

Guidelines for Master's Thesis

in

Occupational Therapy

Department of Occupational Therapy Education
University of Kansas Medical Center

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The Master's Thesis in Occupational Therapy

Introduction

The Master's Thesis is an educational experience that will assist each student to develop independence and competence in the following five areas:

1. Identifying significant research problems or questions.
2. Locating, reviewing and selecting ideas and information related to specific professional questions through discriminating and creative use of the published literature in a variety of fields.
3. Evaluating findings reported by other investigators on the basis of such factors as the design of the study, the methods used for measuring variables, and the analysis and interpretation of data.
4. Synthesizing research findings, theory, and research data from varied fields, and applying this integrated understanding to consideration of questions in performance.
5. Formulating, summarizing and expressing ideas, findings and conclusions in a manner which makes them truly understandable and useful to professional colleagues and to those in other performance related disciplines.

These abilities are essential to continued independent professional growth, the outcome of which is continued contribution to the occupational therapy profession and the well-being of clients and their families. The skills to be developed are those that will make each graduate an intelligent and critical consumer of research. For those students who pursue a research career, this experience will provide a basis for development of the added skills needed for that work. In addition to their relevance to research, the skills developed through the research experience are of critical importance for all advanced practice roles (e.g. administrators, educators and master clinicians). Each of these roles requires the professional to solve problems systematically; research skills contribute to these abilities.

There are many research models, including experimental, quasi-experimental, survey, methodological, historical, observational, naturalistic, action, evaluative and correlational designs. Whatever the research model, the student will engage in a learning process with his or her committee throughout the thesis process.

THE THESIS PROCESS

In Overview, the thesis process consists of three phases (details provided on subsequent pages):

- Phase 1: developing and defending the thesis proposal
- Phase 2: conducting the thesis research
- Phase 3: writing the thesis document and defending the thesis

These phases include required coursework associated with the thesis process. Required coursework is described here:

Occupational Therapy 890: Graduate Research (1 - 6 credit hours)

This course focuses on individual investigation of special problems in occupational therapy. The student will propose an individual original research project to the student's advisory committee. Once the proposal is approved by the student's advisory committee, the student will carry out initial phases of the project, including materials preparation and data collection, and will then summarize the data. For degree completion, a minimum of three credit hours on OTH 890 is required which may be taken in one semester, or spread across semesters.

Occupational Therapy 899: Thesis (1 - 6 credit hours)

This course requires scholarly writing, based on individual original research and is carried out under the guidance of the student's advisor. The scholarly writing and a professional oral presentation of research must meet with the approval of the student's advisory committee to complete thesis requirements. For degree completion, a minimum of three credit hours in OCTH 899 is required, which may be taken in one semester, or spread across semesters.

Once a student has enrolled in OCTH 890/899, **continuous enrollment in OCTH 890/899 is required.** OCTH 890 and OCTH 899 typically will be taken sequentially. Students must accumulate at least 3 credits in each course. Occasionally, a full-time student may enroll in 890/899 concurrently after consultation with the student's faculty mentor.

A Note on Thesis Course Grades: The letter "P" is used to indicate progress in research and thesis enrollments (related to thesis research). Upon completion of thesis, a letter grade (A, B, C, D, or F) will be assigned for the last semester of thesis work.

In the course of completing OCTH 890 and 899, the student is expected to demonstrate scholarly expertise in a given content area. That expertise is to be demonstrated in the student's written review and synthesis of the literature relevant to the chosen problem area. The literature review is presented in two (2) versions. The first version is a comprehensive review of all relevant literature, which must be completed at the time of the proposal defense. The second version of the literature review is constructed as would be appropriate to a journal article, and is included as part of the thesis document at the thesis defense.

PHASE 1: DEVELOPING THE THESIS PROPOSAL
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Students are encouraged to attend seminars and talk to faculty members when trying to choose a research topic and research mentor. Because faculty teaching and advising loads vary year to year, it is important that students be flexible in developing relationships with several faculty members who might be available to be research advisors. The thesis process is initiated when a student identifies a research topic and a faculty mentor agrees to supervise the student. At this time the student enrolls in OCTH 890.

The student develops the research proposal with input and guidance from the Research Advisor and from members of the Thesis Committee (see below). The research proposal serves to focus the student's efforts and define the nature and scope of the research project. A clear, well-defined proposal will increase the likelihood of a successful project and insure that the student and all members of the Thesis Committee clearly understand the direction the student will take. Following is a discussion of the stages involved in proposal development.

1. Selection of Research Advisor and Committee

Thesis Committee members must have graduate faculty appointments at the University of Kansas and the research advisor must be a member of the Occupational Therapy Education Graduate Faculty. There is a minimum of three committee members.

The student asks an Occupational Therapy Education graduate faculty member to be a research advisor based on common research interests and appropriate expertise. The student should consider:

1. the advisor's interest and experience in the area of research;
2. the advisor's availability to the student during the planning and implementation periods for the purpose of ongoing advising; and
3. the qualities that will create a compatible working relationship.

