



## **Thesis Information and Guidelines**

### **Scope**

This document covers information and material for all MA program thesis courses:

MENG 6940-Professional Project Thesis

MENG 6950-Creative Thesis Project

MENG 6960-Literature Thesis

### **Overview**

It is not required that you complete a thesis in order to complete your degree. All theses are rigorously researched, written to a standard that approaches publication quality, and require a public defense. Theses are completed as individual projects, and while your committee is there to support you, the research and writing is done independently and requires self-discipline. As such, you should only complete a thesis in your final semester in the program, and only after consultation with faculty members who could potentially serve on your committee. If you plan to pursue a terminal degree upon completion of your MA, you are encouraged to consider the thesis option, but it is not required.

All thesis projects must be a minimum of three (3) credit hours, and a maximum of six (6) credit hours except in rare cases that must be approved in advance by the graduate program director. If a thesis project is three (3) credit hours, all must be taken in a single term. A longer thesis can be taken all in one semester, or broken into two semesters as a 3 + 3 thesis.

Upon completion of your defense, the thesis committee will make one of four determinations:

- Accept your thesis as is, and assign a letter grade;
- Accept your thesis with minor corrections, and assign a provisional grade that will apply once the corrections are completed (typically within a week);
- Accept your thesis with major corrections, and assign a provisional grade that will apply once the corrections are completed (typically within a week);
- Not accept the thesis as is, and require a continuation to complete the major corrections in the following semester (you must register for the thesis continuation course).

### **Proposing Your Thesis**

During the semester(s) prior to your final term, you are encouraged to have informal discussions

with faculty members whose interests/expertise intersect in some way with your thesis idea. These faculty may serve on your committee, or may simply help advise you as you refine your thesis idea.

You are strongly encouraged to attend a Thesis Information session hosted by the MA program director.

You are strongly encouraged to look at previous thesis projects that are housed in the Stewart Library Archives to get a sense of past thesis projects.

You **MUST** meet with individual faculty members, provide them with at least a summary of your thesis, and request that they serve on your committee.

You **MUST** submit a thesis proposal form that includes your name and information, a proposed number of credit hours, the names and signatures or e-signatures of your thesis committee, a detailed summary of the thesis project, a preliminary bibliography for the thesis, and a proposed calendar for the thesis semester. The completed proposal must be submitted to the graduate program director at least one month prior to the start of the thesis semester.

### ***Composition of the Thesis Committee***

Your thesis committee will be composed of three individuals who possess the requisite qualifications (terminal degree in the field or a closely-related field) to be faculty in the MA-English program. At least two (2) of these individuals must be faculty members from the MA-English program. No more than one (1) of these individuals may be from another department at Weber State University, or from outside the University.

The thesis committee includes a chair and two readers. The chair will serve as your primary advisor on the thesis, and the readers will be secondary advisors. The chair is considered the “instructor of record” and is responsible for assigning the thesis a grade in Banner.

It is strongly recommended that your thesis committee provide you with diverse academic positions that intersect with your thesis topic. In other words, it is encouraged that your thesis committee represent more than one emphasis or area of interest within the MA-English program (creative writing, English education, linguistics, literature, rhetoric/writing).

It is the responsibility of faculty members to ensure that they serve on a number of thesis committees that represents an appropriate and accomplishable workload. The MA-English program recommends that you chair no more than one (1) thesis per semester, and serve on no more than two (2) thesis committees total in a given semester, though three (3) committees may be reasonable, depending upon your role on each committee.

### ***The Body of the Proposal and Bibliography***

The body of your thesis proposal should be a detailed summary of your thesis project. This should include a summary of the project itself, the genres that it will explore (for a creative project), the problem/issue that will be addressed (for a professional project), the

literary work(s) that will be studied and the critical/theoretical approaches that will be utilized (for a literary project), and the type(s) of research that will inform the project (for all sub-disciplines). Please note that it is expected, as a capstone to your studies, that your thesis will grow out of your previous work, and that research and writing that you have done for prior course work may be part of your thesis.

