

Rochester Institute of Technology

Master's Thesis Guidelines for Students and Faculty

The objective of this document is to provide guidance for students and faculty committees concerning the planning, conduct, and defense of the master's thesis. These guidelines outline the expectations of the Criminal Justice Department and the Rochester Institute of Technology as well as the responsibilities of the student, thesis supervisor, and committee members.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why do I have to do a Master's thesis?

A thesis is **required** for completion of the MS degree in Criminal Justice. Planning for the thesis should begin as early as possible.

Your thesis is the culmination of your graduate work and an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills that you have acquired through course work and research assistantships, etc. It is intended as a guided, constructive learning experience. It is a chance for you to work in collaboration with a number of faculty members on a research project of mutual interest and to possibly publish manuscripts resulting from the thesis.

2. What is acceptable for a Master's thesis?

The expectation of the Criminal Justice Department is that the master's thesis will involve an *empirical* component. While theoretical frameworks or conceptual models may (and should in many cases) guide the research questions, or be the subject of empirical testing, a strictly theoretical paper is not acceptable for a master's thesis. The thesis may involve quantitative data, qualitative data, or a combination of both types of data.

3. How do I get started?

First, you need to explore possible topics and areas of mutual interest through talking with faculty members and reading the relevant published literature. You may become interested in certain areas as a result of course topics or papers. Your advisor or other faculty members may describe current research projects that may be of interest to you. *Since the Master's time line is quite short, it is important to start exploring and discussing possible thesis topics as early as possible, no later than the end of the first year of the program for full-time students.*

4. Who is on the Master's thesis committee?

RIT guidelines stipulate that for degree programs requiring a Master's thesis, the committee must consist of at least three faculty members: *the supervisor from within the home department, and two committee members (at least one of whom has an academic appointment in the home department).* Your supervisor will assist you in selecting and approaching potential committee members for your thesis.

Once your thesis topic has been determined and your committee has been chosen (and agrees to serve), you can proceed with development of the thesis proposal. You need to complete the *Declaration of Topic and Committee Form*, have it signed by your thesis supervisor, and return it to the Criminal Justice Department.

5. What constitutes the Master's thesis proposal and approval process?

The proposal begins as the *blueprint (Preliminary proposal)* or plan for the thesis and evolves into a more *contractual agreement (Written Proposal)* between the student and his or her thesis committee. The intent of the working proposal is to develop the ideas, obtain input and guidance from the committee, and reformulate the ideas as necessary into a workable and feasible thesis or thesis project. A thesis proposal normally goes through a number of drafts prior to the more formal and public presentation. The supervisor provides feedback and guidance on early drafts of the proposal; other committee members may also be involved at this stage. *It is desirable for all committee members to provide feedback on at least one complete draft of the proposal prior to scheduling the proposal presentation.*

THE PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL

The preliminary proposal is constitutes a brief description of your topic and methods. It represents your initial commitment to a research area, methods, and scope of work. The thesis chairperson and committee members work to refine and guide the student in executing the research project. The elements of the preliminary proposal include the following:

- 1) Working title of your paper.
- 2) A one paragraph description of your topic.
- 3) A paragraph description of your methods, i.e., who is your population (e.g., Rochester police officers, college students); what method(s) will you use (e.g., interviews, surveys); how will you access the data (e.g., interview drug court clients at the Hall of Justice); total number in sample you expect (e.g., N = 20 drug court clients); how you will analyze the data (e.g., utilizing SPSS using cross-tabs and frequencies, and regression).
- 4) A paragraph description of the theoretical framework.
- 5) A paragraph description of the significance of the study (i.e. why is it important) and policy implications.
- 6) A list of fifteen references. The works must from professional periodicals (see instructor for clarification). You will need to have found these in the library/internet but not necessarily read them thoroughly at this point.

THE WRITTEN PROPOSAL

The questions students typically ask are: "*What should be included in the proposal?*" and "*How long should it be?*" Below are detailed guidelines for the sections that must be included in the proposal. With the exception of the abstract, however, the length of each section has not been specified for a number of reasons. What is important is that *sufficient detail and clarity* are provided in each section, particularly concerning the rationale, objectives and methods. As a general guideline, the text of the full proposal should be between 15-25 pages (excluding appendices). Length of each section greatly depends on the particular topic and preferences of the supervisor. For instance, in some cases, the literature review is quite extensive up front (with later searches mostly for the purpose of updates). In other cases, the proposal is shaped based on a few key articles with a more thorough literature search and write up to take place later.

