



University of  
**Pittsburgh**

Graduate School of Public  
and International Affairs

## **Master's Thesis Manual**

Graduate School of Public and International Affairs

University of Pittsburgh

Office of Student Services

## POLICY

1. Students may substitute the writing of a thesis for completion of a capstone seminar. The thesis is worth six credits. The six credits fulfill both the capstone requirement and one free elective. The thesis will be regarded as a requirement for graduation for those selecting this option. Any student wanting to pursue the thesis option **MUST** meet with their faculty advisor, in their first or second term, to discuss research proposal, develop a plan to complete a research project, discuss potential committee members, etc. After this meeting, the student should meet with their Graduate Enrollment Counselor (in the Office of Student Services) to discuss the internal policies and administrative procedures governing the thesis process.
2. Students planning to write a thesis must have earned a minimum GPA of 3.6 and completed a minimum of 24 credits toward their master's degree when they begin the procedure described below. Students **MUST** complete PIA 2003: Seminar in Research Design & Methods, or an equivalent graduate research methods course. Students may be enrolled in PIA 2003 concurrently with the first three credits of the thesis course, PIA 2099: Thesis.
3. The thesis committee must consist of three faculty members, who are recommended by the student's faculty advisor and approved by the director of the student's degree program. The committee may have one adjunct faculty member. **The chair of the committee can only be a member of GSPIA's faculty.** One member of the committee can be from another department in the University or from an appropriate graduate program at another academic institution.
4. Students must register for three thesis credits in their third term under the sponsorship of a faculty thesis committee. In addition to chairing the committee, the chair will also monitor the student's academic progress and submit grades for the PIA 2099, thesis credit courses.
5. The student's thesis committee must accept the proposal by the end of the third term. If the proposal is accepted, the student will register for a further three credits (PIA 2099) in the fourth term and undertake the appropriate research. If the proposal is not accepted, the student will enroll in PIA 2096: Capstone Seminar, during his/her fourth term.
6. The thesis as submitted must adhere to the standards and requirements of the University's *Electronic Theses and Dissertations* (<https://etd.pitt.edu/>) and be of potentially publishable quality.
7. After submission of the thesis, the student will work with his/her thesis chair to schedule a date for the thesis defense. The thesis committee will determine whether the oral defense will be a public defense. After the defense, the committee will sign the Thesis Defense form and submit to the Office of Student Services. The chair will then award a grade of H, S or U (Honors, Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory).
8. After the committee has approved the thesis, the student must submit one electronic document prepared according to the *Electronic Theses and Dissertation* at the University of Pittsburgh, <https://etd.pitt.edu/>.
9. Students also submit the following paper documents to their graduate school:
  - ETD Approval Form: Requires **signatures from your committee** approving the final document on the first page and your **thesis/dissertation advisor's signature** on the second page.
  - One (1) copy of the Thesis Defense Form with signatures.
  - ETD Patent Form (if applicable)
  - Receipt for processing fee (pay at Student Payment Center, G7 Thackeray)
  
  - One (1) copy of the title page.
  - Two (2) copies of the abstract (350 words maximum) **initialed by the committee chair in the upper right corner.**
  - If material copyrighted by others is included in your thesis, attach the copyright permission letter(s) from the copyright owner(s). For more information, see the [Copyright Primer](#) and information on [How to Get Copyright Permission](#).
  - If your thesis contains executable software owned by another party, attach a letter from the owner of the software license granting permission to use it. For more information, see [How to Get Copyright Permission](#).

10. The student will not be permitted in any circumstances to graduate until all procedures for the evaluation of the thesis have been completed.

## PROCEDURES

Candidates for the master's degree thesis are required to demonstrate the capability to plan and complete a project of original research.

### Thesis Overview

A student must be registered in the term during which the thesis overview meeting is scheduled. The thesis overview is a written proposal for the thesis. A student must prepare a thesis proposal for presentation to the committee. The overview requires the student to carefully formulate a plan and permits the committee members to provide guidance in shaping the conceptualization and methodology of that plan. A unanimous vote of the thesis committee is required for the overview. Once approved, the committee will sign the Thesis Overview Proposal form and submit along with a corrected copy of the overview to the Office of Student Services.

### Approval of Research with Human Subjects

If the research proposed in the overview involves human subjects, the University Institutional Review Board (IRB) must approve the proposed research for the Protection of Human Subjects before it may be carried out. The student is responsible for ensuring that all appropriate regulatory approvals are obtained for the proposed research. Information on materials that must be submitted and the procedures that must be followed for an IRB review are available at <http://www.irb.pitt.edu/>.

### Thesis Preparation and Final Oral Examination

The student completes the thesis research and prepares the master's thesis under the direction of the thesis chair, according to the approved overview. In preparing the thesis, the student must follow the University's *Style and Form Manual for Graduate Thesis and Dissertation Preparation* available online at [www.pitt.edu/~graduate/style.html](http://www.pitt.edu/~graduate/style.html).

The completed thesis is submitted to the thesis master's committee for the Defense. The student must be registered in the term during which the Thesis Defense is scheduled. The defense is devoted primarily to the thesis, and an affirmative vote by the majority of the committee members is required to pass. One copy of the Thesis Defense form and one copy of the Electronic Thesis and Dissertations (ETD) Approval Form must be submitted to the Office of Student Services. These documents are due not later than the approved deadline day set each term by the Office of Student Services.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### 1. Responsibilities of the student

- Discuss recommendation for the thesis examining committee with faculty advisor and obtain approval of the committee from the degree program director.
- Obtain the agreement of a faculty member who will agree to serve as thesis chair (must be GSPIA faculty member).
- Register during the terms in which the Thesis Overview Proposal and the Thesis Defense are undertaken.
- Submit signed copies of the Thesis Committee Approval Form and the Thesis Overview Proposal Form at the end of the first registered thesis term to the Office of Student Services.
- Provide sufficient copies of the thesis for the committee's review.
- Schedule a date for the thesis defense, in consultation with the thesis chair.
- Submit all required documents and pay all required fees (see #9 under Policy)

### 2. Responsibilities of the thesis chair

- Direct the student's research activities.
- Chair the thesis committee
- Ensure that the thesis meets the requirements of the University's *Style and Form Manual for Graduate Thesis and Dissertation Preparation*.
- Submit a grade for PIA 2099: Thesis.
- Schedules a date for the thesis defense, in consultation with the student.

### 3. Responsibilities of the thesis examining committee

- Review the thesis proposal and final thesis.

- Vote on the student's thesis overview and thesis defense.

**4. Responsibilities of the Office of Student Services**

- Provide student with the internal policies and procedures governing the thesis option.
- Update and distribute the requisite forms for the thesis option.
- Review and approve the ETD and all supporting documents.
- Enter results of the thesis committee approval, thesis overview proposal and the thesis defense into PeopleSoft, the Student Information System.