Role of Research Advisor

The role of the advisor is to serve as the Committee Chairperson and to provide ongoing guidance to the student while the research project is in progress. The research advisor:

1. offers suggestions and critiques the planning and development of all phases of the research;
2. gives the student opportunity for independent problem-solving;
3. coordinates the activities of the student's Thesis Committee;
4. chairs meetings of the Thesis Committee;
5. communicates with the student regarding conclusions of the Committee;
6. provides student with a summary of the committee members' comments after preliminary and final defense;
7. provides consultation to the other committee members, if requested;
8. evaluates the quality of the student's progress on the research project; and
9. provides feedback to the student in addition to formal committee meetings.

Once a faculty member has agreed to serve as a student's Research Advisor, the advisor then assists the student in developing a thesis committee, consisting of at least two additional members. Once the advisor and committee members have agreed to serve on the student's committee, each of them signs a Thesis Committee Agreement (see Appendix A) which must then be submitted to the OT Graduate Director.

Role of Committee Members

When the student has identified a suitable research question and a faculty member has agreed to be the Research Advisor, they confer to choose other committee members with knowledge and expertise in related relevant areas. The research advisor carries primary responsibility for supervision of the research project. The student and research advisor will consult the second and third committee members as needed.

The role of each Thesis Committee member is to:

1. assume responsibility as a resource person in the area of expertise which the student identified in selecting the faculty member as a committee member, e.g., clinical OT, research design, statistics;
2. serve as an objective reviewer of the proposal and the completed thesis;
3. attend the thesis proposal defense;
4. critically review and evaluate the thesis on completion for internal consistency and merit;
5. attend the thesis defense; and
6. sign the approved thesis.

II. Selection of a Problem

Selection of a research problem begins with identification of a content area in which the student has some knowledge or interest and in which there is faculty expertise. The student collaborates with the Research Advisor to identify the research problem. The student will select a methodology appropriate for the research question, subject to approval by the research advisor.

It is recommended strongly that student thesis projects be tied to on-going faculty research. This may involve research in the same general problem area as current faculty work, or participation in an on-going project. In any case, thesis topics must correspond to faculty expertise so that faculty are available to guide the project. Talking with individual faculty members and attending seminars are excellent methods for learning about current faculty research interests and on-going projects.

III. Submission and Approval of Proposal

Once the student has identified committee members, the student and Research Advisor begin to develop the research proposal. Students are encouraged at this point to consult with their committee members for additional guidance. In addition, the Research Advisor may elect to discuss the proposal with other graduate faculty. At the end of the proposal development process, the student produces a written proposal document. The written proposal consists of four parts: (1) a comprehensive literature review, (2) a problem statement, (3) a description of the methods to be used in the thesis project, and (4) an analysis plan.

Steps in Thesis Proposal Development Process

- Student selects Research Advisor and problem area
- Student and Research Advisor begin to develop research ideas
- Student and Research Advisor identify other committee members
- Student meets informally with individual faculty (potential committee members), describes the project, and obtains agreement to serve on committee
- Student consults with other committee members, as needed
- Student submits proposal to Research Advisor for feedback
- When Research Advisor is satisfied with proposal, student is ready for defense

Guidelines for preparing the four sections of the written proposal:

The student works on the written proposal with the Research Advisor. Proposal revisions continue until the advisor believes the document is ready to be submitted for the defense. It will be necessary to rewrite the proposal or sections of the proposal several times. This is not unusual and should be accepted by the student as an essential part of the learning process for novice researchers. Students are encouraged to seek conceptual input from faculty and other content experts in developing the proposal, but the bulk of the proposal must be a product of the student's insights and the synthesis of existing knowledge with the question(s) proposed for study.

The thesis proposal should be prepared in APA style (see <http://apastyle.apa.org/> and the APA Manual, 5th edition). Below is an outline to assist in proposal preparation; consult the APA Manual for further details.

1. Comprehensive Literature Review

Introduction: Provide a brief (1-2 paragraphs) description of the area you will be studying. It is helpful to frame your introduction in relation to what the profession needs or what would make practice better.

Literature review: The comprehensive literature review must demonstrate the student's knowledge of both benchmark and current literature in the chosen problem area. The review must provide a synthesis and integration of literature that illustrates the status of knowledge in the relevant problem area and provides a rationale for the thesis study. The literature review must be constructed so that it leads to the problem to be addressed in the thesis study and motivates that study.

2. Problem Statement

The problem statement describes the problem addressed in the thesis study. Explain the problem clearly as an outgrowth of deficiency in knowledge in your area of study, as described in the literature review.

Purpose: State explicitly the purpose of your study. The problem statement is usually more general; be specific here about what your study will accomplish.

Specific hypotheses, predictions, or research questions: Hypotheses or predictions should be stated clearly. Be sure to provide a rationale for the hypotheses or predictions. In some cases, research questions or objectives may be more appropriate than hypotheses. If so, be sure to state clearly the research questions your study will address.

3. Methods

This section needs to be detailed enough to allow replication of your study. It includes the following subsections (or equivalent subsections appropriate to your study design and approach):

Research participants – Describe the sample you intend to recruit for your study, including methods of recruitment and sample size as well as a description of the inclusion/exclusion criteria required for participation.

Setting – Describe where the study will take place and any salient features of the setting that might affect data collection or interpretation.

Materials / Instrumentation: Describe any tools, measurement devices, tests, or questionnaires to be used in the study. Provide copies when possible.

Procedures: Describe step-by-step how your study will be conducted. Include a time-table for completing data collection.