Regardless of length, clarity and conciseness are strongly encouraged. Part of the master's thesis experience is to improve one's writing skills. The written proposal must include the following sections:

- Title page** The cover page must include the title of the thesis proposal, the student's name, degree sought, department, names of the supervisor and committee members, and date.
- Abstract** The one page abstract should not exceed 300 words.
- Introduction** Contains a statement of the problem or issues to be addressed in the proposed study.
- Literature** The review of relevant literature should provide an overview of the field and demonstrate that the student knows the area under investigation. Equally important, this section should provide supporting evidence concerning the rationale, statement of the problem and/or issues to be addressed by the present study.
- Objectives** This section describes the overall purpose, as well as the specific objectives of the present study. In some cases, the objectives may be formulated as research questions. In other cases, such as an evaluation project, the study may address program objectives and/or underlying assumptions. This section of the proposal often includes the researcher's hypotheses or a priori expectations and should be closely linked with the literature in the preceding section.
- Methods** Subsections typically include: study design; sample selection criteria, size, and sampling process; data collection procedures and instruments; and a description of data analysis techniques and statistical software programs to be used. Be as detailed as possible, including the identification of concerns.

- Time Line** Develop a reasonable time line for each phase of the project, including: pilot testing of instruments or procedures, data collection, data analyses and interpretation, and write-up. Specify the anticipated term/year for final defense. Where applicable, institutional review board (IRB) approval should be considered in your timeline.
- References** For the proposal, this may include a list of references already obtained and cited in the literature review section, as well as a list of articles to be obtained (listed separately).
- Appendices** Should contain supporting and descriptive materials, instruments, etc.

CONDUCTING RESEARCH AND WRITING UP THE THESIS

Once you have received approval, you are on your way. Students must keep their thesis supervisors informed of their progress. It is very important to inform your supervisor of any problems that may be encountered that could jeopardize the validity of the study. You will address these problems together and find workable compromises. If there are major changes to the study design, sampling or other aspects of methodology along the way, all committee members should be apprised of these changes. Your supervisor will guide you in these matters. Make every effort to meet with your committee on a regular basis.

You should not leave the entire thesis writing until after data collection and data analyses are completed. For instance, when you have breaks in data collection, you may want to work on your literature and methods sections. You are encouraged to refer to published guides for thesis writing (re: outlines, organizing, formatting, etc.).

Discuss with your supervisor whether he or she wishes to see preliminary sections of the thesis prior to production of a full draft. Some committee members may also be willing to provide feedback on specific draft sections in line with their expertise. Typically, however, your supervisor reads and provides comments on preliminary drafts and helps you decide when it is ready to submit to the full committee. Keep in mind that *before* allowing you to proceed to the thesis defense your committee has the prerogative (and will typically exercise it) to request revisions.

THE PROJECT-BASED THESIS APPROACH

What distinguishes a project based thesis from the more traditional thesis described above?

The project based thesis is similar to the thesis in rigor, but differs in terms of its multifaceted approach to a problem or set of inter-related research questions. The expectation is that the project based thesis will commence with the written proposal to be shared with a chair and two other faculty members.

The formal written proposal will consist of a literature review that helps identify and draw upon the relevant literature pertaining to each project executed but the delivery of the proposal elements is subject to agreement between the chairperson, committee, and student. This should take the form of a written, but flexible, plan of action and explicit deliverables with timelines for completion. This effort will, for example, be used to identify testable hypotheses for sub-projects within the completed thesis. The unifying feature of the project based thesis will be a segment of the literature review should that explicitly addresses how each facet (which may be in the form of different chapters or sections) is tied together by an overarching theme.

Planning

The project based thesis chair and candidate should agree upon an initial set of project outlines, with the recognition that project expansion and alteration may emerge from the ongoing research efforts.

Administration

The student must identify a chairperson who will advise on the entirety of the project and at least two other faculty experts who will serve on the committee. If necessary, students may elect to involve different faculty members in different segments of the student research. But the minimum number of faculty involved must be three. All necessary human subjects research requirements must be met for the completion of each phase of the project based thesis.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

Every thesis must have a title page, abstract, library release form, table of contents, introduction, literature review, and references. The arrangement and nature of the parts of the thesis body can be varied to improve the clarity of the document. The following listing gives a typical arrangement:

• Title Page	Page i
• Preface or Forward	Page ii
• Abstract	Page iii
• Table of Contents	Page iv
• Table of Appendices	.....
• List of Tables	.....
• List of Figures	.....
• List of Symbols	.....
• Introduction	Page 1
• Chapters Giving	.....
▪ Theory	.....
▪ Data Collection	
▪ Method of Analysis	.....
▪ Results	.....
▪ Discussion	
▪ Policy Implications	.....
• Conclusions	.....
• Summary	.....
• References	
• Appendices	Page A1

PAPER STOCK AND TYPING REQUIREMENTS

At least 16-pound, at least 50% rag content, white unruled bond paper, trim size 8-1/2x11 inches, is to be used for all required copies of the thesis. The text must be double spaced, and must be typed on one side of the paper in 12 size Times New Roman font. The title page is considered page i of the thesis. All other pages prior to the Introduction will be consecutively numbered in lower case roman numerals. Beginning with the Introduction, Arabic numerals are to be used consecutively for all successive pages of the thesis.

