

Students are urged to begin thinking about their research topic as they progress through their coursework. When courses have been completed, students may register for the required number of POLS 8990 credits and begin the formal procedures for thesis work. The following procedures have been established for the supervision, presentation, and approval of theses.

1. Committee

Thesis committees must have three members of the graduate faculty of the Department of Political Science. Additional members from inside or outside the department may be appointed with approval of the Director of Graduate Studies. Students preparing to write a thesis must meet with the Director of Graduate Studies to initiate the process of constituting a committee. Completion of a "Declaration of Intent" form is required.

2. Prospectus/Prospectus Defense

Students will write a thesis prospectus that outlines their proposed research design. The research design will then be orally presented and defended; the presentation session shall be open to all members of the faculty and to others. The acceptability of the prospectus shall be determined by at least a two-thirds vote of the members of the thesis or dissertation committee.

Two copies of the thesis prospectus shall be made available in the office of the Graduate Director at least one week in advance of the oral presentation. Members of the faculty must be notified by the thesis committee chairperson of both the date of the oral presentation and the availability of the research design. The presentation date must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

3. Thesis Expectations

The M.A. thesis should follow the format of an article in a Political Science research journal, normally running 10,000 words (approximately 40 pages). It will include an abstract, introduction, literature review closely related to statement of problem, formal statement of the theory and specific hypothesis/hypotheses to be tested, description of research methods and data, findings and analysis, conclusion and bibliography. The thesis will present the results of primary research, original theoretical contribution, or creative approach to a problem. It should be of a quality suitable for submission to a professional conference or research journal.

4. Defense

There shall be a final oral defense of the thesis. The defense shall be administered by the thesis committee, and shall be open to all members of the faculty and to others. The acceptability of the thesis shall be determined by at least a two-thirds vote of the members of the committee.

Two copies of the thesis shall be made available in the office of the Director of Graduate Studies at least one week in advance of the defense. Members of the faculty must be notified by the thesis committee chairperson of both the date of the defense and the availability of the final typed copies of the thesis. The defense date must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

5. Reproduction

The defended and approved thesis must be submitted to the Graduate Office of the College of Arts and Sciences; for graduation purposes, the necessary last step is the formal submission of the finished thesis. Specific guidelines regarding the thesis format and submission requirements, as well as deadlines for submission, are available from the Graduate Office or from the Assistant to the Political Science Graduate Director.