

**Millersville University  
Graduate and Professional Studies**

**Master's Thesis Guidelines and Requirements**

Updated May 2009

**I. Definition of a Thesis & Why to Complete One**

A master's thesis is an approved creative project or an interpretive, analytical work that offers evidence of an original point of view, supported by original research and the results of that research. In completing a thesis, the student demonstrates a capacity for independent research, an ability to organize and present empirical evidence logically and proficiency in the use of scholarly language. The final written thesis demonstrates originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate format, organization and thorough documentation. In certain circumstances, a thesis may be a literary review.

A thesis is different from a research project in that it is greater in scale, complexity and time to produce. A thesis will result in a bound, publishable paper which is submitted to Ganser Library, the academic department and the Masters' Theses Directory. If you are completing a research report rather than a thesis, you should consult with your advisor concerning requirements. Research reports are not submitted to Graduate and Professional Studies. Students must fulfill departmental requirements in the completion of a research report.

If you are planning to pursue a doctoral program, you may want to strongly consider completing a thesis as part of your master's degree requirements. Many doctoral programs look to this as a requirement for admission.

The master's degree programs at Millersville that offer an option for a thesis are:

M.Ed. Art	M.A. History
M.S. Biology	M.Ed. Math
M.Ed. Elementary Education	M.S. Clinical Psychology
M.Ed. Language and Literacy Education	M.S. School Psychology
M.Ed. Early Childhood Education	M.Ed. School Counseling
M.Ed. Gifted Education	M.Ed. Special Education
M.A. English	M.Ed. Sport Management
M.A. French, German, Spanish	M.Ed. Technology Education
M.Ed. French, German, Spanish	

Programs in which there is currently no defined option for thesis\*:

M.S. Emergency Management	M.S. Nursing
M.Ed. English	Master of Social Work
M.Ed. Leadership for Teaching and Learning	

\*Students enrolled in these programs of study who are interested in potentially completing a thesis as a part of the program, should contact the department to explore the option.

## II. Choosing a Topic and Advisor

The student is responsible for selecting a topic and finding a graduate faculty member who is willing to serve as an advisor. In general, the student should follow these steps in selecting a topic and an advisor:

1. Begin by exploring topics that match your interests, knowledge and skills.
2. Discuss your ideas for the master's thesis with faculty members who have an interest and expertise in the area of your selected topic. You may explore possible topics with several faculty members before selecting your final topic.
3. Select an advisor based on mutual interests and the availability of the faculty member to direct the thesis project during the appropriate semester(s). Keep in mind a thesis is rarely completed in one semester; often a full year is utilized to complete it.
4. Keep in mind that departments may use different procedures for thesis proposal approval: some departments through discussion and a written tentative outline, other departments through a more detailed proposal.

## III. Timeline

**Deadlines and timeline may fluctuate depending on your academic discipline, your topic and your advisor. This timeline is intended as a general guideline.**

One year prior to graduation:	Explore possible topics on your own and with potential faculty advisors.
11 months prior to graduation:	Select topic and advisor and consider additional committee members (at least three committee member required).
10 months prior to graduation:	Thesis proposal submitted for approval (depending on your department, requirements for approval may vary). Your thesis committee should also be finalized at this time. Regardless of approval requirements, a "Thesis Proposal Approval Form" should be signed and submitted to Graduate and Professional Studies. <b>**This must be completed before the semester in which you plan to apply for graduation.</b>
9 months prior to graduation:	Begin research; prepare abstract, bibliography and outline.
5 months prior to graduation:	Meet with your advisor to review thesis progress (at a minimum). During the entire thesis process, you should remain in communication with your advisor to ensure successful progress.
In the semester you plan to complete your thesis:	Fill out "Request for Special Study" to register for the thesis course in your program. (Generally, the thesis is a 3 or 6 credit course registered for in one semester; however, it will most likely take you more than one semester to

	complete the thesis. Generally a thesis from start to finish will take about a year).
3-4 months prior to graduation:	Give first draft of the thesis to your advisor.
2 months prior to graduation:	Submit revised, final version of the thesis to your advisor and committee (allow a few weeks for review).
1 month prior to graduation:	Schedule thesis defense presentation with your advisor and committee.
2-3 weeks prior to graduation:	Thesis grade should be recorded via Banner web grading by the student's advisor, or via the standard grade change form if the student had previously taken an "incomplete." Thesis Examination Report should be submitted to Graduate and Professional Studies.
2 weeks prior to graduation:	Three copies of the final form of the thesis must be submitted to Graduate and Professional Studies. <b>Each copy of the thesis should bear the original signatures of the thesis advisor and committee members on the approval page and the student's original signature on the abstract page.</b>
Following Graduation:	Bound copies are submitted by Graduate and Professional Studies to Ganser Library, the student's academic department and the student. An invoice for binding costs will be sent to the student and must be paid before the bound thesis can be picked up in Graduate and Professional Studies.

