

CREATIVE PROJECT/THESIS AND THESIS PROPOSAL

Creative projects and theses require a proposal or prospectus. The following steps are suggested to help you along your way.

1. First, obtain a permanent advisor who, in conjunction with two additional committee members, will discuss your creative project or thesis.
2. Next, your initial idea concerning the feasibility of your particular project or thesis must then be written up in the form of a proposal or prospectus.

While there are no hard rules that cover every type of prospectus, there are a few minimal guidelines to consider.

For a thesis, the student should address:

- (a) Title of your Thesis
- (b) Type of project/study to be undertaken (historical/critical/descriptive/experimental/others)
- (c) General purpose or thesis statement, then narrowed down to specifics
- (d) Justification for undertaking this specific line of investigation or project [i.e., should be something new, addresses some aspect not covered in previous research, replication of a previous study with adequate justification, etc.]
- (e) Initial review of the pertinent literature that organizes what is known about the object of study and leads to your research questions
- (f) Specific research questions/hypotheses you will seek to answer
- (g) Proposed research method for conducting your investigation, including subjects to be sampled, data collection methods you intend to employ, and how this research or project is to proceed (time element)
- (h) Data analysis: which variables will be included, which excluded.

For a creative project, the student should address:

- (a) Title of your Project
- (b) General intent of the project; i.e., what should the project accomplish?
- (c) Justification for considering this project as a worthwhile and legitimate graduate endeavor in Communication
- (d) Any supporting literature justifying the intention of your project
- (e) Method for accomplishing your project, including any necessary background or equipment needed for your project, where this project is to be conducted, and proposed timeline to completion.

3. Once you have written your prospectus or proposal, your permanent advisor convenes a formal committee meeting at which time you must explain your proposal. Copies of the same should have been distributed by you to all of the members of your committee. You should give committee members a week to read your proposal/prospectus before the meeting. At the meeting you will be given suggestions, specific directions, or other advice that the committee feels will aid you in bringing your project/thesis to a successful conclusion.

4. Once your committee has approved your project/thesis proposal, you may THEN AND ONLY THEN commence your project/thesis. You should keep your permanent advisor aware of your progress and submit portions/chapters of your work on a regular basis to him or her.
5. Writing means re-writing. Audio and video work requires precise planning and long hours at the editor. It is best to keep in mind that a first draft or edit is only that. Content and format have to meet the specific requirements of the Graduate Office, the Department or Division, and your committee. Be prepared to do a lot of writing and rewriting once you undertake your thesis/project. (It is not uncommon for projects to go through 10 or more rewrites prior to the oral defense.)
6. Your oral defense is the final formal step in completing your exit option. You will defend your thesis/project at a public meeting. You will be expected to give a summary of your thesis/project and present examples of creative work. Your thesis/project committee will question you about your work and then allow members of the public to comment on your work or ask you questions. This is an opportunity for you to take pride in your work and enjoy sharing it with others.

SAMPLE THESIS PROPOSAL FORMAT

1. USE THE APA STYLE MANUAL!
2. PARTS OF YOUR PROPOSAL:
 - A. Introduction (Why study this problem?)
 - B. Preliminary literature review
 - (1) Statement of the problem (This should be either a hypothesis statement or a research question.)
 - (2) Limitations (Will the results of your study apply to everyone in the world or is your research confined to a subset of the world population that limits the people to whom you can generalize the results? Are you studying all of a problem or just a manageable part? Is there something about the way you selected your survey or study population or your topic that isn't quite what you wanted and which will limit the outcome of your study? And so forth.)
 - C. Methodology
 - (1) How are you going to do your study? (Are you doing a survey? If so, how do your survey questions stem from your research questions or hypotheses? Who do you intend to sample/observe? How?)
 - (2) How will you analyze your data once you receive it? Are you doing library research? How will you do it? What are your search methods?

D. Reference List

Include everything you have cited so far. Don't forget that interviews and television programs also are sources and need to be included if you have referred to them. Under APA style, you do not include anything that you have not cited in text.

3. PARTS OF YOUR THESIS

Most theses in Communication will consist of five chapters, a reference list and appendices. Chapters (in general) are as follows:

- A. Introduction (proposal with revisions, minus the methodology section)
 - B. Survey of pertinent literature
 - C. Methodology (expanded form the proposal)
 - D. Results
 - E. Discussion, conclusions, and recommendations
4. The Graduate Office can provide you with a copy of university requirements for your thesis addressing such things as margins, the need for an abstract and its length, and so on.
 5. Normally, it takes quite a bit of time to get your research question/hypothesis focused so that you can proceed logically. Be ready to spend several months at this level, in addition to the time it takes to do your actual research.

ORAL DEFENSE PROTOCOL

1. Notice of an impending oral defense of an exit option should be posted by the permanent advisor/thesis committee chair so that interested faculty and students may attend. The announcement should contain the name of the student and the title of the creative project/thesis, the day and time of the oral defense, and the location.
1. Prior to the time and date of the oral defense, the exit option committee may wish to convene in private for 10-15 minutes, after which the candidate and the public may be summoned.
2. The candidate should prepare an oral presentation explaining the origin of her/his exit option project, developmental process, methodology, results/findings, and conclusions (20-30 minutes).
3. The candidate will answer questions (after the oral presentation) from members of the exit option committee.
4. After the members of the committee have satisfied their curiosity, given objections, or provided input, the candidate may entertain questions from the participating public (faculty members, fellow graduate students or friends).
5. The candidate will then be excused.
6. The exit option committee members will deliberate whether to pass or fail all or part of the exit option, which parts may need revision, and which grade to assign to the exit option.
7. The candidate is then summoned back and the chair of the committee will inform the

student of the action taken (pass/fail) and the grade given for the thesis.

9. If the exit option is a thesis, all thesis committee members will sign the Thesis Approval Sheet of the thesis proper assuming, of course, that no further revisions are necessary.
10. If the degree candidate has chosen the thesis option, the candidate must place at least three copies of the thesis, along with three copies of a thesis abstract, with the Library Archives office at the University Library for processing and binding. The library will send the final copies of the abstract to the Graduate Office as proof of completion. If the degree candidate has chosen the creative project option, then the candidate must provide a clean copy of the project with all finalized supporting materials for the department library.
11. It is common courtesy to provide the chair of your exit option committee with a bound copy of your thesis/creative project. (This is in addition to the three (3) copies requested by the Graduate School.) It is not required, however.
12. In order to receive final department clearance, all revisions requested by the committee must be made and resubmitted to the exit option chair for verification of compliance. Only then will a student receive departmental clearance for graduation.