

### Guidelines for preparation of the Master's Thesis

The intent of this document is to provide a general rubric for the Master's proposal, final thesis document, and the Master's defense. Generally speaking, the faculty envision the Master's thesis to encompass roughly the size and scope of a peer-reviewed journal article. To this end, the final document should be prepared to meet peer review standards. In recognition that completion of the Master's Degree must be accomplished by the end of second year and projects may lag, additional measures and/or experimental work may need to be added after degree conferral for publication purposes. Nevertheless, the hope is that all Master's theses can transition to peer review within 6 months of degree completion, serving as the first, first-author paper for most students. More specific milestones and expectations are provided below.

#### Masters proposal:

- The Master's committee should be assembled at the start of the spring semester in the students first year.
- The proposal document should essentially include the front half of the eventual thesis, including:
  - **Title page** formatted for the graduate school
  - Brief **Abstract** outlining the project (300 words max) is optional for the proposal, but required for the final thesis.
  - **Introduction** (~3 pages), that culminates into a clear statement of hypothesis and/or goals of the project.
  - Complete **Methods** section with (i) general methodology; (ii) sufficient rationale to justify experimental parameters, and for the committee to evaluate proposed methodology. Inclusion of an infographic to visually represent the experiment(s) is often useful.
  - Any **Results** and/or data that will be included in the final thesis, or that serve as the basis of the proposed studies. Tables, Figures and Captions should be included as appropriate.
  - The proposal document should be sent to the committee 1 week prior to the proposal meeting.
- The proposal meeting should include a 10-15 min presentation summarizing the thesis proposal. The remaining time will be for discussion of the project. Students should come prepared to discuss Expected Outcomes for their studies and the Timeline for completion of the work.

#### Final Master's Thesis:

- The final thesis should be a more polished version of the proposal document that has been updated with any new literature, findings, and other changes necessary to frame (or re-frame) the project that as it was completed.
- Additional Methods, Results and a 3-5 page Discussion should be added.
- The thesis must be given to the committee 2 weeks in advance of the Defense. The defense should begin with a 25-30 min presentation of the project, including background, key findings, and conclusions. Remaining time will be for discussion of the project and assessment of the student's knowledge base in the area of scientific inquiry.
- The defense should be scheduled with sufficient time to account for revisions to the document, taking into account the posted deadlines by the graduate school.
- All graduate school deadlines and formatting requirements must be followed for degree conferral.