

Division of English as an International Language

Master's Thesis

The Master's thesis is an opportunity for highly qualified students in the pedagogical and research tracks to carry out specialized research to fulfill a part of the requirements for their MATESL degree. Standards of excellence will be applied to the work of those undertaking a Master's thesis.

Qualifications

In order to qualify for the Master's thesis, a student must meet the following minimum qualifications:

- Completion of at least 4 units in the MATESL program (excluding curriculum prerequisites)
- Residence of at least one full semester in DEIL
- At least a 3.75 GPA upon entering step 2 below.

Procedures

The following procedures describe the responsibilities, in their proper order, of (a) a student who meets the above qualifications and wishes to undertake a Master's thesis, (b) the Thesis Director and the Thesis Committee, and (c) the DEIL Secretary.

1. The student first secures the consent of a DEIL faculty member to serve as the Thesis Director. The director must be a DEIL faculty member with graduate standing.

Note: Students in the research track have tentatively a preassigned Thesis Director. Students in the pedagogical track must find a director themselves. They are strongly urged not to move too far into the development of their thesis until they have a director. Failure to find a director at the outset can result in a great deal of wasted time, should it prove impossible to find someone who will act in that capacity.

At this point, the Thesis Director begins to keep a record of the student's progress through the Master's thesis process by using the MATESL Thesis Checklist obtained from the DEIL Secretary. (The Checklist is also printed on the last page of this document.)

2. In consultation with the Thesis Director, the student will devise an informal written proposal of the research to be undertaken.
3. The student, in consultation with the Thesis Director, will then seek an additional faculty member to serve with the Thesis Director as a Thesis Committee. This faculty member may be in another department, if desirable. The committee may consist of other members. They, however, play an advisory and consultative role and not an official role on the committee.
4. The student then takes a written qualifying examination in the area of specialization. Prior to the examination, the Thesis Committee counsels the students on appropriate research and literature over which the student is to be examined. The form (sit-down, take-home), length, content, and timing of the qualifying examination are determined by the Thesis Committee.

5. Failure of the student to achieve a grade of High Pass on the qualifying examination, as determined by the Thesis Committee, will result in the student's discontinuing work toward the Master's thesis.

Upon successful completion of the qualifying examination, the Thesis Director makes a record of this milestone on the student's MATESL Thesis Checklist.

6. Having completed the qualifying examination, the student prepares a formal, written thesis proposal in consultation with the Thesis Committee and in accordance with specifications in Appendix 1. Upon its completion, the proposal is presented and defended before the Thesis Committee.
7. If the Thesis Committee does not approve the proposal, the student will then follow one of three courses of action:
 - a. rewrite or revise the existing proposal only if the Thesis Committee so recommends;
 - b. attempt an entirely new proposal, possibly with a different committee;
 - c. discontinue work toward a Master's thesis.

8. After the student has received the Thesis Committee's approval of the proposal, the Thesis Director submits to the DEIL Secretary a thesis abstract prepared by the student then updates the student's MATESL Thesis Checklist.

9. The student then, in consultation with the Thesis Committee, proceeds with the research. The student must enroll in EIL 499, Thesis Research (0-2 units), for at least one semester between the approval of the proposal and the successful completion of the oral examination. The student receives a grade of DF (deferred) for EIL 499 until such time as the thesis is completed.

10. Upon completion of the research, a formal thesis is written and submitted to the Thesis Committee. The format of this thesis will be in conformity with a standard style sheet and with the Graduate College guidelines for thesis preparation. The student must be careful to adhere to the Graduate College timetable for submission and approval of the thesis.

11. After sufficient time has elapsed (no more than two weeks), the Thesis Committee and the student meet together for approximately two hours in an oral examination on the thesis. The Thesis Director records the successful completion of the oral examination on the MATESL Thesis Checklist.

12. At some appropriate point in the progress of the student's thesis, the following conditions must be met:

- a. The student presents the essence of the research at a DEIL colloquium, and
- b. either i or ii:
 - i. the student submits the essence of the research for consideration as a professional conference presentation (e.g., TESOL, MLA, ACTFL, AAAL, NAFSA/ATESL, LSA).
 - ii. the student prepares a version of the thesis as a manuscript for submission to a professional journal (e.g. IDEAL, LANGUAGE LEARNING, TESOL QUARTERLY). Other journals to which the manuscript might be sent are listed in Appendix 2.

Graduation is not contingent on having the conference paper or the journal article accepted.

The student submits to the Thesis Director a copy of materials sent to fulfill requirement b. (i.e., conference proposal for i. Or submission letter and manuscript for ii.). The Thesis Director puts these materials in the student's permanent file and notes this step on the student's MATESL Thesis Checklist.

