departments and programs may impose additional requirements.

Students who wish for an extension to the doctoral time limit must apply before the conclusion of their final academic year. Such a request must be directed in writing through the department chairperson or program director, must be approved by the dissertation mentor, readers, and the department chairperson and must receive the written approval of the dean. An extension to the time limit for degree completion will be granted only if, in the dean’s judgment, there is sufficient evidence that the degree will be completed expeditiously and that the dissertation will be of high merit.

Extensions beyond the time limit will not be granted to students who have not secured approval of a dissertation topic prior to the expiration of the time limit or who have otherwise not made substantial academic progress toward completion of the degree, except with the permission of the dean.

Requests for an extension of the doctoral time limit must include:
- A sufficient portion of the dissertation to permit an objective evaluation of the quality of the student’s work. In the humanities, a reasonable portion is one-half of the dissertation; in the sciences, research through the stage of data collection should be presented.
- A timetable for the completion of the remaining portions of the dissertation.
- A plan for renewed demonstration of language and/or research skills competency (if needed for dissertation research) if more than five years have elapsed since the original completion of these requirements.
- A plan to demonstrate currency of knowledge for any courses taken prior to the request for extension, and departments may require that they retake certain courses.
- A timetable for retaking and passing the doctoral comprehensive examinations in the department’s or program’s current format if more than five years have elapsed since any portion of the comprehensive examination was completed.

Guidelines
1. After oral defense, make any changes in the dissertation that were identified during the defense. Make sure that the changes conform to the formatting guidelines for dissertations and then secure approval of those changes from your mentor and committee.
2. Upload your dissertation to ProQuest/UMI:
   a. Click on "Submit my dissertation/thesis"
   b. Follow the instructions to create an account.
   c. Continue through the online submission process until completed.
   d. Submit your dissertation with the proper format.
   e. Graduate School of Arts and Sciences will automatically receive an electric confirmation once your dissertation has been uploaded to ProQuest/UMI and we will then review your submission.
3. Complete the Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED):
   a. When you have successfully completed the SED, you will receive a confirmation.
   b. Print out the confirmation and submit it with your paperwork.
4. Submit all paperwork required to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Office of Academic Programs and Support in Keating 216 by the deadline on the GSAS Academic Calendar.
5. The survey and the paperwork will be reviewed in absentia. No appointment is necessary.
6. However, you are invited and encouraged to submit your paperwork during designated time blocks, when the Associate Dean will be available to answer any questions, chat with you, and congratulate you! If you would like to meet with the Associate Dean but cannot be available during these designated times, you may request a phone call or separate meeting time. Also, if you wish to meet with the Associate Dean, you do not need to do so by the deadline on the GSAS Academic Calendar, as long as your paperwork is completed by then.

Updated: 07-16-2019
Procedures for the Presentation to the Dean

1. You are now required to complete the online Ph.D. Exit Survey as part of your presentation. Your responses will be seen only by the Dean and Associate Dean of GSAS, and will not be shared with anyone else under any circumstances. The input you give us will be invaluable in helping us determine how best to allocate resources in years to come (e.g., what sort of professional development workshops to offer). We have made the survey as brief as possible, and you may choose to skip questions that you prefer not to answer. However, the survey itself is required as part of the presentation. Detailed instructions and links will be sent to you via email after your Defense Notification is received by GSAS. The survey must be completed before the dissertation and defense paperwork is submitted to GSAS.

2. After oral defense, make any changes in the dissertation that were identified during the defense. Make sure that the changes conform to the formatting guidelines for dissertations and then secure approval of those changes from your mentor and committee.

3. Upload your dissertation to ProQuest/UMI:
   a. GSAS will automatically receive an electric confirmation once your dissertation has been uploaded to ProQuest/UMI and we will then review your submission.
   b. Submit your dissertation with the proper format.
   c. Continue through the online submission process until completed.
   d. Follow the instructions to create an account.
   e. Click on Submit my dissertation/thesis

4. Complete the Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED):
   a. When you have successfully completed the SED, you will receive a confirmation.
   b. Print out the confirmation and submit it with your paperwork.

5. Submit all paperwork required to the GSAS Office of Academic Programs and Support in Keating 216 by the deadline on the GSAS Academic Calendar.

6. The survey and the paperwork will be reviewed in absentia. No appointment is necessary.

7. However, you are invited and encouraged to submit your paperwork during designated time blocks, when the Associate Dean will be available to answer any questions, chat with you, and congratulate you! If you would like to meet with the Associate Dean but cannot be available during these designated times, you may request a phone call or separate meeting time. Also, if you wish to meet with the Associate Dean, you do not need to do so by the deadline on the GSAS Academic Calendar, as long as your paperwork is completed by then.