4. Analysis Plan and Potential Interpretations

Describe how you plan to analyze your data. These analyses must be appropriate for answering the research questions you are asking. You may seek input from faculty and other experts in developing this section in particular. Be explicit about linking analyses to research questions or hypotheses. Be sure to:

- choose statistical/qualitative analyses appropriate for the design and type of data to be obtained in the proposed study;
- articulate a clear rationale for statistical or qualitative analyses chosen;
- understand the implications, problems, and expected difficulties of interpretation using particular data analyses;

- determine how the analyses will proceed, e.g., obtain support to enter data into the statistical program, obtain consultation of a statistician, etc.

Describe the implications of your anticipated results. What will your findings mean in terms of your research question? How will information from your study affect the profession or knowledge development? Students are encouraged to provide a projected timeline for the various stages of the project as part of this section.

References:

List the references you cited in the proposal, following APA style. Students are encouraged to make use of EndNote™ (see <http://library.kumc.edu/resources/EndNoteFAQ.htm>) or similar referencing software.

IV. Defense of Thesis Proposal

Once the advisor has approved the written proposal document, but prior to proceeding with implementation of the thesis project, the student must formally defend the research proposal to the thesis committee. The student should allow at least two weeks between delivering the final written proposal draft to the committee members and the scheduled defense date, in order to allow adequate time for the committee members to read and evaluate the document. Note that a “Do All” form (http://www2.kumc.edu/aa/gradstudies/grad_forms.htm) *does not* need to be completed for this phase of the thesis process.

During the Proposal Defense, the student presents the project, including: problem identification, background literature and rationale for study, hypotheses, procedural details, analysis plan, and expected limitations. The student brings copies of his or her timeline, surveys, descriptions of tests used, intake sheets, consent forms, *etc.* This is a time for dialogue between the student and the committee, which serves to clarify any issues, discuss and negotiate any suggested modifications, recommend resources, answer questions, and provide support to the research efforts of the student.

Criteria for Approval of Thesis Proposal

Approval is determined based on the following criteria:

- The proposal clearly describes the research problem and the relevance to Occupational Therapy.
- The comprehensive literature review and the student’s discussion of the literature in the oral proposal defense demonstrate the student’s knowledge of both benchmark and current literature in the chosen problem area. The review provides a synthesis and integration of literature that illustrates the status of knowledge in the relevant problem area and provides a rationale for the thesis study. The literature review is constructed so that it leads to the problem to be addressed in the thesis study and motivates that study.
- The proposal describes the research design, identifies the variables to be measured and studied, clearly states the hypotheses and/or research questions and the objectives of the research, describes the methods in sufficient detail for the examining committee to evaluate them, and clearly described the planned data analyses.
- The project and its design are sufficiently specific to be practical within the limits of a master’s thesis.
- The project approach and procedures conform to ethical standards of the professional as well as KU Medical Center’s compliance regulations (<http://www2.kumc.edu/compliance/>).
- The written proposal document reflects good organization, logical development, good grammar and syntax, and follows APA format.

Proposal Defense Outcomes

Depending on the student's performance in the proposal defense, the committee may decide to award a "Pass", a "Conditional Pass", or a "Fail".

If the student receives a "Pass", work may begin on the thesis project once Human Subjects Committee Approval is obtained.

A "Conditional Pass" is warranted if relatively minor changes are required in order to make the proposal acceptable to the thesis committee. These changes might include rewrites of a section, addition of other relevant literature, consideration and discussion of alternate approaches or interpretations, addition of other useful measurement tools, *etc.* In any case, the student will receive specific suggestions from Thesis Committee members to make the proposal acceptable. These changes must be made and approved by all committee members within 14 days of the proposal defense. If the required work is not completed within that time frame, the "Conditional Pass" is withdrawn, and a "Fail" is awarded.

If the proposal is inadequate, the student will receive a "Fail". Common criteria for failure include, but are not limited to:

1. inadequate motivation or rationale for the proposed study
2. inadequate integration of the literature
3. inadequate link made between the literature review and the problem to be studied
4. unclear or flawed design
5. inability of the student to defend his or her ideas and proposed study design.

If a "Fail" outcome is awarded, a second Proposal Defense is required. Specific suggestions will be provided by the Thesis Committee members to assist the student in producing an acceptable proposal.

Approval of the Experimental Protocol by Institutional Compliance Committees

Once the thesis project is approved by the Thesis Committee, and before initiating the research project (e. g., before beginning data collection) the student must obtain approval from the appropriate research compliance committees for KU Medical Center and any other institutional entities involved in the research project. For most MS in OT students, this will be the Human Subjects Committee (<http://www2.kumc.edu/researchcompliance/hrpp.htm>). The student will also need to complete all training appropriate for the project, including HIPAA training, and to submit a Conflict of Interest form prior to initiating the research. It is the student's responsibility to obtain current human subjects guidelines and application forms, and to submit an application in collaboration with the Research Advisor. The Research Advisor will be listed as the Responsible Investigator and the student will be listed as a co-investigator. Students must comply with the compliance committee's recommendations, complete compliance training appropriate for the project, and to conduct research as indicated in the protocol application. Note that *any* deviations from the approved version of the protocol must first be considered and approved by the compliance committee. Students should be aware that obtaining protocol approval may take several months or longer, and therefore should plan accordingly.

