

SENIOR THESIS GUIDELINES

Approved by the Academic Policies Committee on March 3, 2000
For implementation beginning Fall 2000

DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF THE SENIOR THESIS

The senior thesis is the product of scholarly or scientific research or artistic work of high academic quality. The character of the work leading to the senior thesis is expected to be more advanced than normal course work and should involve an unusually high level of initiative, independence, organization, and effort. It is used by many departments as one criterion for selecting students who are awarded honors in the major.

The senior thesis may take any one of a wide variety of forms suitable to the discipline(s) concerned. In all cases, the thesis should demonstrate excellence, originality, and dedicated effort by the student.

Senior thesis work carries eight credits and ordinarily involves two sequential courses of four semester credit hours each, directed by a faculty adviser selected by the student. The adviser and the thesis subject are ordinarily in the student's major field.

ELIGIBILITY FOR THE SENIOR THESIS

Students may register for senior thesis work after completion of a minimum of 87 semester hours of college credit, registering for two consecutive four credit courses. To qualify for senior thesis registration, students must ordinarily have a minimum GPA of 3.50 in the major field(s) and 3.25 overall. They should also be making normal progress toward completion of all requirements in the major(s).

In addition to the ordinary course registration, senior thesis registration entails: 1) the agreement of a faculty member in the student's major department to direct the senior thesis; and 2) the completion of the Statement of Intent which is to be submitted to the office of the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies. In addition to the thesis director, the student is required to invite two or more faculty members to serve on the thesis review board. The Statement of Intent must be approved by all members of the thesis review board. A copy of this document must be submitted to the chair(s) of the department(s) involved.

In certain unusual circumstances, if it is in the best educational interest of a student, exceptions to the above guidelines may be made. For example, it may be advantageous to:

- begin senior thesis work before completion of 87 semester hours;
- register for 8 credit hours in one semester rather than for 4 credit hours in each of two semesters;
- perform the work in two consecutive spring semesters in the junior and senior years;
- convert an independent work after one semester (4 hours credit) into senior thesis with only one semester of additional enrollment based on an unexpected research discovery or success. The timing of such a conversion must conform to the College's withdrawal policy. (See current Academic Calendar for date)

In all of these cases, it is necessary to demonstrate the educational validity of the requested exception. The written consent of the thesis review board, the department chair(s), and the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies is required.

PROCEDURE FOR INITIATING A SENIOR THESIS

The choice of subject, thesis director, preliminary delineation of the nature of the project and its goals should be completed during the semester preceding that in which work is expected to begin. The members of the thesis review board should also be selected and recruited during the planning period. The completion of the Statement of Intent marks the end of the preliminary planning stage. A signed copy of the Statement of Intent is to be submitted to the thesis director and the office of the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies during registration for the semester in which senior thesis work formally begins.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STUDENT IN PREPARING THE THESIS

It is the responsibility of the student to pursue the goals described in the Statement of Intent independently and to arrange for conferences with the director as well as with members of the thesis review board. It is the student's responsibility to submit a tentative version of the thesis to the director in sufficient time to allow review and revision. The director and student should work out a time schedule at the beginning of the project, including a due date for first submission of the finished-for-review-version of the thesis. It is the student's responsibility to arrange any necessary meetings of the thesis review board during the conduct of the thesis work and for evaluation of the thesis at its completion.

SUBMISSION OF THE SENIOR THESIS

The senior thesis, in final form for evaluation, shall be submitted to the thesis review board no later than the last day of classes of the semester in which the work is to be completed. It shall be in a form that facilitates efficient evaluation by members of the board. The procedure for evaluating the thesis is expected to vary widely, depending on the nature of the final product described as "the thesis." Therefore, it is imperative that all parties agree as to the nature of the expected product, and that the student understands what is required for submission and evaluation. If the thesis is a manuscript, videotape, audiotape, CD ROM or photographic slides, for example, an adequate number of copies shall be provided for evaluation by the thesis review board.

