

# Master's Thesis

## Thesis Committee

The thesis committee is composed of at least three members. The chair must be a member of the SHSU graduate faculty. The doctoral program faculty must approve any chair who is not a member of the Department of Psychology. Students may arrange for a member at another institution to co-chair their thesis with the approval of program faculty, and provided that a Department of Psychology faculty member co-chairs the thesis. Students may also arrange for a member at another institution to serve as a committee member. The final thesis committee must then be approved by the chair of the major department and the appropriate academic dean.

## Thesis Courses and Continuous Enrollment

*You must have a chair and have permission from your thesis chair to enroll in thesis courses.*

When you are working on your thesis, you will register for PSYC 6098, Thesis I, and PSYC 6099, Thesis II, as part of your degree plan. These are not classroom courses; instead, they exist to legitimize your thesis work as part of your semester load and to pay the University for the faculty and library resources you should be using. Once you begin your enrollment in the thesis courses by taking PSYC 6098, you must **continue** enrollment in a thesis course until you complete your thesis work. Typically, you will take PSYC 6098, receive a grade, and then move on to PSYC 6099, enrolling in Thesis II in successive semesters until your work is done. To complete your thesis during a given semester, you must defend your completed thesis on or before the deadline posted by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (which is several weeks before the end of the semester). If you miscalculate and do not defend your thesis by the deadline, you must re-enroll in PSYC 6099. You may enroll in Thesis II as many times as needed; assuming you continue to make progress, you will continue to receive a grade of "IP"--in progress--until you complete the project. For summer sessions, students who are taking *no courses* do not need to enroll in PSYC 6099 unless they want to work on or defend their thesis. Students who take any credit hours during summer and have already taken PSYC 6099 must enroll in PSYC 6099 in the summer.

Thesis courses are variable credit courses, meaning that a student can enroll for 1, 2, or 3 hours each semester. Students must enroll for 3 hours of Thesis I. They will then enroll in 3 hours of Thesis II during the first semester they take Thesis II. If students enroll in Thesis II for more than one semester, they can then enroll in Thesis II for 1, 2, or 3 hours.

### **Thesis Course Grades**

Thesis courses (PSYC 6098 and 6099) are graded as Credit (CR) or No Credit (NC) or In Progress (for PSYC 6099 only). Although grades in these courses are not used to calculate your GPA, a grade of NC has serious consequences. The Graduate School and doctoral program view a grade of NC as being equivalent to a grade of C for the purpose of continued enrollment in the program. In addition, a student who receives a grade of NC must repeat the course the following semester. Grades of IP are reserved for Thesis II (6099) courses and will not be used to allow students who made poor progress in a semester to have additional time to complete their expected tasks.

Each semester, the faculty member chairing the student's thesis will develop a syllabus outlining the student's expected progress during the semester. A faculty member will assign a grade of No Credit (NC) when he/she believes that the student has made no or insufficient progress on the tasks outlined on the syllabus. Students are encouraged to meet with their chairs at the beginning of each semester to ensure that the student understands the type and amount of progress expected during the semester.

### **Thesis Procedure**

**Proposal:** The student, in consultation with the chair of the thesis committee, will select a subject of investigation and determine the availability of the required resources, facilities, materials, and equipment for the research and the writing of the thesis. The student will prepare a thesis proposal document containing (a) a review of the relevant literature; (b) a rationale and justification for your specific research question; (c) explicit hypotheses; (d) a Method section detailing the sources and nature of your research participants and the materials and procedures

you will use; and (e) a proposed data analysis section. It should also include (f) an Appendix that contains copies of materials, including any written scales or surveys and the verbal script or instructions to participants the researcher will use.

**Prospectus:** A prospectus is an abstract of the proposed thesis which consists of a two-page summary of the literature review, rationale, methods, and proposed data analysis. After the committee has approved the proposal, the student submits the prospectus to the appropriate academic dean for final approval. Any major changes in the project must be approved in writing by the thesis committee and submitted for approval to the academic dean.

**IRB approval:** Except in exceptional cases in which approval has been granted by all the committee members, your proposal must be successfully defended before it is submitted to the SHSU Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. Moreover, CPHS approval *must* be obtained *before* any data is collected from human participants. If your procedure requires a review by the full Committee, expect this approval process to take at least one month.

