



MCU THESIS COMMITTEE Primary Advisor Guidelines

What does being a Primary Advisor for an MCU graduate student working on their thesis entail? How can you make sure you do a good job? This guide is a short introduction to the process and your responsibilities as the Primary Advisor.

The Thesis Process

Graduate students take two classes for their thesis work. PROD 511 is the three-credit prospectus course. In this course the student selects their thesis committee, decides on a thesis topic, and writes a detailed outline or plan for completion of their thesis. This 10 to 15 page plan is called a prospectus and details on the requirements can be found in the PROD 511 syllabus. The prospectus is not given a letter grade; however all committee members and the course instructor (known as the Committee Secretary) must deem the prospectus satisfactory before the student completes the course. This process will likely involve several drafts. Students generally enroll in PROD 511 in the second year of their Master's work and should complete the course in one year.

Students then enroll in MDWF 560 if they are doing a written thesis or MDWF 584 if they are doing a thesis project. This course is five credits and takes approximately two years. The student works closely with their committee and their course instructor to complete the thesis work outlined in their prospectus. The Committee Secretary sends drafts to advisors for a rigorous, formal review. The student will also communicate with advisors through monthly updates and may communicate less formally with advisors through emails or phone calls. When the committee feels the thesis is in final form, the student completes an oral defense. MDWF 560 and MDWF 584 are pass/fail courses; the student must pass the course to receive their Master's degree.

Resources to Help You

(All documents in italics are available under the Thesis Advisor link in your teacher menu.)

Documents You Should Read

- *The Thesis Process: Step-By-Step*
- *PROD 511 syllabus*
- *PROD 560 syllabus OR PROD 584 syllabus*
- *MCU Guide to the Preparation of Theses*

Tracking Students/Deadlines:

- *Track Your Graduate Students* (this spreadsheet lists all graduate students, the thesis course they are currently enrolled in, their topic, committee members, and **any due dates advisors need to be aware of.**)

- Thesis students are required to send their advisors a monthly update by email
- Each time the Committee Secretary requests an action such as review of a draft, a due date will be included in the accompanying memo.

Specific Responsibilities of Primary Advisors

The Primary Advisor has the major responsibility for ensuring that the student's topic is appropriate for either a written thesis or a thesis project. Although it is certainly appropriate for the Primary Advisor to make suggestions on the mechanics of writing, their major focus is on CONTENT of both the prospectus and the thesis. The following checklist will remind you of items to verify. Not all of these will be relevant to every thesis, particularly in the case of projects.

Introduction and Problem Statement

- ✓ Is the problem stated both in a general and in a specific way?
- ✓ Is the purpose of the study stated?
- ✓ Are the questions or hypotheses stated?
- ✓ Does the reader get a general view of both the rationale for the investigation and its relationship to a supporting theoretical base?

Review of the Literature

- ✓ Does it show thorough knowledge of the research, theory, concepts, ideology, and opinion related to this topic?
- ✓ Is the reader made aware that the review has been selective, and are the criteria for selection and relevance explained?
- ✓ Is there any critical assessment of the reviewed literature?
- ✓ Does the review reveal the relation between what has previously been done by others and what is proposed in this study?
- ✓ Is each section summarized?
- ✓ Is there a final summary that clinches the need to do the study, including gaps in the literature this study fills?

Method or Procedure

- ✓ Does it explain what was done to gather the information essential to the investigation?
- ✓ Would it be possible for another person to gather data and analyze it exactly as in this study simply by reading and following the statements in this section?
- ✓ Is the specific research method used related clearly to a more general design known in the research methodology literature?
- ✓ Is the setting of the study specified?

Results

- ✓ Does the reader learn how information in raw form was summarized? Descriptive statistics? Content analysis? Other?
- ✓ Are results grouped in relation to questions or hypotheses?
- ✓ Is redundancy eliminated or minimized?
- ✓ Is this section free of interpretations or results?

Discussion and Conclusions

- ✓ Are the meaning and importance of the results indicated?
- ✓ Are conclusions drawn about each question or hypothesis?

- ✓ Are the limitations on conclusions specified?
- ✓ Are alternative explanations for the findings identified and discussed?
- ✓ Does the reader learn how successful the investigation was and what further study might be needed on the topic?

(Above checklist is a selection from a more comprehensive checklist in Mauch, J.E. & Park, N. (2003). *Guide to the successful thesis and dissertation: A handbook for students and faculty* (5th ed.). (pp. 249-250). New York: CRC Press. This excellent handbook is available to thesis advisors from the MCU Graduate Library).