**Guidelines for the Thesis in History**

**Overview**

The MA thesis is the culminating research project of a student’s time at MSU. It should demonstrate a mastery of historical research methods and should present original research and an original argument. The thesis must use both primary and secondary sources and should be of a quality suitable for academic publication.

Students are expected to complete the thesis with the guidance of their committee chair and committee members. When able, thesis research and writing should begin immediately.

**Expectations**

**The thesis must demonstrate:**

* knowledge of the issues and the historical literature related to the topic, otherwise known as the historiography
* the ability to critically assess sources, primary and secondary
* the ability to construct a long and sustained argument
* the ability to communicate one’s ideas in writing clearly and coherently
* graduate-level scholarship

**The thesis should include:**

* an explanation of the significance of the work
* the methodology to be employed
* originality
* citations (formal and proper—Turabian/Chicago) of both primary and secondary sources in both footnotes and a bibliography
* proper English and be free of errors and typos (please note that the MSU Writing Center provides tutoring and consulting to all students)
* a minimum length of about 60 pages (approximately 18,000 words)

**Getting Started**

The path to creating a successful thesis begins the first semester. Students beginning the program in the fall should enroll in History 6103: Research Methods. In this course students will come up with a topic proposal, create an annotated bibliography, and start a literature review. That literature review can be completed in the spring, second semester after taking History 5713: Historiography. During both the fall and the spring of the first two semesters, students should enroll in either seminars and/or elective courses and produce papers that can become topic chapters in the later thesis.

**Graduate Advisory Committee**

By the end of the first year, students must have identified a topic and a committee. The Graduate Advisory Committee (GAC) consists of the chair and two other graduate faculty members from the department of history. The student may chose an outside committee member from another department. Normally, members of the committee have an academic background related to the student’s thesis topic. Although the committee can guide and advise the student during the thesis process, most communication will be between the thesis chair and the student. It is up to the chair to see the student through the thesis advising process from this point on. Students should consult with your chair to brainstorm potential ideas for the thesis, as well as prospective thesis chapters in seminars.

**Enrolling in Thesis Credit**

Students should enroll in Thesis 6983 (Thesis I) the first time taking thesis credit. During all subsequent semesters, students will enroll in Thesis 6993 (Thesis II) until the thesis is successfully completed. Students will earn a grade of ‘X’ in both 6983 and 6993 until successful completion of the thesis.

**Contents**

The thesis should include the following items:

* Table of Contents
* Abstract
* Review of Literature
* Introduction
* Topic Chapters
* Conclusion
* References Page/Bibliography

The thesis must be formatted to the guidelines as set by the graduate school. The guidelines can be found below.

Once completed and vetted by the thesis chair, the completed thesis should be distributed to the other two committee members at least two weeks before the oral defense.

**Oral Defense**

The student should work together with his/her thesis committee to schedule the oral defense. When scheduling the thesis oral defense, keep in mind that the completed, polished thesis is due to the Dean of the Graduate School no later than two weeks before graduation. Students are encouraged to schedule the defense earlier than later in order to give time for revisions.

The student needs to bring two forms to the defense: the thesis approval form and the release for electronic archival in the MSU Library (see the checklist of forms below).

The oral defense centers on matters pertaining to the thesis, but may also include examination of other areas of graduate training. Students should be prepared to present a formal overview of their thesis and respond to any questions from the Graduate Advisory Committee. The GAC may discuss and require possible revisions to the thesis.

Following the successful defense of the thesis, the GAC members sign the thesis approval form. The student is responsible for making any necessary revisions and for submitting all necessary materials to the graduate school in a timely manner (a checklist of items is located below, as are the submission guidelines).

