

Thesis Preparation and Submission

- ❑ The culmination of the M.A. is the Master's Thesis. The thesis is an original scholarly work which demonstrates a graduate student's ability to explore, develop, and organize materials relating to a certain topic or problem in a field of study. The goal of the master's thesis is not only to pursue research and investigation, but also to write an extended scholarly statement clearly, effectively and directly. This is the demonstration of your ability to conduct original research and present the written results.

It is very important for students not to underestimate the amount of time that the entire thesis writing project will require (research, analysis, and editorial process). The entire process will take between **12 and 18 months**. See [Writing the Thesis](#) for guidelines pertaining to time management and planning.

- ❑ Students in the M.A. Program should work closely with their major advisor at all times and should meet with them frequently to discuss their course work, research interests and progress. Students are also expected to work with the major advisor from the time of being fully classified, if not before, in the development of a thesis.
- ❑ Following [University Policy](#), a thesis committee is made up of 2-3 persons who are regular, full time tenured or tenure track members of the Anthropology faculty. Emeritus faculty, faculty in the Early Retirement Program (FERP), and regular faculty in a department/program other than Anthropology may serve as third members, but not as chairs or second members (except in very unusual circumstances). Lecturers may serve as third members of a thesis committee only in exceptional circumstances. This must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate Division as well as by the Graduate Committee of the Department of Anthropology.
- ❑ All students in the Bioanthropology emphasis of the anthropology MA program must submit a formal thesis/creative work project proposal to their thesis committee before enrolling in ANTH 898 (*Master's Thesis*). The proposal must conform to the [Proposal Guidelines](#).

Two forms must accompany your final accepted proposal when filed with a student's Thesis Committee Chair. **Both forms must be typed and signed by all of your committee members.**

(1) [Proposal for Culminating Experience](#)

(2) Approval Page for MA Thesis/Project Proposal (see [MA Thesis Proposal Guidelines](#))

- ❑ Before preparing a draft of your thesis, download a copy of the [Thesis Preparation and Submission Guidelines](#) on the Graduate Division website. Do not use a previously prepared thesis as an example of the approved style or format.
- ❑ You should register for ANTH 898 only after significant progress has been made in researching and writing the thesis/project. The semester that you register for ANTH 898 should be your *last* semester.
- ❑ A *complete final draft* (NOT a first draft or a partial draft) of the thesis must be in the hands of all thesis committee members *at least* by October 15 (for Fall graduation) or March 15 (for Spring Graduation) in order to allow time for corrections, editing, and final reading and presentation to the Graduate Division.

- ❑ The *complete final draft* is a draft that has already been extensively edited in its entirety by your *entire committee* and includes all pages (chapters, tables, figures, references, table of contents, cover pages, appendices, etc.). Do not under any circumstances turn in a first draft on October 15 or March 15 and expect to graduate that semester.
- ❑ Faculty members are generally not available for consultation, thesis reading or similar activities during the summer or winter breaks. Students should schedule consultations and submissions of drafts accordingly.
- ❑ When you have completed your thesis and gotten final approval from your committee, you must submit a bound copy of your thesis to the Graduate Coordinator. It is also customary to submit a bound copy to the chair of your thesis committee.
- ❑ University policy mandates that you must complete the M.A. degree before enrolling in a Ph.D. program. University policy states that a student pursuing a graduate degree at San Francisco State University may not simultaneously enroll and complete course work for the purpose of meeting requirements for any other degree offered by this or any other institution of higher education. Each degree must be completed in its entirety before work may be taken for the purpose of meeting requirements for a new degree.

Directions for the First Draft

Follow the directions below precisely when submitting drafts of your thesis. Do not place your committee members in the awkward position of telling you that you did not follow directions.

- ❑ The first draft should be a *complete draft* (including all chapters, figures, literature cited, etc.). Do not give committee members individual chapters.
- ❑ Do not submit drafts by email.
- ❑ Do not give your committee members computer disks, CDs, or other media instead of a paper copy of your draft.
- ❑ Do not staple your draft (keep pages together with a binder clip)
- ❑ Make sure that all pages are numbered
- ❑ All chapters should start with the number and title of the chapter
- ❑ Your committee members are not copy editors. All of the following should be completed *before* you turn in the first draft:
 - ◆ Check and double-check to make sure that all of your citations have a corresponding entry in the literature cited
 - ◆ Spell check and *proofread* before giving your draft to your committee
 - ◆ Before you begin writing you should get the two essential writing manuals listed below. Get them and read them. Keep them where you write for reference.

Turabian, Kate L. 1996. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th edition (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing). University of Chicago Press.

