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# 1. Overview

*Writing an M.A. Thesis* involves performing empirical research, which is an organized, systematic search for answers to research questions. It aims to provide students with opportunities to

- read and critique up-to-date book chapters and journal articles based on library research;
- plan and perform empirical research on a topic of the student's interest;
- deepen the student's understanding of the topic; and
- improve one's academic writing ability.

To conduct empirical research, students should follow the steps below:

- 1) Identify research problems and research questions
  - Students review previous studies on a related topic and find a research gap in the literature. Students can also start from their own teaching/learning experience before reviewing the relevant research.
- 2) Determine a research design
  - To provide answers to research questions, students make a plan for getting the research under way.
- 3) Collect and analyze data. Depending on the research questions, students may collect numerical data and analyze them statistically (quantitative research), or collect verbal data and analyze them using a non-statistical method (qualitative research). Students can also use different combinations of both types of quantitative and qualitative research at the data collection or analysis levels (mixed-methods research).
- 4) Draw conclusions about the initial questions based on the analysis and its interpretations.

## **2. Thesis Advising**

The advisor will guide students at each step of the thesis-writing procedure. Therefore, it is important to meet with an advisor regularly and discuss any issues, concerns, and progress of the thesis writing while going through the procedure. An advisor determines an appropriate time/semester when students submit and present each step of the plan, proposal, and thesis, based on his/her evaluation of the student's readiness. Without the advisor's approval, students cannot apply for their thesis proposal or defense.

In addition to an advisor, two other professors will assist students in the thesis-writing process by becoming thesis committee members. Students decide on their thesis committee members with their advisors.

### **3. Preparing and Presenting the *Plan* (First Step)**

All students who want to choose a thesis as part of their graduation requirements must follow the guidelines in this document for writing their thesis research plan.

Students must prepare for their thesis research plan during the second semester and submit it at the end of the second semester (14<sup>th</sup> week). All submitted research plans are evaluated as pass or fail by the committee.

The thesis research plan must include the following two components up to a maximum of ten pages, double spaced, exclusive of references: (1) motivation for the thesis writing; and (2) the actual research plan (title, introduction, methods, and references).

#### **1. Motivation for the thesis writing**

Before writing the actual research plan, students must briefly write their rationale for the selection of their thesis track (approximately 200 words).

#### **2. Research Plan**

A research plan includes the following parts:

- (1) Title
- (2) Introduction
  - Background of the study (previous studies relevant to the topic of the research)
  - Research gap / Need for the study
  - Purpose of the study
  - Research questions
  - Significance of the study
- (3) Methodology
  - Brief description of the methods that the students plan to use in answering their research questions, including the participants and data collection/analysis procedures
- (4) References
  - (See “6. Referencing” for more details.)

***\* Refer to the “plan writing guidelines” for more details.***

## 4. Preparing and Presenting the *Proposal* (Second Step)

Students in (or beyond) the fourth semester are required to submit a thesis research proposal after passing the research plan. The purpose of writing the research proposal is to state what the research topic/problem is and how the students are going to research it. The plan is further elaborated at this stage. Supervisors assist students in preparation of the research proposal.

Minimum length is 20 pages (double spaced, not including references and appendices). Students submit three copies of their proposal to the office by the designated date. These copies are then provided to the three members of each student's committee. Students have two options for the proposal submission and presentation:

	Submission	Presentation
4-semester graduation	3 <sup>rd</sup> week	5 <sup>th</sup> week
5-semester graduation	13 <sup>th</sup> week	15 <sup>th</sup> week

Students present their proposal for 15 minutes, with a subsequent question-and-answer session. Note that students should focus on the *most important parts* of their plan when preparing their presentation (e.g., PowerPoint slides).

A research proposal includes the following parts:

1. Introduction (Similar to the plan)

- Background of the study (previous studies relevant to the topic of the research)
- Research gap / Need for the study
- Purpose of the study
- Research questions
- Significance of the study

2. Review of the Literature (Detailed review and critique of previous studies on the topic)

3. Methodology

- Context of the study
- Participants
- Materials
- Instruments
- Data collection procedure
- Data analysis

4. References

(See "6. Referencing" for more details.)

Three committee members individually evaluate both the draft and presentation. They then evaluate the proposal with the decision to *pass* or *fail*. Students are informed of this decision during the 16<sup>th</sup> week of the semester. Students who presented a proposal at the beginning of the semester, but failed may resubmit and present their proposal at the end of the same semester upon their advisor's approval.

## 5. Preparing and Presenting the *Thesis* (Third Step)

Students in (or beyond) the fourth semester are required to submit an entire thesis. At this stage, students revise the first three parts (introduction, review of the literature, and methodology) and add the rest of the thesis (results & discussion and conclusion) based on the analysis and interpretations.

There is no page limit for the thesis, but it should include the appropriate details required in each chapter. The deadline for submission is the 13<sup>th</sup> week of each semester. Students submit three copies of their thesis to the office by the designated date. These copies are then provided to the three members of each student's committee.

Thesis presentations are scheduled during the 15<sup>th</sup> week of the semester. Students present their thesis for 20 minutes, with a subsequent question-and-answer session. Note that students should focus on the *most important parts* of their thesis when preparing their presentation (e.g., purpose of the study, research questions, brief data collection/analysis procedure, and main findings of the study and their implications).

A thesis includes the following parts:

### 1. Introduction

- Background of the study (previous studies relevant to the topic of the research)
- Research gap / Need for the study
- Purpose of the study
- Research questions
- Significance of the study

### 2. Review of the Literature (Detailed review and critique of previous studies on the topic)

### 3. Methodology

- Context of the study
- Participants
- Materials
- Instruments
- Data collection procedure
- Data analysis

### 4. Results and discussion

### 5. Conclusion

- Summary and discussion of the results
- Implications of the study (e.g., theoretical, methodological, pedagogical, or practical)
- Suggestions for future research

### 6. References

(See "6. Referencing" for more details.)

Three committee members individually evaluate both the thesis and defense. They then evaluate the thesis with the decision to *pass* or *fail*. Students are informed of this decision during the 16<sup>th</sup> week of the semester.

## 6. Referencing

In-text citations and references should conform to the requirements of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Refer to the following link for APA style in general:

<http://www.apastyle.org/>

Specifically, refer to *The basics of APA style (view the tutorial)* in the following link. Samples of in-text citations and references are provided.

<http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>