Please note that it is expected, as a capstone to your studies, that your preliminary bibliography for the thesis will include some works that you have previously consulted/studied, and that the total bibliography will be equivalent to the amount of reading you would complete during a course of equivalent credit hours. The bibliography should include primary and secondary sources. It is expected that creative project bibliographies will have mostly (or entirely) primary sources – published works that model forms, styles, and/or genres for the project – whereas bibliographies for other projects are likely to have significantly more secondary sources, as such there is no minimum requirement for number of sources, only that the amount of reading be equivalent to a course of the same number of credit hours.

The *completed* thesis proposal should be submitted to the MA-English program director at least one (1) month prior to the semester during which the thesis will occur. Once approved by the director, the program's administrative specialist will create the course and send you the CRN for registration purposes.

*The MA-English program director is available to advise students on thesis ideas, proposals, and committees prior to submission.*

## **The Thesis Semester**

### ***Meetings with your Committee***

You must schedule a meeting with your committee by the third Monday of the semester. At this first meeting, you should go over your proposal in more detail, including any work you have completed since the proposal. You should present your proposed calendar to the committee, which should include completion dates for readings, drafts/portions of drafts, and the defense date/time. Once the defense date has been set, either you or your chair (decide cooperatively) should contact the MA-English administrative specialist with the date/time. They will create a calendar invite for you and your committee that you can also share with family/friends, and reserve a room. The defense date should be in the final full week of classes at the latest, providing time to make corrections before semester grades are due.

Throughout the semester, you and your committee must meet a minimum of three times: the preliminary meeting detailed above, a check-in sometime around the middle of the semester, and for your defense. Additional meetings may be initiated by you, your chair, or one of your readers, and should be up to you to work out cooperatively. Every student, and every thesis, is different. Some will thrive working independently while others need more guidance. So please make your voice heard with your committee and make sure your educational needs are being

met. Additional consultations can happen via email, as well (for example: sharing a portion of writing for feedback).

Please note: anything described as a meeting above can be completed in-person, via Zoom, or some combination of the two.

### ***Thesis Content***

Regardless of the thesis number, or the sub-discipline within which your thesis falls, every thesis is expected to approach the quality of a peer-reviewed or equivalent publication in the field.

#### **MENG 6950-Creative Thesis Projects**

##### ***Critical Introduction***

All creative thesis projects must include a critical introduction of 10-12 pages (approximately 2500-3000 words). The critical introduction should be written in academic prose, and include citation of any works referenced in an agreed-upon style. Broadly speaking, the intent of the critical introduction is to help you as a writer focus on the literary, historical, and/or theoretical context(s) of your creative work. You should place your work in conversation with the work(s) of other writers, styles, genres, and/or literary trends – both those that you acknowledge as influences, as well as those which your work pushes back against.

The critical introduction will help both you as a writer and your readers understand your work from an intellectual perspective. Included in the critical introduction may be some reflection on the process you followed to imagine, create, and polish your writing. At the same time, the critical introduction should be essentially an outward-looking work; that is less a reflection on your own creative process and more an engagement with the literary, historical, stylistic, generic, and/or theoretical context(s) in which your writing is situated.

##### ***Poetry Thesis Projects***

In addition to the critical introduction described above, a 3-credit hour poetry thesis should include 20-25 poems or pages of poetry (depending upon formatting, etc.). Additional credit hours will require an additional number of poems/pages of poetry, with a 6-credit hour thesis requiring 40-50 poems/pages of poetry.

##### ***Fiction and Creative Non-Fiction Projects***

In addition to the critical introduction described above, a 3-credit hour prose thesis should include 35-40 pages of finished work. Additional credit hours will require additional pages, with a 6-credit hour thesis requiring 70-80 pages of finished work.

#### **MENG 6960-Literature Thesis**

Literature theses should be written in academic prose, adhering to the stylistic guidelines of the discipline as modeled in peer-reviewed publications. Three (3) credit theses should be approximately 6000-7000 words in length including in-text references and works

cited/bibliography. The thesis should be formatted consistently using whichever style guide is agreed upon with the committee.

