

MFA Program in Creative Writing, Editing, and Publishing
Sam Houston State University
Steps to Writing the MFA Thesis

A synopsis of steps in the thesis process follows:

1. You must be an MFA candidate to begin thesis work. If you have not already done so, file a declaration of major form indicating that you are on the thesis track.
2. If you have not already done so, decide upon a book-length creative project that will sustain your interests and energies for one to three years.
3. Ask a member of the creative writing graduate faculty to serve as a thesis director. Presumably, this will be someone who has specific academic training and interests in the field of your creative pursuit. Faculty members are not required to say, "Yes." Bear in mind as well that individual faculty members can only accept so many requests each semester, so the earlier you approach a particular faculty member, the better your chances.
4. With your director, decide upon the other two graduate faculty members of the reading committee. In exceptional cases, one of the readers may be a member of another department.
5. Enroll in ENGL 6098 (Thesis I). No later than the first class day of the semester in which you enroll in this course, you must submit to the Director of the MFA Program an Appointment of Thesis Committee form. On this day you will also submit to your thesis director a rough plan for the thesis and a preliminary bibliography, as appropriate to the nature of the project. (See the calendar of submission deadlines for ENGL 6098.)
6. During this semester, a candidate who undertakes a thesis involving human subjects (for example, in interviews for oral histories or surveys for statistical measurements) must also submit paperwork for approval by the Sam Houston State University Office of Research and Special Programs. For further information, see the ORSP web site.
7. To earn credit for ENGL 6098, you must submit the thesis prospectus and any other thesis materials required by your director and committee. The prospectus is a reasonably well-developed plan for the thesis. In this prospectus, you will describe the project and your approaches to it, lay out your methods for accomplishing it, and provide a bibliography, as appropriate to the nature of the work. (You might provide a bibliography of primary works that have influenced you as a writer and/or works of writing theory that you will use in the critical introduction to the thesis.)
8. Submit the prospectus to the Director of the MFA Program with the approval page signed by all members of the reading committee (see the calendar of deadlines). You will receive a final grade of CR (Credit) or NC (No Credit). ENGL 6098 is a three-credit class, but your grade will not be computed mathematically into your overall graduate GPA. You may not take an incomplete in ENGL 6098.
9. Procure a copy of Directions on Form, Preparation, and Submission of the Final Copies of Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations (<http://www.shsulibraryguides.org/thesisguide>).

10. Enroll in ENGL 6099 (Thesis II). In this second semester of thesis work, you will complete the project begun in ENGL 6098. You must continue to enroll in (and pay tuition for) ENGL 6099 every term until you have completed the thesis; if you withdraw

for any amount of time after beginning ENGL 6099, you will be required to pay back-tuition upon reenrolling in the course. You will receive a grade of IP (In Progress) until the completion of the work, at which time you will receive a final grade of CR (Credit) and three credit hours for the course.

12. Request that your director write a letter to the Dean of Graduate Studies, requesting a “permanent embargo” of your thesis. While most university theses are now published electronically and made available on the Internet, students in the MFA program—because of the commercial possibilities of the work—are granted permission to keep their work from being made widely available at no cost. MFA students should prepare two bound copies—one for the Newton Gresham Library and one for the department, which must be submitted by the appropriate deadline. See “Steps for Permanent Embargo” on the library website (<http://www.shsulibraryguides.org/thesisguide/faculty#s-lg-box-14639684>).

13. Complete the thesis to your readers’ satisfaction and orally defend the work by the stated deadline for the semester during which you plan to graduate. (See the calendar of submission deadlines for ENGL 6099.) It is the responsibility of the candidate and his or her director to establish the thesis date and time and to coordinate the event with the other readers. About a week before the oral defense, send the Director of the MFA Program the following information for the thesis defense form: (1) the date and time of the defense; (2) the official title of the thesis, as you would like to appear on your graduate transcript; (3) the names of the committee members.

14. At the conclusion of the oral defense, the members of the committee should sign a paper form indicating the results of the defense (high pass, pass, or fail). The paper form will then be submitted for approval to the director of the MFA program, the chair of the Department of English, and the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

15. Once the thesis has been successfully defended, the student should also then initiate the electronic routing sheet for dissertation and thesis defenses. This form is electronically approved by the director of the thesis, the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Newton Gresham Library Director, and the Dean of Graduate Studies. To access the link, see the Office of Graduate Studies webpage for thesis and dissertation guidelines (<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/graduate-studies/theses-and-dissertations.html>).

16. After defending the thesis orally, you will have about a week and a half to make final revisions and corrections before submitting the approved thesis to various campus offices for approvals and, eventually, to the Newton Gresham Library for binding. (See the calendar of submission deadlines for ENGL 6099.) Information about preparing the final copies of the thesis for binding and a schedule of binding appears in the Directions on Form, Preparation, and Submission of the Final Copies of Master’s Theses and Doctoral Dissertations. For a link to the route sheet that accompanies the thesis, see the Graduate Studies Office.