**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND THEATRE**

**GUIDELINES for Literary-Critical Honours Thesis**

An Honours thesis in the Department of English and Theatre may be a literary-critical argument based on careful thinking, research, and critical analysis, or it may be a creative writing project of original poetry, fiction, drama, or mixed genre, again with much careful thought and research. The working process is much the same for either kind of thesis, but because there are some differences in terms of structure and approach, the Honours Committee has drawn up two sets of guidelines. The following instructions apply to the **literary-critical thesis**.

**Choice of Subject and Supervisor:**

Because each faculty member is limited to supervising a finite number of theses each year, students should contact a prospective Supervisor as soon as they have chosen the general area of study they wish to pursue. The Honours Committee strongly recommends choosing a supervisor no later than the **second term of a student's third year** so that the student and supervisor can further clarify the area of research in preparation for writing a thesis proposal at the beginning of the Honours year the following term. Although a student may consult any member of the Department for suggestions concerning thesis supervision, if the student is in doubt about where to begin, the Honours Co-ordinator is always available to provide advice.

**Thesis Proposal:**

Students are expected to do preliminary research during the summer following the third year of their programme in order to provide the Departmental Honours Committee with a **thesis proposal by** (usually) **the First of October**. The proposal should be **750-1,000** words; it should include a specific description of the **objective of the project** (i.e., a thesis statement identifying what your thesis is about), a discussion of **major scholars or publications** in the field and their pertinence to the topic – which will usually include the theoretical context in which the discussion will be developed – and a **breakdown of chapters**. The proposal should have a **working title** and an attached **preliminary bibliography**: part of the bibliography’s purpose is to allow you to shape your critical and theoretical background. The proposal will assist the Honours Committee in deciding whether the topic is manageable and appropriate for the level of scholarship required for an Honours Degree. When the proposal is ready it should be submitted electronically to the Honours Co-ordinator, who will distribute it to the Honours Committee. Although we used to ask for a print copy signed by both the supervisor and student, **electronic submission to both the Honours Co-ordinator and the supervisor** will now suffice. Obviously submission should not normally occur unless the supervisor agrees. (For more details, see also the Proposal Guidelines document.)

**The Thesis Proper:**

A literary-critical Honours thesis should be 40-60 pages long. Each thesis student will work with her or his or their supervisor until the thesis has been completed and formatted according to the University’s “Regulations for Honours Theses.” These regulations are available from the Honours Co-ordinator or from RGS’s web site, under the “Honours Thesis” link:

<https://www2.acadiau.ca/research/undergraduate.html>

**NB**: It is **imperative** that the **final** copy of the thesis – the one you submit in electronic format to the library and in print format to the Department – be formatted in accordance with these regulations.

**Thesis Quality and Assessment:**

Theses are given a grade based on the combined assessment of the supervisor and a second reader; usually the second reader is another member of the English Department, though where relevant the reader may be from another discipline. Amongst other things the assessment takes into account the following aspects of the thesis:

* the clarity of thesis statement and argument;
* the overall quality of the argument and writing;
* the development and success of a clear, unified, and coherent argument;
* the soundness of the student’s scholarship;
* the level of engagement with the existing scholarship;
* successful stylistic citation (either MLA or Chicago);
* the correct use of grammar, punctuation, and syntax;
* consistency – of argument, citation style, etc.

**Thesis Structure and Length:**

Students and Supervisors are strongly encouraged to respect the Departmental regulations on thesis length: **40-60 pages**.

***Typical Thesis Elements:***

1. Title page (formatted as per RGS instructions)
2. Approval page (formatted as per RGS instructions)
3. Permission for duplication page (formatted as per RGS instructions)
4. Acknowledgements page (optional; if included, its tone should be formal)
5. Table of Contents
6. List of Tables (if necessary)
7. List of Figures (if necessary)
8. Abstract page (stating concisely and clearly the subject, main idea(s), and conclusion of the thesis)
9. The Thesis proper (which must be divided into chapters and which generally includes a formal Introduction and Conclusion)
10. Appendices (if necessary)
11. Works Cited.

The **style manual** to be followed with regard to scholarly presentation is either the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* or *The Chicago Manual of Style.*

**Writing the Thesis**:

To guarantee finishing the thesis on time and thus being eligible to graduate at the spring convocation, the candidate is expected to meet the following deadlines:

1. **By the last day of the December Examination period:** a minimum of 20 to 25 pages of typed thesis draft must be submitted to the Supervisor for assessment.

**N.B. If the December requirement is not met, the student will receive a failing grade for the first term in English 4060. This could affect acceptance into any postgraduate programmes for which the student is applying.**

2. **By late February:** The student must submit to the supervisor a complete draft of the remainder of the thesis. The supervisor will look this over, make suggestions, and the student will revise the thesis for what she or he or they and the supervisor conclude is the final version. [NB in order to meet this deadline it is strongly recommended to submit smaller thesis chunks throughout January and February.]

3. **By early to mid-March:** The student should present to the supervisor the complete thesis, revised and formatted for assessment by the second reader. The second reader is appointed by the Honours Co-ordinator in consultation with the supervisor; this reader will examine the thesis. The reader will almost certainly ask for some revisions, however minor. The student will then work – with the supervisor – to enact these revisions. Following acceptance by the second reader and supervisor, the thesis is ready for submission.

4. **By the University deadline of April 17**,following acceptance by the second reader and supervisor, **one print** copy of the thesis must be submitted to the Department of English and Theatre. Additionally, **you must also submit one electronic copy** via the library’s thesis submission site (<https://library.acadiau.ca/about/help/faq/thesis-submission.html>). Then submit the signed Thesis Checklist to the Office of research and Graduate Studies.

5. If you would like your own hardcopy of the thesis, please submit another set of signature pages to the Department. The English Department will pay for this copy.

NB The Department of English and Theatre awards a $100.00 prize each year for the best thesis.

[Rev. KSW 6.ix.22]