

Procedures for Thesis Writing and Research Projects
In the MA-TS and MA-CM
(Hereafter referred to simply as “thesis”)

Thesis proposal: Students may elect to write a thesis equivalent to 6 credit hours. This requires the submission of a proposal to the Director of Graduate Studies normally by April 30, one year before the student expects to graduate. Students will be granted permission to pursue a thesis based on the strength of their proposal, overall academic performance, and faculty availability. The proposal must include the following: 1) A description of the subject to be investigated including why it is worthy of investigation; 2) a thesis statement or central argument that will guide the research and writing (at this point the statement may be speculative or provisional); 3) a preliminary account of the prevailing views on the subject that is being investigated which addresses the questions, interests, and methods of previous scholarship; 4) a preliminary outline of what a completed thesis might look like; and 5) a bibliography that demonstrates availability of resources and indicates that the student has begun to read widely in the field. Together with the proposal, the student should suggest in writing two faculty that should be considered for thesis advising. The proposal is evaluated by the Graduate Studies Committee. If all the criteria of the proposal and the Department are met, a Thesis Advisor is named, and the student is informed of the Committee’s decisions by the Director. The Faculty Advisor is retained and continues to advise the student as needed.

The Thesis: The thesis is approximately 25,000 to 30,000 words (80-100 pages) in length and conforms to the university’s standard guide for academic writing including the University of Chicago Style of documentation.

Thesis Submission: Students wishing to graduate in the spring of any given year must submit their thesis (two hardcopies and one electronic copy) to the Director by February 28. The thesis will be submitted to two readers (two faculty, not including the Thesis Advisor). If the readers judge the thesis to be ready for defence (evaluations should be complete by March 15), a date is scheduled for a defence in the presence of the readers, the Thesis Advisor and a Chair (normally the Director of Graduate Studies).

Thesis Defence: The defence must take place at least two weeks prior to graduation. The defence is a public event to which faculty, students, and the wider community are invited. At this event, the student will be asked to give a ten to fifteen minute introduction to the work in question, describing the argument of the thesis and the conclusions reached. The student will also supply a one or two-page single-spaced abstract of the thesis that will be available for those attending the presentation. The readers will then be given an opportunity to ask questions regarding any aspect of the thesis. Finally, the public will be given an opportunity to ask questions or offer comments. The thesis may be accepted without revisions, or accepted with minor revisions. All revisions, if any, must be completed prior to graduation. When the student has successfully defended the thesis, the Thesis Advisor assigns a grade that takes into consideration the grade-recommendations of the two readers. These grade-recommendations with an accompanying rationale are also forwarded to the Director. Students must earn at least a “B” on their thesis essay to graduate with a Masters degree.

The Completed Document: The Thesis Advisor is responsible for ensuring that the final document is in an acceptable condition. The student is responsible for submitting the final document (one hard copy; one electronic copy) to the Director prior to graduation.

Time Limit: Students are strongly encouraged to complete their thesis within two semesters after having registered for the Thesis Writing course. After each unfinished semester, the student will be given an “IP” (in progress) mark until the Thesis is finished and successfully defended. If a student needs more than 12

months to complete the thesis, the student must apply for an extension for each semester beyond the 12-month period. Extensions will be granted if the student demonstrates progress toward the completion of their work and if they have paid a continuation fee. The application for extension must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies, who consults with the Thesis Advisor. If the extension is granted, the Director will send a written statement of the decision to the Registrar's office, which will allow the Registrar to extend the period for completion by one semester and generate a continuation fee (equivalent to registering for a 3-hour course) to the student.

Discontinuing the Thesis Midstream: Should a student decide to discontinue the thesis, the student may elect to have the Thesis Writing course changed to a 3-hour directed study. Directed study credit is normally subject to the approval of, and graded by, the Thesis Advisor. The student will need to complete a Course Change form to formally change the registration from Thesis Writing to Directed Study. The Thesis Advisor will need to communicate to the Registrar's office, in writing, that the course change has been approved.