Helpful Hints for a Successful Thesis Proposal Process

EARLY IN THE PROCESS

- develop competency in :

- a word processing program
- use of APA style in writing (the current edition of the APA manual is available in the KUMC bookstore)
- use of a statistical package (*e.g.*, SPSS), or mentorship if naturalistic inquiry will be employed (software licenses can be obtained through KU Statistical Software Office 785-864-0494)
- EndNote™ or a similar referencing system
- identify your research advisor
- discuss appropriate authorship for any journal articles that will develop from the research; it is common for the research advisor and student to co-author journal articles

PREPARING THE PROPOSAL

- meet with your research advisor regularly to develop the plan for your proposal
- consult with your research advisor to identify two other committee members
- obtain a commitment from all committee members
- provide a draft of your proposal to your research advisor in advance of your meetings
- negotiate in your contract with your advisor for an acceptable time frame for feedback and revisions
- return your advisor's edited draft each time you submit a new draft
- label each draft you submit with the submission date
- if you do not come into the department regularly and wish your research advisor to mail your feedback to you, please provide self addressed stamped envelopes; alternatively, use editing functions in word processing programs, and email correspondence.
- As you prepare your proposal, schedule regular individual meetings with members of your thesis committee to let them know about your ideas as they develop, and to solicit feedback from the committee.
- photocopying costs are the student's responsibility

PREPARING FOR THE PROPOSAL DEFENSE

The Proposal Defense focuses on the research methods and analysis plan.

- when your research advisor believes you are ready to defend your proposal, schedule a 2 hour block of time with the committee (approximately 1 hour for defense, 30 minutes for the committee to meet in closed session to discuss your work, and 30 minutes for meeting with your advisor to debrief afterward)
- schedule a room (*e.g.*, small conference room)
- prepare a 20 minute presentation of your study, emphasizing the rationale, hypotheses, design, methods, and analysis. Committee members may ask questions during your presentation; be prepared to get the group back on track after discussions that move away from your central topic. You are responsible for assuring that the design and analysis sections are covered in your defense meeting.
- create visuals depicting your design and analysis in a simple way for the presentation (*e.g.* PowerPoint)
- remember: your research advisor can cancel your defense at any time if the advisor feels you are not ready
- it is helpful if you draft your protocol materials for submission to the compliance committee prior to the proposal defense; after feedback from your defense and more edits, you will be ready to submit your protocol proposal for approval
- bring supplemental information including surveys, descriptions of tests, intake sheets, and consent forms to the defense

DURING THE DEFENSE

- be prepared to answer WHY questions related to each phase of your plan
- be prepared to discuss the possible impact of your study
- have a note pad and pen available to take notes on decisions/changes that are made during the meeting
- there will be times when the committee discusses an issue with each other; participate in these discussions in a collegial manner and be prepared to take charge of the discussion when appropriate
- be honest about your perspectives; it's okay to admit you don't know the answer or haven't considered a particular perspective
- discuss pros and cons of issues; the committee is likely to ask you questions that make you think or reflect on your plans further
- your committee will ask you to leave the room at the end of the defense so they can discuss their impressions in closed session. After a period of time, they will call you back in and discuss their decisions with you
- if others attend your defense, they will be asked to be quiet during the defense; they will be able to ask questions/participate after you finish the presentation. The non-committee members of your audience will be excused before you meet with the committee for their questions.

AFTER THE DEFENSE

- be prepared to meet with your research advisor after the defense to clarify the committee's recommendations, and to make a plan for revising the proposal, if necessary
- submit your revised research compliance protocol proposal to your research advisor and then, once approved by the advisor, obtain the appropriate signatures and submit the proposal to the appropriate compliance committee(s).
- consider submitting the proposal for funding from appropriate sources; consult with your research advisor
- data collection can begin only after the protocol is approved by the appropriate Institutional Compliance committee.

Phase 2: THE RESEARCH PROCESS**I. Data Collection**

Once the preceding steps have taken place, the student is ready to implement the study. The first step is to enroll in OCTH 890 to obtain course credit for the data collection phase of the project. Careful data collection is crucial to the validity, reliability, truthfulness, impact, and utility of the results. This is a time when close mentoring relationships with faculty are of great value in anticipating errors which could later invalidate results. It is the student's responsibility to:

1. obtain appropriate research participants
2. be sure full, informed consent is obtained and documented
3. maintain participant confidentiality
4. conduct/arrange rater training when indicated
5. collect/supervise collection of data

6. obtain approval of any change from the original proposal with the thesis committee, and inform the Institutional Compliance Committee if the changes in the protocol
7. maintain complete, consistent, and accurate records of collected data

II. Analysis of Data

Once data collection is complete, the student enrolls in OCTH 899 and begins data analysis. The organization and analysis of data depends upon the design and purpose of the study. The planned analyses are carried out with guidance from the research advisor and other committee members as appropriate.

Phase 3: THE THESIS DOCUMENT

I. The Complete Thesis Document

The complete thesis document contains a number of items, only one of which is the thesis manuscript. It is the complete document that is to be submitted to the thesis committee. Before you begin this process, familiarize yourself with APA Style guidelines (see <http://apastyle.apa.org/>). Following are the required contents for the complete thesis document:

Title page with signature lines (The title is a clear and accurate representation of the content of the study which describes the relationship between variables under examination and the sample population(s). You must use the Graduate Studies format found at <http://www.graduate.ku.edu/~etd/#Formatting>).