**Sample Timeline for Thesis Completion**

The following timeline is based on taking nine credit hours a semester and should be revised according to individual student needs. It is also based on beginning in the fall.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Semester** | **Course Sequence** | **Comments** | **Action to Take** |
| Semester 1 | History 6103: Research Methods |  | ☐ Create topic proposal  ☐ Write literature review  ☐ Produce annotated bibliography  ☐ Begin identifying GAC |
|  | History 6003: Seminar | Thesis students must take 2 seminar courses | ☐ Draft potential topic chapter |
|  | History 500-: Elective |  | ☐ Draft potential topic chapter |
| By the end of Semester 1, you should:  ☐ Touch base with potential advisors and committee members to discuss your thesis topic  ☐ Circulate topic proposal with chair  ☐ Circulate any potential chapters with your chair  ☐ Have a general idea of the structure and argument of your thesis  ☐ Identify relevant archives and collections (both physical and digital) | | | |
|  | | | |
| Semester 2 | History 5713: Historiography |  | ☐ Finalize GAC & identify thesis chair |
|  | History 6003: Seminar |  | ☐ Draft potential topic chapter |
|  | History 500-: Elective |  | ☐ Draft potential topic chapter |
| By the end of Semester 2, you should:  ☐ Identify what methodologies and historiographical arguments you will be engaging with in your thesis  ☐ Have at least one chapter drafted; circulate that chapter to your thesis advisor  ☐ Continue to brainstorm chapter ideas  ☐ OPTIONAL: Conduct archival research during the summer | | | |
|  | | | |
| Semester 3 | History 6983: Thesis I | Work with the chair to produce thesis chapters and draft | ☐ Draft potential topic chapter |
|  | History 6003: Seminar | Could be a seminar or elective | ☐ Draft potential topic chapter |
|  | History 500-: Elective | Could be a seminar or elective | ☐ Draft potential topic chapter |
| By the end of Semester 3, you should:  ☐ Have at least two, if not three, chapters drafted | | | |
|  | | | |
| Semester 4 | History 6993: Thesis II |  | ☐ Work with the chair to revise and complete thesis chapters; finalize draft |
|  | History 6003: Seminar | Could be a seminar or elective | ☐ Draft potential topic chapter |
|  | History 500-: Elective | Could be a seminar or elective | ☐ Draft potential topic chapter |
| By the end of Semester 4, you should:  ☐ Have polished thesis of at least 60 pages  ☐ Schedule thesis defense in conjunction with committee members one month before defense  ☐ Circulate your completed thesis with your advisor two weeks before your defense  ☐ Defend thesis | | | |

**Thesis Completion Forms**

The following items must be submitted to the Graduate School upon successful defense of the thesis (students and the committee chair should work together to assure that all items are filled out and submitted):

The Thesis Approval Page

Thesis Title Page Template

Thesis Information Form

Thesis Interview Release Form

Thesis Publication and Distribution Release Form



**Thesis Formatting and Submission Guidelines**

1. **Style and Formatting Guidelines**

* 1. Title Page - Please use the official *Thesis Title Page* for the MSU thesis.

* 1. Publication Style - The MSU thesis must conform to publication style guidelines selected by the student’s department. Common style guidelines include APA, Chicago, MLA, although others are acceptable.

* 1. Citation of references - Students should assure that references are cited in accordance with the selected style guidelines.
     1. Quotations - be sure to include page numbers with citations in text if required by your publication style guidelines
     2. Lengthy quotations - a number of publication style guidelines require that quotations of significant length be formatted differently. Be sure to check on this.

* 1. Margins - Because students may elect to have their theses bound, the following margins are expected:
     1. 1 ½ inch left margin, and
     2. 1 inch for top, right, and bottom margins.

* 1. Spelling and grammar - The thesis is a formal document; spelling and grammar are expected to follow standard guidelines for the English language and the designated publication guidelines. Most word processing programs have spelling and grammar check that can be quite helpful; however, please be aware that these tools do not capture all errors.

* 1. Plagiarism - Plagiarism carries stiff academic penalties. Students must carefully reference material gleaned from references, as this is the best defense against any possibility of plagiarism.

* 1. Writing Center - The staff in the Writing Center is available to help students with enhancing their writing acumen. It is important to plan ahead and make an appointment. The Writing Center is not, however, an editing service. Should you wish to have assistance with editing, please check with your graduate coordinator for guidance.

* 1. Table of contents - A table of contents must be included and is to be formatted as per the publication guidelines.

* 1. Acknowledgements - Students may include an optional acknowledgement.

* 1. Chapters - The thesis document sections should comply with the guidelines provided by the department.

* 1. Protection of confidentiality or anonymity - The thesis is held to the highest standard of protection for human subject participants, when applicable. Students must protect the confidentiality or anonymity of their study participants in accordance with the human subjects protection guidelines assured through the Institutional Review Board. If the thesis is of a nature that includes quotes through which the source may be identifiable, a form has been developed by the General Counsel of the University that must be completed and submitted with the thesis, titled *Interview Release Form*.

1. **Submission of Final Documents:**

* 1. The student shall submit the following documents as per departmental guidelines:
     1. the final thesis document to the Graduate Advisory Committee Chair, in both a Microsoft Word and PDF format;
     2. completed *Thesis Information Form*; and
     3. completed *Electronic Thesis Publication and Distribution Release Form*

* 1. The original, signed *Thesis Approval Page* with all committee signatures and department chair signature, as well as the documents referenced above, shall be sent to the Dean of the McAda Graduate School at thesis@mwsu.edu in accordance with departmental guidelines.

* 1. After the Dean of the McAda Graduate School has approved the final copy of the thesis, the *Thesis Approval Page* will be submitted to the Office of the Registrar, which serves as official notification of completion of the thesis requirement.

1. **Instructions Regarding Binding the Thesis:**

Below are instructions if the student wishes or is required to have bound copies of their thesis. (Note: This is done after final approval by the McAda Graduate Dean.)

