

Department of English and Theatre
Guidelines for
Literary-Critical Honours Theses

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 of course with much careful thought and critical preparation. 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 she or he, together with the 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 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 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 proposal should be 750-1000 words; it should include a specific description of the objective of the project (i.e., what is your thesis?), a discussion of major 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 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 literary-critical Honours thesis should be 40-60 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

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

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:

- the clarity (and existence) of a thesis statement
- the overall quality of the argument and writing style
- a clearly developed, unified, and coherent argument
- soundness of the scholarship
- consistency of style (either MLA or Chicago)
- correct use of grammar and punctuation.

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.)

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 subject(s), main ideas, and general conclusion of the thesis)
9. The Thesis proper (which must be divided into chapters and include a formal introduction and conclusion)
10. Appendices (if necessary)
11. 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. [Rev. KSW 8.ix.17]