

Pittsburg State University Graduate School
Thesis Guide

Requirements and Guidelines
For the Preparation of a Master's Thesis

Approved by the Graduate Council
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Introduction

The Master's level graduate programs are structured to build on the knowledge and skill gained in a baccalaureate degree program. At the graduate level, students are expected to learn a mode of scholarly inquiry and to demonstrate their ability to conduct independent research. Because graduate education requires incorporation of a strong component of scholarly inquiry, the thesis, advanced practice, scholarly seminars, and creative activities provide a central scholarly core in a graduate program. The Graduate Council expects all graduate study to be conducted according to the highest professional standards and to provide knowledgeable contributions to the respective disciplines.

Policies Governing Writing a Thesis

Option I: Thesis

Students who select Option I, the Thesis option, are required to satisfactorily complete a minimum of 30 hours beyond the baccalaureate degree and to write and defend the thesis before the Graduate Faculty. All members of the thesis committee must sign the approval page for the thesis before it is considered approved.

The thesis must demonstrate the student's ability to clearly define a significant problem, conduct a complete and thorough investigation, organize and logically present data and to be able to draw defensible conclusions.

In the visual or performing arts, a master's thesis may take the form of a recital, concert, art exhibition, composition, play, audio/visual production, or other creative endeavor prepared according to departmental or program guidelines and approved by the Dean of Graduate School.

Thesis Manual

Each student is expected to use the PSU Thesis Manual as a guideline for the layout and design of the thesis. The thesis manual is available at the Graduate and Continuing Studies web site: <https://www.pittstate.edu/graduate/student-information.html>. The PSU Thesis Manual is considered the first authority for the technical aspects of the thesis. The thesis style selected by each department or program is the first authority on thesis format. Any department or program upon presenting a written copy of its planned program of deviation to the Dean of the Graduate School may take departures from the recommended style or format.

Thesis Steps/Forms

The steps/forms for the student completing a thesis are available on-line within GUS. After logging into GUS and selecting Graduate School from the menu, select Candidacy from the menu bar on the left. The Thesis Steps link has four screens including the Thesis Committee, Thesis/Research Proposal, Thesis Review, and Submission of Thesis for Publication.

Thesis Committee

Prior to the start of the thesis, each student is responsible for establishing a Thesis Committee. The thesis advisor acts as the chair of the committee and must have the designation of Graduate Teaching Faculty and may or may not be the student's academic advisor. In cooperation with the thesis advisor, the student must establish the committee of at least two other graduate faculty and/or graduate service faculty members, one of which is outside of the degree. The Thesis Committee may include an additional member who is a graduate research associate faculty. Once decided, the committee members should be listed for approval on the Thesis Committee online form, found online in the Graduate System.

Thesis Proposal

Each student is required to submit a thesis proposal for the review and approval from their thesis committee. This proposal should be attached on the Thesis/Research Proposal online form. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that their committee members approve the proposal online.

Research Involving Human Subjects

Federal policy requires that all research involving human subjects be approved by an Institutional Review Board to ensure that the rights and welfare of human subjects are properly protected. The Committee for the Protection of Human Research Subjects, designated by the Graduate Dean, must review all research dealing with human subjects conducted by Pittsburg State University faculty, staff, or students. The researcher is required to complete the Application for Initial Review of Research Using Human Subjects prior to any research being conducted. A copy of the approved application from the Committee must be submitted along with the draft of thesis to the Graduate and Continuing Studies Office.

Thesis Review

A rough draft of the thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School for technical review during the semester in which the student plans to graduate. Thesis should be submitted electronically through Digital Commons by the date given in the University's academic calendar for "Final day for first draft of thesis and Ed.S project."

Publication and Binding Fees

Each student is required to submit their final thesis electronically to Digital Commons. Submit a completed copyright agreement and a signed thesis approval sheet to Graduate School. Bound copies of theses can be ordered through Pittsburg State University Printing and Design Services.

