GSPM Master’s Thesis Guidelines

“If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?”
---Albert Einstein

Revised and Updated September 2014
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Introduction

A Master’s Thesis can be the culminating achievement of your course of study at the GSPM. It entitles you to claim genuine mastery with respect to an aspect of the world your program prepares you to join, because to complete a Master’s Thesis requires you not only to comprehend what experts know, but also to add to that knowledge through original research.

Be aware from the start that this intellectual and largely solitary project demands a hard sustained effort through two semesters. However, the rewards for those who hit the finish tape on this marathon are considerable. You will have the basis for a publishable work to be read by your fellow experts in the field. You will have gained the confidence to take on similar projects entailing a literature review, original research, and analysis of your findings. Both your final deliverables and your enhanced self-confidence will help you obtain what you want: better jobs, more contracts and work assignments, or perhaps admission to a Ph.D. program.

We want to help you achieve your goal on time, so you do not incur additional costs and headaches. Don’t wait long before asking a question or voicing a concern.

This document contains rules and basic information for writing a Master’s Thesis at the GSPM.

Rules

Students in the Political Management and Strategic Public Relations programs who commit to writing a Master’s Thesis enroll in PMGT6498-6499.10; Legislative Affairs students enroll in LGAF6299-6300.LH

Each course earns 3 credit hours toward your degree. While the courses may be taken in one semester, we strongly suggest that you schedule them over a two-semester period of time. Cramming thesis work into a single semester is a very difficult proposition, and can often lead to disappointing results.
The *PMGT6498-6499.10* sequence will fulfill GSPM core course requirements; students not taking the Thesis option will take PMGT6495-Political Power and Practice for 3 credits, and fill the remaining three credits with an elective.

*LGAF6299-6300.LH* fulfills the requirements for the Master’s degree in Legislative Affairs.

For Political Management, you must have completed 24 hours of Master's degree studies before you can sign up for the thesis courses, and you must have a grade point average of 3.33 (B+).

**Steps for Signing Up for PMGT6498.10 or LGAF6299.LH**

1. Discuss thesis ideas with Dr. Michael Cornfield (corn@gwu.edu) and/or your Program Director. Your main goals in these preliminary discussions are to focus your interests down to a manageable topic, and start reading intensively on the topic so you can develop the first version of your research question.

What’s the difference between a topic and a research question? That’s one of many crucial distinctions taken up in a helpful way in Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research* (Chicago, paperback, 3rd edition, 2008). This book is indispensable to your thesis work. Purchase it now, skim it once, and refer to it often.

2. Contact Suzanne Farrand (sfarrand@gwu.edu), Director of Academic Administration, who will register you for the course. You will not be able to register for PMGT6498 or LGAF6299 until you have been approved to do so by Dr. Cornfield.

3. Submit a Thesis Proposal or Prospectus of three to five pages that states your research question, results from a preliminary literature review, plan of inquiry, and timetable for completion of your research, writing and revisions. Based on this document, Dr. Cornfield will put together your Thesis Committee, consisting of a Director and Reader, both generally drawn from the full-time faculty of your program.

And then….you are off! Your final product will usually run between 75 and 150 pages of double-spaced and properly margined text, with additional pages for endnotes, bibliography, and appendices. Theses based largely on quantitative analysis run between 35 and 50 pages of text.

**Grades for PMGT6498-6499**

You will automatically receive the grade of "IPG" ["in progress"] for the PMGT6498 and LGAF6299 courses. When you have finished your thesis and it is approved by Dr. Cornfield (Thesis Director) and a full-time faculty member who serves as Thesis Reader, you will receive the grade of "CR" ["credit"]. There is no oral examination associated with the Master's Thesis.
The Completed Thesis
The completed thesis must be uploaded to the ETD Website and The ETD Approval Form completed with signatures, and submitted to Suzanne Farrand. The thesis must be approved by the Library ETD Administrator (for formatting) and Suzanne Farrand by the date indicated in the calendar below.

Extension of Time for Thesis
If your thesis takes longer than two semesters and you have completed all other requirements for graduation, you are required to stay continuously enrolled to keep your degree status active (please contact Suzanne Farrand). You will incur a registration fee for Continuous Enrollment, but no tuition charges. However, if you require more than three semesters to complete your thesis, you will be required to register for 1 credit of Continuing Research, which carries both the registration fee and tuition charges.

Suggested Readings
In addition to The Craft of Research, consider purchasing the following books from the GW Bookstore; they are all listed under PMGT6498.

- Kate Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations (Chicago, paperback, most recent edition).

These books will be very helpful as you formulate your research question and thesis statement, hone the major concepts along the spine of your argument, and write your thesis (which you should start well before you think you are “ready!”)

Calendar for Thesis Work

Your timetable to produce your thesis should work backward from one of the following dates. These apply for those students already engaged in the process as well as those just beginning.

Fall 2015 Graduation:

- November 9: Master's Thesis final copy must be submitted to Dr. Cornfield for Fall 2015 graduation (this is our departmental deadline). This means that your Thesis Committee should have had the opportunity to see earlier drafts, made comments and suggestions, and that the final copy you submit on this day is as close to perfection as you can make it.

- December 7: Last day to submit master's thesis for Fall 2015 graduation. This means that Dr. Cornfield has read your thesis, marked it up, you have made the appropriate changes; the Thesis
Reader has read your cleaned up version, has commented on it, and has given it back to you for revisions.

