



**South Carolina
Honors College**
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Senior Thesis

Program Guidelines



January 2025



Contents

The Senior Thesis	3
Meet Our Team	4
Guidelines	5
Appendix A	
Thesis Timeline	19
Appendix B	
Weekly Planning Guide	22
Appendix C	
Learning Contract Template	22
Appendix D	
Guidelines for Students in the College of Engineering & Computer Science	29
Appendix E	
Guidelines for Students in the College of Pharmacy.....	32

The Senior Thesis

The Senior Thesis is designed to be the culminating experience of a student's career at the South Carolina Honors College. It is a chance for students to ask and answer meaningful questions about the natural world, social or political systems, history and culture, artistic expression, the creative process, or the application of knowledge to specific challenges. Students are free to choose their thesis topics and may elect to write a thesis or complete a project outside their majors. The senior thesis should be something students can point to with great pride and satisfaction.

Though the thesis is primarily defined by the individual student working with a thesis director and second reader, the Honors College asks all students to fulfill the same basic requirements. This guide answers some general questions students may have about the senior thesis. Students and thesis directors can contact Dr. Tracy Skipper, SCHC Senior Thesis Director, **by email** or phone at 803-777-9737 if they need additional guidance. Students are also welcome to schedule an appointment with a member of the thesis team **via EAB**.



Meet Our Team



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Guidelines

General Requirements

All thesis projects meet the same general requirements, which these guidelines will describe at greater length. To graduate with Honors from the South Carolina Honors College, students must:

- Submit a thesis proposal for approval by SCHC
- Complete a minimum of three credit hours of SCHC 499 or an approved course equivalent with a grade of C or better
- Successfully defend the thesis project
- Submit a final, approved version (i.e., the thesis director and second reader have signed the title page) of the thesis by the date established by SCHC for the semester in which the student completes thesis coursework

Research Thesis vs. Creative or Applied Project

Students have flexibility in the type of thesis project they pursue. Typically, students pursue an original research project or engage in a creative or applied project.

A **traditional research thesis** is an extended original project designed to answer a question of interest to the student. Some common research aims might include interpreting and comparing primary texts; constructing and testing models that reflect theories of human behavior, social or political systems, or the natural world; making human action, symbols, and communication intelligible at the individual and collective levels; exploring how social meanings are constructed; and evaluating current practices and suggesting more effective ones (see Lipson's *How to Write a BA Thesis*, 2018).

A **project-based thesis** might be a creative endeavor, such as original artwork, performance, novella, or volume of poetry. Alternatively, students may pursue an applied project, such as developing a business plan, creating a podcast series or informational pieces for a community organization, or designing an app or video game. In addition to the project, students must submit a paper offering a critical introduction to their project.

Baccalaureus Candidates

BARSC candidates are required to complete a thesis of at least 9 hours. While many of the requirements for the BARSC thesis mirror those of the traditional thesis, students are encouraged to review **the BARSC Thesis Guide** for specific requirements.

The Thesis Timeline

Despite being labeled, the Senior Thesis, students are encouraged to begin thinking about—and planning for—the thesis well before the final year of undergraduate studies. You may begin research as a first-year student that culminates in a thesis project during your senior year. You may enroll in a class during your sophomore year that captures your interest and serves as a springboard for an applied project. A hobby you have pursued for most of your life may be very appealing as a potential creative thesis. See Appendix A for a suggested timeline for incorporating a thesis into your four-year plan. Spend some time mapping out your plan for the senior thesis.

Students often underestimate the time required to complete their projects. Allowing two or more semesters for thesis work and strategically using breaks can be critical in completing the thesis and graduating on time. See Appendix B for a week-by-week planning guide for a two-semester thesis. Suggested activities and space for students to map out their schedules are included.

Regardless of when students begin the thesis, they are expected to defend and submit the project during the semester in which they enroll in their final SCHC 499 (or approved equivalent) credit hour(s).

Independent Studies and Research

An independent study or undergraduate research experience can be a great launching pad for the senior thesis. Such experiences help students gain valuable research skills and self-discipline while providing an opportunity to work independently before confronting the more challenging task of completing the senior thesis. For example, Honors students majoring in the natural sciences will find that doing an independent study or research allows them to "work out all the kinks" before starting the thesis. This, in turn, enables students to begin the thesis without delays related to unfamiliarity with scientific research protocols and laboratory procedures.

That said, undergraduate research opportunities are available in all disciplines. The Office of Undergraduate Research maintains a **Faculty Research Database** that can help students identify faculty who are pursuing projects in their areas of interest.

Students can pursue **undergraduate research through SCHC 497 or a departmental independent study course** (e.g., BIOL 399, ENVR 399, SOCY 561). Check with your academic advisor first about which course would be most appropriate.

The **Honors College Research Grants**, a **Magellan Scholar Award**, or an **NSF Research Experience for Undergraduates (REUs)** are possible pathways for funding an undergraduate research experience prior to the thesis.

While the thesis/project may be a continuation of work students began as a research fellowship, in a course, or independent study, it may not be a repetition of work for which students have already received academic credit.

SCHC 390: Senior Thesis/Project Planning Course

SCHC 390: Thesis/Project Planning Course is a one-credit-hour, pass/fail course offered each semester and typically taken in the second semester of the junior year. Successful completion of the course includes submitting a thesis proposal deemed appropriate for an Honors College thesis.

SCHC 390 is required for all Honors students, except those in the Molinaroli College of Engineering and Computing (MCEC), who will use the required engineering capstone as their thesis project, and Pharmacy majors. While these students are not required to take the thesis planning course, they must submit a thesis proposal by the deadline established by the Honors College. MCEC and Pharmacy students should see the appendices for more information about thesis requirements for those programs.

Students should plan to complete SCHC 390 at least one semester before enrolling in SCHC 499. For many students, this will be the spring of their junior year. Students who plan to study away for all or part of the junior year, graduate early, or complete the thesis before the senior year to accommodate program of study requirements should discuss the most appropriate time to enroll in SCHC 390 with their academic advisor.

