STUDENT ACTIVITIES TO COMPLETE THESIS/PROJECT

♦ Determine who your major advisor is going to be based upon your general interests and your potential major advisor’s interests.
  ■ If your major advisor is not familiar with your interest area, then: (1) your major advisor may not have the knowledge base to assist you in outlining your thesis/project, (2) the major advisor will not be able to guide you towards the key articles or book chapters on your topic, and (3) the major advisor will take longer to critique your work because he/she is not familiar with and/or interested in your topic.

♦ Meet with your major advisor to discuss thesis/project ideas.
  ■ It is in your best interests to decide on a thesis/project that is within the interest area of your major advisor because: (1) the faculty member will be interested in working with you, and (2) the faculty member will be able to guide you in the right direction throughout the thesis/project.

♦ Meet with your major advisor to determine your plan of study (i.e., the courses you will take as part of your graduate program).

♦ Identify other committee members who can contribute to the thesis/project topic – be sure to get input from your major advisor on who you decide to choose for your committee.
  ■ You need two other faculty members on your committee. One faculty member should be in your major area of study (e.g., family studies) and one faculty member should be outside of your major area of study. Preferably, each of these members will be chosen because they have some expertise in an area of your thesis/project (e.g., area of study, research design, statistical analyses).

♦ Get approval from your major advisor and committee on your idea for your thesis/project and plan of study.
  ■ Get Plan of Study and Thesis Project Planning Form forms signed.

♦ Begin working on Chapters 1, 2, and 3 with major advisor’s guidance.

♦ Submit Chapters 1, 2, and 3 to major advisor for approval.

♦ After the first three chapters are approved by your major advisor, arrange for a proposal meeting with your committee.
  ■ You should not expect to get comments back for at least one week.
  ■ Typically, you will have at least one re-write before your major advisor gives approval.

♦ Submit your proposal (i.e., Chapters 1, 2, and 3) to your committee at least one week ahead of your proposal meeting.

♦ Meet with your major advisor to prepare for the proposal meeting.

♦ Have the proposal meeting.

♦ Make the changes to your thesis/project proposal as suggested by your committee.

♦ After approval by your committee, begin working on your thesis/project.
  ■ For thesis – Obtain Human Subjects Approval if needed.
  ■ For project – Begin developing the project.

♦ Conduct thesis/project.
  ■ For thesis – Collect and analyze data.
  ■ For project – Write or develop project and get approval on the project from experts in the field and/or potential audience.

1 Note: This is just my opinion. Your major advisor and/or committee may have different ideas.
2 When you begin writing the first three chapters, you should enroll in FCS 696C: Directed Graduate Research. You will need to contact your major advisor to get the permission number. When you enroll in FCS 696C, it shows the following: (1) you are agreeing to begin work on your thesis or project, and (2) that your advisor will be spending time assisting you. The next semester, you should enroll in FCS 698C: Thesis. If you do not finish your thesis/project by the end of the semester, you will need to enroll each semester until you finish the thesis.
Example – If you are developing a booklet to assist Iranian immigrant families in the acculturation process, then 2-3 people who are experts in acculturation and/or Iranian families should critique the booklet for accuracy. Then 2-4 Iranian people should critique it for helpfulness and ease of reading.

♦ Begin writing Chapter 4.
♦ Submit Chapter 4 to your major advisor for approval.
  ■ You should not expect to get comments back for at least one week, and you should expect at least one re-write before your major advisor gives approval.
♦ After approval by your major advisor, write Chapter 5.
♦ Submit Chapter 5 to your major advisor for approval.
  ■ You should not expect to get comments back for at least one week, and you should expect at least one re-write before your major advisor gives approval.
♦ After you receive approval by your major advisor, arrange for a thesis/project defense meeting with all your committee members.
♦ Submit your thesis/project (all 5 chapters, reference page, title page, table of contents, signature page, acknowledgements, abstract) to your committee at least one week ahead of the defense meeting.
♦ Meet with your major advisor to prepare for the defense meeting.
♦ Have the thesis/project defense.
  ■ Check with your major advisor to see what the appropriate protocol will be for the defense. For example, some major advisors and committees will expect you to give a presentation about your thesis/project.
♦ Make changes to your thesis/project as suggested by the committee.
♦ Submit the modified thesis/project to your major advisor for final approval.
♦ After approval by your committee, submit the thesis/project to the Office of Graduate Studies, Research & International Programs for critique on your formatting.
♦ Make suggested changes and re-submit to the graduate studies office.

