



MCU THESIS COMMITTEE Writing Advisor Guidelines

What does being a Writing 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 Writing 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 Writing Advisors

Although you are encouraged to offer suggestions on the content of a student's work, your focus is the writing process.

- A thorough review should be done of the **FIRST** draft of the prospectus. Any problems with APA citation, paper mechanics, and general flow and structure of the document should be pointed out at this time. You should provide specific guidance to the student in order to help her improve her work. Getting the student on the right track earlier in the process is preferred.
- The *MCU Guide to the Preparation of Theses* is the definitive guide to formatting and contents of the prospectus and thesis. APA citation is required and the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.) is the required text. In the case of conflicting information the *MCU Guide to the Preparation of Theses* is preferred.
- General comments on writing style and citation are helpful; however examples and plenty of "red ink" are often necessary. Citations and formatting should be perfect and it is the writing advisor's job to check these.
- Any time a reference is used in-text, there must be a corresponding reference in the bibliography and vice versa. The exception is for a personal communication which has an in-text citation but no entry in the bibliography. Before the final thesis is accepted, this should be checked.
- Transitions should be provided between sections
- Headings are formatted according to the number of levels of subordination in the paper. Check the APA rules carefully; this can be tricky!
- Tables should stand on their own and contain all essential information so they can be read without references to the text.
- The completed thesis becomes a published work. The editing process should reflect this. In other words, a thesis of "B" quality is not acceptable. The writing advisor has the responsibility to make sure the thesis is publication ready in the areas of paper mechanics and citation.