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements (optional)

This section typically contains the author's thanks to the faculty, fellow students, and family who gave support throughout the thesis process. It is appropriate to thank anyone who helped with the process.

Thesis manuscript (the length of a journal article, typically 18-25 pages)

Abstract
Thesis
References
Tables
Figures

Colored page to separate appendices from manuscript

Appendices – appendix materials should have page numbers that are numbered consecutively from the end of the thesis manuscript. Appendix materials include:

- + comprehensive literature review and references
- raw data / coded data+data collection forms
- + questionnaires and other measures
- + Human Subjects consent form
- + other tables and figures which are relevant to, but are not part of, the thesis manuscript

NOTE: As you begin to consider formatting and writing your dissertation, students should be aware that all dissertations must now be submitted electronically at the University of Kansas. The creation and submission of a dissertation using an electronic format has specific considerations and rules. Early in the writing phase, students should learn about these special requirements (see http://www2.kumc.edu/aa/gradstudies/grad_ETD.htm). You will still need to prepare a paper version of the dissertation for your committee, but an awareness of the ETD requirements will prevent the need to reformat your document at the last minute in order to meet graduation deadlines! The most common formatting problems for electronic submission are placement of page #s, use of running head, and Title page. When APA guidelines and ETD requirements differ, the student should follow the ETD requirements.

II. Writing the Thesis Manuscript

The Department of Occupational Therapy Education acknowledges the obligation to contribute to the occupational therapy profession through dissemination of knowledge gained through research. In completing a Master's Thesis, the student will have explored in depth an area of occupational therapy and executed a research project. The final paper describing this research project should be of such literary quality and conceptual depth that its publication will contribute to the occupational therapy base of professional knowledge. It is a requirement of the Department of Occupational Therapy Education that thesis research be submitted for publication.

To meet this requirement, the thesis manuscript is to be written in the form of a journal article, following APA guidelines for format and style. The student must provide the Thesis Committee with a copy of the guidelines for the journal to which the thesis will be submitted. Below are brief descriptions of the required sections. For more extensive guidance on each of these sections, see the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (see <http://apastyle.apa.org/> and the APA Manual, 5th edition published in 2001).

Abstract. The abstract is a brief description of the project. It includes a statement of the purpose of the study, a general description of the procedure, and a summary of the major findings and conclusions. It must conform to Graduate studies guidelines (350 words) and the word limit set by the journal chosen for publication of the manuscript.

Introduction and Literature Review. The paper begins with the presentation of the specific problem under study and a description of the research strategy. This is followed by a discussion of the relevant literature. This review should be scholarly and focused but brief, as is appropriate to a journal article. This section includes a statement of the purpose and rationale behind the study being reported.

Note: a comprehensive literature review is required as part of the proposal for the master's thesis, but is not part of the thesis manuscript. The more extensive comprehensive literature review from the proposal and associated references are to be included as an appendix in the thesis document.

Methods Section. In this section the experimental method and procedures are described clearly so that replication is possible. This section includes a description of the subjects, of the instrumentation or apparatus, and it describes the procedures, designs, and methods of data gathering.

Results. The results section summarizes the data collected and the statistical analysis.

Discussion. This section includes an evaluation and interpretation of the findings reported in the results section, especially with respect to initial hypotheses. This section also includes a discussion of possible

implications of the results as they relate to theoretical and clinical literature and to occupational therapy practice.

III. The Final Semester

The Application for Degree (AFD) must be completed and submitted using Enroll & Pay early in the semester in which the student anticipates completing all requirements for the dissertation, including the dissertation defense. This form may be submitted during enrollment for the final semester, but it **must** be submitted by the deadline date set by the Graduate Division. Students should also consult the graduate checklist available through the Graduate Studies website (see link below).

http://www2.kumc.edu/aa/gradstudies/grad_grad.htm

IV. Oral Defense of Thesis

Master of Science degree examinations are administered by a committee consisting of at least three members of the Graduate Faculty. The Oral Examination Committee and the Thesis Committee are always the same. The examination is held during the semester of the student's final enrollment in thesis hours. The student should first identify an examination date agreeable to all members of the Dissertation Committee and prior to the Graduate Studies deadline (this often is a difficult task). The student then initiates a formal request to the Graduate studies office to schedule the examination by informing the Graduate Director. This request is made on the University's Do-All Form (see Appendix B), which must be submitted at least two weeks in advance of the desired examination date. Examination deadlines related to graduation dates are set each semester by the Office of Graduate studies (typically early December for a Fall graduation, mid July for Summer graduation, and early April for a Spring graduation).

The oral comprehensive examination for thesis students is the student's formal defense of the thesis. This defense is typically 1-1/2 to 2 hours in length. In addition to questions of scientific merit, contribution to occupational therapy knowledge, and implications for further research activities, questions are addressed to the student to assess competency in the individual's field of study.

The suggested procedure for the oral examination follows:

1. The student summarizes the thesis in a logical, formal presentation detailing the background of the problem studied, the actual problem and its ramifications, the methodology, analysis of data, major findings, and recommendations for further research based on the conclusions of the study.
2. The Thesis Committee members then discuss the thesis with the student, raising questions for further clarification of content.
3. Each Thesis Committee member questions the student. The questions may focus on interpretation, how the research affects the student's area of study, how the research relates to other areas, how the research process will be used in the future, and what further research is needed.
4. After the examination has been completed, the student is asked to leave the room. At this time, committee members evaluate the student's thesis and presentation. Following their discussion, the student is invited back into the examination room and is informed of the committee's decision.