What does approval of the proposal mean? The Honors College review is not designed to certify the feasibility or methodological soundness of the thesis proposal. If not involved in the original crafting of the proposal, the thesis director and second reader may suggest or require revisions to satisfy disciplinary conventions, fit the project into a larger research agenda, or manage external constraints such as time and resources. Modifications made in conjunction with the thesis committee support the student's ability to plan and execute the thesis project. Such revisions are expected and generally do not require the resubmission of the proposal.

SCHC 499: Senior Thesis Course

To meet the requirements for graduating “with Honors from the South Carolina Honors College,” students must complete at least 3 credit hours of SCHC 499 with a grade of C or better each semester the course is taken. Most students distribute the credit hours across their final two semesters at the university, taking 1 credit hour in the penultimate semester and 2 credit hours in the final semester. In a typical university course, students are expected to work approximately 3 hours per week for every credit in which they are enrolled. So, students enrolled in SCHC 499 for 1 credit hour can expect to spend 45 to 50 hours working on the thesis that semester. That said, all projects are different, and students may need to spend more time than that working on the thesis to reach their goals.

During priority registration, students should select an open section of SCHC 499 and adjust the credit hours to reflect the number they plan to take that semester (typically 1 - 3). Keep in mind that students may not enroll in more than three credit hours (cumulative) without prior approval from the SCHC Thesis Director. SCHC 499 cannot be added to the student’s schedule after the drop/add deadline. SCHC 499 is offered only during the fall and spring semesters.

Students receive a letter grade for each semester they enroll in SCHC 499. The grade in the final semester takes into account the student’s performance throughout the entirety of the project, along with successfully defending and submitting the thesis project. The grade in the first semester is based on progress toward mutually defined thesis tasks. Students are encouraged to draft a learning contract (see Appendix C) for the first semester of SCHC 499 to clarify expectations and success criteria. All grades for SCHC 499 are assigned by the student’s thesis director in Self Service Carolina.

The **thesis director** is the instructor of record for SCHC 499. Students without a faculty thesis director may take up to 1 credit hour of SCHC 499 under the direction of the SCHC Thesis Director. Students without a director at the end of the first semester of SCHC 499 will not be allowed to continue with the thesis process until an approved director has been identified.

Additional thesis credits. Students (except for BARSC/BARSC - Accelerated Pre-Medicine Concentration) may not enroll in more than 3 credits of SCHC 499 without prior approval from the SCHC Thesis Director. Students may request to enroll in additional thesis credits if the scope of their thesis project would likely take significantly more than 150 hours to complete. Requests for additional credits must be accompanied by a letter from the thesis director outlining the scope of the thesis project and the estimated number of hours needed to complete the project as outlined.

Course Equivalents

Several majors offer capstone or thesis courses that allow students to receive distinction in their major. SCHC recognizes these as equivalent to SCHC 499. Pharmacy students and students in the Molinaroli College of Engineering and Computing will automatically use a course equivalent for their thesis. Other students seeking to employ a course equivalent for the thesis should confirm with their academic advisor that it is an approved equivalent and must meet any departmental requirements for enrolling in the class. Completing at least 3 credit hours with a grade of C or better is required to satisfy the thesis requirement. If students are enrolled in a multi-semester capstone, they must earn a C or better in each semester of capstone work. Students planning to use a course equivalent must complete SCHC 390; they may submit a fully signed departmental independent study contract instead of the SCHC Thesis Director contract.

Effective 8/1/2024, the following courses can be used in lieu of SCHC 499:

AESP 428 - Design I (3 Credits)
ANTH 498 - Senior Thesis (3 Credits)
BMEN 427/428 - Senior Biomedical Engineering Design I & II (6 Credits)
CSCE 490/492 - Capstone Computing Project I & II (6 Credits)
DANC 490 - Senior Capstone Dance Project (3 Credits)
ECHE 465/466 - Chemical-Process Analysis and Design I & 2 (6 Credits)
ECIV 470 - Civil Engineering Design (4 Credits)
ELCT 403/404 - Capstone Design Project I & 2 (6 Credits)
EMCH 427/428 - Design I & II (6 Credits)
ENGL 490 - Topics in Advanced Study (3 Credits)
ENGL 499 - Thesis (3 Credits)
EXSC 499 - Independent Study (3 Credits)
GEOG 499 - Senior Thesis (3 Credits)
HIST 497/498 - Senior Seminar (3 Credits)
HIST 499 - Senior Thesis (3 Credits)
ITEC 564 - Capstone Project for Information Technology (3 Credits)
MATH 499 - Undergraduate Research (3 Credits)
NSCI 499 - Senior Thesis (3 Credits)
PHIL 495 - Senior Thesis (3 Credits)
POLI 499 - Senior Thesis (3 Credits)
SOCY 599 - Advanced Independent Study (3 - 6 Credits)
SPTE 499 - Senior Thesis (3 Credits)

The Thesis Committee

All SCHC students will form a committee consisting of a thesis director and a second reader to support the development and completion of the thesis project. Additional readers are permitted. Students may not have family members, friends, or undergraduate students fill any role on the thesis committee.

Deadlines: The thesis director should be identified before enrolling in SCHC 499. Students should have the director complete and sign the **Thesis Director Contract** and then upload the contract via **Formstack**. Working with their thesis directors, students should identify and confirm a second reader by the midpoint of their first semester in SCHC 499. Second reader contact information should be uploaded via **Formstack**.

