



## THESIS/DISSERTATION PROCEDURAL CHECKLIST

### THE GRADUATE SCHOOL • VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PLEASE NOTE THAT SOME COMMITTEES MAY NOT ADHERE TO ALL THE STEPS PRESENTED BELOW.  
 DETAILS ABOUT MOST OF THE STEPS ARE ON NEXT PAGE.

<b>v</b>	<b>PROCEDURE</b>	<b>DATE</b>
	DEVELOP TENTATIVE PROPOSAL	
	CONSULT WITH MAJOR PROFESSOR	
	SELECT COMMITTEE	
	CONDUCT PRELIMINARY FEASIBILITY STUDY	
	SUBMIT THESIS OR DISSERTATION COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT FORM TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL	
	PREPARE DRAFT OF PROPOSAL	
	REGISTER FOR THESIS/DISSERTATION CREDIT	
	OBTAIN APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL	
	BEGIN FORMAL WORK ON YOUR PROJECT	
	WORK WITH YOUR COMMITTEE	
	COMPLETE THE ABSTRACT	
	APPLY FOR GRADUATION (AT LEAST 2 SEMESTERS IN ADVANCE)	
	SCHEDULE DEFENSE	
	DEFEND YOUR THESIS OR DISSERTATION	
	MAKE SUGGESTED EDITS FROM COMMITTEE	
	SUBMIT THESIS OR DISSERTATION TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL	
	PAY BINDING FEES	
	BUY REGALIA FOR GRADUATION (HOOD, CAP, GOWN)	
	COMPLETE EDITS FROM GRADUATE SCHOOL	
	PICK UP SIGNATURE PAGES*	
	SUBMIT COPIES TO BE BOUND TO THE LIBRARY*	
	SUBMIT ELECTRONIC COPY TO THE ARCHIVES*	
	<b>GRADUATE!</b>	
	<b>CELEBRATE WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS!</b>	
	*CAN BE COMPLETED AFTER GRADUATION.	

# PROCEDURAL CHECKLIST DETAILS

Students must follow procedures in completing your thesis or dissertation as set by their committees. These procedures are designed to ensure that the process goes as smoothly as it can for students. Students must be aware of this process when beginning a thesis or dissertation in order to plan time properly. Always work with your committee through each step.

## Getting Started

It is never too early to begin planning your thesis or dissertation. You might want to be thinking about your project from the moment that you begin your graduate program. Keep in mind that you must register for thesis or dissertation credit for any semester in which you receive assistance from any member of your committee.

## Develop Tentative Proposal

You should be thinking about your project as soon as you begin your program. As you approach the point in your program where you start your thesis or dissertation, you will develop a tentative proposal prior to a discussion of your project with your major professor. You should have an idea of what you want to do, when you want to do it, where you want to do it, and how you will do it.

## Consult with Major Professor

Once you have your tentative proposal, you should meet with your major professor, who will serve as the chair of your committee, to start the process of getting the committee in place and formalizing your research project.

## Select Committee

When you and your major professor agree that you have a project that both meets the needs of the degree and is feasible, you should form your committee. Procedures for this vary from program to program. You should have an idea of the committee composition you would feel comfortable with, but you need to discuss this with your major professor. Faculty members are limited in the number of thesis or dissertation committees they can chair and upon which they can serve. Your major professor may be aware of other factors that would make the selection of an individual inappropriate for your project. You need to consult your major professor for this and most other decisions pertaining to your research project.

Make sure that all members of your committee are members of the graduate faculty. Submit signed thesis and dissertation committee appointment forms at least three semesters in advance of your planned graduation date. More details found below.

The Graduate Faculty List shows those with associate, full, or temporary status.

**A thesis committee** must have a minimum of three members, with the major professor and at least one additional professor drawn from the department in which the student is majoring. One member of the committee must be from a department outside the student's area of specialization. All members of the committee must be members of the VSU graduate faculty or be approved by exception by the dean of the Graduate School.

**The dissertation committee** will be composed of a maximum of five members and should be named no earlier than the semester in which the Comprehensive Examinations are scheduled to be taken. All of the committee members must be members of the VSU graduate faculty, or have been approved by exception by the dean of the Graduate School. One member must be a member of the faculty in the student's departmental major; this person may serve as the chair of the committee. One member of the committee must be from a department outside the College of Education for EDD students, or Arts & Sciences for DPA students, supporting the core courses. One member of the committee must be from a department within the College of Education or Arts and Sciences, but outside the student's department of specialization. For EDD students, one member must be a member of the VSU research faculty.

### **Conduct Preliminary Feasibility Study**

You should conduct a preliminary feasibility study of your proposal while you are in the process of consulting with your major professor and while you are attempting to come up with a committee. Many times a project looks interesting, worthwhile, and doable when you first consider it, but becomes less so upon closer examination. There may be a number of constraints that make your research project unworkable. Finding these constraints should not disqualify the project, but you must find a way of dealing with the constraint. If it becomes clear that there are too many obstacles that would negatively affect your study, you need to consider a different topic.

### **Submit Thesis/Dissertation Committee Form to the Graduate School**

Once you have determined the composition of your committee and the individual members have agreed to serve on the committee, you must obtain their signatures on the Thesis Appointment Committee form or dissertation committee form (consult doctoral program handbook for forms) and submit that form to the Graduate School, which retains the right of final approval of your committee (remember, all committee members must have graduate faculty status). **Please submit the completed form at least three semesters in advance of the semester in which you graduate.**

There are different forms for master's theses and doctoral dissertation committees. Doctoral students should use forms in their *Doctoral Student Handbooks*. Only thesis students use the above form.