DUTIES OF THE MAJOR ADVISOR

♦ Agree to participate as major advisor because he/she is knowledgeable about the proposed thesis/project topic and he/she can contribute to the thesis/project topic.
♦ Help the student narrow down his/her idea into a feasible thesis/project.
♦ Help the student choose an appropriate committee.
♦ Be available to suggest ideas on thesis/project throughout the process.
♦ Help the student develop an outline for Chapters 1, 2, and 3.
  ■ This does not include writing any of the sections, it means helping the student develop the structure for each of the chapters within which the student can fill in with literature on the topic.
♦ Meet with the student routinely to keep the student on the right track and moving forward through the thesis/project process.
♦ Read the proposal before submission to the committee.
♦ Make suggestions to improve the proposal.
♦ Approve or disapprove the proposal to be submitted to the committee for the proposal meeting.
♦ Read the proposal again before the proposal meeting.

3 Note: This is just my opinion. Your major advisor and/or committee may have different ideas.
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♦ Prepare the student for the proposal meeting.
  ▪ Explain the protocol for the proposal meeting
  ▪ Tell the student what is expected of him/her
  ▪ Tell the student what types of questions he/she can expect from the committee, and so on.
♦ Make suggestions to improve the proposal at the proposal meeting.
♦ Write down the suggestions by the committee to discuss with the student after the proposal meeting.
♦ Be the student’s advocate when necessary.
  ▪ For example, a committee member might make a suggestion that is beyond the scope of what the major advisor believes is necessary for the thesis/project (given that the major advisor is the “expert” in this area). The major advisor should be ready to advocate for the student when he/she deems it is necessary.
♦ Monitor the student as he/she edits the proposal as suggested by the committee.
♦ Approve or disapprove the proposal.
♦ Be available to guide the student through Chapters 4 and 5
♦ Read Chapters 4 and 5 before submission to the committee.
♦ Approve or disapprove whether Chapters 4 and 5 should be submitted to the committee for the defense meeting.
♦ Read the whole thesis/project before the defense meeting.
♦ Prepare the student for the defense meeting.
♦ Be the student’s advocate when necessary.
♦ Make suggestions to improve the thesis/project at the defense meeting.
♦ Write down the suggestions by the committee to discuss with the student after the defense meeting.
♦ Monitor the student as he/she edits the thesis/project as suggested by the committee.
♦ Approve or disapprove the thesis/project.

Things the Major Advisor Should Not Do

♦ Write the thesis/project for the student.
♦ Make major grammatical changes to the thesis/project.
  ▪ When the thesis/project needs major grammar work, the major advisor should direct the student to the writing resources on campus, or he/she should suggest that the student secure off-campus grammar help.
♦ Allow the thesis/project to go to the committee before it is ready.

Duties of the Committee

♦ Agree to participate on the committee because they can contribute to the thesis/project topic.
♦ Be available to suggest ideas on the thesis/project throughout the process.
♦ Read the proposal before the proposal meeting.
♦ Make suggestions to improve the proposal at the proposal meeting.
♦ Approve or disapprove the proposal.
♦ Read the thesis/project before the defense meeting.
♦ Make suggestions to improve the thesis/project at the defense meeting.
♦ Approve or disapprove the thesis/project.

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4 Note: This is just my opinion. Your major advisor and/or committee may have different ideas.
Things the Committee Should Not Do

♦ Write the thesis/project for the student.
♦ Make major grammatical changes to the thesis/project.
♦ Meet with the student routinely to provide guidance for the thesis (this is the major advisor’s job).
♦ Meet with the student to make major changes (except for the proposal and defense meeting).

Sample Outline for the Thesis or Project

The thesis/project outline should be developed before writing the thesis. Outlining forces the graduate student to clarify the research question, to develop a logical order of the thesis/project, and to assess whether there are parts that are missing, redundant, or irrelevant. The outline will often be slightly modified throughout the writing process. A poorly developed outline will lead to a disorganized thesis/project, and ultimately, it will yield a difficult-to-follow final product.

♦ Title Page
  ■ The title of the thesis/project
    • The title should include key words (e.g., independent and dependent variables).
    • The words in the title have an important function in electronic reference retrieval. If the title does not represent the study, the people searching for scholarship on the thesis topic may not be able to locate the thesis.
    • Eliminate unnecessary words (e.g., “A study of…”)
    • Eliminate redundant words
  ■ The publisher/institution usually has specific guidelines for the title page which usually includes the following:
    • Full title of the thesis/project
    • Author’s full name
    • The degree for which the work is submitted
    • Institution
    • Date of submission

♦ Signature Page
  ■ This page is for the graduate committee members’ signatures after successful completion of the thesis/project.