The **thesis director** must be a full-time tenure or professional track USC faculty member with a record of research or creative scholarship that aligns with the student's proposed topic. Other full-time members of the USC community may be approved to serve as thesis directors on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the SCHC deans. The thesis director guides the student through the research and creative process and serves as the instructor of record for SCHC 499, establishing the criteria for grading and assigning a grade for each semester students enroll in the course. The director is primarily responsible for supervising the thesis's content and research/creative process. Criteria to consider when selecting a thesis director include the following:

- Expertise in the thesis topic or primary method to be used in the project
- Teaching style, expectations for independent study students, and grading methods
- Availability for regular meetings/email check-ins during the entirety of the thesis project

Students sometimes settle on a topic before attempting to locate an appropriate director and may need help finding a faculty member willing to work with them on their proposed topic. The following strategies help identify potential thesis directors:

1. Search the **Faculty Research Database** using keywords related to the thesis topic to see who might work in that area.
2. Look at past thesis submissions on **Scholar Commons**, searching by department or keyword. You can see who the director and second reader were by clicking on the title.
3. Determine whether specific courses related to the topic are offered at USC. Find out who typically teaches those courses and reach out to them.
4. Consider the discipline(s) in which the thesis topic falls. Find the department website for that discipline and look for a link that says "Our People." Individual pages for faculty members with a brief bio, research interests, and a list of recent publications may be linked to the faculty director. Search these pages for information that suggests an interest or expertise in or aligned with your thesis topic.

After identifying a list of 3 or 4 possibilities, students should craft an email requesting an opportunity to meet. The email should incorporate a brief synopsis of the proposed project and how you see this connecting to the professor's research interests or courses taught. The Office of Undergraduate Research offers **useful tips for emailing faculty**.

Students are encouraged to reach out to a member of the thesis team for assistance with identifying a director. If a student cannot find a director, they may need to alter or completely change the thesis topic.

The **second reader** brings specific knowledge or expertise to the thesis project, offering support and feedback throughout the project and during the thesis defense. The second reader might be someone who helps the student fill a knowledge or skills gap related to the thesis project. With an interdisciplinary project, the second reader may represent a discipline different from the director. In other cases, the second reader might offer technical assistance with data collection, coding, analysis, or writing the thesis. Because the director bears primary responsibility for overseeing the thesis project, students should identify and select a second reader in concert with the thesis director.

Unlike the thesis director, the second reader does not have to be a faculty member. In fact, the second reader does not have to be affiliated with the University. Criteria to consider when selecting a thesis director include the following:

- Expertise related to the thesis topic or method that complements the areas of expertise of the director
- Availability for regular meetings/email check-ins during the entirety of the thesis project

The thesis director should be a student's first stop for help identifying a second reader. That said, the suggestions for finding a thesis director also apply to finding a second reader. Students struggling to identify a second reader should make an appointment with a member of the SCHC thesis team as soon as possible.

Changing Thesis Topic/Director

As noted elsewhere, we anticipate that students will narrow or occasionally expand their thesis topic; however, significant changes (e.g., switching from a research study to a creative project or choosing an entirely new topic) may require the development of a new proposal. Changes in thesis topic after initial approval by SCHC can only be made with the support of the student's thesis

director and approval of the SCHC Thesis Director. Topic changes must be requested before the end of the second week of classes during the final semester of thesis preparation.

Likewise, students occasionally need to change thesis directors. This should happen only in extraordinary circumstances and **MUST** be cleared with the SCHC Thesis Director first. The student must submit a new thesis director contract upon approval.

Group Projects

Students may elect to pursue a group thesis project, providing the project warrants giving each student involved a minimum of 3 hours of credit. Completing a project over the long term with multiple people can significantly complicate scheduling time for research, writing, revisions, and thesis defense. Students should carefully consider these factors before undertaking the thesis with a classmate. Group members collaborate to write a single thesis proposal, but each student must submit the proposal individually. Similarly, the group can hold a joint defense and develop a single thesis paper, which each member will submit for fulfillment of the thesis requirement.

IRB Approval

USC defines undergraduate research as a scholarly effort, generally beyond the classroom, aimed at developing a student's skills in inquiry through opportunities to contribute to or pursue original intellectual or creative work. Essentially, this is a research experience undertaken for the student's benefit. It is not research as defined in regulation and policy; therefore, IRB review is not required.

The thesis director is responsible for ensuring students understand and abide by ethical obligations in carrying out their projects. The IRB recommends that, at a minimum, students complete the training modules available through **CITI**. Additionally, instructors are responsible for reviewing student projects to ensure that the methods and procedures are ethical and appropriate. This includes monitoring student activities during the project to ensure that the rights and welfare of participants are adequately protected. SCHC recommends that students use the Undergraduate Research Consent template provided on the **University IRB website**.

Senior Thesis Grant

Honors College students can receive up to \$1500 in grant funds to support the development of a thesis project. Grants are available for research, creative, and applied thesis projects. Thesis grants count toward the \$6000 SCHC research funding limit. For example, a student receiving \$5000 in Honors College research funding would have a \$1000 balance to apply toward a senior thesis grant. For group thesis projects, each group member is eligible to apply for funding.

A limited number of **Foley Thesis Project Scholarships** are available annually to support creative thesis projects. Students may receive an award of up to \$1000. Students can apply for the Foley Scholarship using the Senior Thesis Research Grant submission form. To ensure access to thesis support for as many students as possible, we cannot stack grant and scholarship awards.

Thesis grant funds can be used to purchase various goods and services related to thesis research, including lab supplies and equipment, participant incentives, licenses for survey or interview platforms, transcription/translation services, and limited travel to conduct research. The grant and Foley scholarship funds also support supplies and equipment needed to support creative or applied projects. When available, students may be redirected to free or low-cost options on campus.

In most cases, the grant is a direct payment to students, who will then use the money to purchase approved goods or services. Students must maintain receipts/records of grant-related expenditures and submit these records to the SCHC Thesis Director before the end of the academic year in which funding was received. Any unused grant funds must be returned to the Honors College before the end of the academic year in which the funding was received or before the student's graduation, whichever occurs first.

