Handbook for English M. A. Thesis Guidelines

Lynchburg College

Edition III

Revised October 2011

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DEADLINES FOR PROSPECTUS and THESIS
Note on summer thesis

Prospectus Deadlines:

- Topic is discussed with Graduate Director at least 4 weeks before classes end during the pre-699 semester.
- Draft is due to Advisor at least 2 weeks before classes end during the pre-699 semester.
- Prospectus is approved by Advisor and turned in to 699 professor by the end of the first week of classes during the 699 semester.

Thesis Deadlines:

- Defense deadline: 2 weeks before the last day of classes. Paper copies delivered to Committee members at least one week prior.
- Thesis revision (if required) approval deadline: by last class day.
- Approved final materials (copy, PDF, check for binding and Thesis completion form): by last day of the Exam period.

These dates may be slightly extended if so advised by the Thesis Advisor and with the permission of the Graduate Director, but a student should NOT expect approval.

Academic Calendar, ENGL 699, and Thesis Schedule for 2011-12
(Students planning for subsequent years can determine deadline dates by matching the above rules with the current academic calendar)

Aug 25- first class day
Nov 28- last day for Thesis defense
Dec 9- last class day-- any revisions completed and approved
Dec 16- last exam day-- final thesis materials completed and approved

Jan 16- first class day
April 17- last day for Thesis defense
May 1- last class day-- any revisions completed and approved
May 8- last exam day-- final thesis materials completed and approved
May 12- Commencement
Aug 17- August degree granted date.

Summer thesis work and graduation:

A student may request but cannot expect an Advisor and Committee to agree to 699 coursework and a Defense in the summer. A student must enroll in 699 as a Summer course in order to defend and graduate in August. The thesis is defended at least one week before the August Degree Granted Date; all final materials are approved and turned in by the Degree Granted Date. The Advisor may set earlier required dates.

BASIC TIMELINE FOR THE THESIS

Prior to enrollment in ENGL 699:

- Become familiar with the general criteria and process of thesis development
- Select an Advisor: semester prior to taking 699
- Select a Committee: semester prior to taking 699
- Enroll in English 699
- Prospectus Draft due to Advisor 2 weeks before end of term

Prospectus in 699 Semester:

- Advisor-approved Prospectus due to 699 professor first week of 699 class
- Sign out Format Template Sheet
- Fully approved prospectus due to 699 professor 2 weeks into term

Devise writing/revision schedule with Advisor: 2 weeks into term

- First draft of thesis due to Advisor no later than midterm
- Paper and electronic copies due to committee no later than 1 week prior to defense

Thesis Defense: 2 weeks prior to last day of classes

Completed Revisions and 3 copies of Title Pages: due last day of classes.

(Note: The 3 Title Pages must be on at least 50% rag bond or cotton paper.)

Pass Format Check: by last day of exam period

Final Thesis Materials: due last day of exam period

- Electronic PDF of thesis
- 1 hard copy of thesis (on plain paper)
- Thesis completion form
- Check for binding costs
- Return Format Template Sheet

GENERAL OUTLINES FOR THE THESIS PROCESS

The procedure which must be followed in order to receive thesis credit is spelled out with some specificity in this Handbook, but below is a summary of the procedure to be followed.

1. A general thesis topic is developed.

2. An appropriate Advisor and two Readers to serve on the Thesis Committee are identified in conjunction with the Graduate Director.

3. The proposed Advisor and Readers agree to supervise the thesis process.

4. With the assistance of the Advisor, the student refines the thesis topic.

5. A thesis prospectus is completed and submitted for approval.

6. The student is enrolled in ENGL 699 in the term in which the thesis is defended.

7. The first draft of the thesis is in the hands of the Advisor no later than mid-term of the semester in which the student intends to defend and graduate. The defense copy is submitted to the full committee via both paper and email at least one week prior to the defense.