There are two possible outcomes for the Thesis Defense: "Pass" or "Fail". The criteria for obtaining a "Pass" are as follows:

Criteria to Pass:

1. Problem is well defined.
2. Literature review is complete and appropriate.
3. Study is well designed.
4. Data are analyzed appropriately.
5. Results are related to a broader problem area.
6. Implications for occupational therapy are stated clearly.
7. Student responds appropriately to questions posed by Committee.

If the thesis is found to be satisfactory, the “Do-All” form is signed by the advisor and returned to the Graduate School. The title listed on the Do-All must be exactly the same as the title on the cover page of the bound thesis. Note: The date on the title page remains blank; the Library staff will insert the appropriate date.

If the thesis committee believes that the thesis is exceptional, they may wish to nominate the student for graduation honors. In order to obtain honors for the student, the thesis committee chair must prepare a written letter of nomination outlining the outstanding character of the thesis project. This nomination letter (and any supporting materials) is then circulated to the graduate faculty for approval. If the majority of the graduate faculty agrees that the student deserves honors, then the thesis committee chair indicates honors on the Do-All form before it is submitted to the Graduate School. An honors nomination requires that the thesis committee chair not sign the Do-All following successful defense of the thesis until the nomination has been voted on by the graduate faculty. Because this may take some time, the thesis committee chair is advised to be mindful of the student’s timeline and graduate deadlines for submitting the Do-All.

If the thesis does not meet the criteria for passing, and is found to be unsatisfactory, written recommendations are given to the student. The examination is rescheduled within a time period stipulated by the committee.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL THESIS DEFENSE

PREPARING YOUR THESIS DOCUMENT

- meet with your research advisor regularly to review your draft document
- provide a draft of your thesis to your research advisor in advance of your meetings
- plan for several revisions as you obtain feedback from your research advisor
- as you are working on your thesis document, arrange individual meetings with your committee members to share your findings with them and obtain advice on interpretations
- use APA style manual for format
- submit your completed thesis to your committee at least one week prior to your thesis defense; use that week to prepare your oral presentation
- make a plan with your research advisor about submitting your article to a journal and which one would be appropriate
- become familiar with the formatting requirements of the Department and the University (e.g., electronic submission of theses) to limit the need for last minute reformatting of the final document

PREPARING FOR YOUR DEFENSE PRESENTATION

- schedule a 2 hour block of time with the thesis committee (approximately 1.5 hours for defense and 30 minutes for meeting with your advisor afterward) when your research advisor believes you are ready to defend your thesis findings
- be conscious of the deadline for submitting the final thesis each term and plan accordingly. Your committee members have other personal and professional responsibilities occurring near the end of the term; they may also serve on the committees of other students and scheduling conflicts may arise; adequate time must be given for the faculty to review the document carefully prior to the defense; revisions to the thesis are common after the defense and must be completed prior to submitting the final document in time for the deadline.
- schedule a room (*e.g.*, conference room) for the defense.
- prepare a 20 minute presentation of your study findings, emphasizing the findings and interpretation. Committee members may ask questions during your presentation; be prepared to get the group back on track after discussions that move away from your central topic. You are responsible for continuing to make progress through the discussions. You will need to focus on your findings and interpretation for this presentation (*i.e.*: results and discussion of your thesis).
- create visuals depicting your findings in a simple way for the presentation
- prepare copies of your title page to obtain signatures at your defense
- practice the presentation until you are confident that you can present the material fluidly and clearly

DURING THE THESIS DEFENSE

- be prepared to answer WHY questions related to each phase of your findings; also be prepared to discuss why you selected various analyses
- consider how your study relates to the “big picture”
- be prepared to discuss the possible impact of your study
- have a note pad and pen available to take notes on decisions/changes that are made during the meeting
- there will be times when the committee discusses an issue with each other; participate in these discussions in a collegial manner and be prepared to take charge of the discussion when appropriate
- be honest about your perspectives; discuss pros and cons of issues; the committee is likely to ask you questions that make you think and reflect on your interpretations further
- your committee will ask you to leave the room at the end of the defense so they can discuss their impressions. After a period of time, they will call you back in to discuss their decisions with you.
- if others attend your defense, they will be asked to be quiet during the defense; they will be able to ask questions and participate in discussions at the end of the presentation. They will, however, be excused when the committee begins to ask questions

AFTER THE DEFENSE

- if no revisions are needed, obtain signatures from your committee members on your title page so you won't have to find them at a later time to obtain signatures
- meet with your research advisor to review the recommendations for your thesis
- make edits, get approval page signed once edits are done, and submit your dissertation to the Graduate Studies office by the appropriate deadline
- make necessary edits and submit your article to a journal within a month or so of your defense
- **CELEBRATE**

PROCESSING MASTER'S THESES

After the thesis has been successfully defended but before it can be submitted for final processing, the student must establish that the document complies with University regulations for electronic submission of a thesis. This information is available on-line: <http://www.graduate.ku.edu/~etd/>

You also will need to 1) pay the fee associated with the ETD submission process (\$50 in fall of 2007), 2) submit a completed release form, allowing your finished thesis to be placed in an electronic depository at KU Scholarworks (see http://www2.kumc.edu/aa/gradstudies/grad_grad.htm for details), and 3) submit both the original Title page and original Acceptance page to the Office of Graduate Studies to document your committee's acceptance of the final version of the document.

