

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Writing a thesis is complex, and it can be an intimidating process. The following guidelines on the [Thesis and Disquisition Information and Resources](#) webpage and the [WCU Thesis Guide 8th Edition](#) are designed to help you through each step of the process. You will save yourself a lot of time, trouble, and anxiety by following them.

FAQs

*** Every department is different.* Before you begin any thesis work, consult your advisor or program director about the following questions for more specific details and guidelines:

- **Should I write a thesis?** Theses are not required of all master's candidates in all programs. Writing and completing a thesis is an incredibly rewarding process, of course, so if you would like to take this option, be sure you are ready. Discuss the process with mentors and friends, and be realistic about the time it takes to do it right.
- **Are there prerequisites?** Most departments require specific courses, exams, or approvals before a student can register for Thesis credit. Check with your department/program.
- **What are the major deadlines?** Abstracts, defenses, and final drafts must be completed on a timeline determined both by your program and the Graduate School. Familiarize yourself with these [deadlines](#) at least one semester beforehand, if not sooner in order not to delay your target graduation date.
- **Are there writing "rules" in my discipline?** Learn the citation and style guidelines for academic writing in your field. See [Style Guides by Discipline](#) for a complete list.
- **What are the limits on my topic?** Your academic advisor, thesis director, and/or thesis committee will help you determine whether your research will be limited by Institutional

Review Board ([IRB](#)), geography, or other practicalities. Be sure your thesis is viable, especially if you have pressing deadlines.

- **Who will direct me?** Your Committee members will be your closest allies in this process; choose wisely.

Your Committee

- Your thesis committee is extremely important to the success and completion of your thesis. Be sure to select faculty with whom you want to work closely, and who are willing and able to offer the level of involvement you will need.
- Choose a director (and members) who will be accessible to you at all times throughout the entire thesis process, including your defense, submission, and review processes. If any member of your committee is planning to be absent from campus or otherwise indisposed in the coming semesters, plan ahead. You never know when you'll need advice or a signature.
- Discuss your goals and the direction of your research with your director. He/she will help you formulate a committee, and he/she will formally nominate the other WCU members (usually two) of your committee. You may have additional committee members if needed. All members must be formally approved as holding graduate faculty status.
- The Dean of Graduate School and Research confirms the eligibility of the faculty nominated to your committee based on the [Thesis/Thesis-Exhibition Abstract Form](#) you submit. The Dean will notify you, your committee members, your department head, and your program director once the [Thesis/Thesis-Exhibition Abstract Form](#) is received and your committee is approved.
- *Special information for thesis directors is provided in the [Guide for Thesis Directors](#).*

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Forms

If you are conducting research involving humans or any other live vertebrates, you must submit protocol(s) and IRB forms to the Graduate School and Research office before your thesis abstract can be approved and *prior to beginning your research*.

IRB instructions and forms can be found on the [Human Subjects Institutional Review Board](#) webpage. Your thesis director will be your best guide for filling out these forms. Your IRB protocol must include a Faculty Advisor as part of the investigative team. Initial Review of IRB forms may take up to two weeks.

Resources

Additional resources available on the [Thesis and Disquisition Information and Resources](#) webpage:

- Abstract Guide
- Thesis/Thesis Exhibition Abstract Form
- WCU Thesis Guide
- Style Guides by Discipline
- Formatting Checklist
- Defense Approval Form
- Guide for Thesis Directors