Students applying for a thesis grant/Foley Scholarship agree to the following guidelines:

- The grant application must be approved before purchases begin, as the Honors College will not reimburse students for prior expenditures.
- All equipment purchases become the property of the South Carolina Honors College.
- Requests for food purchases will not be considered.
- All applications must include a detailed list of items and projected costs, price verification (e.g., invoice, link to web-based pricing guide), and an explanation of how the expenditures will enhance the thesis. Please note the following considerations for travel and incentive requests:

- **Travel.** Travel requests should include a printout of estimated mileage using Google Maps or similar. Airline cost estimates should be supported by a printed itinerary from the airline website or travel aggregator (e.g., expedia.com, kayak.com). Any request for travel costs should include a letter of support from the thesis director explaining the purpose and use of travel for the senior thesis. Travel support will be capped at \$500.
 - **Incentives.** Requests for incentives should detail your plan for recruiting participants, your target number of participants, and the amount/type of incentive you plan to offer each participant, along with a description of the activity and expected time commitment. The total incentive allocation for survey completion will be capped at \$250. Students are responsible for maintaining a recipient log and returning this with relevant receipts at the end of the academic year in which funding was received.
- Students working on a group or joint thesis project should submit a single application. The Honors College will consider a higher funding limit for these projects when possible.
 - Any work supported by a Senior Thesis grant and subsequently presented or published should cite the support as: "This work was supported in part by the South Carolina Honors College Senior Thesis Grant." Students receiving a Foley Scholarship should include a similar acknowledgment: "The South Carolina Honors College Foley Thesis Project Scholarship partly supported this work."

Application Timeline

We manage three application cycles each year, with closing dates in mid-February, mid-September, and mid-November. Award notifications are typically made within two weeks of the closing date. However, receipt of funds following the award may take up to four weeks. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Students must be enrolled in SCHC 499 or an approved thesis course equivalent to be considered for thesis grant/scholarship funds. Preference will be given to students who have not received prior funding to support the thesis project (e.g., SCHC Research Grant, Magellan Grant, or SCHC Thesis Grant/Foley Scholarship).

The Thesis Defense

The thesis defense (part presentation/part conversation) allows students to demonstrate what they have learned throughout the thesis process. The purposes of the defense are:

- To examine relevant questions that did not arise during the thesis/project process but do arise during the defense
- To discuss how the student might change the thesis/project given additional time or resources
- To provide a sense of closure to everyone involved in this process
- To give students the valuable experience in oral expression gained from conducting the defense
- To provide a public venue for students to present the work

The defense also allows the committee to offer further feedback and engage in a dialogue with the student about the project. The director and second reader must be present at the thesis defense, and students are welcome to invite friends, family members, and interested others to participate. The defense can be held virtually.

The length of a defense usually ranges from thirty minutes to an hour. The thesis director and second reader determine the format. Still, the usual procedure is for the student to make a brief presentation on the thesis/project and then respond to questions. Suggestions for revisions will be made both during and after the defense. At the defense's conclusion, the students and any guests are excused while the committee members determine any modifications that must be made before the thesis is accepted. Finally, the student is recalled and informed of the committee's decision and required changes. At this point, arrangements should be made to deliver the final thesis or project paper to the thesis committee to acquire their signatures on the title page. Electronic signatures on the thesis title page are permitted.

Following the defense, the thesis director will submit a defense evaluation form to SCHC, which is required to certify students for graduation from the South Carolina Honors College. The link to the form is included in the confirmation of the defense evaluation date/time sent to thesis directors and second readers. Note that the confirmation email is triggered when the student completes the **Thesis Date Submission Form**.

The defense should take place at least one week before the submission deadline of the semester in which the student completes thesis coursework at a time and place agreed upon by the student and committee members. It is the student's responsibility (possibly with help from the thesis director) to schedule the defense, find a location, and inform the SCHC office of the thesis

defense plans (via the **Thesis Date Submission Form**) by the deadline established by SCHC for the current semester. Any scheduling difficulties should be brought to the attention of the SCHC Thesis Director. Rooms in HRH can be reserved by completing this **online form**.

Two weeks before the defense, the student must submit a complete draft of the thesis paper to the thesis committee members to ensure they have adequate time to review the student's work before the defense. That said, this should not be the first time thesis committee members see the student's thesis. Successful thesis projects involve regular cycles of drafting, feedback, and revising.

Paper Guidelines

Ultimately, details, such as length, style, and format, are left to the discretion of the thesis director. Generally, the length of a research-based thesis should mirror the length of a chapter or journal manuscript in that field. Some typical page ranges might include:

- Humanities: 45 – 60 pages
- Social sciences: 30 – 40 pages
- Math, natural sciences, or pre-professional disciplines: 25 – 30 pages
- Critical introduction for project-based thesis: 7 – 10 pages (minimum)

All thesis projects are required to have a written component, and the paper must include the following elements:

- **Thesis title page** (Use **the template** provided online.). The thesis director and second reader must sign the title page for the thesis to be approved by SCHC. Electronic signatures are permitted. The title page should include a space for Dean Lynn's signature, but students do not need to have him sign the title page before submission. Students can request a fully signed title page (including Dean Lynn's signature) from the SCHC Thesis Director after the thesis has been approved.
- **Thesis summary or abstract.** For traditional, research-based thesis projects, an abstract is preferred. This is a brief description of your research aim or purpose, the methods used, key findings, and implications for research or practice. A summary written in less formal language than an abstract or introduction might be a more appropriate choice for creative or project-based theses.
- **Table of contents.**
- **Body of thesis paper with pages numbered consecutively.** For a research-based thesis, the paper may adopt the organization of a manuscript that could be submitted to an academic journal. For a project-based thesis, students will submit a critical introduction as the written component, a short essay (7 to 10 pages) that explores the various aesthetic, theoretical,

social, or historical influences on the project. It identifies specific individuals, artifacts, or genres that shaped the approach and may describe pitfalls the student sought to avoid. The introduction describes the overall approach to creating the project and situates it within the context of the specific influences cited. The essay might also discuss a specific question the work explores or its purpose.