FORMAT OF THE TITLE PAGE

Letter size: 8.5" x 11"

1.5" 1" 1"

Title of the Master Thesis
Title: Bold, Times New Romans, 16 pt.

By
First M. Last
A Thesis Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science
in
Criminal Justice

Approved by:
Prof. _____
Dr. First M. Last (Thesis Advisor)
Prof. _____
Dr. First M. Last (Thesis Advisor)
Prof. _____
Dr. First M. Last (Thesis Advisor)
Dr. First M. Last (External Collaborator)
Dr. First M. Last (External Collaborator)

DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
MONTH, YEAR

FORMAT OF THE TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter size: 8.5" x 11"		1"
1.5"	Table of Contents Title: Bold, Times New Romans, 16 pt.	1"
Title Page	i	
Acknowledgement	iii	
Abstract	v	
Table of Content	vi	
List of Figures	ix	
List of Tables	x	
1. Title of Section 1	1	
1.1. Sub-section Title	3	
1.2. Sub-section Title	17	
1.3. Sub-section Title	20	
2. Title of Section 2	27	
2.1. Sub-section Title	27	
2.2. Sub-section Title	46	
2.3. Sub-section Title	59	
2.4. Sub-section Title	71	
3. Title of Section 3	73	
3.1. Sub-section Title	73	
3.2. Sub-section Title	88	
3.3. Sub-section Title	98	
Reference Page.....	121	
	vi	1"

FORMAT OF THE LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Letter size: 8.5" x 11"

1.5" 1" 1"

List of Tables

Title: Bold, Times New Romans, 16 pt.

Table	Description	Page
1.1	Table's Description	3
1.2	Table's Description	17
2.1	Table's Description	21
2.2	Table's Description	48
2.3	Table's Description	61
3.1	Table's Description	76
3.2	Table's Description	89

List of Figures

(This part should be printed on separate page from List of Tables)

Fig.	Description	Page
1.1	Figure's Description	1
1.2	Figure's Description	17
2.1	Figure's Description	24
2.2	Figure's Description	51
2.3	Figure's Description	66
3.1	Figure's Description	73
3.2	Figure's Description	97

x 1"

GETTING READY FOR THE THESIS DEFENSE

Once your committee decides you are ready to proceed to the thesis defense, there are a number of things that need to be done, similar to the steps taken prior to the proposal presentation.

1. The student must contact all members of the committee to determine available dates and times for the defense. Again try to select a time that allows most faculty and graduate students to attend.
2. The student must provide each member of the committee with a copy of the thesis at least two weeks in advance of the defense date.
3. The student must book a room for the date and time agreed to by all committee members. Book the room for at least a two-hour period. Notify all committee members of room and time.

THE ORAL THESIS PRESENTATION, DEFENSE AND EXAMINATION

It is a public meeting. Faculty members, besides your committee may attend. Students are also invited to attend and are encouraged to attend.

Allow about one and a half hours for the process. Your presentation should take about 30 to 45 minutes with the remaining time for questions. You should have a presentation that explains your topic, the data gathering process, the method of analyses, the theoretical perspectives, results, and policy implications.

You need signature sheets for your committee to sign – one for each copy you intend to have bound. You should have at least three bound copies – one for yourself, one for the department (usually given to your committee chair), and one for the library. If you desire more that is your choice.

The examining committee will deliberate and reach one of the following decisions:

i. Accepted. The thesis requires no change or only minor typographical or editorial changes which will be made to the satisfaction of the thesis supervisor.

ii Accepted with Modifications. The thesis requires minor changes in substance and/or major editorial changes or clarifications. Typically, this category implies that no further work needs to take place. It is more a matter of refinement, clarification or elaboration. The Chair will make notes on the changes requested by the committee, as well as who will take responsibility for examining and approving these changes, and the date by which the changes should be submitted. This list can be produced by both the Chair and the thesis supervisor.

iii. Accepted Conditionally. The thesis required more substantive changes (such as minor additional data analysis or reanalysis, or major rewriting), but will likely be acceptable once these changes are made to the satisfaction of the committee. The report of the Chair will outline the nature of these changes, the date by which the changes are to be completed, who will be responsible for approving these changes, and the consequences if the student fails to comply

iv. Decision Deferred. The thesis requires very substantial modifications (such as additional data collection or major reanalysis); acceptability is in doubt. Similar to ii, the report of the Chair will provide a list of concerns and modifications required, as well as a time line for completion, and consequences should the student fail to comply. **In this case, the revised thesis must be submitted to the entire examining committee and a subsequent defense scheduled.** Normally, the same committee will serve. A decision to defer is permitted only once for each candidate.

v. Rejected: The Chair will provide a written report concerning the reasons for rejection by the examining committee.