NOTE: Although an electronic version of the thesis is required by the University of Kansas, the Department of OT Education requires that the student provide five paper copies of the thesis: one bound copy for each committee member, one bound copy for the department, and one bound copy for AOTF. The copy for AOTF should be sent to AOTF Library, 4720 Montgomery Lane, P.O. Box 31220, Bethesda, MD 20824-1220

STYLE AND FORMAT

In addition to documenting that the student has done significant scholarly work in occupational therapy, the thesis must also meet standards of clarity, form, and expression. The University of Kansas Instructions to Candidates (Appendix D) contains specific details regarding the standards by which all theses will be judged for final approval by the Graduate College. It is important that each student take responsibility for the quality of the writing and editing of the thesis. Those who have difficulty in this area may want to consider hiring an editor, a practice which is not uncommon among thesis students.

Students must comply with the University of Kansas guidelines for thesis completion, Instructions to Candidates for Any of the Master's Degrees, included in Appendix D. Failure to comply with each of these instructions may result in a delay in granting the degree.

TIME LIMITATIONS

The University of Kansas Graduate Studies Catalog indicates Master's degree students are allowed **seven (7) years** for completion of all degree requirements. The Occupational Therapy Education Department allows students **a maximum of four (4) semesters** to complete the research component of the degree after all course work has been completed, providing this occurs within the seven year span. These time limitations apply to both full-time and part-time students.

Other Important Things to Know

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

“A graduate student who believes himself or herself unfairly or unlawfully treated in an academic matter may present a grievance to the department or program chairperson. A student unwilling to accept the decision at the department or program level may appeal to the Graduate Division of the school or college for consideration. Similarly, a student unwilling to accept the decision at the Graduate Division level may appeal to the Graduate School, where the grievance will be considered under guidelines established by the Standing Committee charged with student affairs and the Executive Committee of the Graduate Council. For information on these guidelines, contact the Graduate School, 785 -864-4141.” (The University of Kansas Graduate studies Catalog; <http://www.catalogs.ku.edu/graduate/>)

COSTS

The student is responsible for all costs involved in completing the research project. Expected costs might include: research supplies, subject fees, data collection costs, mailing, typing, editing, printing, duplicating, fees for figures or drawings, etc.

Students may consider seeking financial support for their thesis research project. Possible sources of funding include granting agencies, professional organizations, and foundations. Occupational Therapy professional organizations such as AOTF and KOTA make grants available for the support of research projects. AOTF has a funding category exclusively for student research. KOTA gives preference to those who have been KOTA members for two years or more (recognizing reciprocity to new Kansans). The Research Advisor or the Director of Graduate Studies may have additional suggestions for sources of funding.

DETERMINATION OF AUTHORSHIP

It is important to decide before beginning a project how authorship of the journal manuscript resulting from the thesis will be handled. Guidelines for deciding on authorship are given in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2001, 5th edition). Students may bring this issue to committee for discussion once the proposal is approved. Delineating authorship at the beginning of the project, rather than the end, will not only help to avoid misunderstandings, but also help to define what roles each member of the committee will assume throughout the thesis process. In addition, the opportunity to renegotiate should remain a possibility because changes may evolve as the scholarly process takes place.

The thesis manuscript must be submitted for publication within 6 months of the successful defense of the thesis. If the student does not submit the manuscript within this 6 month time frame, the advisor may submit the manuscript and authorship may be renegotiated.

Appendix A
Occupational Therapy Education Graduate Program
Thesis Committee Agreement

Student's Name:

Academic Advisor:

When a faculty member agrees to become the research advisor and supervise a student's thesis, that student should obtain the faculty member's signature on this form. The student and his or her faculty research advisor should then discuss the selection of two additional committee members, and the signatures of these faculty should also be included on this form. When all signatures have been obtained, this form should be submitted to the department's Director of Graduate Studies.

Research Advisor: _____

Date: _____

Committee Member: _____

Date: _____

Department: _____

Committee Member:

Date: _____

Department: _____

Appendix B

The DO-ALL Form

When you are ready to defend your thesis, the “Do All” form is the official form that must be submitted to the University. This form is also used for other purposes, hence its name. A Do-All form is available on-line (http://www2.kumc.edu/aa/gradstudies/Doall_checklist.pdf).

A single form is used both BEFORE and AFTER the thesis defense, but the signatures and routing are different. Because there often is confusion about the correct way to complete and route this form, instructions are included here and a sample DO-ALL form follows this page.

BEFORE THE THESIS DEFENSE

Your thesis advisor must submit the DO-ALL form at least two weeks prior to your scheduled defense (if possible, submitting the form three weeks before hand is even better, and the extra time will be appreciated by the Graduate Studies staff). Only the top section and the section titled “Examinations” need to be completed.

TOP SECTION

Date: today’s date (must be *at least* 2 weeks prior to defense date)
To: Graduate Division of The University of Kansas Medical Center
From: The Department of Occupational Therapy Education
Departmental authorization: signature of departmental Director of Graduate Studies
Name: student’s name
Student No.: student number

EXAMINATION SECTION

Only the first section under Examinations needs to be completed. Check the following places: Master’s Degree, M.S., thesis; fill in the proposed date of examination, and in the space below the date, write in the time and place of the examination. At the bottom of the form, include the title of your thesis and list the three committee members. That is all that is needed at this point – ***DO NOT*** have your advisor sign the form at this time!