Appendices. Depending on the type of project, students may choose to include appendices or supplementary information (e.g., documentation of a creative or applied project, plan set for engineering capstone) in their thesis submission. These can be incorporated into the primary thesis submission or uploaded as a separate file. Supplementary files can be DOCX, PDF, JPG, or MP3; however, file size is limited. Large supplementary files should be stored on an accessible cloud server with a link embedded in the thesis paper.

Grade and Grading Guidelines

Grades for SCHC 499 and approved course equivalents may range from A to F and are at the discretion of the thesis director. Grades are posted to Self Service Carolina by the thesis director each semester the student is enrolled in thesis credits. The grade for the final semester should be assigned once the student has submitted the final version of the thesis to SCHC. Receipt of a grade in SCHC 499 or an approved course equivalent without evidence of the thesis defense and submission of the final thesis paper will not satisfy the Honors thesis requirement.

Students may receive an incomplete in the final semester of thesis work if they have requested and received an extension from the thesis director and SCHC. If a student is unable to complete the thesis, they need to follow the procedures for withdrawing from a class outlined by the **Registrar** to avoid receiving a WF for SCHC 499. If the WF deadline has passed, students may be able to negotiate a grade based on work completed in SCHC 499 for that semester. Again, the grade for SCHC 499 is at the discretion of the thesis director. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with their academic advisor or a member of the thesis team before withdrawing from SCHC 499.

Any student who completes the requirements to graduate with SCHC Honors (including all portions of the Senior Thesis/Project) AFTER they have graduated from the University of South Carolina will NOT be able to have the distinction "with Honors from the South Carolina Honors College" retroactively added to the transcript or diploma. Therefore, it is imperative that students complete ALL requirements for the senior thesis BEFORE graduating from the University, including holding the defense, receiving final grades, and submitting the final version of the thesis/project paper to SCHC.

Keys to Success

Students are expected to remain in close contact with their thesis director and second reader, providing regular updates about their progress, asking for help when they feel stuck, and submitting drafts of thesis sections throughout the project. It's essential for students to attend scheduled meetings and send updates if they have gotten behind or feel overwhelmed. The most significant cause of thesis distress is inadequate communication between students and directors. That said, students must have realistic expectations about director responsiveness and allow a reasonable amount of time for committee members to review their work, especially before the thesis defense. Setting mutual expectations about how and how often to communicate early in the thesis timeline can avoid many issues. If any problems arise, students should contact the SCHC Thesis Director.

Students are encouraged to save copies of their work in progress in multiple places: on a secure cloud server, sent as email attachments to themselves, or on an external drive. Labeling files with the date or a version number ensures students can easily find the most recent version. Such practices will save much anxiety and time in the event of loss, theft, or accidental erasure of a file.

Most problems arising with a senior thesis can be fixed relatively easily when students seek the necessary help and do so sooner rather than later. In addition to the senior thesis team, students can access support from the following campus resources:

- **The University Writing Center**
- **The Student Success Center**
- **University Counseling & Psychiatry Services**

Last Notes

The Honors College recognizes the hard work involved in pursuing a senior thesis. Furthermore, we acknowledge that the thesis is only possible with assistance from thesis directors, second readers, other USC faculty, and community members. We hope students conduct themselves with integrity throughout this process and demonstrate an appropriate level of gratitude to those who help them along the way. The Honors College staff and other members of the USC community continue to be impressed by the amazing and thoughtful projects engineered by Honors students. We also hope students find this to be a rewarding experience.



Appendix A

Thesis Timeline

Most students begin the thesis process in the spring of their junior year by taking a course designed to help them develop a thesis proposal. Students then work on the thesis for both semesters of the senior year. We encourage you to think about your thesis well before then, especially if you plan to study abroad, graduate early, or major in a discipline requiring internships or practica in the senior year.

Here are some suggested focal points for thesis planning.

Years 1 & 2

- Attend a Demystifying the Senior Thesis session.
- Learn more about undergraduate research and fellowship opportunities that might serve as a springboard for the thesis.
- Explore study abroad, internships, and service-learning opportunities that might serve as the basis for an applied thesis project.

Year 3

- Take coursework related to possible thesis topics.
- Engage with faculty.
- Formulate an initial proposal.

Summer Between Years 3 & 4

- Build a reading list.
- Refine your proposal.
- Develop a thesis grant proposal.
- Gain needed skills.

