

## Guidelines for Completing your Thesis

### Thesis Committee

You should, from the very beginning of the program, introduce yourself and get to know faculty members. Do Independent Readings (298s) to become familiar with the different working styles and accessibility of the faculty. You must have all three committee members before you fill out your Advance to Candidacy paperwork You file this form by the second week of the quarter that you wish to graduate.

### Chair

You want someone for your Chair who will motivate, support, and encourage you to finish, versus someone who encourages you to continue modifying your work until it is a perfect PhD dissertation. This person dictates how your committee is run. If there is a conflict of opinion regarding the quality of your work, it is up to the Chair to make the final decision.

### Other Committee Members

You must have a total of three assistant or full professors from UCSD. Two must be Latin Americanists. An adjunct professor, lecturer, or professor from another University may take the fourth or even fifth position, but you must get a letter of exception from the Student Affairs Officer and submit it to OGS.

There are several guidelines to keep in mind when selecting your committee:

- 1) Anyone can advise you and they do not need to be on your committee.
- 2) If a committee member is unable to come to the defense, they are still obligated to ultimately agree with the general opinion of those present at your defense. They do this by signing off on the Final Report of your thesis.
- 3) It is worthwhile to select professors from multiple disciplines so that your thesis will be well-developed.
- 4) You can work with your committee members throughout your tenure here or you can work with some of them when you are in the process of drafting your thesis. It is entirely up to you and your Chair.
- 5) Lastly, you should know the personalities and expertise of your committee. You should pick people that have a history of working with MA students. They should also have a history of working well with each other.

### Reconstitution of Committee

If you have a valid reason for reconstituting your committee, then you are permitted to do so by the University. The request to reconstitute the membership of a committee, you must submit the Reconstitution of Committee form to the dean of Graduate Studies. Requests must be approved by the department chair and committee chair, and submitted to OGS no less than two weeks prior to the qualifying examination or defense of the dissertation.

### Independent Study (LATI 299) versus Leave of Absence

You can usually complete all of the course requirements during your first year, with the exception of the LATI 299 requirement, which is an independent study taken your second year with a member of your committee to write your thesis. Some students find that, after completing the one course of 299 and all other requirements early on in their second year, they want to go on a leave of absence in order to save money.

It is worthwhile to weigh this decision for several reasons:

- 1) International students must obtain approval from the International Center to go on leave of absence.
- 2) A student seeking to maintain health coverage must contact the Student Health Center to purchase insurance.
- 3) While on leave, a student may not be employed by UCSD, UCSD Extension, or UCSD Medical Center or hold a fellowship, traineeship, or similar appointment administered by the University.
- 4) Students may not use any University facilities or place demands on faculty. This includes not being able to use the library.

Most students decide to take 12 units of 299s their entire second year. By doing so, they have full access to their faculty committee members and can continue having health insurance and access to the library resources. In addition, you still receive financial aid.

If you do decide to take a leave of absence for the quarter that you defend, you can pay a filing fee (~\$192) and readmit fee (~\$60) on the day that you defend. These fees readmit you as a student and allow you graduate without being registered that quarter.

## **Writing the Thesis**

Be realistic about a Master's thesis. This is not a PhD dissertation and you should not let faculty members turn it into one. Don't be afraid; it is not a monster. Just think of it as a large paper **(80-120 pages)** that has between 4-6 chapters, depending on overall length. Some of your faculty members may encourage you to publish your thesis. This is beneficial, especially if you plan to stay in academia and pursue a PhD. If this does occur, you should first write your thesis and then make a condensed version (approximately 15 pages) to submit for publishing. However, focus on finishing your thesis first.

Your introduction is the hardest part. Many people complete this last just because your thesis statement will develop/change with time. Plan to write 1-2 chapters each quarter so you are not killing yourself in the Spring.

## **Requirements for Formatting Your Thesis**

There are several requirements that you must take care of before you submit your thesis to OGS. In early April, the Graduate Academic Affairs Adviser from OGS will come to CILAS to talk to the students about the formatting requirements of the thesis. This is a mandatory meeting. After the meeting, you will be required to make two appointments with the Graduate Academic Affairs Adviser from OGS during the Spring quarter of your second year or your last quarter here. The meetings will be to conduct the preliminary thesis check and the final thesis check (when you submit the final copy of your thesis). There are several formatting requirements of the thesis and they can be a huge headache. The guidelines for formatting your thesis can be found at:

## **The Defense**

You will need to reserve a 2 hour timeslot in LASB 4 or the Cramb Reading Room for your defense. The Student Affairs Officer will post a calendar outside LASB 4 for everyone to sign up for a time. This obviously needs to be cleared with all members of the committee.

You cannot graduate until you have defended and turned in the final copy of your thesis to OGS. You have until the last week of school to have your name printed in the Commencement booklet. Otherwise, you have until the last day of finals to participate in Commencement, but not have your name printed in the booklet.

On the day of your defense, there are several pieces of paperwork that you need to complete:

- 1) Degree and Diploma Application
- 2) Final Report of the Thesis
- 3) Graduate General Petition (for filing fee if on leave of absence)
- 4) Alumni Information Sheet ☺

The defense is typically run in the following ways:

- 1) It is customary that you bring refreshments for your committee members.
- 2) You will need to arrange with the Student Affairs Officer if you need Audio Visual equipment (PowerPoint, projector).
- 3) LAS defenses are open to family, friends, colleagues, and other faculty members, although it is your decision to include these people if you care to.
- 4) You should arrange to present for 15 minutes. You should cover very general points of the thesis, address why you did not choose to cover some topics, and also highlight strengths of the thesis.
- 5) The committee will then ask you a series of questions.
- 6) Then, you will be asked to leave the room while they discuss if you should pass or fail.
- 7) You are then asked back into the room and you find out about any necessary revisions that you need to make and if you have passed or failed.