

Tips for Preparing for Your Graduate Thesis or Project

Although it may seem early, thinking about and planning for your thesis or project now can make for a smooth process. Refer to this sheet from time to time as you progress toward your graduate thesis or project.

RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH (RCR) TRAINING

All GVSU graduate students are required to complete Responsible Conducts of Research (RCR) training prior to engaging in any research activities. Please check with your Thesis Chair or Graduate Program Director to determine which RCR training program is required for you.

PROJECT VERSUS THESIS

Candidates for advanced degrees must demonstrate their mastery of the subject matter and their ability to generate new knowledge or to apply existing knowledge to specific practical situations. This demonstration may take the form of a research project or thesis, planned with and directed by a faculty supervisor.

A PROJECT involves curriculum or program development and applies theory to practice, while a THESIS is a traditional research capstone where a candidate for an advanced degree gathers data, analyzes that data, and presents the results along with their interpretations. Whereas a PROJECT creates a product that is often used in professional capacity by the students, a THESIS uses data analysis to answer a research question or test a hypothesis or interest to the students.

TOPIC SELECTION

When it comes to choosing a topic for your project or thesis consult with your program advisor to discuss your areas of interest and gain some guidance. Topics that you are passionate about or ones which offer you practical utility in your professional will most likely sustain your interest and provide you with the greatest sense of accomplishment. Additionally, whenever possible, make use of various graduate class assignments to further explore your topic. For example, if a class assignment calls for you to compose a literature review on a topic of your choice, treat it as an opportunity to learn more about your area of interest and gather literature that might serve your project or thesis.

ADVISORS

Your program advisor is someone with whom to discuss your ideas. Although your advisor may not necessarily be your supervising instructor for your project or thesis (the person who will help shape project or thesis, assess your progress, and evaluate the final product), it is still well worth to seek out your program advisor for advice.