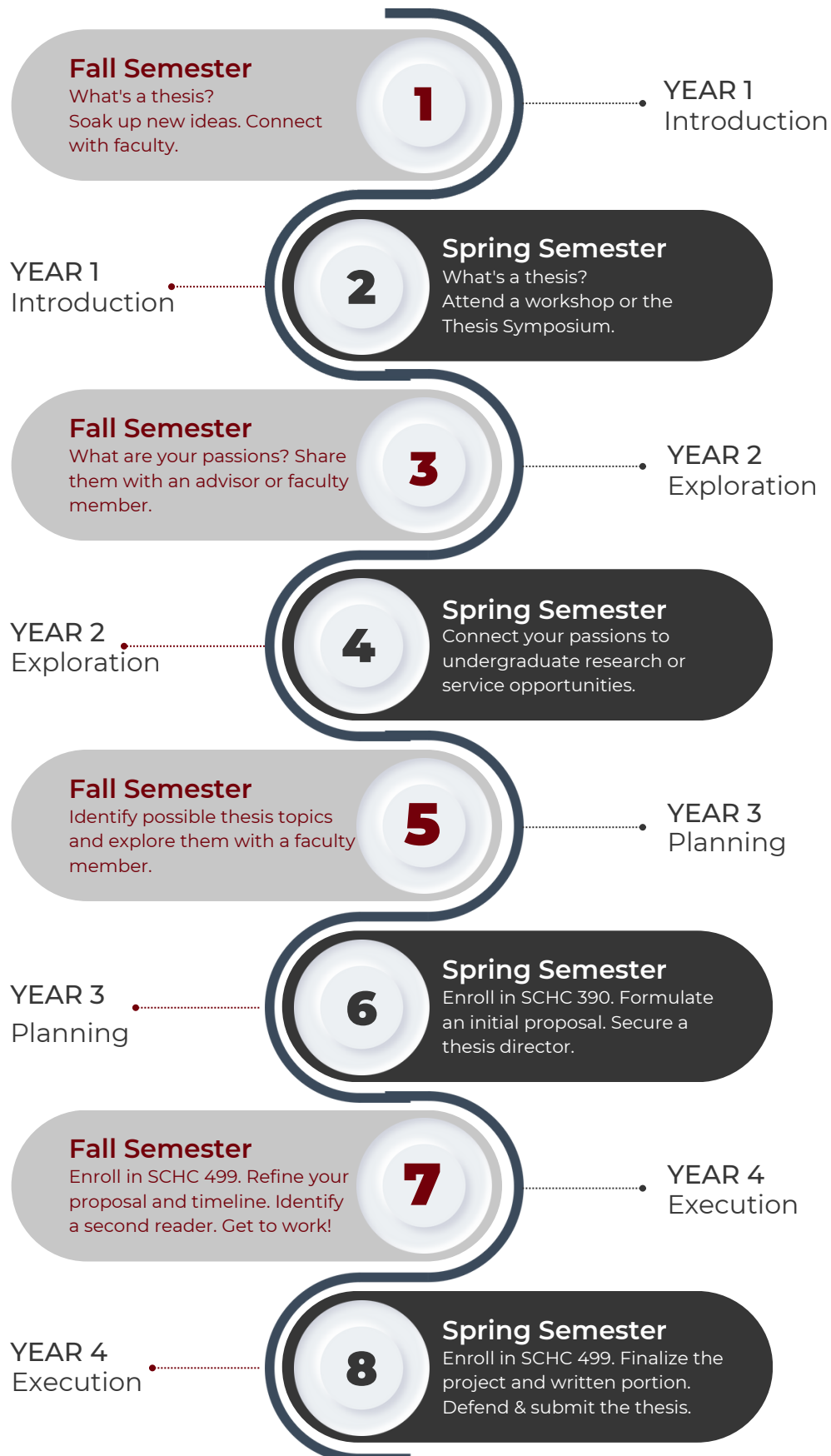
Year 4

- Develop strong work habits.
- Communicate regularly with your thesis director.
- Attend thesis workshops.
- Present at the Thesis Symposium or the Fall Thesis Forum.

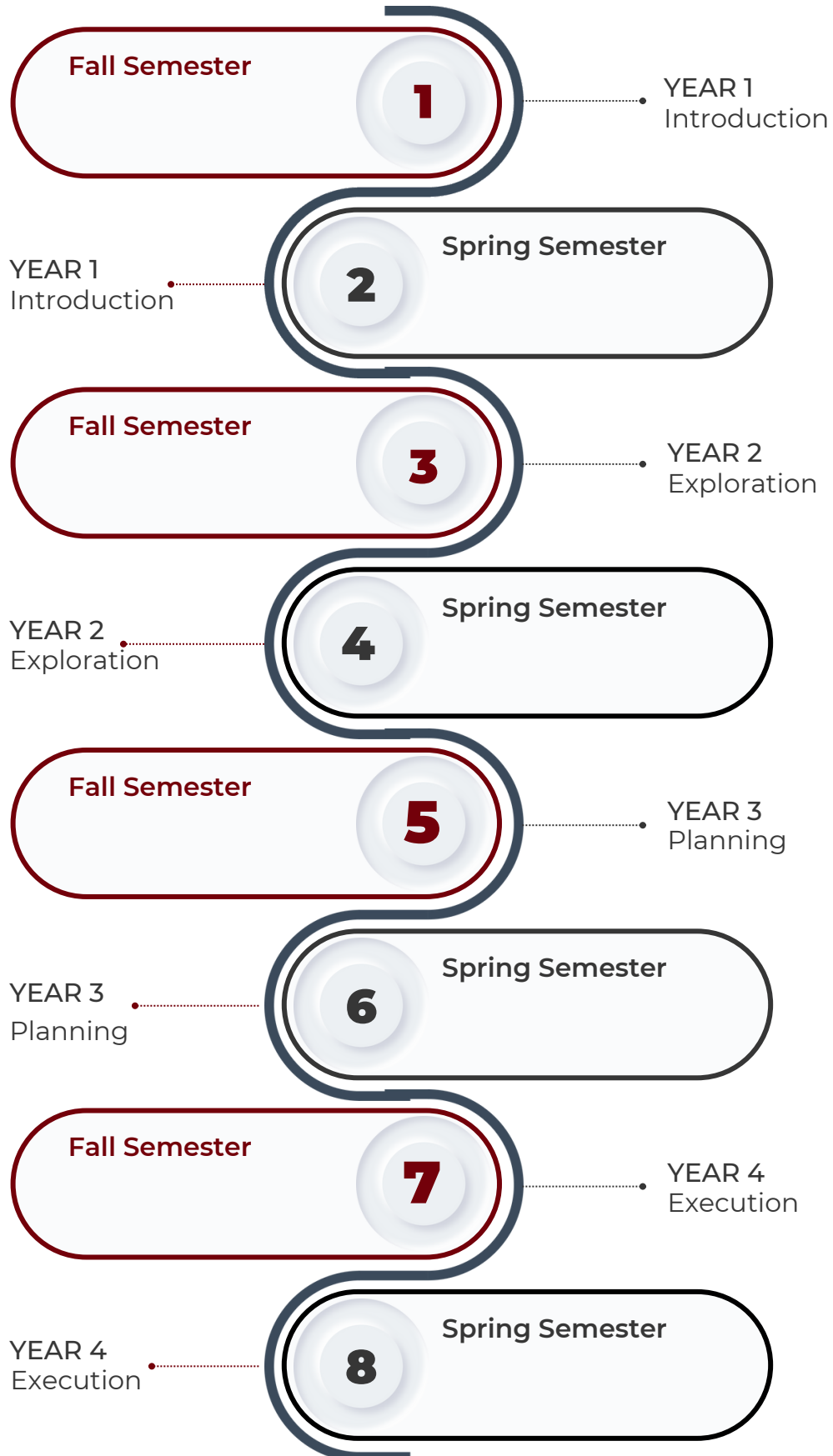
Use the timeline on the following pages to map your own thesis journey.