8. The Candidate defends the thesis orally before the committee at a time scheduled by the Advisor and Readers. The defense must be scheduled so as to allow time for the student to make further changes in the thesis before the deadline for submission of the thesis.

9. The Candidate completes any required revisions.

10. The thesis passes format check. The Final Thesis Materials are submitted to the 699 Professor and the Administrative Assistant by the deadlines.

RULES AND PROCEDURES

1. Select a Thesis Advisor and Readers

The student chooses an Advisor and two Readers, in consultation with the Graduate Director. The Advisor serves as Chair of the Thesis Committee and is the primary faculty mentor the student consults over the course of writing the thesis. The Advisor and Readers are chosen based on the topic of the thesis.

The two Readers are members of the thesis committee. One may be faculty in a department outside of English, in a field that is closely related to the thesis topic. One may be from outside Lynchburg College. While the committee members may be described at times as "Reader 1" and "Reader 2," their roles are the same and they are to receive materials for approval simultaneously. These members read the prospectus, the thesis, and evaluate the thesis following the thesis defense.

2. Enroll in ENGL 699

Course Description: ENGL 699: Research and Thesis is a semester-long course that provides students the opportunity to do extensive research on a topic of particular interest, culminating in the writing and defense of a thesis, under supervision of a faculty advisor. (This course may be repeated for credit.)

3. Prospectus

The student must work with the Advisor in the semester prior to taking 699 in order to develop the thesis topic. The student must submit a draft of a 1-2 page proposal plus bibliography to the Advisor for approval at least two weeks before classes end in the pre-699 semester. The prospectus should include the focus of the thesis, its methodology, any questions it intends to investigate, its relevance to literature and language studies, its organization (such as chapter outlines) and a bibliography. The prospectus may suggest some conclusions that the thesis will reach.

By the first week of class in the 699 semester, the student should have completed a prospectus that meets with the Advisor's approval. The student obtains the Advisor's signature on a paper copy of the prospectus, using the Prospectus Form. The Advisor in turn gives the prospectus to the 699 professor, who distributes it to the committee. Committee approval and signatures should be obtained by 2 weeks into classes of the 699 semester.

The Advisor may also require that you email an electronic copy of the prospectus to facilitate committee approval.

4. Contact the 699 professor in the first week of classes

In the first week of classes, students should be ready to meet with the 699 professor, according to how the professor wishes to schedule the meeting. Students will sign out a copy of the Thesis Format Template (to be signed back in after successful final format check), and will have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss concerns with the 699 professor.

5. Working with the Thesis Advisor and Committee

The Advisor is the primary resource for mentorship, directions, and suggestions. Therefore, the Advisor and the student should create a timetable for the submission of drafts. The expectation is that the Advisor will return the draft with comments and suggestions to the student within two weeks. While the Advisor is responsible for reading all drafts, the committee members are not.

The student is responsible for maintaining contact with the Advisor and committee throughout the writing of the thesis.

6. The Defense Copy of the thesis

At least one week prior to the scheduled defense date, the student must provide the full committee with a paper and electronic copy of the completed thesis. The defendable copy is not a rough draft, but it may still require some revisions. Most theses require at least minor revisions based on suggestions and requirements which the committee develops during the thesis defense. Therefore, the student should submit the defendable copy to the committee as a final copy, but must be prepared to complete some revisions after the defense and have them approved in time to complete all final thesis materials.

7. Scheduling the Defense

The Candidate should contact committee members to schedule the date, time, and room of the defense so that it is arranged at least 2 weeks prior to the defense. The SHUSS Administrative Assistant can provide a copy of faculty schedules and help reserve a room. Allow ample time to contact faculty and coordinate the date and time.

8. Defending the thesis

Each thesis must be successfully defended by the student.

The defense of the thesis gives the student and the committee another opportunity to discuss the thesis, and for the committee to offer suggestions for emendations to the thesis.

The format of the oral defense is up to the Advisor and the Candidate for the Master's degree. Usually the student begins with initial remarks about the origin of the project, methodologies used, and findings. This defense should be an intellectually rewarding conversation.

