

Thesis Guidelines for Students

Approved by the University Council on November 20, 2020

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.

For specific guidelines and procedures, including length, organization and style matters, students should refer to WVPU's *Thesis Process, Content and Minimum Standards*.

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 (for graduate by at least two qualified individuals, a supervisor and 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. Thesis supervisors must hold a PhD or equivalent in the respective discipline of the thesis topic or fall into one of the following groups:
 - Assistant, Associate, Full or Visiting Professors or Lecturers 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 nominated by the respective departments and approved by the Director.
- 1.2. The specific quantity of ECTS 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.
- 1.3. Students are solely responsible to consult with the librarian regarding the requirements for the thesis submission to the library.

1.4. 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.

1.4.1. Students are solely responsible to complete and receive approval for their thesis before graduating.

1.4.2. 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 relevant program requirements prior to 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.

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 may 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
- 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 semester prior to the 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 WVPU, 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, in the case of graduate theses, the reader provide a written assessment of the work to the respective departments and the departments provide those assessments to the Office of the Director prior to scheduling a defense.
- 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 a letter grade of F.

5. Undergraduate thesis rules

- 5.1. ECTS for successfully completed undergraduate theses depend on the discipline and are specified in corresponding study plans.
- 5.2. The course coding for undergraduate theses must be approved for scheduling by the Director or Associate Director.
 - 5.2.1. No other course may be substituted as a thesis.

6. Undergraduate thesis registration

- 6.1. Specific registration rules are determined by the respective departments.
- 6.2. Registration for an undergraduate thesis must be for one semester.

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 corresponding study plans.
- 8.2. The course coding for graduate theses must be approved for scheduling by the Director or Associate Director.
 - 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. Registration for a graduate thesis must be for no less than one semester and no more than two semesters.

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 are to be graded with letter grades.