SCHC SENIOR THESIS

TIMELINE



WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?





Appendix B

Weekly Planning Guide

Most students take two semesters to complete the thesis. The weekly planning guide offers suggested activities for each week of those two semesters. After reviewing the suggested activities, use the blank pages to create your own plan for completing the thesis.

SENIOR THESIS PLANNING GUIDE

Semester 1

Here's an example of week-to-week plan for the first semester of SCHC 499.

WEEK 1

- Block calendar
- Schedule meetings with thesis director for semester

WEEK 2

- Revise/refine proposal
- Build reading list
- Submit thesis grant request

WEEK 3

- Finalize learning contract (specific tasks for semester)
- Confirm second reader

WEEK 4

- Read literature
- Secure access to data
- Finalize method
- Develop skills

WEEK 5

WEEK 6



WEEK 7

- Mid-semester check-in
- Assess progress
- Adjust plan

WEEK 8

- Read/synthesize literature
- Collect data
- Receive thesis grant funds (if approved)

WEEK 9

- Read/synthesize literature
- Collect data

WEEK 10

WEEK 11

WEEK 12



WEEK 13

- Final meeting of the semester
- Create plan for using upcoming break

WEEK 14

- Work on learning contract deliverables

WEEK 15

- Submit learning contract deliverables

SENIOR THESIS PLANNING GUIDE

Semester 2

Here's an example of week-to-week plan for the second semester of SCHC 499.

WEEK 1

- Block calendar
- Schedule meetings with thesis director for semester

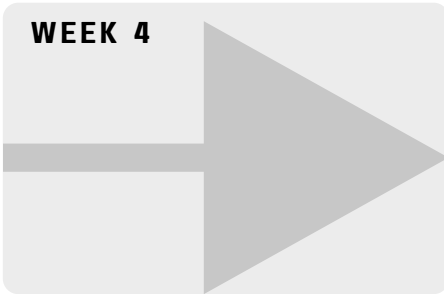
WEEK 2

- Confirm schedule for data analysis and writing
- Analyze data

WEEK 3

- Analyze data
- Complete fill-in research

WEEK 4



WEEK 5

- Draft Findings

WEEK 6

- Revise writing from semester 1 based on director feedback

WEEK 7

- Mid-semester check-in
- Set defense date
- Draft discussion section

WEEK 8

- Revise Findings
- Complete fill-in research

WEEK 9

- Draft conclusion
- Complete fill-in research

WEEK 10

- Revise draft based on feedback

WEEK 11

- Revise draft based on feedback
- Draft abstract or summary

WEEK 12

- Submit fully revised thesis to committee

WEEK 13

- Prep for thesis defense

WEEK 14

- Defend thesis
- Begin final revisions

WEEK 15

- Finish required revisions
- Get title page signed
- Submit thesis to SCHC

SENIOR THESIS PLANNING GUIDE

Semester 1

Use this template to create your own week-to-week plan for the first semester of SCHC 499.

WEEK 1

WEEK 2

WEEK 3

WEEK 4

WEEK 5

WEEK 6

WEEK 7

WEEK 8

WEEK 9

WEEK 10

WEEK 11

WEEK 12

WEEK 13

WEEK 14

WEEK 15

SENIOR THESIS PLANNING GUIDE

Semester 2

Use this template to create your own week-to-week plan for the second semester of SCHC 499.

WEEK 1

WEEK 2

WEEK 3

WEEK 4

WEEK 5

WEEK 6

WEEK 7

WEEK 8

WEEK 9

WEEK 10

WEEK 11

WEEK 12

WEEK 13

WEEK 14

WEEK 15



Appendix C

Learning Contract

Template

Students sometimes struggle with the lack of structure in the senior thesis. Unlike other courses, there are no class meetings, specific assignments, or exams. There is really only one due date, which is 8 or 9 months away for most students. Working with your thesis director to develop a learning contract, especially in the first semester, can help bring the needed structure to your thesis project. Use the template on the following page, or create your own.

SCHC 499 (1 Credit)
[Semester] [Year]
Thesis Learning Contract

Student Name:

Date:

Brief Description of Thesis Project: (150 to 200 words):

Use the table below to indicate the activities or tasks you plan to complete this semester to advance work on your thesis. Several examples of activities and deliverables have been provided to guide you. Keep in mind that you should be spending about 50 hours working on the thesis this semester. The proposed activities you have included should reflect that time commitment.

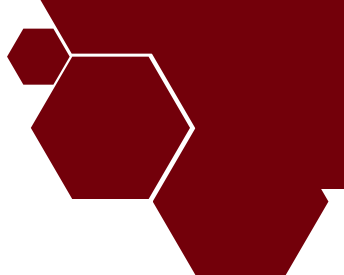
Proposed Activity	Description of the Deliverable(s)	Due Date
Gain access to data set/archival material for analysis	Copy of email/application requesting access Permission/access confirmation from granting entity	10/16/2023
Code book created and data set cleaned	Memo describing how data codes derived/assigned, cleaning procedures used and results	10/31/2023
Draft of literature review section	Five- to seven-page draft of literature review along with works cited page	12/8/2023

Student Signature:

Date:

Thesis Director Signature:

Date:



Appendix D

Guidelines for Students in the Molinaroli College of Engineering & Computing

Molinaroli College of Engineering and Computing (MCEC) students enroll in major-specific capstone/senior design courses recognized as approved equivalents for SCHC 499. Students should only be enrolled in a MCEC capstone and SCHC 499 if they opt to complete a traditional/creative thesis in addition to the senior design project.

