



School of Public and Nonprofit Administration
Graduate Thesis Guidelines

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GRADUATE THESIS

The purpose of a thesis is to give students experience conducting the kind of inquiry that will be useful in their professional career. Because professional goals differ, each thesis will have its own character. Some students may wish to conduct an original research project, others may want to conduct an evaluation of a policy or program that exists in their current workplace, still others may wish to explore some of the theoretical debates surrounding a particular public administration issue.

The word “thesis” refers to a formal, scholarly investigation that is based first and foremost on a research question. The thesis is an attempt to provide at least one unique answer to that question. It is also a demonstration of a student’s ability to locate and synthesize theoretical and empirical knowledge about a given phenomenon, formulate an appropriate method for investigation, analyze related data, and arrive at a sound conclusion. All of the courses taken before the thesis provide opportunities to learn and practice these skills. For this reason, it is a very good idea to start thinking about a thesis topic early in your graduate studies.

The thesis should be not less than 75 pages and no more than 125 pages.

Please note that all GVSU research projects involving human subjects requires approval from the Human Review Committee. Even if your project does not involve any risk or very low risk to human subjects, as long as it involves interacting with human beings in any way to gather data or information, you need to get prior approval. The required form and instructions are included in the appendix.

Prerequisites

A student is eligible to form a thesis committee when he or she has completed twenty-one credit hours, which must include PA 611, research methods.

THESIS COMMITTEE

All students selecting the thesis option must select a Thesis Committee. The Thesis Committee consists of a Chair who is the primary Advisor who agrees to supervise the thesis, and one additional faculty member from the School of Public and Non Profit Administration. The Chair and at least one faculty member must be full time tenure track faculty within the School of Public and Non Profit Administration. A third full time tenure track faculty member relevant to the student’s thesis is optional.

Once a Thesis Chair and Committee have been selected, the student must submit an Approval of Thesis Committee form to the director of the Graduate Program who will verify that the Thesis Committee meets the rules regarding committee membership and will place the form in the student’s file.

Special Responsibilities of the Thesis Committee Chair:

1. Ensure that the Thesis Committee meets periodically and functions effectively.
2. Facilitate the submission and approval of the thesis proposal.
3. Organize and facilitate the student's proposal defense.
4. Ensure that materials are read by committee members in a timely fashion.
5. Organize, facilitate, and lead the student's thesis.
6. Work with the student to facilitate the submission of paperwork needed for graduation.

Responsibilities of the Thesis Committee and Chair:

1. Approve the nature and scope of the thesis problem to be studied.
2. Meet with the student to assess and discuss the thesis proposal.
3. Review drafts of the student's thesis and identify needed revisions.
4. Participate in the completion of the thesis and certify that the student has successfully completed the program of Study.

THESIS REQUIREMENTS

Thesis Proposal

Students choosing to write a thesis must prepare a detailed proposal for their thesis research. The proposal demonstrates that the student has reviewed the relevant literature and outlines in detail how the research will be conducted. The proposal should include the following information: the major questions to be addressed, the significance of these questions, the extent of current knowledge in the area of research, the materials and methods to be used to answer the questions, and the schedule for completion of stages of work.

Thesis Proposal Format

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
3. Purpose of the Study and Research Questions
4. Proposed Methods
5. Expected Findings
6. Summary
7. References

Thesis Proposal Defense

Before a student may enroll for thesis credit hours, a successful thesis proposal defense must be held during which the thesis proposal is discussed by the student and all committee members. This will provide the opportunity to develop a consensus around the thesis. It will often become a very constructive working session. Assuming agreement over the proposal, a Thesis Proposal Approval form must be signed by all committee members and forwarded to the Director of the Graduate Program to be placed in the student's permanent file.

Thesis Style

The thesis is to be written in American Psychological Association (APA) style. Copies of the APA Publication Manual are available at the GVSU bookstores. The thesis must be written in 12-point, professional font and the entire document (including footnotes, endnotes, and reference pages) must be double-spaced. Pages must also be formatted with a 1.5-inch left margin and 1-inch right, top and bottom margins. Other requirements, including the quality and weight of the paper used for final copies, are specified by the GVSU library and University Microfilms Incorporated. (For a more detailed example see MSU's formatting guide for master's thesis available at www.msu.edu/user/gradschl/)

Example Thesis Format

The following thesis format is an example of a traditional thesis. Those involving qualitative and/or alternative methods may be written in different formats. There are, however, certain components that **must** be included in the final thesis. Mandatory components are marked with an asterisk (*).

1. Title Page* : unnumbered
2. Thesis Defense Approval Form* (Signed by all committee members and the Director of the Graduate Program) unnumbered
3. Dedication Page (optional): unnumbered
4. Acknowledgement Page (optional): page i
5. Abstract* (100-250 word limit): page ii or page i if no acknowledgement page

6. Table of contents: page iii
7. List of figures and/or tables (if applicable)* : page iv
8. Chapter one- Introduction: Begin with unnumbered page 1. Number all subsequent pages 2, 3, etc.
9. Chapter Two- Literature Review
10. Chapter Three- Methods
11. Chapter Four- Results
12. Chapter Five- Discussion
13. Chapter Six- Conclusions
14. Referenced cited: follow the sequential page numbering of the text
15. Appendix or Appendices (if applicable)*: follow the sequential numbering of text

Required Presentation of the result of the Master's Thesis

A public presentation is required for all Master's candidates writing a thesis. Normally, the student will provide a brief summary of the thesis research (15-30 minutes) followed by a question and answer session.

Publication Requirements

After successfully defending the thesis and making any final corrections to the manuscript, the student should then present one (1) finished and bound copy of the final thesis to the Thesis Committee Chair. This copy will be put on reserve in the School of Public and Non Profit Administration for future student reference. Additional instructions are provided in the publication packet provided by Zumberge Library. These instructions include the type of binding required and other issues pertaining to the University microfilm Incorporated (UMI) archiving. A bound copy is also kept at the Zumberge Library. The student is responsible for all costs associated with thesis production and binding (Binding Unlimited Inc., 2730 Alpha Street, Lansing MI does an excellent job).

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APPROVAL OF THESIS COMMITTEE

The following faculty members agree to serve as a Thesis Committee for:

Student's Name

Signature

Name (Committee Chair)

Signature

Title

Name

Signature

Title

Name (optional)

Signature

Title

Approved:

Director of Graduate Program

Date

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THESIS PROPOSAL APPROVAL

This Acknowledges that _____ has submitted and successfully
Defended a thesis proposal entitled:

Thesis Committee:

Chair Date

Member Date

Member Date

Director of Graduate Program Date

Note: This form and a copy of the proposal should be placed in the student file.

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FINAL THESIS APPROVAL

This acknowledges that _____ has completed all requirements for the Master's thesis PA 695. It further attests that the student successfully met the requirements for a Master's Thesis.

The undersigned agree that this thesis entitled:

is accepted by the faculty of the School of Public and Non Profit Administration, Grand Valley State University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Public Administration degree.

Thesis Committee:

Chair Date

Member Date

Member Date

Director of Graduate Program Date