**Preparation of thesis document:** When you are preparing a proposal or a finished thesis, you will ordinarily submit *several drafts* of your work to your Chair before submitting your material to the other members of your committee. No one, anywhere, has ever written an entirely suitable report in one take. You will receive several rounds of helpful criticism and prepare several different versions of your work before your Chair is completely satisfied.

**Submitting document to thesis committee:** When your Chair is content, you submit your document to each member of your committee. When you present written matter to a committee member, correspond with him or her to set a target date for receiving feedback on your work. Expect such feedback *no sooner* than *one week* from the day the member acknowledges receipt of your materials; a member may sometimes need up to two weeks to give your work the attention it deserves. Do not put yourself into the position of having to depend on faster turnaround; the faculty will typically be unable to rearrange their many other commitments in

order to provide you instant feedback. Do not seek to schedule an oral defense of the thesis document until each member of your committee has provided feedback.

Once you receive feedback from each committee member, you are allowed to schedule the proposal or defense. Although you will be allowed to schedule your defense, one or more committee members may have major concerns about your study or document. If this is the case, the committee member may have requested substantial revisions to your study or document. Keep in mind that the committee members use your thesis document to evaluate your understanding of the research literature, theory, research design, and data analysis issues relating to your project. If a committee member reviews your document and tells you that s/he has serious concerns about your document, it is crucial that you understand the committee member's concerns so that you can address them in both your oral defense and the final thesis document. After reviewing your document, the committee member will identify, either in writing or in person, the issues you need to address in your thesis document and in your oral defense. If you have any questions about a committee member's feedback, you should schedule a meeting with the committee member to clarify the committee member's concerns. Although the committee member will not see your document again until your oral defense, it would be wise to a) address the issues the committee member raised in the oral examination, and b) bring a revised document to the oral examination in case the committee member wants to how you have addressed the issues s/her raised in the document. It is also *strongly* recommended that you submit a draft of your thesis to the library for formatting approximately a month before the planned defense. This will significantly speed the final approval process.

**Oral defense:** Plan on staging your oral defense about one week after receiving feedback from your committee members. Schedule 90 minutes for your oral defense. During the oral defense, the student describes the purpose and objective of the study, reviews the literature, presents the methodology, and defends its importance and relevance to the field. Typically, students prepare a 20-30 minute presentation (e.g., Powerpoint presentation). The committee will then need time to ask questions about the project. Members of the committee, other faculty, and doctoral students may ask questions, make suggestions, or challenge any part of the project. The committee will then excuse the student from the room so that they can discuss the student's

performance, come to agreement about required document revisions, and vote on whether the student passed or failed the defense. The final decision to accept the proposal requires a unanimous vote of the committee.

**What happens if you pass the oral defense?** If the student passes the proposal or defense examination, the committee will likely require the student to make some revisions to the thesis document. If this happens, the thesis chair will be responsible for drafting a list of required revisions by the end of the committee meeting. The non-chair committee members will sign completion of thesis defense form and route sheet at the oral defense, but the thesis chair will not sign the forms until the student has completed the document revisions agreed upon by the committee. In other words, the student will not officially pass the defense until the student has made all of the revisions agreed upon by the committee.

Please understand that the revisions required by the committee might be substantial. If you schedule your defense close to the university's posted defense deadline, you may have little time to complete the revisions before the university's posted deadline for submitting final thesis documents. Students are always in a better position to make revisions when they schedule a defense early in the semester because they will have more time to make revisions. Moreover, students must consider that their thesis chair will need time to review any revisions that the student makes to the document. As with any other thesis document, expect such feedback from your chair *no sooner* than **one week** from the day the member acknowledges receipt of your materials; a chair may sometimes need up to two weeks to give your work the attention it deserves.

If the student passes the defense and the committee does not request any changes, all committee members will sign the defense and route sheets at the oral defense.

After the examination is passed and the thesis is approved and signed by the committee, the student must submit the completion of proposal/defense form, routing sheet, and typed abstract to the academic dean at least two weeks prior to the date on which the candidate expects to graduate. **[See the academic calendar each semester for the exact deadline of submission.]**

Upon receipt of approval of the academic dean, the student must submit the routing sheet and the completed thesis document to the Dean of Graduate Studies and then to the Newton Gresham Library. Students should be aware that Library process takes some time. Upon approval of the Director of the Newton Gresham Library, the original and the required number of acceptable copies of the thesis are submitted to the Newton Gresham Library by the candidate.