Capstone experiences may be one or two semesters depending on the major. In a two-course design experience, students will be expected to submit the thesis project during the semester they complete the second course in the sequence. Students enrolled in a one-semester design capstone will submit their project at the end of the semester in which they complete the capstone.

Because many of the capstone projects are designed to be team-based, Honors college students may collaborate on required components (e.g., proposal, final project paper).

Requirements for Using MCEC Capstone Course in Lieu of SCHC 499

MCEC students must complete the same requirements as other SCHC students by the posted deadlines. These requirements include:

- Submitting a senior thesis project proposal
- Completing a thesis defense presentation. Class presentations or capstone/design showcases satisfy the defense component. As individual instructors set the dates for capstone presentations, they may occur after the posted deadline for the thesis defense.

- Submitting a written component for the MCEC Capstone project even if the MCEC major does not require it. Honors students working together as part of a team-based project will list all participants' names on the title page. Each student will submit a copy of the paper individually by the posted deadline, typically near the end of the final exam period.

MCEC Project Proposal

The project proposal format for students in the MCEC capstone course differs in form and content from that for students completing a research or project-based thesis. The proposal should be approximately 2 to 3 single-spaced pages. While a review of the research and practice literature is not required as part of the proposal, students should appropriately cite any external sources used to develop the proposal. The proposal should include the following sections:

- **Description of Problem.** Describe the context and any parameters relevant to understanding the scope of the problem. Offer insight into the importance of resolving the problem (to whom does this matter and why).
- **Proposed Solution.** Describe your possible solutions to the problem, including any potential challenges associated with specific solutions. Include a description of any project deliverables.
- **Approach/Methodology.** Describe the steps you will take to design or implement the proposed solution.
- **Potential Significance/Application.** Describe the anticipated outcomes for project clients or immediate stakeholders. Also, note any potential future application or broader significance of the proposed solution.
- **Timeline.** Include a detailed project timeline that reflects the steps described in the approach/methodology section, client and team meetings, background research, site visits, etc. For a two-semester design sequence, the timeline should include projections about work to be completed in the second semester.

Students working with other Honors students can develop and submit one proposal listing all group members' names. For recordkeeping purposes, each student will submit a copy of the proposal using the **Senior Thesis Proposal Submission** Form. The proposal should not be emailed to the Honors College. Proposal deadlines vary by major and are posted annually to the Blackboard organization for students pursuing a thesis equivalent.

Paper Guidelines

If the design capstone requires a final written report, this document can form the basis of the thesis submission. If the design capstone course does not require a

paper or does not have specific paper requirements, we recommend that the report submitted in fulfillment of the thesis requirement be organized as follows:

- **Description of Problem.** Describe the context and any parameters that are relevant to understanding the scope of the problem. Offer insight into the importance of resolving the problem (To whom does this matter and why).
- **Solution.** Describe your solution to the problem, noting any alternate solutions you may have considered.
- **Approach/Methodology.** Describe the steps you took to design or implement the solution. This might also include a discussion of iterations or testing.
- **Use of Feedback.** Describe how feedback from peers, instructors, or project stakeholders shaped your final design.
- **Potential Significance/Application.** Describe outcomes, noting immediate application potential and recommendations for future iterations.
- **Appendix** (e.g., graphs, diagrams, illustrations, screenshots)
- **Works Cited or Reference List** (if applicable)

Thesis Submission

All Honors students must include the following components in their submission to fulfill the requirement. As with the proposal, Honors students working in a group can collaborate on a single thesis submission, though each student must submit the document. The required components should be combined in a single file and submitted via the **Senior Thesis Submission form**:

- **Signed thesis title page.** Include the names of all students involved in the project on the title page. The capstone instructor will sign as thesis director. A second reader is not required. The Honors College will obtain Dean Lynn's signature for the title page.
- **Summary or abstract**
- **Table of contents**
- **Thesis paper.** Include the paper or project report produced for the design capstone.
- **Supplemental files (optional).** Plan sets, drawings, etc., can be uploaded separately. If the file is too large for upload, include a link to an accessible cloud server where supplemental materials can be accessed in the body of the main report.

The thesis project should be submitted during the semester the student completes the design capstone. The submission date is typically during the final exam period and is posted annually to the Blackboard organization for students pursuing a thesis equivalent.



Appendix E

Guidelines for Students in the College of Pharmacy

Honors students in the College of Pharmacy will use one of the departmental independent study courses to complete the SCHC thesis requirement. This course will be taken instead of SCHC 499. Please note that pharmacy students are not required to take SCHC 390, the thesis preparation course.

This document outlines the typical pathway and requirements for Honors students pursuing a Pharm.D.

P2 Year

Select a topic and find a full-time USC faculty member who can serve as an independent study director. Typically, students choose a professor in the College of Pharmacy. The professor can also be associated with the USC School of Medicine (including Greenville).

P3 Year

- Complete the Undergraduate Independent Study Contract for enrollment in PHMY 716 or PHMY 757 and submit this to the Honors College via the Senior Thesis Director contracts submission link.
- Develop and submit a proposal for your independent student project in the fall of the P3 Year. The proposal will be 2 to 3 pages and should include the following sections:
 - An abstract
 - Statement of the research problem or questions
 - Method
 - Timeline
- Complete a minimum of three credits of PHMY 716 or PHMY 757. All three credits can be taken in one semester or spread over multiple semesters. PHMY 716/757 must be letter-graded, and students must earn a minimum of a C to have the course count toward fulfillment of the thesis requirement.

- By the spring of the P3 Year, complete the independent study, defend the thesis project, and **submit the final project paper to SCHC** by the deadlines on the thesis webpage and Course Equivalent Blackboard group. Required components of the thesis:
 - **Signed thesis title page**
 - Summary or abstract
 - Table of contents
 - Thesis paper
- Students should undertake the thesis project with an eye toward creating a manuscript that could be submitted for publication. As such, the final thesis paper should be consistent in length and format with a journal manuscript in the field.