♦ Acknowledgements Page
  ■ This page is to acknowledge anyone who has helped with the substance or mechanics of the thesis. This would include anyone who has (1) given you ideas for your thesis, and (2) read your drafts and given you feedback. It is better to recognize anyone who helped and have a lengthy acknowledgment page than to leave someone out.

♦ Table of Contents
  ■ The table of contents should include chapter headings and the first level of major headings.

♦ Table of Figures
  ■ Have separate listings for figures, charts, and tables.

♦ Abstract Page
  ■ The information in the abstract will be widely incorporated in various search and bibliographic services. The thesis may be cited by others just on the basis of the abstract alone. The abstract should generally be 150-300 words. Include the research questions/hypotheses, one sentence description of the procedures, a description of the participants, and major findings. It is generally written in past tense to reflect research already completed.
♦ Chapter 1 – Introduction
  ■ Introduction
  • The introduction will generally contain the following: the research problem, a summary of the proposed research, and how the study will contribute to scholarship.
  • Leave the introduction until after the review of literature is completed.
  ■ Definitions of key terms
  ■ Significance of problem (i.e., problem statement or research problem)
  • Where the researcher sets forth the problem in society that needs to be addressed through research and/or the limitations in previous research that needs to be addressed.
  ■ Research statement
  • Briefly summarizes the data collection strategy and methodological procedures to be used.
  ■ Theoretical framework
  • Briefly highlights the main theoretical points addressed in the study.
  • If there is not an appropriate theory, then the researcher should not force an inappropriate theoretical framework.
  ■ Purposes and objectives
  ■ Justification
  • States how this study will benefit theory, research, practice, or policy.
  ■ Hypotheses (or research questions for exploratory studies)
  • Null hypotheses should be included
  • Research or alternative hypotheses – When supported by the review of literature or theory, then the researcher should state the expected direction of the relationships.
  • The significance level (e.g., $p < .05$) that will be used for hypotheses testing should be stated.
  • Research questions are similar to hypotheses, but they are in question format.
  ■ Assumptions
  ■ Limitations

♦ Chapter 2 – Review of Literature
  ■ Introduction
  • Significance of problem
  • Problem statement
  ■ Theoretical background
  ■ Literature review
  • Each of the variables in the study should be addressed beginning with the primary focus of the study.
  • The literature should be organized according to the hypotheses or research questions.
  ■ Show how the current research study confirms, disproves, and/or extends the literature.

♦ Chapter 3 – Methodology
  ■ Research design
  • This section should explain the specific research design.
  • The research design section should explain the treatment of potential control and modifier variables which may affect the main relationships of interest.
  ■ Sampling and data collection procedures
  • The type of sampling procedure
  • The types of data which are to be collected.
  • Quality control procedures (e.g., tests of inter-rater reliability, triangulation of respondents, translation and back-translation, recoding of recorded interviews).
  ■ Characteristics of sample
  • Response rates
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• Demographic profile of the sample and, if available, of known characteristics of the population. For example, if the research is looking at Latino families, and the majority of the sample is Mexican-origin, then it should be pointed out that the majority of Latinos in the population are Mexican-origin.

■ Instrumentation/Measurement
  • Include description of instrument, sample items, and assessment of validity and reliability
  • If using previously established measures, the researcher should show highlight the previously established reliability and validity indicators of the measure as well as the reliability of the measure with the current data.
  • If using original measures, the researcher should discuss the validity and reliability concerns and tests related to them (e.g., factor analysis, reliability).

■ Overview of the qualitative and/or statistical procedures to be used
  • The assumptions of the procedures should be evaluated in relation to the proposed research.
  • Where appropriate, tests of assumptions (e.g., tests of multivariate normality, homogeneity of variances) should be reported.

◆ Chapter 4 – Results
  ■ Preliminary evidence on relationships (e.g., descriptives and/or bivariate relationships)
  ■ Evidence with use of control variables and/or more complex models

◆ Chapter 5 – Conclusion
  ■ Brief, concise summary of findings
  ■ Discuss each finding; link the findings to previous research and/or theory
  ■ Discuss the limitations
  ■ Implications for research
  ■ Implications for theory and/or practice
  ■ Summary

◆ Endnotes
  ■ Endnotes are used to further explain comments and provide relevant supplementary information when insertion into the body of the text would be distracting to reader.
  ■ Endnotes should be listed in order they appear in the body of the thesis.
  ■ The “Endnotes” section is not for citations (which go in the “References” section).

◆ References
  ■ The “References” section lists only references cited in the work,
  ■ Note: A “Bibliography” lists all references consulted whether cited or not. Most publishers and academic departments do not want a bibliography.

◆ Appendices
  ■ The actual instrument used in the study
  ■ Human subjects approval