#### IV. Acceptable Formats

Before beginning the preparation of your manuscript, you should consult with your advisor concerning the proper style to be used for your discipline. Some of the style guides approved for disciplines at Millersville are:

Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.

American Psychological Association. Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

University of Chicago. Chicago Manual of Style.

You are required to submit your thesis in printed format. You have the option to include it as an electronic document (.pdf format only) for archiving.

## **V. Research Support Funding**

Several sources of on-campus funding are available for undergraduate and graduate students seeking to conduct course-related or degree-related research. You may be eligible for this funding to aid you in completing your thesis or presenting your thesis at professional conferences or meetings.

Student Research Grant Program - Both graduate and undergraduate students are eligible for these grants, which have a maximum award amount of \$500. This funding is made available through an Academic Affairs' performance funding allocation. Consult the [Graduate Studies website](#) for current deadlines, guidelines and applications.

Noonan Endowment Fund Grant Program - Undergraduate and graduate students may also be eligible to apply for Noonan Grants. Current deadlines and information about Noonan Endowment Grants is available at the [Academic Affairs/Provost's website](#).

Undergraduate and graduate students should also consult their academic department to determine if additional department or university sources of funding are available to them.

## **VI. Library Research Support**

For support and consultation on using the research tools and resources available at Ganser Library, please visit the library website at <http://www.library.millersville.edu/> or contact the library to make an appointment with a research librarian or subject librarian.

## **VII. Policies on Research with Human Subjects or Animals**

All systematic investigations involving human or animal subjects that are performed to meet academic requirements (e.g., thesis) or designed for public dissemination under the aegis of Millersville University require approval from the appropriate entity.

If your thesis involves research using human subjects, you will need to follow the procedures to have your research approved by the IRB. Proposals requiring a full Board review must be submitted ten days in advance of the board's meetings. A current meeting schedule as well as additional details on the IRB and their processes are available at their website at <http://www.millersville.edu/~irb/>.

If your thesis involves research using animal subjects, you will need to have your research proposal approved by IACUC (Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee). The Millersville University IACUC, under the direction of Dr. Jim Cosentino, should review any research proposals that involve the use of laboratory animals and will work with grant seekers to ensure that the proposed research incorporates adequate safeguards for and appropriate treatment of laboratory animals.

## **VIII. Roles & Responsibilities of Student, Committee, Advisor, Coordinator & Graduate and Professional Studies**

### **Student**

The graduate student has the primary responsibility for the master's thesis from the creation of the subject matter to the preparation of the thesis document. The student is responsible for ensuring that the thesis manuscript meets accepted standards for scholarly writing and has thoroughly proofread the documents for accuracy including spelling, punctuation, and grammar. The student should read MU Thesis Guidelines thoroughly and know the requirements and guidelines for preparation of the thesis. The student also should identify and become familiar with a recognized academic style manual appropriate to his/her academic discipline. Both documents should be used in the preparation of the thesis.

### **Thesis Advisor**

The thesis advisor, who must be a member of the MU Graduate Faculty, accepts and assumes the major responsibility to work directly with the graduate student in the research or creative project. The thesis advisor will work closely with the student in all aspects of the thesis experience, including the development of the research proposal, the implementation of the research design, the analysis of the data or supporting evidence and the writing of the thesis. The thesis advisor has the responsibility to edit the thesis for accuracy in terms of both content and format. Prior to the submission of the thesis to the thesis committee, it is the responsibility of the thesis advisor to review the document and ensure that it is of high quality in content and literary style.

### **Thesis Committee**

The student's departmental thesis committee is comprised of the thesis advisor and at least two additional members. The majority of the committee must be MU Graduate Faculty; in other words, one member of a three person committee may be an outside member. The outside member should be a subject matter expert and must be approved by the department. Each department determines the composition of the thesis committee and the roles of its members. The members of the committee should be available to the student for consultation and advisement.

### **Graduate Coordinator**

The graduate coordinator monitors thesis progress and ensures that the student is making acceptable progress on the thesis in a timely manner for the student's intended graduation.

### **Graduate and Professional Studies**

Graduate and Professional Studies oversees and implements all policies and procedures governing graduate theses. It publicizes and disseminates the articulation of these policies to the graduate community. Graduate and Professional Studies also sends the copies of the final thesis from the student out for binding. Bound copies are distributed to the library, the academic department and the student. Graduate and Professional Studies sends thesis information on a yearly basis to the Master's Theses Directories for categorization and publication in a directory which is distributed to college and university libraries across the United States and Canada.

## **IX. Final Preparation and Binding of the Thesis**

**It is imperative that you consult your research advisor to use the appropriate approved style guide for your discipline, and to follow it carefully and consistently. Style guides currently being used by departments include MLA, APA and Chicago.**

**Word Processing Aids:** Students are referred to their appropriate style guide for answers to questions related to word processing. Theses must be free of blemishes and typographical and grammatical errors. Regardless of the style guide followed, the student is expected to conform to appropriate citation forms.

