MA Proposal and Final Thesis Defense

*see current Graduate Student Handbook on Department website for details on paperwork, page 16

Students should work with their thesis adviser to finalize their proposal. Once the adviser approves the draft, the proposal is sent to the entire thesis committee for review. Faculty are given a minimum of 3 weeks to read the document and give feedback, preferably in writing. The thesis committee should meet following this time period to discuss the proposal. The student is present at this meeting. This is not a formal defense; rather, it is an opportunity for committee members to give feedback to the student before beginning data collection. NOTE: this pre-defense meeting is a change from our previous policy.

Following the meeting, two documents are submitted to the DGS: (1) Thesis Outline and Record of Approval (signed by student and adviser), and Approval of MA Thesis Proposal (signed by student and all committee members, indicating approval of the proposal). The DGS forwards the thesis outline form to the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. The approval of MA thesis proposal form is maintained for internal department purposes solely. NOTE: the approval of MA thesis proposal form is new.

Final thesis defense: Students should work with their thesis adviser to finalize their thesis. Once the adviser approves the draft, the thesis is sent to the entire thesis committee for review. Faculty are given a minimum of 3 weeks to read the document and give feedback, preferably in writing. The committee should meet following this time period to discuss the thesis, and then decide whether it is defendable. The student is not present at this meeting. Only after all committee members agree that the thesis is defendable, can an oral defense be scheduled. NOTE: this pre-defense meeting is a change from our previous policy.

One of two outcomes is decided at the pre-defense meeting:

(1) The committee decides to move forward with the thesis defense; the student makes revisions required by the committee, preferably provided to the student in a written summary based on the discussion at the meeting. The advisor works with the committee to schedule a defense date.

OR

(2) The committee decides not to move forward with the defense; if this is the outcome, then the process restarts. The student will work with their adviser and resubmit to the committee a revised thesis. Ideally the student would provide the committee with a memo indicating the specific revisions (similar to a response memo for a manuscript) that were made in response to the committee’s concerns and suggestions. The committee will then have a minimum of 3 weeks to read the revised thesis and decide if this version warrants a defense. If the committee deems the thesis acceptable the advisor will work with the committee to schedule a defense date.

Following a successful defense, the Final Report with Recommendation is submitted to the DGS, who forwards it to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (signed by student and advisor; committee member names and signature are added in the comments section). Student and advisor also sign the thesis title page.

Defending the thesis and graduating in the same semester: If students wish to graduate the same term they defend their thesis, students must deliver a full draft of the written work to all committee members at least six weeks before the last day to defend in the semester in which they graduate. Failing to do so will not give committee members adequate time to read, comment, and approve moving forward with the thesis defense before the CLAS deadline. Keep in mind students often have some revisions following the oral defense.