

**Department of English and Theatre**  
**GUIDELINES for**  
**Creative Writing Honours Theses**

An Honours thesis in the Department of English and Theatre may be a creative writing project of original poetry, fiction, drama, or mixed genre (along with considerable thought and deliberation), or it may be a literary-critical argument based on research, critical analysis, and considerable thought and deliberation. 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 creative writing 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 to undertake a creative writing thesis. The Honours Committee strongly recommends choosing a Supervisor no later than the **second term of a student's third year** so that she or he, together with the Supervisor, can further clarify the genre, portfolio, and preliminary research necessary to produce 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 he or she 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 and writing during the Summer following the third year of their programme in order to provide the Departmental Honours Committee with a **thesis proposal by the first Monday of October**. The creative proposal should be 300-500 words outlining the genre, structure, concept, and context of the project (i.e., what is your thesis?), a bibliography of relevant genres and authors, writing principles, or research texts, and – quite different from the literary-critical thesis – a *writing sample* from the proposed project. The proposal should also have a working title. The proposal will assist the Honours Committee and Supervisor in deciding whether the topic is manageable and appropriate for the level of preparedness and writing ability required for an Honours Degree and a creative writing thesis. When the proposal is submitted to the Committee, it should be signed by both the student and the Supervisor. Please submit one hard copy **and** an electronic copy to the Honours Co-ordinator.

**The Thesis Proper:**

A creative writing Honours thesis should be 30-60 pages. Each thesis student will work with her or his 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:

[http://research.acadiau.ca/Undergraduate\\_Student\\_Honours\\_Research.html](http://research.acadiau.ca/Undergraduate_Student_Honours_Research.html)

**NB:** Regardless of the genre of the thesis, it is *imperative* that the *final* copy that you submit to RGS, to the Library, and to the Department be formatted in accordance with these regulations.

The final thesis manuscript should appear as a publishable work – formatted according to the above guidelines – and must be a creative work of art as opposed to a commercial product.

### **Quality and Assessment:**

In assessing the merits (and grade) of the thesis, the Supervisor and Second Reader will look for and evaluate the following elements:

- originality and innovation: a fresh voice that is not forced or borrowed
- overall unity of design and coherence of structure
- significance for others (including readability and interest)
- poetry* should demonstrate effective figurative language and appropriate rhythms
- fiction* should demonstrate some mastery of character, dialogue, plot, setting, theme, and narrative techniques
- drama* should demonstrate theatricality, staging, viability, and effective action emerging from successful characterization and dialogue
- consistency of style (either MLA or Chicago).

Once the Supervisor and Second Reader have approved the thesis and the student made revisions, an External Reader from outside of the Department will also assess the thesis for consistency of grammar, logic or clarity, methodology, and style.

### **Structure and Length:**

Students and Supervisors are strongly encouraged to respect the Departmental regulations on thesis length. (See above.)

The creative writing thesis might take the following structure:

- a collection of at least seven short stories
- a collection of poetry of approximately thirty to forty pages
- a novella or a long short story of approximately sixty pages
- three one-act plays, or one full-length play
- a short film script
- a substantial mixed-genre work meeting the above criteria

**Thesis Elements:** Each thesis should include (in this order)

1. A Title page
2. The Approval and signatures page
3. The Permission for duplication page
4. An Acknowledgements page (this is optional; if included, its tone should be formal)
5. A Table of Contents
6. A List of Tables (if necessary)
7. A List of Figures (if necessary)
8. An Abstract page (stating concisely and clearly the genre and scope of the thesis)
9. A Preface (or Afterword) discussing the processes used and discoveries made by the writer during the completion of the project
10. The Thesis (writing project) proper
11. Appendices (if necessary)
12. Works Cited
  - NB: 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*.

**Thesis-Writing Stages:**

To guarantee finishing the thesis on time and thus being eligible to graduate at the Spring convocation, the candidate (the thesis author) should meet the following deadlines in the fourth year of the programme:

1. **By the last day of the December Examination period:** twenty to twenty-five pages of reasonable-quality 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 the beginning of 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 feels is the final version.
3. **By the end of the third week in February:** The student should present to the Supervisor the complete, revised and final version of the thesis. At this stage, a Reader appointed by the Honours Committee 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.
4. **By the third week in March,** in accordance with the University deadline, the final revised

copy of the thesis, having been approved by both the Supervisor and the Second Reader, should be printed and delivered (in **one** copy only) to the Office of Research and Graduate Studies. The thesis is then read by the External Examiner.

5. **By the University deadline in April**, following acceptance by the University Honours Committee, **one** copy must be laser-printed and submitted to the Office of Research and Graduate Studies. A **second print** copy is to be submitted to the Department of English and Theatre. **Finally**, you must also submit **one electronic copy** via the Library's thesis submission site. Please ensure that **all copies** include the requisite signature pages. **NB:** remember that different printers have different formatting settings, so triple-check that whatever printer you are printing these final copies on matches the University thesis guidelines for margins et al.
  
6. If you would like your own hardcopy of the thesis, please submit a third copy of the final thesis to Christine and the Department will pay to bind it for you.

The Department awards a small cash prize each year for the best thesis.