

Thesis Guidelines for Students at Webster Vienna Private University

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Introduction

Writing a thesis or conducting a thesis project is one of the most challenging and yet rewarding academic experiences a student faces at any level. It provides them with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to undertake independent research appropriate to their academic level as well as develop and apply discipline relevant research designs, techniques, and methods or produce a major independent project reflective of and appropriate to their respective field. Furthermore, it serves as evidence of successful completion to a long stretch of studies, thereby stimulating the transition from one degree-cycle to the next or from university to a working life.

The following presents, in sequence, universal rules pertaining to the registration, preparation and assessment of bachelor and master theses and those respectively specific to first and second cycle degrees.

1. Universal rules

- 1.1. In order to earn an Austrian accredited degree in any field and at any level requires that students successfully complete a thesis project including preparation, submission and approval by at least two qualified individuals, a supervisor (first reader) and reader (second reader).
 - 1.1.1. Individuals authorized to serve as thesis supervisors or readers are to be made available by the respective academic departments.
 - 1.1.2. Theses supervisors must hold a PhD or equivalent in the respective discipline of the thesis topic and fall into one of the following groups:
 - Assistant, Associate or Full Professors of WVPU or any of Webster University's campuses
 - Status-track faculty of another accredited university in the US or European Higher Education Area
 - 1.1.3. Thesis readers may be any individual of category 1.1.2 as well as individuals and Other Scientific Staff of WVPU explicitly approved by the respective departments.
- 1.2. Any student that fails to deliver and receive approval for his/her thesis project, but successfully completes a capstone course (or its programmatic equivalent) may still receive a US accredited degree.
- 1.3. The specific quantity of credit for a thesis or thesis project as well as the specific requirements in terms of content and length will vary between cycle level and discipline and must be made available in writing to students via the departments overseeing the respective degree programs. However, at no point may the discipline and cycle specific standards fall below those presented in this document.

- 1.4. Students are solely responsible to consult with the librarian regarding the requirements for the thesis submission to the library.
- 1.5. A thesis or thesis project may not be substituted for a core course in any first-cycle program.
- 1.6. Students should expect that the editing and approval processes preceding the final thesis acceptance/non-acceptance may take considerable time and subsequently could have an impact on the actual graduation date.
 - 1.6.1. Students are solely responsible to complete and receive approval for their thesis before graduating.
 - 1.6.2. The time required for the supervisor and reader to review the student's thesis or thesis project as well as the time allocated to conduct any additional editing may not be shortened to meet a student's desired graduation date.

2. Universal Registration Rules

- 2.1. Students must complete all of the required courses of their major (or both in the case of double majors) before formally registering for a thesis or thesis project. However, students are strongly encouraged to begin preparing for their thesis or thesis project as early as possible.
- 2.2. Registration for a thesis must consume no less than two terms or one semester and last between one semester and may take as long as one academic year between registration and completion.

3. Universal Preparation Rules

- 3.1. Students must follow a specific sequence of actions when preparing to write their thesis or produce their thesis project.
 - 3.1.1. Students must fill in all appropriate forms in proper sequence. The precise forms will differ depending on degree cycle and discipline.
 - 3.1.1.1. The supervisor (first reader), reader (second reader) and department head must sign the Thesis Declaration Form
 - 3.1.2. Regardless of level or discipline, students must produce a complete Thesis Proposal including:
 - Introduction summarizing a research question
 - Initial Literature Review on the topic organized around all major concepts identified in the research question thereby identifying an existing research gap
 - Theory-based hypotheses deriving from the research question
 - Initial proposal on the methodology used to test the hypotheses
 - Initial outline of the thesis or thesis project
 - A brief analysis of the limits and uncertainties involved in the research
 - Statement of anticipated outcomes
 - Any proposed use of human subjects
 - Any potential use of university equipment

- A bibliography or cited references section depending on the standards of the respective discipline.
- 3.1.3. If human subjects are required to complete the thesis or thesis project, students must obtain written permission from Webster University's Institutional Review Board before beginning to collect any data on human subjects beyond the pilot study stage of the thesis.
 - 3.1.3.1. Students are solely responsible to allow enough time for approval.
 - 3.1.4. Students must submit all relevant forms and the written proposal and receive approval before the last day of the term prior to the term or semester when they intend to begin.
 - 3.1.4.1. Students are solely responsible for preparing all materials and getting approval in time.
 - 3.1.4.2. Academic departments are required to establish appropriate procedures with announced deadlines for submission and approval of thesis proposals.

4. Universal Assessment Rules

- 4.1. Students must deliver theses according to the most updated formatting and citation rules of Webster University, the details of which vary between undergraduate and graduate programs, and must be provided by the respective academic departments.
- 4.2. The thesis or thesis project is considered a draft, and thus incomplete until a final version has been approved in full by the supervisor and reader according to the appropriate procedures and level defined by the respective academic departments.
- 4.3. It is the sole responsibility of the thesis supervisor to forward the thesis to the (second) reader after he/she has approved it.
- 4.4. Both the supervisor and the reader provide a written assessment of the work to the respective departments.
- 4.5. Upon final approval, students must deliver a digital version of the thesis in PDF format and at least one bound hard copy to their respective academic department.
- 4.6. Students are required to adhere to any discipline specific rules as defined by the academic departments.
- 4.7. Grading standards depend on level and discipline, but must be credit/no credit, pass/fail, or a letter grade.
- 4.8. Students who do not meet the respective departmental standards for their thesis will not receive any credit.

5. Undergraduate thesis rules

- 5.1. Credit for successfully completed undergraduate theses depend on the discipline and are specified in the corresponding course curricula.

5.2. The course coding for all undergraduate theses is 4620 (for Media Communications), 4700 (for International Relations), 4825 (for Psychology), or 4970 (for Business Administration and Management).

5.2.1. No other course may be substituted as a thesis.

6. Undergraduate thesis registration

6.1. Specific registration rules insofar as they apply are described in Section 2 and determined by the respective departments.

7. Undergraduate thesis assessment

7.1. Undergraduate theses receive a letter grade (A,B,C,D,F).

7.2. Final approval of an undergraduate thesis is the sole responsibility of the supervisor.

8. Graduate thesis rules

8.1. Credit for successfully completed graduate theses depend on the discipline and are specified in the corresponding course curricula.

8.2. The course coding for all graduate theses is 6250 (for Business Administration, Finance, International Relations, and Marketing) or 6100 (for Psychology).

8.2.1. No other course may be substituted as a thesis.

8.2.2. Students writing a thesis in International Relations must also register for INTL 6900, an anchor course for document tracking and processing.

8.2.3. Students writing a graduate thesis must also fill out the requisite forms allowing the thesis to be published by ProQuest in its digital database.

8.2.3.1. Formal submission of the thesis to ProQuest is the responsibility of the respective departments.

9. Graduate thesis registration

9.1. Specific registration rules insofar as they apply are described in Section 2 and determined by the respective departments.

10. Graduate thesis assessment

10.1. In addition to universal submission rules, graduate theses must meet the following additional requirements:

10.1.1. Students must publicly defend their thesis.

10.1.1.1. Departments are required to schedule thesis defenses and announce them with two weeks notice.

- 10.1.1.2. Students must submit together with their thesis an unsigned Thesis Approval Form, which is signed by the supervisor and (second) reader, the department head and either the Director or Associate Director.
- 10.1.1.3. Graduate theses may be graded with letter grades or credit/no-credit depending on respective disciplines and academic departments. The current default grading system is credit/no-credit.