



Master of Arts in Communication

Guidelines for Preparing and Defending Thesis Proposal and Completing and Submitting Thesis

Students choosing to complete their M.A. by the Thesis plan must have a minimum 3.5 GPA and apply for this option. The student should be in the second year of their M.A. Communication program. The Thesis plan includes preparing a proposal and presenting it to Applicant's Thesis Committee. Upon approval of the committee, Applicants are required to prepare, present, defend, and submit the Thesis in accordance with the Graduate School Master's Student procedures outlined below and on the Graduate School website. **It is solely the responsibility of the student to meet the deadlines for required document submissions in order to graduate from the program.** Detailed information regarding graduation deadlines, thesis and dissertation information and graduation forms are available at [the Graduate School website](#).

Thesis Proposal Process

Students must independently demonstrate his/her ability to execute the thesis project through the development of a Thesis Proposal, which the Thesis Committee will approve or disapprove. Students developing a thesis proposal must follow these steps:

1. Identify an area of study and develop research question(s) and research plans for the thesis project
2. Form a Thesis Committee that consists of a chair and two faculty members who have theoretical and methodological expertise relevant to the proposed project (the committee members may change after the defense upon the tentative committee members' suggestions; one committee member may be from outside the Communication Department depending on the nature of the thesis project).
3. Submit the Thesis Proposal to all committee members as well as the Director of Graduate Studies via email by **5pm MST on October 1** (Fall Semester) or **March 1** (Spring Semester).
4. Schedule your Thesis Proposal Defense with your committee members within 2 weeks after the submission of your Thesis Proposal. Defense typically takes one hour including your presentation, Q&A, and the Committee deliberation.
5. The Thesis Committee decides at the end of the defense either approval or denial. Students who are denied must take COMM 6050 (Capstone in Communication) instead for degree requirement.

No student will be allowed to propose a thesis in the semester in which s/he intends to graduate. Additional information is available in [the Graduate School Thesis and Dissertation Manual](#).



Thesis Proposal Content

Successfully defended Thesis Proposals must be formatted in APA Style. Improperly formatted Proposals or those that lack appropriate citations and/or the content areas outlined below may not be approved. The Thesis Proposal in the Department of Communication shall (at a minimum) include the following:

I. Introduction

The introduction to the Proposal should have a scope of sufficient detail to provide adequate discussion of the following:

Statement of the Problem

- What problem area does the proposal focus on?
- Briefly, how is the problem typically viewed by communication scholars?

Specific Purpose

- What facet of the problem area are you going to confront and what portion of the problem area do you not intend to confront?
- What is the main focus of your study?
- What are the specific aims of the study?

Significance of the Study

- What will your study accomplish?
- In what way will your study clarify or test specific theoretical formulation?
- How will your study add to the existing body of knowledge in the Communication discipline?
- Why is this study important?

II. Review of the Literature

The review of the literature should cover the relevant bodies of theory and/or research that provide information about the problem area. It should include conceptual definitions of all key concepts and address the specific approaches that are most beneficial for understanding the problem area. It should demonstrate how the study represents the appropriate "next step" toward understanding the problem area. The literature review should be appropriately narrowed and related directly to the research question(s).

- At the conclusion of the literature review, you need to integrate your rationale for your hypotheses or research questions into the text.
- In this section, use the existing literature to set up a rationale for the study.
- Formally state the hypotheses or research questions

III. Method

This section focuses on the execution of the study. Provide a detailed description of the procedures so that, by following the description, any other person could replicate the study. The minimum components for this section should include:

Sample

- To what population of people, events, cases, etc., do you intend to generalize?
- What sample of people, events, or phenomena do you intend to observe?
- Through what specific procedures will you decide which population elements will be included in your sample?
- How do you plan to recruit study participants?
- What steps will you take to secure approval from the campus institutional review board for Human Subjects Institutional Research Board (IRB)?

Design (Procedures)

- If the study is experimental, give a detailed outline of the design. Additionally, give a detailed description of all treatments or conditions employed in the design.
- If the study is descriptive or formulative, provide a detailed explanation of the data gathering procedures.
- If the study is critical-analytic, provide specifics about the discreteness or diffuseness of the artifact sample, and methods for either random or illustrative sampling.

Measurement (Instrumentation)

In this section, operationalize the concepts employed in the statement of the hypotheses or description of the research objectives.

- How will the concepts be measured?
- What kind of observations will be made and how will the observations be classified?
- If the observations produce scores, how will the scores be computed?
- What information do you have, or what information do you plan to gather bearing on the reliability and validity of your observations?
- What were previous reliability and validity estimates of the operationalization's of the variables?
- If you are designing your own instruments, explain the procedures used with appropriate statistical information on the new instrument(s).
- For critical-analytic studies, what specific methodology do you propose using? Is this a semiotic study, a critical discourse analysis, a rhetorical analysis, or some other methodology?
- Finally, what are the major alternative measurement approaches or assessments for getting at the concepts or variables you want to observe or measure in the study?
- Why are your assessment procedures "better" than the alternatives?

Data Analysis

Using the procedure outlined above to generate the data, how will the data be analyzed or evaluated?

- How will you test your hypotheses or answer research question(s) related to the specific research objective?



- Restate the hypotheses or objectives identified in the final section of the literature review and indicate how you will make decisions concerning them.

IV. Discussion

This section should identify, within reasonable limits, problems you might encounter during execution of the study and how they will be resolved.

- What are some of the threats to reliability and validity of the constructs and the research design?
- Additionally, you should identify the limitations or restrictions you plan to make on the inferences you draw from the study and the generalizations you make to other conditions or populations.

Thesis Approval, Development, and Submission

The Thesis Proposal must be approved before registering for Thesis credit (**COMM 7000 – Master’s Thesis**). Over the semesters during which the thesis is completed, defended, and submitted, the student must register for a total of six thesis credits. Because of the rigorous nature of the Thesis Proposal, Thesis Proposal Defense, and the writing and defense of the thesis study, Thesis option students are not required to take the Comprehensive Exam or to register for and take **COMM 6050 – Communication Graduate Capstone Experience**.

Graduate School Requirements and Thesis Procedures

Graduate students choosing the thesis option are responsible for being aware of the following procedures and honoring the following requirements, as outlined on the Graduate School website. The graduate student’s Thesis Committee Chair and the Graduate Director are available to answer questions about these procedures and requirements.

- [Thesis/Dissertation Submission Fees](#)
- [Thesis Submission Procedures](#)
- [Approval of Format](#)
- [Master Defense \(Exam Report\)](#)
- [Schedule of Deadlines for UCCS Graduate Degree Candidates Expecting to Graduate](#)
- [Application for Admission to Candidacy for an Advanced Degree](#)
This form is filled out online by the graduate student and then forwarded to the Graduate Director early in the semester during which the student plans to graduate. The Director signs the Application electronically and forwards it to the Graduate School for the student. If the semester of graduation changes, advise the Director immediately.
- [Application for Diploma](#) (also known as Diploma Card)
The Diploma Card is available on the graduate student’s portal. The card is filled out online at the same time as the Application for Candidacy. The Diploma Card is submitted to the Office of Admissions automatically. If the semester of graduation changes, advise the Director and the Admissions office.



- [Request to Participate in Commencement](#)
If the graduate student's coursework is almost complete, but one or two courses or the thesis will be completed the next semester, then the student can ask to participate in the Commencement using this form. **The graduating student's name will NOT appear in program at the commencement, until all coursework is completed.**