

MPA THESIS OPTION GUIDELINES
I. OVERVIEW

School of Public Affairs
University of Colorado at Denver
1380 Lawrence Street, Suite 500
Denver, CO 80202

Originally Prepared December 1991
Revised November 1997
Revised May 2003

The School of Public Affairs (SPA) offers a thesis option for students meeting certain eligibility criteria. The thesis is undertaken in lieu of PAD 5361 Advanced Seminar in Public Policy and Public Management, plus three units of elective course work. These Guidelines set forth the eligibility criteria as well as an outline of the process to be followed in satisfying the requirements of the option.

ELIGIBILITY

The thesis option is available for MPA students who have achieved an exceptional academic record and who wish to pursue independent research in greater depth than would normally be possible in PAD 5361. It is particularly suitable for students who wish either to pursue the PhD degree or to enter a research or policy environment upon completion of the MPA degree.

Minimum eligibility requirements include:

1. matriculation in the MPA program – MCJ and Executive MPA students are not eligible
2. successful completion of all core and required concentration courses
3. overall gpa of 3.75 or higher
4. demonstrated ability to pursue research work, as evidenced by two submitted research papers developed in SPA courses or elsewhere
5. preliminary identification of a thesis topic or area of interest
6. agreement from two SPA faculty members to serve on the thesis committee

Minor exceptions to the above criteria may be made in exceptional cases.

PROCESS

Eligible students will be expected to follow a prescribed process in completing the requirements of the thesis option. An overview of the process is provided below. Detailed procedures and required forms are available in a separate document.

A student wishing to undertake the thesis option applies formally through her/his faculty academic advisor, first, to establish eligibility with respect to the above criteria, and, second, to identify appropriate faculty members to serve as the student's three person Thesis Committee. The Thesis Committee will consist of a major member, a minor member and an outside member. The major advisor must be a full-time member of the SPA faculty; the second committee member may hold adjunct faculty status and the outside committee member may be a faculty member of another school or college at the University, at another University or an individual from the preferred community. (NOTE: Although the formal procedure entails application through the academic advisor, the student is encouraged to make informal contacts with appropriate subject-matter faculty to determine interest and availability.) Before the student will be allowed to enroll for thesis credit, the Thesis Committee must formally approve a written thesis proposal, which includes a thesis plan and a timetable for completion.

THIS SHOULD BE INITIATED THE SEMESTER BEFORE THE STUDENT PLANS TO ENROLL FOR THESIS CREDIT.

Upon approval of the proposal, the student will be allowed to enroll in PAD 6950 Master's Thesis, normally in two consecutive semester (including summer semester), for a total of six academic credits. The grade of "In Progress" will be awarded until the thesis has been completed and approved. During the time, the student will work with the Committee in implementing the thesis plan. Upon completion, the student will be expected to present results at a one-hour open colloquium.

The thesis document will be prepared in accordance with Guidelines for Preparing Master's and Doctoral Theses available from your student services team coordinator. In accordance with the Guidelines, the Graduate School requires 3 copies of your thesis.

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II. DETAILED PROCEDURES

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This document sets forth the step-by-step process involved in completing the thesis option of the School of Public Affairs. An overview of the process is contained in a separate document (Part I).

1. Consultation with Faculty Advisor: When a student is thinking about writing a thesis, he/she should contact his/her academic advisor to establish whether or not the eligibility criteria are satisfied (see Part I) and to determine whether or not a thesis fits within the student's overall academic program. This should be initiated a semester in advance of taking thesis credit. This part of the process is especially important for those students who are matriculating a concentration (Environmental Policy, Local Government and Nonprofit Organizations). Following certification and approval by the advisor, the following subjects should be broached:
 - a. possible research topic
 - b. approach to studying the research topic
 - c. time frame for completion
 - d. possible committee members

The outcome of this part of the process should be identification of the research topic and general plan as well as the identification of appropriate subject matter faculty to serve as major and minor members of the Thesis Committee.

2. Selection of Thesis Committee: The purposes of the Thesis Committee are to:
 - a. assist the student in completion of the thesis proposal
 - b. formally approve the thesis proposal
 - c. assist the student in implementing the thesis plan
 - d. review drafts of the thesis; and
 - e. approve the final copy of the thesis.

The student should select a major advisor who is knowledgeable about the research topic. He or she must be a full-time member of the SPA faculty. The student should be sure that the thesis advisor is interested in the topic, has time available, and is willing to assume advisor responsibilities. The thesis advisor will serve as Chairperson of the Thesis Committee.

In addition to the Thesis Advisor, the Thesis Committee is comprised of two additional members, the minor advisor, and the third committee member, who should be a fully qualified researcher in the subject matter of interest, but who need not to be a full-time member of the SPA faculty. Adjunct SPA faculty members and full or part-time faculty members in other academic units at CU-Denver are eligible.

3. Development of Thesis Proposal: After identifying a research topic, the student must prepare a thesis proposal. The proposal should contain the following:
 - a. concise statement of the problem area to be investigated
 - b. statement of the purpose of the thesis as well as the research hypothesis

- c. statement of the thesis' significance
- d. brief discussion of the most important contributing resources, i.e., books, journals, et al.
- e. discussion and justification of the methodology to be employed, including data sources
- f. outline of the organization of the thesis; and
- g. timetable for completion.