## Prepare Draft of Proposal

At this point, you will prepare a formal proposal for your committee to approve. Check with your committee chair to determine what style or form to use for the proposal. When submitting your formal proposal and, indeed, when submitting any element of your project, you must make sure that the document is formatted properly, typed, free of grammatical and spelling errors, and well organized. Your committee is there to assist your intellectual growth, and to serve as basic proof readers and assist with editing your work as needed.

The purpose of the proposal is to offer your committee evidence of the significance and rationale of the proposed study, the philosophical or theoretical knowledge base within which the topic is developed, the methodology or procedures to be employed, and the anticipated implications of the findings or conclusions. The proposal is an indication of the student's readiness to conduct the research (Georgia State University, 1989).

## Register for Thesis/Dissertation Credit

You must register for thesis or dissertation credit once any member of your committee actually begins working with you on your research project, and you must be registered for the appropriate credit during any semester in which your committee is providing assistance to you. Your committee will not consider your formal proposal unless you have registered for thesis or dissertation credit. **Students must be registered for thesis or dissertation hours the semester they graduate.**

## Obtain Approval of Proposal

Your committee must approve your proposal prior to your beginning formal work on your project. Committee members may suggest or require that changes be made to your proposal prior to their approval. It is possible that you may get conflicting requirements from different members of your committee. If this happens, it is your responsibility to try to clarify and work out the differences. If this cannot be done, you should go to your committee chair and follow his or her advice. Your chair will serve as a mediator on your behalf with the committee. **As part of the proposal process, remember to obtain IRB or IACUC approval for any research that involves human or live animal subjects BEFORE beginning the actual project (see Research Ethics).**

## Begin Formal Work on Your Project

You are now ready to work with your committee on your project. If you have taken care with each of the steps listed above, your formal work should proceed with relative smoothness.

## **Working With Your Committee**

Your committee's cooperation is essential for the successful completion of your research project, and obtaining that cooperation can at times seem difficult and frustrating. Keep in mind that you are working with a number of busy people, and that your project is just one of many things that they have on their minds. You must give the members of your committee adequate time to read and review your work. Check with the various members of your committee to see if there are any time conflicts of which you need to be aware. Try to plan your own schedule so that you have work to do while your committee is reviewing a given chapter. You might be revising chapter one, for example, while your committee is reading chapter two. The committee needs to be involved in the review of all completed work. The committee members will establish a procedure that you should follow, and it may vary from person to person. It is your responsibility to determine the role each member of your committee wishes to play and adjust your plans accordingly.

In consultation with your committee, the chair will determine when the document is ready to be defended. Before the defense is scheduled, all committee members should have read the document, have had opportunities for input, and should have indicated that the document is ready for final action. Keeping your committee fully engaged in the final revision process will avoid excessive re-writing after the defense. Your committee chair is your key advisor on your project. Work very closely with this individual.

## **Library Use in an Electronic Age**

The Odum Library will aid you in the collection of the information needed to put your project in perspective. Technology has given the library access to nationwide and global information through Galileo (Georgia Library Learning Online). As a statewide initiative to improve information access for higher education in the state of Georgia, Galileo allows you to access every library in the university system, as well as about 400 full text periodicals. Galileo has a number of other useful features that may be useful to you; familiarize yourself with it and the other resources available early in the thesis or dissertation process.

## **The Abstract**

Once you have completed your project, you will prepare a one-page abstract. This should tell the reader what your topic was, how it was researched, and what were the major findings. Copies of the abstract will be distributed at the defense of the thesis or dissertation, and will be bound in the finished document.

## **The Defense**

Your committee chair will inform you when the committee members consider your project ready for a defense. The defense should be scheduled around midterm of the semester in which you expect to graduate. Your committee chair must notify the Graduate School of the

date, location, and time of your defense at least two weeks in advance (an email will suffice). Notification must include your name, your degree program, the title of your project, and a short description of the project. A copy of your abstract may be included for this purpose. The defense is usually an oral discussion/ presentation of your project and, with some programs, is open to the academic community and invited guests. Doctoral students have particular "notification of defense" forms to submit to the Graduate School – consult your program's guide.

### **Submission of the Thesis or Dissertation**

Definition of "approved final draft" of the thesis or dissertation: that which has been defended, corrected, and undergone a final review by the members of your committee and is ready to submit to the Graduate School. Steps to submit include:

- The committee chair must notify the dean of the Graduate School that the student has successfully defended the thesis or dissertation by memo or email.
- One copy of the committee-approved (defended) thesis or dissertation, with all signed signature pages and proof of paid binding fees, must be submitted to the Graduate School not less than two weeks prior to the scheduled graduation date for that semester. **One-sided printing only.**
- Note: The Graduate School's review can take up to two to three weeks, possibly longer, depending on the number of theses and dissertations received any given semester. The goal will be complete the review process as quickly as possible.
- After the Graduate School's review process is complete and signature pages are retrieved, printed copies of the thesis or dissertation shall be submitted to the library with five days after graduation for binding purposes with the completed library binding fee form. *Keep in mind that each official (bound) copy must have an original signature page.*
- Two copies are required for the library. Additional copies may be required by your department or by your committee.
- Submit a final copy in Word format (includes signed sig page) to the VSU Archives' on-line repository (complete the web V-Text form).

**Questions? Contact the Graduate School at [gradschool@valdosta.edu](mailto:gradschool@valdosta.edu) or call Teresa Williams at 229-333-5695, or visit the Thesis and Dissertation Information web pages at:**

**<http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/thesis-and-dissertation-information.php>**