13. After the student has successfully completed the oral examination and met the requirement outlined in step 12 above, the Thesis Director submits to the DEIL Secretary a revised abstract prepared by the student then updates the MATESL Thesis Checklist.
14. The student deposits one bound copy of the written thesis with the DEIL Secretary to be placed in the DEIL's Helen Brennan Memorial Library. This being done, the student will have completed all requirements for the Master's thesis. Completion of step 14 is noted on the MATESL Thesis Checklist. The Thesis Director then prepares a Supplemental Grade Report to change all DF grades given in EIL 499 to S (Satisfactory).
15. The DEIL Secretary shall place all written communications from the Thesis Director in the student's permanent file as a written record of the student's progress toward completing the thesis.
16. The DEIL Secretary shall compile and continuously update the list of completed theses and theses -in-progress. The DEIL Secretary is a resource for the DEIL newsletter staff who are encouraged to publish abstracts of completed and in-progress thesis.

Appendix 1
Guidelines for Writing the Formal Thesis Proposal

The proposal should consist of six sections- an introduction, statement of purpose, discussion of methodology, discussion of possible outcomes and conclusions, implications, and bibliography. Each of these sections is discussed more fully below.

5. **Introduction to the Area of Interest**

The student should review the major studies previously conducted in the area of interest. The review should make apparent the importance and relevance of additional research in this area. The review should reveal the student's depth of understanding of the major issues in this area as well as the strengths and weaknesses of prior research.

2. **Statement of Purpose**

The statement of purpose should frame the research questions in an explicit manner and relate them directly to the literature discussed in the review. The research questions may be followed by specific hypotheses (when appropriate). A clearly presented statement of purpose can be of great value to the student and the Thesis Committee. It can help guide the student throughout the project, and it can make readily apparent to the Thesis Committee the range and feasibility of the proposed thesis.

3. **Methodology**

Next, the student should explain, in detailed terms, what type of research project is to be carried out; whether or not a pilot study will be required; how subjects will be selected and tested (if subjects will be used); how data will be elicited and examined; and what practical problems might be encountered when trying to implement the study. In short, the student should discuss the various practical and technical facets of the research project.

4. **Possible Outcomes and Conclusions**

The student may anticipate any one of several different outcomes of the research (especially if an experiment will be conducted) and may thus anticipate arriving at any one of several different conclusions. These possible outcomes and conclusions should be stated clearly (e.g. "If there is no difference between the three groups, then..." or "If there are significant differences between the three groups, then..."). In this way, the student can be prepared for various results and can also demonstrate an understanding of the potential complexity of the research project.

5. **Implications**

The implications of the research project- the general and specific relevance and contribution of the study to the field- must be addressed. The student may also wish to consider implications for the future research (e.g.) What issues for further study might this project suggest? In this section, the student places the study in the context of the research discussed in the introduction and indicates an understanding of the relative importance of this contribution to it.

6. **Bibliography**

The bibliography need not be as long as the one which will appear in the thesis. However, it should be complete enough to demonstrate to the Thesis Committee that the student has conducted a reasonably thorough literature search and has not overlooked any works of importance.

For more detailed information regarding how to develop a thesis proposal, the student is encouraged to consult texts such as Isaac and Michael's *Handbook in Research and Evaluation (1983)* and Leedy's *Practical Research Planning and Design (1985)*

Appendix 2

American Speech
Applied Linguistics
Applied Psycholinguistics
Australian Review of Applied Linguistics
The Canadian Modern Language Review
ELT Journal
English Language Research Journal
English Teaching Forum
The ESP Journal
Foreign Language Annals
International Review of Applied Linguistics (IRAL)
Issues and Developments in English and Applied Linguistics (IDEAL)
ITL Review of Applied Linguistics
JALT Journal
Journal of Language and Social Psychology
Journal of Psycholinguistic Research
Journal of Reading
Journal of Reading Research
Journal of Second Language Research
Language in Society
Language Learning
Language Teaching
Language Testing
Linguistics
The Midwest Modern Language Journal
The Modern Language Journal
NABE Journal
Reading in a Foreign Language
RELC Journal
SPEAQ Journal
Studies in the Linguistic Sciences
Studies in Second Language Acquisition
TESL Canada Journal
TESOL Quarterly
Word
World Englishes: Journal of English as an International and Intranational Language

The above list is not exhaustive. The student is encouraged to consult the Thesis Director and other members of the Thesis Committee for suggestions about where to submit the article.