

Guidelines for Graduate Thesis

PSYC 6100

MA in Psychology with an Emphasis in Counseling Psychology

**Webster Vienna Private University
Psychology Department**

Steps for thesis completion

PSYC 6100

This document is a departmental supplement to the Thesis Guidelines for Students at Webster Vienna Private University (WVPU), adopted by the Executive Board and approved by the University Council on October 7, 2016.

This document will guide you through the process, explaining formal procedures and providing you with helpful hints. It is of utmost importance that you read this document thoroughly and well ahead of your intention to formally register as a thesis-writing student.

THE PROCESS

*MA students normally register for the thesis course in the 2nd year (3rd + 4th semester) of their studies.

1. Find a supervisor and a topic.

You will need to find a thesis supervisor, as the department will not assign one for you. Please review our research faculty's research areas and methods. Please note that not all teaching faculty are eligible to supervise your thesis, even though you are welcome to discuss your ideas with any faculty member.

Approximately two terms before you intend to register for thesis credit hours, you need to start approaching eligible instructors with your ideas about a thesis topic. From as early in your studies as possible, you should listen closely to suggestions about possible research topics in your courses. Instructors may mention that certain issues are worth researching in more depth, some areas have not been researched sufficiently, or particular studies could be replicated for a new region, different circumstances, etc.

The topic can be within the area of counseling psychology, broadly defined, but it doesn't have to be. It can be within any discipline that falls within the research area/specialization of a faculty member, see

http://webster.ac.at/sites/webster.ac.at/files/attachments/thesis_areas_psych_revised_2018_0.pdf.

2. Formal Submission of Thesis Intention and Topic

Students are required to complete the "Thesis Declaration of Intent Form" and turn it in to the Thesis Coordinator. The form will require a working title for the thesis - which can be modified later. Any likely special requirements (type of facility, room, tests, equipment, materials, etc.) should also be indicated.

Please see the [table of due dates and deadlines](#) in order to submit the “Declaration of Intent Form” in a timely manner.

3. Committee Meeting Presentation, Proposal Approval and “Thesis Approval Form”

Following formal approval to undertake the preparatory work on the topic with the named Supervisor, the student will begin to work on a thesis proposal in which the aims, design, methods, planned analyses and other relevant material are described (please see Appendix A for more detailed information). This thesis proposal will be reviewed and corrected by the Supervisor. Please see the [table of due dates and deadlines](#) in order to submit the “Thesis Proposal Form” in a timely manner.

The students are asked to present their proposal in front of the “Thesis Committee” consisting of at least a three-person panel (Supervisor, faculty member, and one other). Students may need to amend the written proposal following this discussion. The students will receive a written feedback sheet to document the needed changes. The corrected/final proposal, after being approved by the thesis supervisor must be sent to the Thesis Coordinator along with the “[Thesis Approval Form](#)” which must be signed by the Thesis Supervisor, Head of the Department and Second Reader.

4. Design experiment/study

As soon as the student receives approval to conduct their study they should already begin designing the study. This may include finding the questionnaires or material to be used in the study, familiarizing themselves with the equipment etc.

5. Institutional Review Board (IRB) Application (Ethics Committee Review)

The final approval to commence data collection will be contingent upon submission to Webster University’s IRB ethics committee and their approval. It is necessary to send the IRB application one term before starting the thesis (i.e. end of Fall I after the changes are made according to the Thesis Review Panel, as noted above, for a Spring graduation, and end of Spring I for a Fall graduation). Whether or not the IRB ethics committee extensively examines the proposal will depend upon a number of factors: the involvement of other collaborating institutions and the identification by the panel of potentially intrusive, risky, harmful, or otherwise ethically and socially contentious procedures. The IRB will decide, if the thesis will need an Exempt Review, an Expedited Review or a Full Board Review. The Exempt and Expedited Reviews can take up to two weeks. The Full Board Review can take up to four weeks. For more information, please see www.webster.edu/irb/policy/. It is common that the IRB requests more information or changes in the design, thus beginning the process in a timely manner is critical.

Before submitting the thesis application to the IRB committee all students must complete an online ethics training. You can find it here:

<https://php.nihtraining.com/users/login.php> . Upon successful completion of the online training the IRB application can be submitted.

All MA theses must go through an ethics committee. If another collaborating institution wishes that the proposal be submitted through their own research ethics committee, Webster University will accept the outcome of that committee's deliberations as final.

Once the approval of the IRB or another collaborating institute's ethics committee is received, the MA student may add a statement to the consent form stating that the research project has been approved by the given ethics committee, and only then may s/he begin with the experiment.

6. Data Collection

As soon as the student receives approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) s/he may begin the data collection. (Nevertheless, piloting the study would be possible while waiting for the IRB approval)

7. Write the final thesis

More detailed information can be found in Appendix B.

8. Send the final e-copy to the supervisor and thesis coordinator

The thesis will be examined by the Supervisor and the 2nd Reader, who is assigned or invited by the Thesis Coordinator. The final version of the thesis to grade will be sent – electronically – to the Supervisor and Thesis Coordinator by the set deadline. Please see the [table of due dates and deadlines](#) in order to submit the “Final thesis” in a timely manner.

The Coordinator will forward the thesis to the 2nd Reader. The Supervisor is responsible to be sure that there is a Turn-It-In link in Canvas for this assignment as well. The student must also upload their thesis using the Turn-It-In link. The Supervisor and the 2nd Reader have approximately 10 days to grade the thesis and make a list of comments for the student. These necessary changes will be communicated to the student by the Supervisor, preferably in writing.