Decisions and Signatures

Accepted theses should have the signature sheet signed at the defense. In cases where a thesis is accepted with modification or conditionally, it is the chair's discretion (in consultation with the committee) as to whether the committee will sign the signature sheet at the conclusion of the defense. Deferred decisions and rejected theses require no signature sheet being signed at the defense.

Policy on Absent Committee Members for Master's Thesis Defense The policy is that no more than one committee member, and not the thesis supervisor, may be absent for the MS thesis defense to take place. The absent member must be contacted in advance by the thesis supervisor and submit a list of questions, desired responses, as well as a final recommendation (refer to decision categories), including a list of revisions that need to be made, to the supervisor at least one week prior to the scheduled defense. In contrast to the proposal, feedback from an absent committee member cannot be submitted after the defense has taken place. If the above stipulations cannot be met, the defense will have to be cancelled and rescheduled.

Steps to follow after you have successfully defended your thesis:

Obtain the following forms from Karla Van Strander in electronic form ksvcms@rit.edu

- ⇒ Include the Thesis Title page form as page 1 of your Thesis.
- ⇒ Have the Thesis Approval form signed by your committee members. This will be page 2 of your Thesis.
- ⇒ **Upon submitting the thesis to UMI/Proquest, provide Karla with a receipt of that transaction to be included with your file (see below for details regarding this process).**

You are required to have your thesis bound and submitted to UMI/Proquest. The following source is of particular importance in outlining the procedures for submitting your thesis. Since these links will contain the most recent changes in thesis processing procedures for the Institute, you should consult them first:

<http://infoguides.rit.edu/thesis-services>

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- ⇒ Binding contacts: Diane Grabowski (585-475-2554) or Tracey Melville (585-475-6013)
 - ⇒ Binding Process Timeline:
 - Typically takes two-four weeks for binding.
 - Shipments of your thesis are sent from and received by the Library ONLY on alternate Thursdays.
 - RIT's Archive copy will be cataloged in Einstein (RIT Libraries Catalog), in WorldCat, and it is shelved in RIT's permanent archives.
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THESIS MILESTONES

DATE	MILESTONES
_____	1. Review Thesis FAQ.
_____	2. Meet with the faculty to discuss potential thesis topic.
_____	3. Decide on the subject and form thesis committee.
_____	4. Carry out detailed literature search and preliminary ‘proof of concept’ experimentation.
_____	5. Obtain thesis Advisor's approval of preliminary thesis proposal.
_____	6. Submit preliminary thesis proposal to other thesis committee members.
_____	7. Obtain approval of preliminary thesis proposal by all committee members.
_____	8. Begin writing a formal thesis proposal based on the approved outline.
_____	9. Submit formal thesis proposal for approval.
_____	10. Proposal defense, upon receiving approval of formal thesis proposal continue the study.
_____	11. Regularly share and discuss the results with your committee.
_____	12. Periodically submit draft of chapters of thesis to the advisor to review
_____	13. Periodically meet with other members of thesis committee and provide draft revisions of completed chapters
_____	14. Submit final draft for thesis committee approval
_____	15. Schedule formal defense of thesis (specific date agreed to in oral defense)
_____	16. Revise your thesis according to comments in the defense and submit to thesis advisor for final approval
_____	17. Submit copies to the library for binding and submit to PROQUEST (retain PROQUEST receipts and submit to Karla)
_____	18. GRADUATION! :)

Department of Criminal Justice
Preliminary Thesis Proposal

Name _____

Date _____

Instructions:

Below include a brief description of your topic and methods. Include:

- 1) Working title of your paper.
- 2) A one paragraph description of your topic.
- 3) A paragraph description of your methods, i.e., who is your population (e.g., Rochester police officers, college students); what method(s) will you use (e.g., interviews, surveys); how will you access the data (e.g., interview drug court clients at the Hall of Justice); total number in sample you expect (e.g., N = 20 drug court clients); how you will analyze the data (e.g., utilizing SPSS using cross-tabs and frequencies, and regression).
- 4) A paragraph description of the theoretical framework.
- 5) A paragraph description of the significance of the study (i.e. why is it important) and policy implications.
- 6) A list of fifteen references. The works must from professional periodicals (see instructor for clarification). You will need to have found these in the library/internet but not necessarily read them thoroughly at this point.

<Thesis Title>
by
<Student Name>

Committee Members
Committee Member #1
Committee Member #2
Committee Member #3

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Science in Criminal Justice
Rochester Institute of Technology
College of Liberal Arts
<mm/dd/yyyy>

ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

College of Liberal Arts

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

~ Thesis Proposal Approval Form ~

Student Name: _____

Thesis Title: _____

~ MS Thesis Committee ~

Name

Signature

Date

Chair

Committee Member

Committee Member