After the student has completed his/her oral defense, the Advisor and committee will determine the thesis project grade of Pass, Pass with Distinction, or Fail.

At the defense, or by the last class day, the student should give the 699 professor 3 copies of the title/ signature page. The committee will sign after any required revisions are approved by the Thesis Advisor.

9. Final copies of thesis

Successful completion of revisions, submission of all materials, and payment for binding the thesis by the required deadline are required for graduation.

The student must ensure the thesis receives approval for the final copies and materials. Take care to do these steps well and on time.

The Format Check: the thesis must conform to the required format. The student must present the complete thesis each and every time the format check is required until approval is received. **USE the transparency template--**the Administrative Assistant will check every single page of your thesis by applying this template onto the page. (Also, see last page of these Guidelines if you have a paper copy, or obtain a paper copy from the 699 professor.) Students should take care to follow instructions so they do not have to repeatedly print their thesis and ask for assistance to pass the format check. Once the format check is complete, the student prepares the PDF file and the final hard copy. NOTE: since the Title Pages are submitted separately, the PDF file and the final hard copy of the thesis should begin with the Table of Contents page of the thesis.

Students requiring assistance converting their correctly-formatted thesis into a PDF file should contact ITR.

One PDF and one hard-copy of the thesis, including title/ signature page, must be submitted to the 699 professor and the administrative assistant no later than the last day of the exam period for the semester. The Thesis Completion form must be submitted to the Graduate Director. At the same time, the student must provide the check for binding costs ($90.00 made out to Lynchburg College if the student wants a copy; $60.00 if the student does not want a bound copy for him/herself). The hard copy of the thesis may be printed on plain white paper; **however, the 3 copies of the title/ signature page must be at least 50% rag bond or cotton paper.** Students submitting the required materials after that deadline may not be approved for graduation until the subsequent term.

The program takes care of having your thesis professionally printed and bound; copies are placed in the Lynchburg College Library and the SHUSS Dean's Office.

GENERAL CRITERIA FOR THE THESIS

Overview: The Master's thesis and its defense are intended to be the culmination of the M.A. Candidate's graduate studies in English. They give the Candidate the opportunity to demonstrate his/her expertise as a scholar and writer.

A Master's thesis should be an original investigation, demonstrate a high level of scholarship, and reflect the student's familiarity with the methods of research and relevant literature in the chosen field of concentration.

Overall, the methodology and analytical scope of a thesis are both deeper and broader than a paper written for a course. The Master's thesis—including the entire process of its research, writing, and oral defense—may serve as a starter to further opportunities, including publication, graduate work in a Ph.D. program in English or a closely-related field, enhanced teaching or research in an area of specialization, or other professional aims.

The thesis should be guided by the following general criteria:

Focus: Relevance to research problem and argument.

It is crucial that the thesis retain a focus on the stated research problem and the proposed argument. The thesis should develop clear original arguments, establish their relation to the question(s) being posed or problems(s) being explored, and sustain a focused development of the argument throughout the thesis.

Reading: Thorough and critical use of a wide range of literature, language studies, and theories as they refer to the topic.

The student should clearly provide evidence of the range of relevant literature, the care taken in selecting the texts relevant to the thesis topic, efforts made to find sources independently, and follow up references. The student should demonstrate an excellent understanding of the literature, theories, and sources used.

Research: Adequacy of research design and execution, consistency of interpretation.

Examiners will scrutinize the research design, its appropriateness for the thesis, and the adequacy of its execution. The information presented in the thesis must be consistent with and support the arguments and interpretation put forward.

Argument: The presentation of a thesis and its reasoned defense.

The thesis develops a coherently organized argument. In the process, the thesis presents analysis in addition to description. The thesis clearly formulates a position on the topic and supports it; this support includes dealing with arguments against as well as for this position.

