

Guidelines for the MA Thesis (LCS Track)

The MA thesis is a research-based capstone project representing the culmination of the skills and knowledge that you have developed through the program of study. Think of your MA thesis as a first draft of an academic article: an approximately 10,000-word essay (25-30pp) that posits an original argument and situates its thesis within the relevant research. In doing so, your essay should articulate its intervention into scholarly discourse. What is new, original, and provocative about your argument? How does your argument challenge existing scholarship in the relevant field(s)? How does your argument advance the conversation about a particular issue, idea, or text? What are the stakes of your argument? Or, more crassly, why and to whom does your essay matter?

Your thesis may be an original piece of writing or a revision of an essay that you've already written for your graduate coursework. In the event that you are rewriting a seminar paper, your thesis should entail a substantial revision and expansion of that earlier work. After all, seminar papers are written under duress at the end of the semester and therefore limit the amount of research, reflection, and analysis that you can realistically endeavor. With the added affordances of time, distance from the original essay, further knowledge and skills from other seminars, your thesis should be markedly more researched and argumentatively refined than a seminar paper.

Protocols and Deadlines

Course Enrollment and Committee Determination: During the fall semester of their second year, students should enroll in ENGL 9090 for the spring semester, determine a topic for their project, and then contact two faculty members to serve on their MA committee. Students will need a **chair** to direct the project. This person should be an LCS faculty member and a content-area expert for the project. The chair should take an active role in establishing expectations and timelines for the composition and completion of the project. Students will also need a secondary **reader**. This faculty member can be from any track and may take a more active or supporting role in advising the thesis, depending on the needs of the project as determined by the chair and the student. Once students have arranged for a chair and a reader, they should download the [Committee Form](#), get it signed, and email the signed form to the LCS Director and the Director of Graduate Studies before **11/15**.

Drafts and Revisions: Students are responsible for collaborating with their advisors to determine guidelines, timelines, and deadlines for the submission of drafts and revisions. There is no “one-size-fits-all” model for this process, so students should be proactive about establishing a schedule.

Defense and Submission: Because the thesis is submitted internally rather than through the Graduate School, there is no formal submission process and there are no required formatting guidelines, although we do recommend including a [cover page](#) that follows the college's standard format. Students will complete a **two-hour defense** of their thesis, which they will schedule with their committee early in the spring semester. Students should email their completed thesis to their committee **two weeks before** the defense date. The defense should take place in **April** and may be virtual or in-person at the chair's discretion. If you would like to book a room in A&S (we recommend either 222 or 052), please speak with Susan Luring (luringsn@ucmail.uc.edu). While the defense can be scheduled as late as finals week, all work on the thesis needs to be submitted by the end of the semester. After the defense, the student's MA committee will assign a letter grade, which the DGS will submit as the student's final grade for ENGL 9090. After submitting their thesis, students are strongly encouraged to collaborate with their advisers to identify academic journals where they may submit the thesis for potential publication. This secondary submission is not required and remains at the discretion of the student and their advisers.