### **MENG 6940-Professional Project Thesis**

Generally speaking, these theses will fall into either the education or rhetoric and writing (including technical writing) sub-disciplines. Theses should address a specific problem/issue in the field, be written in academic prose as appropriate to the area, and adhere to the stylistic conventions of the sub-discipline. As some projects may include components that are not traditional forms of writing, such as the creation of teaching lessons/units/modules/materials, translations of works, charts/graphs, etc., the workload should be the equivalent to that of a publication in the specific sub-discipline -or- the equivalent of 6000-7000 words in length. This may include a critical introduction to the project that is written in academic prose, utilizes secondary research in a professional manner, and is 10-12 pages (or 2500-3000 words) in length. The thesis should be formatted consistently using whichever style guide is most appropriate to the sub-discipline.

### ***The Defense***

You should set the date, time, and mode (in-person, virtual, both) of your defense at your first meeting with your committee. Either you or your chair (decide cooperatively) should provide this information to the MA program administrative specialist, who will create a shareable calendar invite, and schedule a room for your defense. Defenses will be scheduled for at least one hour.

Thesis committee chairs, as the instructor of record on the thesis, are responsible for discussing the quality of the drafts of the thesis with the student. Chairs: please make sure that student work is ready to be defended, and if not, have a conversation about a thesis continuation. Please also make sure that students have a sense of the quality/difficulty of the questions that will be asked at the defense so that they know they need to prepare.

The exact structure of your defense is up to you and your thesis chair: you must discuss and collaborate on this. You should expect, at a minimum, to provide the committee and auditors with a brief introduction to your thesis, a brief explanation of your goals in pursuing this thesis and perhaps a self-evaluation of whether or not you met these goals, and then a summary of the thesis itself – this will vary depending upon the type of thesis, but it can include your main argument and a summary of supporting points, a limited reading of your creative work, or a presentation of your professional product. In all, your presentation should be concise, limited to approximately 10-15 minutes of the defense.

The bulk of the defense should be questions posed by the thesis committee after a detailed reading of your thesis. The committee can open the question period to auditors, as well, so please discuss this ahead of time with your chair.

After the presentation and questions, you and any auditors will be dismissed while the committee deliberates. Once it has made its decision, the committee will call you back into the room without auditors and present you with their decision. It will be up to you to announce this to auditors, if you wish to do so. To reiterate, the committee will make one of these four determinations at the defense:

- Accept your thesis as is, and assign a letter grade;
- Accept your thesis with minor corrections, and assign a provisional grade that will apply once the corrections are completed (typically within a week);
- Accept your thesis with major corrections, and assign a provisional grade that will apply once the corrections are completed (typically within a week);
- Not accept the thesis as is and require a continuation to complete the major corrections in the following semester (you must register for the thesis continuation course).

If the committee requires any corrections, they will provide you with this information in writing, either at the defense or shortly thereafter, as well as a deadline for completing the corrections. Additionally, the letter grade will be provided either at the defense, or if it is contingent upon completion of corrections, in writing once the corrections have been submitted to the chair. If an accepted thesis requires major corrections that will require more than the remainder of the semester to complete, the thesis continuation course may be required.

You must bring a copy of the thesis cover page, and have the members of the committee sign this document. It will be the first page of your thesis when you submit it to the University archives.

Auditors may include your colleagues in the program and/or other graduate programs, faculty from the program and/or the department (or other departments), friends, and family. If you have a large number of guests you are planning to invite to your defense, please make that clear to the program administrative specialist so that a room can be reserved that will accommodate.

### *After the Defense*

You must submit any required corrections to your chair and/or committee within the remaining time of the semester. Once the thesis has been accepted, the chair must input the agreed-upon grade into Banner. Chairs and committee members should collaborate on how they will determine the grade, but there must be a clear methodology that they have agreed upon in advance of the defense. Students must then submit their final copy to the university archivist. If this is a relatively simple process (for example, a digital file such as a Word document or PDF), it can be emailed to [archives@weber.edu](mailto:archives@weber.edu). If the material is more complicated, involves websites, videos, etc., please reach out to the archivist via the same email to discuss the best process.

In addition to inputting the thesis grade in Banner, chairs must also collect learning outcome assessments from each of the committee members. This can all be done on one form, or it can be done separately. The forms will be sent to committee members by the graduate program director at the beginning of the thesis semester. The learning outcome assessment is for program

assessment purposes. These should be submitted to the MA program director or administrative specialist by the final grade deadline of the given semester.