It is essential that the thesis develops an independent position in relation to the relevant literature. The thesis must clearly demonstrate a depth and breadth beyond a mere literature

review. To achieve this goal, the student must establish a clear relation between the literature and the research; furthermore, the student should draw conclusions and make connections not immediately evident in the existing literature itself.

Presentation: Competence in mechanics of essay writing and expression.

Overall, the writing must demonstrate a high level of professional competency. The presentation of citations and bibliography must be impeccable. As such, the citations and bibliography must accurately represent all sources and readings, and conform to the citation format relevant to the thesis topic.

Abstract: An accurate abstract is required. Be sure to revise the abstract when you are finished with your thesis if your thesis changed during the process of your research and writing.

Length: Note that ordinarily the thesis is at least 50 pages long, excluding acknowledgements, title page, abstract, foot/endnotes, and bibliography.

Style and Format of the Thesis:

Writing style should be clear and concise, and attention must be paid to word choice, punctuation, and structure.

Except in special circumstances, students should follow the latest edition of the *MLA Guide to Scholarly Publishing [currently the 3rd Edition]*.

Format (outline, headings, margins, etc.) should correspond to the MLA Guide except when in conflict with thesis regulations of the English Graduate Program.

The *MLA Guide* is available in the library, and is often a required text for ENGL 606. Purchase is recommended so that the student has a personal copy available at all times when working on the text of the thesis.

GUIDELINES FOR THE HYBRID CREATIVE/SCHOLARLY THESIS

A student who accomplishes a high degree of proficiency in creative writing during coursework may apply for this option, which consists of two parts: a scholarly section and a body of original creative writing.

The scholarly section presents literary and critical sources that contextualize and inform the creative writing. A typical thesis includes analysis of literary works that are models for the students' writing. While the section may investigate issues especially significant to craft of writing, such as the strategic use of point of view in fiction or forms in poetry, the analysis is as sophisticated and rigorous as a chapter in a critical thesis. Ordinarily this section is 25 to 40 pages (20 pages is the minimum).

In the creative section, the poetry and/or prose demonstrates intellectual and imaginative depth, strategic use of techniques specific to the genre(s), and overall complexity, order, detail, and polish that typically result from multiple revisions. The writing is literary (not formulaic or journalistic). The work must be finished; if part of a longer work (such as a novel or nonfiction book), the sections presented must stand alone as complete works.

The length for the creative section varies according to what is appropriate for the given genre and in relation to the scholarly section, ordinarily 30 to 80 pages of prose; or 25 to 40 pages of poetry, or a proportionate combination of the two. (20 pages of creative writing is the minimum.) Note: The creative writing will have been developed during the M. A. program (not be work developed during a B.A. or other program).

The main text of the thesis must be at least 50 pages.

Application and Prospectus: An application should be submitted three weeks after courses begin in the semester preceding the thesis. Three criteria should be met for a creative thesis to be approved. 1. The student's writing shows superior accomplishment in terms of craft and originality. 2. The student has a substantial body of work that merits further development (for example, the student has revised and developed 20 pages of prose or 20 poems). 3. The student possesses or is clearly developing a sound knowledge of literature that aptly contextualizes his/her writing.

The application consists of a creative writing sample of at least 10 poems or 15 pages of prose; a summary (1-3 pages) of the creative writing and of the scholarly chapter. If approved, the applicant proceeds to the prospectus, which is the summary plus a bibliography.

The application will be judged by two faculty members: the Graduate Director and the proposed Advisor. If the Graduate Director is the Advisor, then she/he will consult one other faculty.

EVALUATING THE THESIS

At the thesis defense, the examining committee will award the thesis a grade of PASS, PASS WITH DISTINCTION, or FAILED. Explanation of the thesis grades are as follows:

Pass

A thesis is awarded a Pass if the committee votes that it is acceptable pending minor or no revisions.

Revisions may include minor modifications to the thesis, editorial revisions, or the correction of typographical or grammatical errors. The Advisor will clearly instruct the Candidate which changes are required before the thesis can be accepted. A list of the required revisions and a deadline must be provided by the Advisor to the Candidate. The Candidate's revisions must be accepted by the Advisor.

