

Thesis Guidelines

Graduate students in the STS Master's Degree program have the option of writing a master's thesis. You should talk with faculty and fellow graduate students to decide whether writing a master's thesis fits your intellectual and career goals.

What is a master's thesis?

The master's thesis is a scholarly paper of approximately 10,000 – 17,500 words (roughly 40-70 pages) that is based on original research. It should present an original argument that is situated in a systematic review of existing relevant research and includes original data collection. The thesis must have a focus that falls within science, technology, and society topics, and it must be written under the guidance of an approved faculty advisor. The faculty advisor has the final say about whether to advise a thesis or not.

To get a better sense for format and content, we highly recommend that you read some theses. A list of MS in STS theses is posted at: <http://www.drexel.edu/sts/academics/ms-STS/alumni/> These are available at Hagerty Library.

When should I start thinking about the thesis?

You should be thinking about your thesis, if only broadly, from your first enrollment in the STS Master's Degree Program. Make appointments with faculty to brainstorm about possible topics and how these might contribute to existing research.

Who can be my advisor?

Any Drexel faculty member affiliated with the STS program or approved by the STS program director can be your primary thesis advisor. Faculty are not required to advise master's theses, but will decide whether they will advise a thesis or not. It is your responsibility to find an advisor. Your advisor will provide general guidance. He or she will help you refine your topic and develop your research questions and methods. Most students choose faculty members they have worked with

in courses.

How do I work with my faculty mentor?

After doing the initial research on your topic, prepare a 1-2 paragraph abstract, a preliminary bibliography (approximately ten to fifteen books or journal articles), and a brief outline before approaching a possible advisor. This information will help make the meeting a productive one. Once a faculty member has agreed to advise you, discuss your anticipated graduation date and agree on a timetable for one-on-one meetings and submission of drafts. It is your responsibility to keep your advisor apprised of your progress. Do not start writing the thesis until you have an advisor who has approved your topic.

Generally, professors will need two weeks or so to review and comment on thesis drafts. Don't expect your advisor to return your thesis in a day or two, whether it is an early draft or the final copy. It is your responsibility to see that the final copy is free from spelling and grammatical errors; your advisor is not responsible for line-by-line editing.

Who is on my thesis committee?

Your thesis committee will be comprised of three faculty: a primary faculty advisor and two faculty who are committee members. The two faculty who are committee members will read your thesis once it is finished and be present at your thesis oral defense. You can also consult them during the research and writing process for input and guidance.

Oral Thesis Defense

Working with your primary thesis advisor, you will decide whether you will have a closed defense (that is, only you, your primary advisor, and your two committee members will be there) or an open defense (that is, beyond the individuals in a closed defense, you can invite other faculty, students and friends). Regardless of whether your defense is open or closed, your defense will consist of a 20-30 minute presentation on your master's research. In your presentation you should discuss your central research question, your research methods, and your key findings. After your presentation, your advisor and committee members will ask

questions about your research and findings. If your defense is open, other attendees will be invited to ask questions after the advisor and committee members ask their questions.

Writing Center

Drexel's Writing Center provides support for working on writing skills with an emphasis on learning how to think through and develop writing projects. The Writing Center offers one-on-one appointments and workshops. See:

<http://drexel.edu/engphil/about/DrexelWritingCenter/>

Human Subjects Research

Theses involving interviews, surveys, or other research on human subjects require human subjects review. Because approval can take time, you should begin the application process as early as possible. See the Office of Research Administration for further information:

<http://www.drexel.edu/research/administration/compliance/humanSubjects/>

Thesis Guideline Checklist

- Make appointments with professors to discuss and identify possible thesis topics
- Choose an approved faculty advisor
- Meet regularly with your faculty advisor as you work on your thesis research and writing
- Working with your faculty advisor, identify and invite two faculty to be readers of your thesis/members of your thesis committee
- Prepare and schedule an oral thesis defense
- Fill out a thesis approval form and submit it to the Office of Graduate Studies: This form is available at:
<http://www.drexel.edu/graduatestudies/forms/>
- Complete and submit a thesis completion form to the Office of Graduate Studies in Randell 240 . The deadline is typically the last day of the first week of classes in the term after you plan to graduate. This form is available at:
http://www.drexel.edu/graduatestudies/forms/Completion_Form.pdf

- Theses must follow a particular format and appearance. For guidelines to Drexel's, see http://www.library.drexel.edu/files/services_documents/thesis/thesismanual.pdf
- To have your thesis bound and put in Drexel's library, see: <http://library.drexel.edu/dissertation>