

Monmouth University
Department of English
Master of Arts in English

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THESIS DEVELOPMENT AND THESIS WRITING

General Information

The MA Thesis constitutes the capstone to the student's academic work in the English MA program, and it should represent the student's strongest scholarly and critical work.

The MA thesis may extend course work or a written project completed in a previous MA-level course, or may be undertaken in a new area of study. The completed thesis should not be simply a review of prior scholarship, but should undertake to discover and present original research (i.e., synthesis or extension of prior scholarly work), such that it can be used as a writing sample in a student's application for subsequent graduate study or form the basis for a conference presentation. If a thesis is exceptional, the thesis advisor may recommend that the student revise the paper for publication in an academic journal.

Students will register for two semesters of independent course work: Thesis Development, and Thesis Writing, normally in consecutive semesters and normally during Fall/Spring or Spring/Fall. At the discretion of the thesis director and second reader, a student may register for Thesis Development during the summer. In this case, the student must expect to spend the full twelve weeks working on the thesis. Students may not register for Thesis Writing in the summer.

Preparing and Registering for Thesis Development

The Thesis will be written under the supervision of a full-time faculty member in the English Department with additional guidance from a Second Reader. Either the Thesis Advisor or the Second Reader must be a member of the Graduate Faculty. In the semester before the student wishes to begin Thesis Development, the student must identify the Thesis Director and Second Reader, consult with the Graduate Program Director about the intent to begin work, and begin working with the Director and Second Reader to set out the direction and scope of the topic.

Before registering for Thesis Development, the student must submit a 500-word Proposal describing the project's nature, scope, critical orientation, methodology, and goals and providing a brief bibliography (approximately five items) of key primary and secondary sources. The student should consult with the Thesis Director and the Second Reader in preparing the Proposal. Preparation of the Proposal is not a formality, but a substantive part of the intellectual process of developing a project of appropriate focus and scope.

Registration for Thesis Development is accomplished by printing the Thesis Application/Registration form from the Registration and Records Adobe Print Forms page and submitting the completed form to the Graduate Program Director with the attached Proposal as approved by the Director and Second Reader.

Thesis Development

The student should expect to meet with the Thesis Director on a regular basis during Thesis Development and Thesis Writing. Early in each semester, the student should prepare a schedule of work to be completed and, with the Director, a schedule of meeting dates.

During the semester of registration for Thesis Development, the student must complete an Annotated Bibliography of at least 25 items accompanied by a ten-page Critical Essay on the bibliographic research.

Each item in the Annotated Bibliography should include one to two substantial paragraphs of commentary, including summary as well as comments on how the item contributes to the project and how items relate to other items in the bibliography. The entire Annotated Bibliography will normally run to about 25 pages.

In the Critical Essay, the student should articulate a position or thesis in relation to the scholarly materials investigated and assembled in the preparation of the Annotated Bibliography – in other words, the student should “enter the critical conversation.” This should not simply be a review of the literature. This essay may be adapted as a portion of the Thesis.

A first complete draft of the Annotated Bibliography and Critical Essay should be submitted in the seventh week of the semester to allow time for both Director and Second Reader to comment and to allow revision before the end of the semester. The material submitted must earn a grade of B or higher, as agreed upon by the Thesis Advisor and the Second Reader.

NOTE: *Students must understand that the Thesis Director and Second Reader cannot be expected to read drafts of the Annotated Bibliography and Critical Essay, or of the Thesis, in rushed fashion over a weekend. Faculty need ample time to read and comment on the materials, and are simultaneously busy with other teaching, service, and research commitments.*

Thesis Writing

Students may register for Thesis Writing after Thesis Development has been completed and a grade of B or higher has been submitted. Registration for Thesis Writing uses the

same adobe print form as registration for Thesis Development, but the Proposal need not be attached.

A complete draft of the Thesis should be submitted no later than the seventh week of the semester to allow feedback from the first and second readers with ample time for revision before the defense.

The completed Thesis should be a minimum of 9,000 words long (about 35 pages), exclusive of endnotes, works cited, bibliography, charts or graphs, or similar materials. The Thesis should not normally exceed 60 pages, depending upon the nature of the project.

As the Thesis nears completion, the student must schedule a formal Defense with the Thesis Director, Second Reader, and Graduate Program Director. This should occur during the last week of regularly scheduled classes (not during final exams). The faculty of the English department will be invited to attend. The Defense will normally last one hour. Following the Defense, the student must submit a revised version of the Thesis in digital form as well as in hard copy. Two bound copies of the Thesis will be produced: one will be archived in the Monmouth University Library and one in the English Department.

For additional information, please consult Dr. Heide Estes, Graduate Program Director, at (732) 571-7547 or hestes@monmouth.edu.

Sample Timeline:

Summer: Preparation

- 5/15 Student submits draft of proposal to Thesis Director
- 5/28 Thesis director returns proposal with suggestions for revision
- 6/15 Student submits second draft of proposal
- 6/30 Thesis director returns, with additional comments
- 7/15 Student submits third draft of proposal
- 8/1 Thesis Director approves proposal; student submits proposal to Second Reader
- 8/15 Second Reader approves proposal

Fall: Thesis Development

- 9/1 Student fills out Thesis Development Registration form and brings to Director and Second Reader for signatures. Student then submits the form, with proposal attached, to Graduate Program Director
- 9/8 Student submits schedule for completion of Annotated Bibliography and Critical Essay to Thesis Director
- 10/15 Student submits complete draft of Annotated Bibliography and Critical Essay to Thesis Director
- 10/30 Thesis Director returns materials to student with notes for revision
- 11/15 Student submits revised materials
- 11/30 Director forwards Annotated Bibliography and Critical Essay to Second Reader
- 12/7 Director returns materials to student with additional comments

12/15 Student submits final draft of Annotated Bibliography and Critical Essay
12/22 Director submits final grade for student

Spring: Thesis Writing

1/15 Student fills out Thesis Registration form, obtains signatures of Director and Second Reader, and submits to Graduate Program Director
1/22 Student submits schedule for completion of Thesis and plans meeting with Director
3/1 Student submits complete draft of thesis to Director
3/15 Director returns Thesis to student with notes for revision
4/1 Student submits revised version of Thesis
4/15 Director sends Thesis to Second Reader
4/22 Director returns Thesis to student with additional notes for revision
4/30 Student submits revisions
5/5 Student defends thesis, during which additional suggestions for revision are made. Director consults with Second Reader about thesis grade and with Graduate Program Director in case of recommendation that the thesis be awarded Distinction
5/15 student submits final version of Thesis to Graduate Program Director for print and electronic archives; Director submits grade