Committee approval of the thesis proposal is obtained through the completion of the Application for Thesis Option form provided as Attachment A. This document becomes a contract between the student and the School of Public Affairs and is part of the student's permanent file. Five copies of the application should be submitted: one for each Committee member, one for the student and one for the student's file.

4. Enrollment in PAD 6950 Mater's Thesis: Upon filing the required signed copies of the Application for the Thesis Option form with thesis proposal attached, the student will enroll in PAD 6950, Master's thesis, for an accumulated maximum of six credits taken over one or more semesters. These credits are in lieu of PAD 5361 Advanced Seminar in Public Policy and Public Management, plus three hours of elective course work. To register for thesis hours please use the attached "Special Processing Form". After you have obtained your committee chair's signature, please submit directly to your student services team coordinator for processing. Registration must occur during registration add/drop period.

PAD 6950 is listed in the catalog for 3-6 credits per semester. The student is strongly advised to devise a timetable that will allow completion of the thesis over two consecutive semesters, possibly including the summer semester, in which case enrollment in PAD 6950 will be for three credits per semester. However, exceptions will be allowed, depending on circumstances. In any case, grades of "In Progress" (IP) will be awarded until the thesis is completed and formally approved, at which time a regular letter grade will be assigned. (See item 10.)

5. Conduct of Research: While enrolled in PAD 6950, the student will conduct the thesis research and document results under the supervision of the Thesis Committee. The student must be enrolled in this course in order to qualify for faculty support.
6. Preparation of Thesis Draft: With guidance from the Committee, the student prepares a thesis draft in accordance with the timetable. In preparing this draft, specifications provided in Guidelines for Preparing Master's and Doctoral Thesis (2000) should be followed. Copies of this document are available from your student services team coordinator.

The student should expect that several drafts will typically be required before the Thesis Committee provides formal approval.

7. Preparation of Final Thesis Copy: When the draft thesis has been reviewed and verbally approved by the thesis Committee, the student may begin to prepare the final copy. The final copy should be consistent with the Guidelines... mentioned above. In addition, SPA (CU-700) has special deadlines for
8. thesis format review and submission (please check with SPA office) that conform to the University dates related to graduation.
9. Completion of Approval of Thesis Form: After a final copy is completed, it must be formally approved by the Thesis Committee using the Approval of Thesis form provided as Attachment B. The signed Approval of Thesis form will be placed in the student's file. The Committee also signs an approval page in the final thesis copy.
10. Thesis Colloquium: The thesis results will be presented at a one-hour open colloquium to which all members of the GSPA community will be invited. A Student must bring the Approval Page that will be inserted into final thesis, two copies on bond and one on ordinary paper (bring more if you are having additional copies bound). Original committee member signatures are **required**.
11. Scheduling Thesis Presentation: When you finalize with your committee the date and time of your presentation, please submit the attached presentation and schedule form to your student services team coordinator (fax or email). When this form is submitted, your student services team coordinator will assign you to a conference space at SPA and reserve any media equipment requested. You will then be emailed a confirmation of arrangements.
12. Grading of Thesis: The thesis is graded by the Thesis Committee chairperson in consultation with the members of the Committee. The thesis will receive a letter grade, which will take into consideration quality of the colloquium performance.
13. Duplication and Binding of Thesis: After final approval has been completed, the student should duplicate at least three copies of the thesis, according to Guidelines for Preparing Master's and Doctoral Theses. Again, the student must meet SPA's deadlines for thesis format review, defense date, and submission of final thesis. Please see your student services team coordinator for deadline dates.
14. Thesis Costs: The student needs to be aware of and plan for the incidental costs of supplies, reproduction and binding, etc., that will be incurred in the process of writing and submitting the thesis. All such costs are the student's responsibility.

Attachment A

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO AT DENVER

APPLICATION FOR THESIS OPTION

NAME _____ STUDENT NUMBER _____

ADDRESS _____ DAY PHONE _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

PART I:

Thesis Title: _____

Expected Completion Date: _____

Approved By:

Committee Chairperson

Date

Committee Member

Date

Outside Committee Member

Date

MPA Director

Date

PART II:

Please attach Thesis Proposal.

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO AT DENVER

APPROVAL FOR THESIS

The Thesis Committee certifies that _____,
a candidate for the degree Master of Public Administration (MPA) has satisfactorily
completed a thesis title _____

Committee Chairperson

Date

Committee Member

Date

Outside Committee Member

Date

Approved By:

Director, MPA Program

Date

Thesis Colloquium Presentation Scheduling Form

When you finalize with your committee the date and time of your presentation, please submit this form to your student coordinator (fax or email is acceptable). Once form is submitted, your student coordinator will assign you to a conference space at SPA and reserve any media equipment requested. At that time you will receive confirmation of arrangements via email. If you have any questions, please contact your student coordinator.

Fax to 303/315-2229

Email to: antoINETTE.sandoval.@cudenver.edu
dawn.savage@cudenver.edu

Name: _____ Email: _____

Phone: (d) _____ (e) _____

Project Title: _____

Date and Time: _____

Committee Chair: _____

Committee Member/Title: _____

Organization: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Outside Committee Member/Title: _____

Organization: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Technical Equipment Needed (check all that apply)

- Overhead Projector
- LCD Projector
- TV/VCR
- Lap Top
- Phone Conference Capability
- Other, please specify _____

Office use only

Space Reserved _____
Equipment Reserved _____
Information added to Projects doc _____
Student Emailed Confirmation _____