Strunk, William Jr., E. B. White, Charles Osgood, and Roger Angell. 2000. *The Elements of Style*. Allyn and Bacon.
 - ◆ Organize your thesis into logical chapters that have clearly stated relationships to one another (see [Researching and Writing the Thesis](#)); it is not your committee members' responsibility to organize your thesis

Master's Thesis Requirements

A candidate for the Master of Arts degree in the Department of Anthropology can satisfy the culminating experience requirement of the university by the submission of a thesis. A master's thesis should be based on original investigation and must demonstrate scholarship and critical judgment, as well as familiarity with methods of research and relevant literature in the candidate's field. The thesis should be at a high level of originality and examine a problem in depth.

A thesis for the MA Program in Anthropology should be between 100 - 150 pages including tables, equations and figures (bibliography and appendices are excluded). The philosophical, methodological or procedural, and synthetic or analytical scope of a thesis must be both deeper and broader than that of a term paper in course work. A thesis bears a close correspondence to an academic monograph substantiating a specific view.

Evaluation of the Thesis

The Department of Anthropology regards the MA Thesis as an important stage in a student's intellectual development. It is necessary for students to leave the MA Program with an awareness of their achievements and a clear perspective on areas where their cognitive abilities were enhanced. In order to provide a constructive assessment, committees are asked to closely examine submitted theses in accord with these guidelines.

The purpose of the thesis is to give evidence of a student's abilities in collecting and evaluating information, critically analyzing theories in the chosen area of inquiry, and constructing, testing and defending a coherent argument. The thesis should also demonstrate a student's ability to present research results concisely and in a scholarly form. The master's thesis should demonstrate that the candidate is capable of original and independent work. A literature review is an essential part of the thesis for it frequently establishes the basis for a thesis' claim to originality. In particular, elements of the thesis that are considered to constitute original scholarship and an advancement of knowledge must be clearly indicated.

General Criteria

The MA Thesis is evaluated using the criteria below. It is important for students to realize that the preparation of a thesis is an iterative process. That is, a thesis will undergo multiple drafts and revisions in close consultation with the student's thesis committee. Each draft is evaluated in regard to the criteria below. While it is acceptable for the first draft of a thesis to be deficient in one or more of the categories below, the final accepted draft of the thesis must satisfy all of the criteria. The department does not use a grading scale for the criteria below. Students are required to make revisions until all of the criteria are satisfied.

Focus. A thesis must have relevance to the research problem and argument. It is crucial that the thesis retain a focus on the stated research problem and the proposed argument. It should develop a clear sense of core

arguments, establish their relationship to the question or research problem being posed, and sustain a focused development of the argument throughout the thesis. For every paragraph of a thesis there should be an answer to the question: So what?

Literature. A thesis must make thorough and critical use of a wide range of literature and theories. The student must clearly provide evidence of the range of literature and a critical analysis of that literature in relation to their stated research problem. It must also be clear that the student has a good understanding of the literature.

Argument. It is essential that a thesis take up an independent position in relation to the relevant literature on the topic. The thesis must clearly demonstrate a depth and breadth beyond merely a literature review to establish a clear relation between the literature and the research, drawing conclusions and making connections not immediately evident in the existing literature itself. It must pursue analysis in addition to description, and the production of a line of reasoning going beyond mere reading and a descriptive account of data (where relevant). In other words, the thesis must present a coherently organized argument. The thesis must clearly identify a formulated position on the topic and support therefore with arguments, dealing with arguments against as well as for it, and arrive at some sort of conclusion. This is particularly important in a thesis; by definition a thesis needs to actually have a "thesis".

Research. A thesis must have an adequate research design and execution with a demonstrated consistency of interpretation. Committees should scrutinize the research design, its appropriateness for the thesis, and the adequacy of its execution. They should look for evidence of an appreciation of the range of different methodologies and of how the chosen research design suits the topic, as well as its possible limitations. It is also essential that the data generated and discussed are consistent with and support the arguments and interpretations put forward.

Presentation. Spelling, grammar, correct use of citations and construction of a bibliography must be impeccable. The literature cited must accurately represent all sources and reading. Material contained in tables or graphs must be clearly and adequately presented, and sources provided. The thesis must conform to the University Graduate Division Thesis Writing Guidelines. The quality of expression is also very important. The thesis must structure and organize the topic well. The thesis must have *coherence*, that is, successive sentences should relate to each other, as should successive sections of the essay, and the grammar should make sense. The thesis must also have *unity*, that is, everything should be clearly related to thesis topic and to the propositions discussed. The thesis must be structured in an appropriate academic style, containing those sub-sections required to organize the material with suitable sub-headings to signify the progression and structure of its arguments. The contents page must correspondingly give a clear indication of the structure of the thesis. The thesis must be more than a collection of manuscripts. All components must be integrated into a cohesive unit with a logical progression from one section/chapter to the next. In order to ensure that the thesis has continuity, connecting texts that provide logical "bridges" between different sections/chapters are recommended.