Roles and Responsibilities

Student

The student selects Option I (thesis) during the completion of the student's plan of study or candidacy. The student is responsible for selecting a thesis advisor and a thesis topic. Once the thesis advisor has accepted the role, the student works with the advisor to establish a thesis committee. The student is responsible for completing the online steps/forms for their thesis, found under Thesis Steps on the Candidacy screen in the Graduate System in GUS. The student is also responsible for obtaining all signatures/approvals for each step/form.

Thesis Advisor

The thesis advisor is selected by the student, but must hold rank as Graduate Teaching Faculty at Pittsburg State University. The thesis advisor should be familiar with the student's work and should be in a field relevant to the topic of the thesis. When selecting the advisor, the student should be able to discuss possible topics of interest for the thesis as well as a tentative schedule for completion. The potential advisor must be able to commit the necessary time for guidance and be available during the semester the thesis will be submitted for approval. The thesis advisor provides advice and direction to the student on all matters relating to the thesis. The thesis advisor is the chair of the thesis committee and in consultation with the student, recommends committee members for the thesis committee. The advisor and the student complete and submit the Application for Initial Review of Research Using Human Subjects form prior to any research being conducted. The advisor coordinates the thesis defense and submits the results on the student's petition page online in the Graduate System.

Thesis Committee

The student selects the faculty thesis committee, with recommendations by the Thesis Advisor. Depending upon the department, either the thesis advisor or the faculty thesis committee approves the student's thesis proposal. The thesis committee makes recommendations and suggestions to the student on thesis content and format. The thesis committee conducts the thesis defense under the guidance of the thesis advisor and accepts or rejects the thesis. All members of the faculty thesis committee must sign all copies of the approval page of the approved thesis before the thesis and grade can be submitted to the Graduate and Continuing Studies Office.

Departmental Chair or Program Coordinator

Each degree program establishes, with their own Graduate Faculty, the discipline-specific thesis style and format guidelines in accordance with their departmental policies and procedures. Any deviations from the Pittsburg State University Thesis Manual must be submitted in writing to the Graduate Dean for approval. The faculty will also determine if a program coordinator or departmental chair will be the final authority on departmental decisions and approvals concerning student theses. This individual then approves the Thesis Committee online.

Graduate School Dean

The Dean of the Graduate School approves the thesis advisor and thesis committee in accordance with the Constitution and By-laws of the Graduate Faculty. The Dean also serves as the final authority for approval of the style and format of the thesis and establishes the calendar of timelines for all forms and the final thesis to be submitted. The Dean of the Graduate School will also act as a mediator if the faculty thesis committee cannot come to an agreement on the acceptance of a thesis.

Steps in Completing a Master's Thesis

**All forms are found in the Graduate System in GUS under Thesis Steps on the Candidacy screen.

The Graduate Student must:

- have Candidacy for Option I completed and approved.
- obtain and review a copy of the Pittsburg State University Thesis Manual, found at the Graduate School web site.
- select a Thesis Advisor.
- in consultation with the Thesis Advisor, complete the Thesis Committee and Thesis/Research Proposal online forms.
- verify the approval of the Thesis Committee members to proceed with the thesis. Committee members must approve the Thesis Proposal on the Thesis/Research Proposal online form. The student should speak with any member who has not yet approved the proposal online.
- complete the Application for Initial Review of Research Using Human Subjects prior to any research being conducted, if applicable.
- continue to work on writing the thesis in coordination with the Thesis Advisor.
- submit a draft of the thesis to each member of the Thesis Committee and to the Graduate and Continuing Studies office through Digital Commons prior to the Final day of the first draft of thesis, including a copy of the approved Application for Initial Review of Research Using Human Subjects.
- in consultation with the Thesis Advisor, schedule a meeting with the Thesis Committee for the defense of the thesis.
- review with the Thesis Advisor the expectations for defending the thesis.
- at the conclusion of the defense, obtain signatures on all of the Approval Pages (one for the electronic submission and one for each copy of the thesis to be bound). The approval page for the electronic submission must have original signatures of the committee in black ink.
- make any corrections/additions to the thesis.
- submit thesis electronically to Digital Commons before the Final Day for submission of Thesis as listed in the University Calendar.
- Every thesis copy must be identical.