(Reproduction of the thesis is the responsibility of the candidate.) The candidate will pay the Newton Gresham Library for the binding costs. The original copy of the thesis will remain in the library collection. The student then takes the completed Thesis Route Sheet to the Registrar

**What happens if you fail the oral defense?** A student will fail the proposal or defense if one or more committee members votes to fail the student. If the student fails the proposal or defense examination, the committee will explain the reason(s) for the failure and identify the deficiencies that must be corrected before the student can schedule a subsequent oral examination.

If a student fails an oral proposal or defense twice, the student will need to petition the Dean of CHSS in writing for permission to propose or defend a third time. The Dean may or may not grant permission. If the Dean does not grant permission, the student will be dismissed from the Program. If the Dean does allow a third oral examination s/he also usually requires the student to complete remedial course work before granting such a petition. If a student fails the proposal or defense a third time, they will be dismissed from the Program.

### **Thesis Deadlines**

The Program requires you to finish your Master's thesis before you are eligible to enroll in PSYC 8383, Doctoral Clinical Practicum II, during a Fall or Spring semester. You must defend your project thesis by the date posted by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences to avoid having to enroll in thesis in upcoming semesters. If you defend after that date (which is several weeks before the end of the semester), but before the end of the semester, you will still have to enroll in thesis the following semester. Please check the both university and college deadlines carefully to ensure that you understand when you need to propose or defend your project. These deadlines are published several semesters in advance.

## **Thesis Forms**

There are a number of forms that students need to complete during the thesis process. These include forms for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Graduate School. Each of these forms requires a number of signatures.

The Thesis and Dissertation Process Checklist (next page) identifies the different forms and explains when each form needs to be completed and signed. These forms do sometimes change, and students are encouraged to check with the program administrative staff (i.e., Sonya Miller), the Dean's Office, and the Graduate School to make sure that they have the most up-to-date versions of these forms.

The Psychology Department webpage provides a link to copies of the CHSS forms (<http://www.shsu.edu/~clinpsy/Forms.html>).

## Thesis Process Checklist (Forms and Approvals)

1. Complete [Appointment of Thesis Committee Form](#). Obtain signatures from Graduate Advisor (DCT), Department Chair and the Dean's Office, prior to proposing your thesis. The Dean's Office will keep the completed/signed form.

If a committee member will be someone outside of Sam Houston State University, please make sure to complete the [Non SHSU Employee on Thesis/Dissertation Committee Request](#) form, obtain signatures, attach non-SHSU committee member's CV, and submit for approval to the Dean of Graduate Studies. Graduate Studies will forward the approved form to the Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program (form will remain in student file).

2. Defend Proposal. On the day of proposal, have the [Proposal/Prospectus Defense Form](#) prepared for signatures. Secure signatures from Thesis Director and Committee, Graduate Advisor (DCT), Department Chair, and send to the Dean's Office along with Prospectus (prospectus is a more in depth version of abstract). The Dean's Office will forward the form to the Registrar's Office.
3. Submit [IRB](#) application (human subject approval). You must have IRB approval before collection data.
4. Check the [Graduate Studies website](#) for specific timeline dates.
5. Submit draft to [Library](#) for approval of basic style and format (6 weeks prior to graduation).
6. Defend thesis. On the day of thesis defense, have the following forms prepared for signatures: [Thesis Defense Form](#), [Approval Page](#) (on bonded paper) and [Route Sheet](#). Secure signatures from Thesis Director and Committee, Graduate Advisor (DCT) and Department Chair. Bring signed forms along with a copy of your abstract to the Dean's Office for signature. The Dean's Office will send the Thesis Defense Form to the Registrar's Office and will contact you to pick up the Approval Page and Route Sheet.



7. Submit approved draft to Thesis Clerk in the Library (with changes, if any, from defense). Make changes as requested by the Library.
8. Once final approval has been received by the Library, [copies](#) should be made (preferably by Sam Houston Press & Copy Center). Take final copy (on bonded paper), approval sheet (on bonded paper), extra abstract (on bonded paper) and Route Sheet to the Library for signature.
9. Take Route Sheet to Graduate Studies Office.
10. Graduate Studies will hand-deliver Route Sheet to the Registrar's Office.

\*Note: Please make sure Program Secretary receives a copy of each signed form.