**Pagination:** Every page in a thesis or research report should be assigned a number, although not every page number is printed. The initial page of any section of the thesis will have no page figure on it, but a number will be allowed for the pagination. For more complete directions, see the appropriate style guide for your discipline.

**Paper:** Millersville University requires that the thesis be double-spaced and printed on one side only of clean, white 8 ½ x 11 size paper. The paper for the original copy must be comparable to 20-lb. (weight or substance) bond which has a rag content of 50% or better. Second or third copies must be printed on paper of similar quality. Students should print three original copies on a letter quality or laser printer.

**Number of Copies:** Three copies of the thesis must be submitted to Graduate and Professional Studies. These should be presented in folders with the student's name lettered on each folder. The folders should also be marked "original copy," "first copy," and "second copy." The pages must be free of all smudges and blemishes.

**Binding:** Graduate and Professional Studies will arrange for the binding of the thesis. The cost of this process is the candidate's responsibility. The student will be sent an invoice for the cost of binding once the bound thesis is received in Graduate and Professional Studies. The cost must be paid before any copies will be released to the student from Graduate and Professional Studies.

**Abstract:** Three copies of an abstract of the thesis (300-500 words) must be prepared for inclusion with each copy of the thesis. A sample abstract page is included in this document. The abstract should be inserted into the thesis following the Approval Page.

## **X. Thesis Grading Policy**

Theses are evaluated by the student's thesis committee on the basis of H (Honors), P (Pass), F (Fail) or I (Incomplete). Requirements for receiving a grade of "H" are set individually by departments. Please speak with your advisor regarding departmental grading guidelines. An incomplete grade may be assigned to a thesis and you will have one year to complete the thesis and have the incomplete changed to an assigned grade by the department.

## **XI. Sample Documents**

The following sample documents should serve as templates for master's thesis processing and final preparation at Millersville University:

Sample Proposal Approval Sheet (Department requirements for proposal approval may vary)

Sample Title Page (First page of the thesis)

Sample Approval Page (To be inserted immediately following the "Title Page")

Sample Abstract Page (To be inserted immediately following the "Approval Page")

Thesis Examination Report

Millersville University  
Graduate and Professional Studies

**THESIS PROPOSAL APPROVAL FORM\*\***

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID #: \_\_\_\_\_

Degree: \_\_\_\_\_ Major Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Title: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\*Human Use Committee (IRB) chair approval (as required): \_\_\_\_\_

\*Animal Use Committee (IACUC) chair approval (as required): \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Proposal Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member

\*If IRB approval is required, the IRB protocol form (available on the IRB webpage) must be submitted with this form to Graduate and Professional Studies. If approval of IACUC is required, appropriate documentation and signature of IACUC chair must accompany this form.

\*\*Suggested accompaniments to this form are an Thesis Introduction/Overview, Statement of the Problem, Methods and Materials, Purpose of the Study and a Review of Related Literature. However, individual departments may have other requirements for approval of the proposal.

10/08 Distribution: Graduate Office/ Original - Advisor's Copy - Student's Copy

(Sample Title Page)

(Thesis Title)

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Millersville University of Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree  
of Master of Art/Education/Science

By (Student's Name)

(Date/Month & Year)

(Sample Approval Page to be inserted immediately following Title Page)

This Thesis for the Master of Education Degree by

John A. Smith

has been approved on behalf of the

Graduate School by

Thesis Committee:

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Research Advisor

---

Committee Member

---

Committee Member

(Create as many lines for committee members as necessary.)

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Date

**(NOTE TO STUDENT:** Three copies of this approval page must bear **original** signatures prior to submission to Graduate and Professional Studies.)  
(Sample Abstract Page to be inserted following Approval Page. Each copy of the thesis should have the abstract page with the student's (i.e. investigator's) original signature)

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

(INSERT THESIS TITLE)

By

(Student Name)

Millersville University, (Year)

Millersville, Pennsylvania

Directed by, (Advisor's Name)

Your Abstract should begin here, and begin with the STATEMENT OF PROBLEM followed by the SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION (300 words).

Signature of Investigator \_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Millersville University  
Graduate and Professional Studies

**THESIS EXAMINATION REPORT**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student I.D. #/ S.S.N.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dept.

699  
# of credits

\_\_\_\_\_  
s.h.

Date of Examination \_\_\_\_\_ Program \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Thesis \_\_\_\_\_

Action taken on Thesis:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Approved
- \_\_\_\_\_ Approved with revisions suggested by committee and to be checked by advisor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule a re-exam after corrections or revisions have been made
- \_\_\_\_\_ Failed (Specific reasons in writing should be attached)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please explain)

Names of Examining Committee:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor

5/09 Distribution: Graduate Office/ Original - Department Copy - Student's Copy

**\* Please note this is for notification of approval only, grade must be submitted via Banner web grading to appear officially on transcript.**