* 1. There are several ways by which the student can have the thesis bound:

* + 1. Directly contact one of the many companies that bind theses; or
    2. Have the thesis printed by a printing company or at the Print Shop on campus. The copies must be printed on 20 lb. weight, 25% rag content bond paper. The fully signed Thesis Approval Page should be inserted at the front of the thesis.
    3. For a nominal fee, the MSU Print Shop will print copies of the final thesis. The cost of the copies depends on the number of pages and whether or not there are any color pages. The Print Shop will accept a PDF file (flash drive) or hard copy. They cannot accept Word documents. The student should be prepared to allow 1-2 days for the printing of the thesis and not count on same day printing as the turnaround depends on current workload. The student will be given an invoice at the time they pick up their thesis. The Print Shop accepts checks or exact change only. If the student needs change or is paying with a credit card, they must pay at the Business Office and then present the receipt to the Print Shop to pick up their thesis.

1. If choosing option b. or c., there is a binding fee of $25 per copy, payable at the MSU Business Office. The receipt and the corresponding number of paper copies desired to be bound must be delivered to the Assistant to the Graduate Dean in Hardin 104.

1. The copies will be sent off campus for binding by the Library. It typically takes a semester for the final product to be returned to MSU. The student will be notified by the McAda Graduate School when bound copies are ready to be picked up.

Thesis Title

by

Student Name with Current Credentials

**GRADUATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

Name of Chair

Chair, Graduate Advisory Committee Signature Chair, Graduate Advisory Committee Date

Name of Member 1

Member, Advisory Committee Signature, Member Advisory Committee Date

Name of Member 2

Member, Advisory Committee Signature, Member Advisory Committee Date

**DEPARTMENTAL APPROVAL**

Name of Dept. Chair

Department Chair Signature, Department Chair Date

**DR. BILLIE DORIS McADA GRADUATE SCHOOL APPROVAL**

Dr. Kathryn M. Zuckweiler

Dean, McAda Graduate School Signature, Graduate Dean Date

**Thesis Title**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty

in the

Name of Department or School

Name of College

Midwestern State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

of the

Title of Degree

by

Name of Student with Current Credentials

Month Date, Year



**Thesis Information Form**

Student Name: Click here to enter text. Mustangs Number: Click here to enter text.

Email: Click here to enter text. Phone: Click here to enter text.

Expected graduation: Click here to enter a date. Have you filed for graduation?  Yes  No

Thesis Advisor/Chair: Click here to enter text.

Thesis Committee Member: Click here to enter text.

Thesis Committee Member: Click here to enter text.

Thesis Title: Click here to enter text.

Does your thesis involve Human Subjects:  Yes  No

If yes - IRB#: Click here to enter text.

If your thesis is of a narrative nature, are you including quotes from individuals?  Yes  No

If yes ~ please include the *Interview Release Form* for Theses (original signed copy)

What publication style is used for your thesis?

MLA  APA  Chicago  Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Checklist:**

Thesis submitted per departmental policy in Word AND PDF by deadline

Official *Thesis Title Page* for MSU Theses used

ORIGINAL *Electronic Thesis Publication and Distribution Release Form* submitted.

ORIGINAL *Thesis Approval Page* submitted per departmental guidelines

If bound copies desired, $25 per copy to Business Office/Printed copies to:

the Assistant to the Graduate Dean, Hardin 114. (This is done after final approval by the McAda Graduate Dean.)



**Interview Release Form**

This form is for the purpose of gaining approval from interviewees for thesis projects in which the author intends to publish the name, likeness, and/or biographical information in a published thesis.

Author: Click here to enter text.

Thesis Title: Click here to enter text.

This form sets fort the terms agreed relating to the information which you have kindly provided through our interview in relation to the thesis titled: Click here to enter text., which will be archived electronically in Midwestern State University’s Moffett Library. It will be available in house via an on-site searchable data base. In addition, the thesis will be made available world-wide via an Internet searchable database.

It is agreed as follows:

The author shall have the right to use material and information from this interview, as well as the right to portray events described within the interview, in the published thesis.

The author shall have the right to refer to the interviewee by name, likeness, and biographical information in the published thesis and in any ancillary publication throughout the world.

The benefit of this Agreement shall extend to my assignees, licensees, sub-licensees, and shall be irrevocable and shall last for the full period of copyright or other protection in the thesis.

The interviewee indicates acceptance and approval of the above by signing and returning this form to the author.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_



Dr. Billie Doris McAda Graduate School

Electronic Thesis Publication and Distribution Release Form

I, (print name) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , understand that my thesis, titled:

Click or tap here to enter text.

will be archived electronically in Midwestern State University’s Moffett Library. It will be

available to the Midwestern State University community (Faculty, Students and Staff) digitally.

Additionally, I (check one)

* Give my permission \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Do not give my permission\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

for my thesis to be made available world-wide via the Moffett Library collection.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Witness: Thesis Chair/Graduate Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Received by the Dean of the McAda Graduate School: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Received by Moffett Library Personnel: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_