Send the form to the Student Records Office, 3017 Student Center. They will process the form, and then it is returned to our department to be completed following the defense.

AFTER THE THESIS DEFENSE

EXAMINATIONS SECTION

Following the thesis defense, the section titled Examinations is completed by the Research Advisor. Depending on the outcome of the defense, the Research Advisor indicates Honors, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory performance. At this time the Research Advisor signs the form as the Chairperson of the Examining Committee. The other committee members need not sign this form.

Send the signed form to the Graduate Office, 5th floor Wescoe to process the form and then return it for our department files.

APPENDIX C: Instructions to Candidates

This information is also available on the KUMC Graduate Studies website, check there for the most updated information, <http://www.catalogs.ku.edu/graduate/master.shtml>

UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS - THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Instructions to Candidates for Any of the Master's Degrees

I. Plan ahead:

Become familiar ahead of time with all the requirements for completing your degree. Visit the Graduate Studies website (http://www2.kumc.edu/aa/gradstudies/grad_grad.htm) and read the information presented there. In particular, obtain a copy of the "Graduation Checklist" (http://www2.kumc.edu/aa/gradstudies/grad_cklist.pdf) and review the steps related to obtaining a Master's degree carefully.

II. "Application for Degree" form:

Use Enroll & Pay to complete the Application for Degree by the Graduate Studies deadline of the semester you will graduate. http://www2.kumc.edu/aa/gradstudies/grad_grad.htm

III. Final Examination

Degrees are granted three times a year (May, August and December). So that the candidate may be considered for a degree on one of these dates, the general examination over the major field must be held before the deadline set by the Graduate Division. Arrangements for this examination must be made with the major department, which will ask the Graduate Division Office if the candidate is eligible to take the examination, and if so, procure an examination form on which to report the results. The request for permission to hold the examination must be made in advance of the examination date by a period of time set by the candidate's Graduate Division.

IV. Thesis

After acceptance of the thesis by your committee, verify that your document, including illustrations, meets the format requirements for electronic submission (see <http://www.graduate.ku.edu/%7Eetd/>), and then prepare one copy and submit it for review to the Office of Graduate Studies. The document will be reviewed by Graduate Studies and you will be notified of any formatting problems. Graduate Studies will officially accept the thesis when they confirm the final document meets ETD requirements. Note 1) that the original Title page and the Acceptance page must also be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies to document your committee's acceptance of the final version of the document, and 2) that there is a fee associated with the submission process (\$50 in spring of 2008).

You also are responsible for supplying five additional, bound copies of the thesis (one for each committee member, one for the Department library, and one for AOTF). These copies can be ordered when you electronically submit your thesis or from another binding company.

The form of the table of contents, the organization of the bibliography, the stylistic practices represented in the footnotes, the placement of the footnotes and the pagination are matters which are ordinarily decided by the student in conference with his or her committee, particularly the director of the thesis. The bibliography should be placed ahead of the appendices. For further information on writing a thesis, please consult your department and/or style books on writing theses on file in the University Library or available for purchase from book stores. (Formats required by publishers for book and journal items are usually not satisfactory for theses and use of them may result in your thesis being rejected. Before using guidelines of this kind be sure they are acceptable to your department and Graduate Division).

IV. Student's Responsibilities

Each candidate for a master's degree is responsible for:

- A. Online submission of the Application-for-Degree form through Enroll & Pay
- B. Seeing that the final examination for the degree is scheduled (see III.) and that the result is forwarded to the Graduate Division.
- C. Checking with the department that all work is completed and grades are sent to the Graduate Division Office.
- D. Submitting an electronic copy of the thesis as well as the original Title page and Acceptance page. (see IV).
- E. Payment of \$50 to defray the cost of electronic thesis submission.
- F. Submit a signed copy of the Release Form for KU Scholarworks (http://www.graduate.ku.edu/~etd/pdf/KU_ETD_release.pdf)
- G. **NOTE:** PLEASE CHECK TO MAKE SURE THAT YOUR THESIS PAGES ARE NUMBERED CORRECTLY AND THAT ALL THE PAGES ARE INTACT IN EACH COPY. It is inconvenient and time consuming for everyone involved to correct these errors and may delay the awarding of your degree.

APPENDIX D: APA “Style Tips” and “Guide to Authorship”

The APA Manual is a useful reference tool for determining the proper way to format a document for publication and the proper use of grammar and punctuation. There also exist a number of elements of expression that are of critical importance and that all writers should consider as they develop a manuscript. These include use of person-first language, use of bias-free language, referencing electronic media, determining authorship, and ethical issues related to research and publication. APA has recognized the importance of these elements and has made both the guidelines and the discussions surrounding them available on-line (<http://apastyle.apa.org/>).

Students and their mentors should become familiar with these topics early in the thesis process.

APA Style FAQs: (<http://www.apastyle.org/faqs.html>) *(be sure to read these!)*

APA Style Tips: <http://www.apastyle.org/styletips.html>

APA Guide to Authorship: <http://www.apastyle.org/authorship.html>

APA Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct: <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code.html> - [Teaching](#)