9. Thesis Defense

The Thesis Defense is the oral examination of the graduate student regarding his/her work. They will be held in Week 8 of the term (Week 16 of the semester) after the student has submitted the electronic version to the Thesis Supervisor. ***The defense date will be set by WVPU in advance, and it is expected that the students and supervisors reserve that day for their appointment.*** The Defense can only be held, if the supervisor and 2nd Reader can attend. A third faculty member will serve as the moderator. The presentations are ca. 20 minutes long and are followed by 20 minutes of questioning.

Directly after the defense, the Supervisor and 2nd Reader will confer on the grading. The grade (A – F) will be given and announced to the student after the Thesis Defense.

The Thesis Defense is a public hearing, thus other faculty members, students and members of the public may attend. The Thesis Coordinator is responsible for making the presentations public.

10. Final Thesis Submission and Final Copies Bound

An electronic copy is submitted to the Thesis Coordinator, Mrs. Nataly Loumba and the Supervisor, as noted above. After the Thesis Defense and after any/all necessary changes were made, the Supervisor will grant the permission to print. The student will then have **THREE** hard-bound copies made and submitted in the following week. The copies must be in a hard-bound cover (no spiral binding) with the name of the student printed on the spine. **Failure to submit the three hard copies will lead to a hold on the student's account and the withholding of the diploma until the task is completed.**

In the case that the student cannot complete his/her work by the set deadline, requests for extension should be made in writing to the Thesis Coordinator, stating the circumstances and the reasons why the work cannot be completed by the due date. The Department Head must give their approval. **ONLY in emergencies will a student be allowed to receive an extension.**

11. Signature page

The student must obtain the signature page from the thesis coordinator and attach it to their thesis.

12. Sign Publication Agreement

The student must obtain the publication agreement from the thesis coordinator and attach it to their thesis.

13. Uploading final thesis on ProQuest

The final thesis must be uploaded on ProQuest, an online platform. The student must make an appointment with the Senior Librarian, Mr. Ben Fasching-Gray, who will provide assistance. Failure to upload to ProQuest will lead to a hold on your account and the withholding of your diploma until the task is completed.

14. IRB Final Form

The student must fill out and send the "End of Project" form to the IRB (Please go to the bottom of this website <http://www.webster.edu/irb/#end> and find the **End of Project Form**). The supervisor must be copied in the e-mail conversation when the student sends this form to the IRB.

General information:

1. The final grading of PSYC 6100 is based on the following three aspects:

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- a. Realization of thesis proposal (proposal, IRB application, study design, data collection, data analysis). Independence and overall effort are important factors.
 - b. Written thesis
 - c. Oral defense
2. Bringing three hard copies of the written thesis to the thesis coordinator as well as uploading the thesis on ProQuest are necessary steps to complete in order to receive “Thesis Clearance” and be able to pick up your diploma from the registrar’s office (Ms. Whitney Isaacs).

For further information on thesis-related issues please contact the Thesis Coordinator Ms. Nataly Loumba, MA (Nataly.Loumba@webster.ac.at)

Appendix A

Thesis Proposal

The following are the necessary pieces of information that must be attached to the MA Thesis Approval Form:

- Required format: APA, 12-point font on A4 single sided pages, double spacing, with margins of 2.54 cm (top and bottom) and 3.17 cm (left and right). Overall, the proposal should be 8-12 pages (excluding references).
- Abstract (200-300 words)
- There should be a very brief review of the relevant literature – enough to establish the context for the research, but not in the detailed format as required in the thesis itself (2 pages would be sufficient for the brief review).
- Arising from that review should be a set of clearly stated aims. The hypotheses that the research addresses should be clear to the reader (approximately ½ to 1 page).
- There should be a simple statement on the design of the study in conventional terminology (e.g., a 2 x 2 factorial design, or development and psychometric evaluation of a questionnaire; survey on ***, etc.)
- The method (approximately 3 – 5 pages, depending upon the complexity of the design) should be described in adequate detail, including the likely number and source of participants, participant inclusion and exclusion criteria, the consent form and information to be given to participants about the research (if relevant) (as appendices), measures to be used, any equipment or special conditions, randomization methods (if relevant), and the overall procedure such as the sequence of steps in the research.
- There needs to be a clear statement of the anticipated data analysis that is consistent with the hypotheses. It is not sufficient to state that a “correlational analysis will be performed”. Students must state which variables will be correlated with one another, what type of correlational analysis will be performed, and so forth in accordance with the type of data to be collected and the various statistical methods. The same point applies to other analytical methods.
- Finally, the proposal should include a reference list (APA format) to the works cited in the text.
- Copies of all questionnaires (copies of the testing material as it applies), the consent form and the demographics form must accompany this form. English translations will need to be attached.

Appendix B

Final Thesis

The final thesis should be between 15.000 and 20.000 words (excluding references, table of contents and other preliminary pages). The thesis should be written in conformity to APA style in its entirety. The print must be in 12-point font on A4 single sided pages, double spacing, with margins of 2.54 cm (top and bottom) and 3.17 cm (left and right). It is to be considered a “print read” research report for a professional journal, with the tables and figures in the text.

The following sections are expected in the thesis and each begins on a new page:

Title Page (required)

Title, author, Webster Vienna Private University, date and following text:

“Master’s thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology.”

- i. Dedication (optional)
- ii. Acknowledgements (optional)
- iii. Preface (optional)
- iv. Table of Contents (required)
- v. List of Tables (required if tables are used)
- vi. List of Figures (required if figures are used)
- vii. Abstract (required) with the Running Head starting here
 1. Introduction (Review of Literature)
 2. Methods
 3. Results
 4. Discussion and Conclusions
 5. List of References (required)
 6. Appendices (optional)

One good source, in addition to WVPU’s Writing Center, is the Purdue University OWL website: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>. There are copies of APA handbooks in the campus library.