

### *Writing a*

*Successful Thesis or Dissertation: Tips and Strategies for Students in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, by Lunenburg and Irby (2008). While the intent and construct of a thesis may vary by program area, its supervision is universally handled by members of the graduate faculty of the Department of Kinesiology serving as chair and committee members.

### **Selecting a Suitable Topic and Journal**

by identifying two or three broad areas in which different types of research may be pursued. By searching professional literature, a student may narrow these broad areas down to one or two specific topics that he/she might wish to research. Good sources for possible topic selection include textbooks, professional journals, dissertations, theses, theories, current employment, and existing databases. In selecting an appropriate topic for a thesis, the following criteria should be considered as important: (a) interest, (b) significance, (c) available data, (d) knowledge and skills, (e) manageability, and (f) funding. Concerning significance, the selected topic should make important contributions to the literature that include at least one of the following: (a) test an existing theory, (b) uncover new facts or principles, (c) challenge existing truths or assumptions, (d) suggest relationships between phenomena, (e) provide new insights into phenomena, (f) suggest new interpretations of known facts, (g) alter other people's perceptions about phenomena, and (h) extend a research methodology or statistical procedure. Once a suitable topic has been selected, the student and thesis chair should select a professional peer-reviewed journal (national or international level) in which the final paper would be viewed as a proper fit considering the scope and mission as stated by the journal. Concerning manageability, the average master's student requires from four to nine months to complete the master's thesis. Students should assess the amount of time he/she will need to complete the thesis early in the process.

### **Selecting a Chair and Committee**

The selection of the thesis committee is an important step in the thesis process and will impact the quality of the finished product. Therefore, the selection of a thesis committee chair is one of the most important decisions relative to success in the thesis process. In collaboration with the thesis committee chair and committee members, the student will delimit his/her topic, develop a proposal, conduct research, and complete a thesis. The chair of the thesis committee usually has broad power and influence throughout the process of completing the thesis including:



The committee provides consultation to the student throughout the process of the research

Committee members establish the direction of the study by approving the thesis proposal and assisting the thesis chair in providing direction for the study

Committee members offer additional assurances to the university, college, and department that the thesis standards have been met

Respect the power differential that exists between the student and a committee member and not to abuse the trust placed in him/her as a member of the graduate faculty for the appropriate conduct of a thesis project.

**Thesis Preparation and Formatting**

A “journal-format” thesis is required for student completing a thesis. Journal format requires the student to obtain the “information for authors” or similar author guidelines for the identified journal and format the thesis exactly as outlined by the journal. This

final oral defense if the written documents require any major revisions. The final oral defense will be held after the student has collected and analyzed his/her data and has completed the final draft of the thesis. The Department of Kinesiology requires a “journal-format” thesis. The final draft of the thesis must be well written and carefully prepared (e.g., no spelling errors or poor grammar, no missing references, tables and figures match text, clear printed copies).

Concerning a thesis proposal meeting, the committee chair will begin the proposal meeting by:

- Introducing the committee

- Explaining the procedures for the thesis proposal meeting.

- Asking the student to introduce himself/herself and make a brief statement about his/her professional background.

- Asking the student to present a 20 to 30 minute summary of his/her thesis proposal. This summary should cover all major aspects of his/her research plan—the problem, purpose, theoretical framework, research questions or hypotheses, and methodology. The presentation should be clear and concise.

- Questions from the committee follow the student’s thesis proposal presentation. Each member should have an opportunity to ask questions on any aspect of the proposal with the thesis chair acting as moderator.

- After the thesis committee has completed questioning the student, the thesis chair will call for further questions.

- If there are no further questions, the student will be asked to leave the room.

- The committee will then deliberate, concerning both the student’s performance during the proposal defense and the adequacy of his/her research plan.

- Finally, the thesis committee will vote on the acceptability of the thesis proposal. Specific voting procedures are presented in the Department of Kinesiology Thesis Policy.

When the thesis is complete and approved by the thesis chair and the entire thesis committee, the student may schedule a defense of the thesis before the entire thesis committee. All members of student’s thesis committee must be physically present for the thesis defense. If a committee member cannot be present, the student is expected to reschedule the defense. In extenuating circumstances, the student may petition through the thesis chair to the remaining members of the student’s thesis committee to have a member participate in absentia, through Skype.

Concerning the thesis defense, the thesis chair and all thesis committee members will follow the guidelines below:

- All thesis committee members are to inform the thesis chair when they consider the thesis ready for defense.