Pass with Distinction

A thesis is awarded a Pass with Distinction if no revisions, or only very minor typographical revisions, are required, and the committee votes that the thesis merits this honor due to its superlative quality. If a thesis is Passed with Distinction, the title pages of the bound copies of the thesis will be stamped to reflect the honor. Also, it is customary for a recipient to note this accomplishment on a C.V.

Failed

A thesis will be failed if it is unacceptable to the discipline even with substantive revisions. If the committee returns two or more votes showing failure, the committee will advise the student be required to withdraw on academic grounds. The student will be notified of the result immediately by the Advisor. The student may have an opportunity to be re-admitted, re-enroll in this course, re-do the thesis, or develop a new thesis. A grade of U (Unsatisfactory) will be assigned unless the student arranges otherwise with the approval of the Advisor and Director of the Graduate Program.

AFTER COMPLETING 699 AND/ OR THE THESIS

Thesis Completion Form;
Register each semester during thesis work or **take a leave of absence;**
Grades for English 699

- **When all thesis materials are approved,** students must fill out and submit the current M. A. Thesis Completion Form to the M. A. Program Director. Download the current form from Graduate Resources on Moodle. Note that approval for graduation will only occur when a student has met all requirements, has a minimum of 36 credits, and has verification from the program chair to the graduate studies office that the thesis has been successfully completed. Graduate Studies will subsequently notify the Registrar's Office that requirements have been met.
- **Students who do not complete the thesis** will ordinarily register for 699 again in the subsequent semester in order to work toward degree completion. Students must be enrolled during the semester of graduation.
- **Required leave of absence form:** If a student who does not complete the thesis takes a semester off from registering for coursework, he/she needs to request a formal Leave of Absence before the start of the semester for which he/she will be on leave. Otherwise, the student will have to re-apply for re-admittance before s/he can register and re-enroll in 699. Note: The "Leave of Absence" form and "Re-admittance" form are on the Graduate Resources Moodle site (or available from the Graduate Studies office if student is not enrolled and thus does not have access to Moodle).
- **Grading:** The class will be closed out each semester with a final grade: S, if satisfactory progress made though completion not achieved; W, if student for various reasons never was able to work toward completion but should not be penalized; and U, if unsatisfactory is the most accurate grade. *(Note: U counts in GPA)*. The evaluation of the thesis as Pass with Distinction, Pass, or Fail will not be reflected in the grade for ENGL 699.
- English 699 may be repeated for credit (however, only 3 hours count toward the 36-hours of required coursework)

GUIDELINES FOR FINAL THESIS MATERIALS

- 3 approved copies of the Title Page, **printed on at least 50% rag bond or cotton paper,** are required.
- One print copy on plain white paper and one electronically-submitted PDF of the thesis are required.
- **On every page, minimum clear margins are required**; see the note about page numbers below: 1 inch right, top, and bottom margins and 1.5 inch left margin. These are minimum margins; margins may be larger but not smaller than these measurements on the finished documents as submitted. We suggest setting margins larger than what is required (1.1 inches for the right, top, and bottom margins, and 1.6 inches for the left margin, for instance) to account for page shifting and print expansion during photocopying. **Page numbers may appear above or below the text, but they must be printed so that the margins remain clear on every page (preferred placement of page number is ½ to ¾ inch from bottom of page)**. Printing must be on only one side of the page. (See last page of the paper copy of this handbook for dimension guide).
- Type for all text in the thesis body must be 12-point Times New Roman. Footnotes, figures, and tables may be 10-point font and/or single-spaced. Long quotations included with the body of the text must be 12-point font but may be single-spaced, if the student's committee and department find that acceptable; the same is true for the reference list. The appendices do not have a font size or spacing requirement. **Every page submitted must meet the margin requirements**.
- The student's name and the correct degree must exactly agree on the title page and the approval page. The title does not appear on the Abstract. The title must exactly agree everywhere that it appears.
- Submit the thesis hard copy in a manila envelope. The envelope must be large enough to hold the thesis without damage to the pages. On the front of the envelope, tape a photocopy of the title page.