In addition to the copies required by the thesis review board, two copies of the thesis should be submitted to the thesis director; one is for the College Archives in the Julia Rogers Library. Theses that are awarded an A will be cataloged; others will be filed by name in the alumnae/i archives. If the thesis is something other than a manuscript, videotape, audiotape, CD ROM or photographic slides, the form of the submitted materials should be discussed with the college archivist in the early stages of the work. Manuscripts should follow the standards of the academic discipline to which they relate. Both copies should be bound in stiff-cover binders. Videotapes, audiotapes, CD ROMs or photographic slides should be placed in a stiff-cover binder designed for that purpose. All formats should include a printed title page with the information that the work is a senior thesis, the name of the department and the date of submission.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE THESIS REVIEW BOARD

The thesis review board is composed of the director and at least two other faculty members whose expertise is related to the thesis subject. The board will:

- approve the Statement of Intent,
- be available for consultation with the student,

- meet with the student midway through the work for a progress report, for clarification of the expected product, and for clarification of the evaluation process,
- examine the student's work at its conclusion,
- if necessary, be prepared to meet with the student in a final session after submission of the thesis for evaluation (e.g., if an oral exam or final oral report is appropriate).
- recommend a grade for the work to the director.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE THESIS DIRECTOR

The thesis director shall:

- collaborate with the student in choosing the thesis review board,
- assist and advise the student in defining goals, shaping the work, and preparing the Statement of Intent,
- meet with the student regularly,
- work with student to set deadlines that encourage progress,
- function as chair of the thesis review board,
- with the advice of the thesis review board, determine the thesis grade,
- submit to the office of the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies a copy of the thesis destined for the College Archives in the Julia Rogers Library, along with a signed copy of the Statement of Thesis Completion.

GRADES

Normally, a senior thesis project is a year-long project. As such, thesis directors will ordinarily submit the grade (s) for the entire thesis at the end of the project. Two separate grades may be used to reflect each semester's work, one of the preparation and the other the final product; or, the same grade may be submitted to reflect both.

If, by the end of the first semester, a student chooses to terminate the project, or if it is apparent to the adviser that an acceptable senior thesis is unlikely, the senior thesis shall be converted to independent work and graded accordingly. The timing of such a conversion must conform to the College's withdrawal policy.

SENIOR THESIS Form 1

Return by 9th week of semester preceding that in which thesis will be undertaken to the office of the ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES.

To: Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies

From: _____ Class of _____ Major _____

Semester in which thesis work is to be carried on: _____

Please attach an outline (six typewritten pages or fewer) of your proposed project covering the points listed below. If your thesis is of an artistic nature such as a musical composition or sculpture, for example, with your director's permission, you may deviate from this format.

1. Description of the research or artistic project.
2. The relevant background you bring to this project: courses, language, special skills, and interests, previous independent work in the field, and so forth.
3. Central hypotheses or research goals.
4. Proposed methodology or treatment of the subject.
5. List of faculty who will serve as resources for the project.
6. Bibliography developed to date (most pertinent references)
7. Time table

Short title of thesis for final record. (Limit to 30 typing spaces, if possible, including spaces between words.)

Planned examination dates:

Oral progress report _____ Final Examination: Written _____
date date
Oral _____
date

Approval of:

Thesis Director date Examiner date

Examiner date

Chair of student's Major Department date

I agree that my thesis may be added to the Goucher College Archives and accessible to users, subject to copyright and library regulations. The library has my permission to reproduce the thesis for archival purposes.

Student's signature date

SENIOR THESIS

Please return this form to the Office of the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies when thesis grade is submitted.

To: Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies

From: _____

Department of _____

Subject: Final Report of work done by: _____ Grade _____

Statement of work accomplished:

Signature:

Thesis Director

Examiner

Examiner

Department Chair

Date