- Upon approval of all thesis committee members, the thesis chair will inform the student that his/her thesis is acceptable for defense and to set a date, time and location for the defense.

- The thesis chair will assist the student in setting the time and date for the thesis defense and scheduling the location of the defense.

The thesis chair will arrange for the thesis defense time, date and location to be announced to the University community a minimum of two weeks (10 working days) prior to defense.

All committee members must approve ALL corrections of the thesis prior to defense.

All committee members will be expected to be prepared to discuss the content of the thesis during the defense, but NOT making suggestions for improving content or publication preparation since these issues should have been addressed to the satisfaction of all committee member prior to the defense.

The thesis committee chair will facilitate the thesis defense to insure questions and discussion are focused toward the student's ability to defend the content of the thesis as completed.

The oral thesis defense is similar to the proposal defense in that much of the expectations provided thus far regarding scheduling and presenting will apply. The student will be asked to:

Present a 30 to 40 minute summary of his/her thesis during which he/she will describe the problem, purpose, brief literature review, theoretical framework, research questions or hypotheses, method, results, and interpretation.

The focus of the thesis defense will be less on the literature, rationale, and method of the study and more on the results and interpretation of those results.

Thus, questions from the members of the thesis committee during the thesis defense will be on a description of what the student did, what he/she found from the data analysis, and what the analysis means and its importance to the profession.

Upon conclusion of the oral defense of the thesis, the student will be dismissed from the room and the committee will vote regarding successful completion of the thesis. If accepted, the approving members of the committee will sign the Thesis Approval Form provided by the student. The chair of the student's thesis committee will retain a copy of this document for his/her files, return the original to the student to be included in the bound copy of the thesis to be retained by the Department of Kinesiology, and provide a copy of the signed document to the following individuals; the graduate student, other members of the thesis committee as requested, the department advisor of graduate students, and the department chair. If the student is unsuccessful in the thesis defense, the committee will provide specific instructions to the student regarding necessary changes, additions, etc. that must be completed to the satisfaction of all thesis committee members prior to an opportunity for a second oral defense attempt. Successful completion of the thesis will require a majority vote by the members of the thesis committee.

**Appendix 1: Student Checklist**  
**University of North Alabama**  
**Department of Kinesiology**  
**Completing a Graduate Thesis**

The following is for students who wish to complete a graduate thesis in the Department of Kinesiology. Students must select a thesis chair and committee members, select a topic, and complete a thesis according to the specified guidelines. The following checklist will help students stay on track when completing the thesis requirements.

**Student Checklist**

1. Select a thesis chair and additional committee members.  
It is recommended that the chair have expertise in the research topic selected.
2. Topic has been selected **AND** approved.
3. Thesis Proposal date confirmed.  
Proposal paper must be submitted to all thesis committee members at least two weeks (10 working days) prior to proposal date.  
Week one: Committee provides feedback to student  
Week two: Student makes corrections necessary to be ready for proposal defense
4. IRB Approval  
Student should wait for IRB until proposal has been approved
5. Data collection and manuscript preparation
6. Format paper for selected journal (see above formatting directions, pg 4)
7. Select a tentative defense date  
Submit final draft of thesis to all thesis committee members two to three weeks prior to the defense date.  
Committee must have one to two weeks prior to defense date to read and provide feedback on final draft.  
Student makes corrections necessary prior to defense date.  
Set up a “mock defense” if wanted
8. Thesis Defense/Completion of Defense Approval Forms
9. Submit Completed Thesis

## **REFERENCE**

Lunenburg, F. C., & Irby, B. J. (2008). *Writing a successful thesis or dissertation: Tips and strategies for students in the social and behavioral sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.



## Title Page Example

The Influence of Interval Training vs. Constant Load Cycling on Markers of Muscle  
Damage in Collegiate Cross-Country Runners

Author's full name

A THESIS

Completed in the Department of Kinesiology University of North Alabama

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science Degree

Date: month, day, year (ex: 02/05/2010)



## Thesis Proposal Approval Form

Student \_\_\_\_\_

Degree Sought/Concentration \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Thesis Proposal Meeting \_\_\_\_\_

Department \_\_\_\_\_

Topic/Title of Thesis \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Date of Completion \_\_\_\_\_

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## Thesis Defense Approval Form

Student \_\_\_\_\_

Degree Sought/Concentration \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Thesis Defense \_\_\_\_\_

Department \_\_\_\_\_

Topic/Title of Thesis \_\_\_\_\_