Prospectus for M.A. Thesis Form:

PROSPECTUS FOR M.A. THESIS

Student: _____ Date: _____

Title of Prospectus: _____

_____

_____

Committee signatures:

Thesis Advisor: _____ Date: _____

Committee: _____ Date: _____

Committee: _____ Date: _____

Graduate Director: _____ Date: _____

THESIS TITLE IN CAPS DOUBLE-SPACED

NO LINE EXCEEDING

5 INCHES

by

Jane Doe

Submitted In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English

in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Lynchburg College

Month Year

_____

type and center name of Thesis Advisor: Dr. Albert Einstein
type and center Professor of Department: Professor of English

_____ _____

for these lines: type and center name of each Reader: Dr. Nichole Sanders
type and center Professor of Department: Professor of History

_____

type this here: Dr. Edward Polloway
Dean of Graduate Studies

Sample page for formatting:

THE GREEN IN THE EGGS AND HAM:

AN ECOCRITICAL EXAMINATION OF CYNICISM AND HOPE

IN THE WORKS OF DR. SUESS

by

Benjamin Compson

Submitted In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English

in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Lynchburg College

May 2011

_____
Dr. Geoffrey Chaucer
Professor of English

_____
Dr. Mungo Park
Professor of History

_____
Prof. Emma Bovary, M.F.A.
Professor of English

_____
Dr. Edward Polloway
Dean of Graduate Studies

[This Table of Contents covers many possible headings, including optional sections. Use only the headings that apply to your thesis/project or insert your own headings.]

Sample:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

Dedication …….....……#

Acknowledgments ……...……#

Abstract……..……. #

Introduction……...……...#

Chapters….…….....…….……#

Appendix……..#

Works Cited……..……#

DEDICATION

[Optional; insert your dedication here, if applicable.]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

[Optional; insert your acknowledgements here, if applicable.]

ABSTRACT

*[**Required**; insert text of abstract here.]*

INTRODUCTION

[*Insert text here.]*

CHAPTER TITLE

[Insert text here.]

APPENDIX *[or]* APPENDICES

[Add appendix or appendices following this page. Note: If you have more than one appendix, label them APPENDIX A, B, etc. and begin each on a new page. The title of each appendix must be listed in the Table of Contents exactly as it appears on the appendix itself. Be sure to number each page of each appendix consecutively.]

WORKS CITED

[Insert your source documentation here in conjunction with the relevant citation guide].

Some Do’s and Don’ts Regarding Theses

DO’S

_DO read these Guidelines and adhere to the deadlines.
_DO make appointments well in advance of deadlines and keep them. Doing so is considerate of your Advisor and fellow students.
_ DO USE THE TEMPLATE for your final thesis format. Sign out this template from 699 professor or Administrative Assistant. A graphic version of basic formatting is at the back of these guidelines.
_DO arrange for a review of a draft of your text for format consideration at least 3 weeks prior to the deadline for final materials.
_DO be prepared to pay the required fee by check at the final appointment.
_DO plan ahead to allow for busy schedules of faculty and the Administrative Assistant.
_DO fill out and turn in the Thesis Completion Form to the Program Director as soon as all final materials are approved.

DON’TS

_DON’T make final copies of your title pages and manuscript until the format is approved.
_DON’T rely on a previous thesis as a guide for style; use an approved style manual in conjunction with these guidelines.
_DON’T wait until the last minute to arrange for a review and final appointment to submit your text.
_DON’T expect the Graduate Program to make copies of your text.
_DON’T forget that guidelines can change from one year to the next. Make sure you have the latest release of the guidelines for completing your thesis.
_DON'T forget to be respectful of the time and workload of the faculty, and of the Administrative Assistant who helps you with the final materials.