· January 11: The completed ETD Approval Form must be submitted to Suzanne Farrand and your final Master’s thesis should be uploaded to the ETD Website. The thesis must be approved by the Library ETD Administrator (for formatting) and Suzanne Farrand by January 15.

Spring 2015 Graduation:

· March 20: Master's Thesis final copy must be submitted to Dr. Cornfield for Spring 2015 graduation (this is our departmental deadline). This means that your Thesis Committee should have had the opportunity to see earlier drafts, made comments and suggestions, and that the final copy you submit on this day is as close to perfection as you can make it.

· April 24: Last day to submit master's thesis for Spring 2015 graduation. This means that Dr. Cornfield has read your thesis, marked it up, you have made the appropriate changes; the Thesis Reader has read your cleaned up version, has commented on it, and has given it back to you for revisions.

· May 1: The completed ETD Approval Form must be submitted to Suzanne Farrand and your final Master’s thesis should be uploaded to the ETD Website. The thesis must be approved by the Library ETD Administrator (for formatting) and Suzanne Farrand by May 15.

Summer 2015 Graduation:

· July 17: Master's Thesis final copy must be submitted to Dr. Cornfield for Summer 2015 graduation (this is our departmental deadline). This means that your Thesis Committee should have had the opportunity to see earlier drafts, made comments and suggestions, and that the final copy you submit on this day is as close to perfection as you can make it.

· August 3: Last day to submit master's thesis for Summer 2015 graduation. This means that Dr. Cornfield has read your thesis, marked it up, you have made the appropriate changes; the Thesis Reader has read your cleaned up version, has commented on it, and has given it back to you for revisions.

· August 10: The completed ETD Approval Form must be submitted to Suzanne Farrand and your final Master’s thesis should be uploaded to the ETD Website. The thesis must be approved by the Library ETD Administrator (for formatting) and Suzanne Farrand by August 20.
The Format of a Thesis

A Master’s Thesis has a standard format that you will be expected to follow. Many of the specifics are contained in the GSPM Style Guide. The basic elements are as follows; more details follow in the appendix.

Title Page
(must strictly conform to style)

Acknowledgements
(optional)

Table of Contents

List of Figures
(required if used)

List of Tables
(required if used)

The Thesis Statement
(A succinct summary of your purpose, findings and conclusions.)

Chapter 1
(Your introductory chapter typically contains background information, your research question, and a description of the chapters to follow.)

Chapter 2 through Chapter x
(Normally, about 6 or so chapters, containing pertinent highlights from your literature review, a detailed description of your method of inquiry, your findings, their implications, and your conclusion)

Appendices
(optional)

Bibliography
Electronic Master’s Theses

The GW library no longer houses hard copies of Master’s theses. Rather, they are stored in an electronic archive used by universities across the country. Please see the following website for information on how to submit your thesis electronically: [http://library.gwu.edu/etd/submission-process](http://library.gwu.edu/etd/submission-process). Information on best practices for formatting your document for electronic submission can be found at: [http://library.gwu.edu/etd/best-practices](http://library.gwu.edu/etd/best-practices).

When It is Finally Over
You will get no letter grade (like A, B+, B), but you will simply “Pass” and get “Credit.” Thus, the “grade” for the thesis is not computed in your overall grade point average. Once Dr. Cornfield and your Thesis Reader have approved the final version, you have submitted electronic copy through the GWU ETD Website, had your submission approved by the Library ETD Administrator and by Suzanne Farrand, then you are finished!!
APPENDIX: Footnotes, Title Page, and Table of Contents Details

Footnotes, according to Chicago Manual

This is the preferred way of doing footnotes for your paper; this should cover about 90 percent of your footnote needs. My predecessor’s comments are in bold, italicized. Follow this and we will give you no grief. RefWorks makes it easy.


3. Ibid., 5-8. *Refers to citation immediately preceding it.*


5. Ibid., 145-46. *Book citation, following directly a previous citation.* (Note: page number is 145-46, not 145-146).


8. Marc Mahan, “The Life of Nathan Dane,” The Nathan Dane Archival Collaborative. Available at http://primaryresearch.org/PRTHB/Dane/biography.htm. *An article from a website. Note, no underlining of URL. If the website is time-sensitive, add the date accessed (“accessed March 14, 2007.”). Further, “website” is the preferred spelling for CMS; other spellings of course are around: “Web site,” “Website,” “web site.” The thinking is that in a few years, we'll all be uniform around “website,” so you might as well be ahead of the curve. The word “e-mail” is still the preferred designation, although “email” is probably where we are headed.*


15. Jones interview. A later citation (if it directly followed footnote 14, of course, it would be ibid.).

The Title Page

Thesis Title in Initial Capitals and Small Letters (Single-space the title if more than one line)
by "[Your Name]"

"[Degrees held, dates conferred, and name of conferring institutions]"

List your lower degrees first, then your higher degrees

Example:
B.A. in Accounting, May 2006, University of Maryland
M.S. in Finance, June 2008, University of Maryland

A Thesis submitted to

The Faculty of
College of Professional Studies
of The George Washington University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Professional Studies

"[Month Day, Year Degree Conferred]"
Acknowledgments (Optional; Delete this page if you do not use it)

The author wishes to (text must be double-spaced)

Table of Contents (Text must be double-spaced)

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List of Figures (Required if there are Figures.) ........................................................... iii
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You may opt to delete the leading dots below if you encounter difficulty converting your
document to PDF or if there is a problem with justification (i.e. you cannot get your table
headers to line up on the left-hand side.)