The Thesis Process

After selecting the thesis option program of study, students will take the following steps in order to complete the requirements for the MA-TESL thesis:

- **Identify a research topic.**

- **Select a thesis chair.** Seek out a member of the TESL faculty with expertise in your topic area and invite her/him to serve as your chair. Refine your topic under the chair’s guidance.

- **Select a thesis committee.** In consultation with your chair, invite two other faculty members to serve on your committee.

- **Complete the “Intent to Write a Thesis” form,** which will include a 100-word summary of your proposed thesis study. Obtain the form from the BBL department. This form must be completed before registering for ESL 6983 (Master’s Thesis).

- **Register for ESL 6983.** Thesis students must register for a minimum of six credit hours of ESL 6983 over two semesters.
  - Work out a detailed timeline with your chair for writing, data collection, and analysis.
  - Visit the Graduate School website for thesis guidelines as soon as possible.
  - Negotiate with your chair how often you will meet to discuss your work in progress.
  - Students are also encouraged to consult with other committee members, as suggested by the chair.
  - Students must register for ESL 6983 in any semester in which they receive formal thesis supervision. Please note that some thesis chairs may not be available during the summer session to provide formal supervision. In some cases, a thesis may require more than two semesters to complete; students must register for additional hours of ESL 6983, as needed. (Thesis students are required to take two semesters of ESL 6983 (Master’s Thesis) in lieu of two electives. If a student chooses not to continue with a thesis, ESL 6983 will not be counted in place of elective courses in the non-thesis program of study)
  - Grades for all semesters of ESL 6983 are assigned after the successful completion of the thesis.

- **Write your thesis proposal.** It will typically range in length from 10-20 pages and include the following: introduction to the topic (significance of the study), literature review, research questions, methodology for data collection and analysis, timeline, and references. The format and length will be negotiated with your chair.
  - Work closely with your chair to develop the proposal.
  - Consult previous MA-TESL proposals as models. These may be requested from chairs of previous theses.
  - It is expected that the proposal be completed within four weeks (or fewer) of the first time a student takes ESL 6983.
  - It is advisable that the proposal include information required by the UTSA Institutional Review Board so that you are prepared to submit your study for review (see below).
• **Submit your proposal.** Once the proposal is approved by your chair, it will be reviewed by the other committee members who will provide additional advice to help guide your work. Allow a minimum of two weeks for your committee to read the proposal. An informal meeting with all thesis committee members to discuss the proposal with the student is usually recommended. No formal proposal hearing is required for master’s theses.

• **Submit your study to IRB.** After your research plans are finalized, and if your study involves human subjects, you must submit your plans for review by the UTSA Institutional Review Board (IRB). Your chair must approve all documents before you submit them to IRB. Please note that it may take 2-4 weeks to receive approval from IRB, depending on the nature of your study. Plan your data collection timeline accordingly. Visit the IRB website for more information.

• **Write your thesis.** The full thesis is written under the guidance of your chair. Upon approval by the chair, the student may provide the committee with the thesis for review. Allow four weeks for your committee to read the thesis.

• **Schedule your thesis defense.** Consult with your chair and committee members to set up a date and time for your thesis defense. Allow a minimum of two weeks before the Graduate School thesis submission deadline so there will be sufficient time to make any revisions requested by the committee. Your thesis chair will contact the BBL student development specialist (Rahnuma Islam) to select a location for the defense.

• **Submit a preliminary version of your thesis to the Graduate School for formatting review.** All theses must follow the UTSA formatting guidelines, available from the Graduate School website. The deadline for formatting review is about three weeks before the final thesis submission deadline. You are encouraged to take the Graduate School’s thesis formatting workshops. A thesis may be rejected by the Graduate School, if not properly formatted, which may delay your graduation by an entire semester!

• **Defend your thesis.** This is a two-fold process. First, you will deliver a 30- to 45-minute public presentation about your thesis research. Second, you will have an intellectual conversation with the committee about your study. It is common for the committee to request additional revisions based on this conversation.

• **Revise your thesis,** as requested. In some cases, the committee will wish to review the revised thesis. In other cases, the committee will delegate the final review of the thesis to the chair.

• **Deposit your thesis.** After final approval of the thesis by the committee, you will submit two hardcopies on special thesis paper to the Graduate School. The spring deadline is typically at the end of April, and the fall deadline is typically in mid-December. Consult the Graduate School website (see above) early in the semester in which you plan to graduate.