



NORTHERN ARIZONA  
UNIVERSITY  
*College of Social & Behavioral Sciences*

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**Department of Sociology and Social Work**

# MASTER OF ARTS IN APPLIED SOCIOLOGY

## THESIS OPTION

As part of your degree requirements, you will need to complete either an internship or a thesis. In selecting an option, you should evaluate your career goals and discuss the options with your graduate committee. If you plan to continue your education beyond the master's level, we strongly encourage you to select the thesis option. If you select the thesis option, the following information should guide you in setting up and completing your thesis.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Thesis Option Overview	Page 3
Requirements to Begin Thesis	Page 3
Thesis Proposal	Page 4
Thesis Guidelines	Page 5
Thesis Formatting	Page 6
Thesis Examples	Page 6
Thesis Defense	Page 6

# THESIS OPTION OVERVIEW

If you wish to pursue a more academic or research oriented career, the department provides the option of writing a thesis. Thesis topics are varied and should reflect your interest.

Students are expected to work closely with their graduate committee. You will be required to submit a thesis proposal to your committee for their approval, indicated by their signatures on the Permission to Register Form. The thesis you are planning to write should influence your decision as to who will be serving on your graduate committee. You will want to enlist committee members with expertise in the area you will be pursuing in your thesis. Once your committee approves your proposal, you will file the Permission to Register Form, pursue research activity related to your thesis, and complete the final document.

When the committee approves the final work, a meeting is scheduled and the thesis is presented to interested faculty for their approval. Six credit hours will be included on your program of study for the thesis when the requirements have been fulfilled and a copy of the thesis is on file in the graduate office.

## **Requirements to Begin Thesis:**

Before you will be allowed to register for graduate thesis credits (SOC 699), you **MUST** meet the following conditions:

- Have "Regular" standing with the Graduate College. (No student with a "Provisional" standing may register for thesis hours.)
- Have completed all thirty hours of coursework required for the degree as documented in the **Course of Study Form - Applied Research or Sociological Perspectives**. (You may not register for thesis hours with an outstanding "Incomplete" or "In Progress" in any of these classes)

***One exception** - If you must maintain "full-time" status, you may petition your graduate committee to admit you to register for thesis hours with twenty seven hours of coursework complete. However, you must take your final three hours of coursework at the same time you are pursuing your thesis hours.*

- Have formed a graduate committee (see Graduate Committee Policy in the Student Guide) and filed a **Thesis/Internship Permission to Register Form** signed by this committee. This form is available on our website and should be signed by all three committee members and will signify their approval of your proposal.

- Have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 on all graduate coursework.
- Have received approval of thesis proposal from your committee chair and committee members. (All documentation required must be approved by your graduate committee and on file in the graduate coordinator's office before you can register for SOC 699)

### **The Thesis Proposal:**

You must submit a thesis proposal to your committee **the semester prior** to registering for thesis hours.

The thesis proposal includes the following:

- **Statement of the problem/research question.**
- **Review of the literature.** The literature review in a proposal outlines the theoretical and substantive areas you plan to examine. You should also display knowledge of the literature and highlight key themes and concepts that you feel will help you understand your research question.
- **Methodological/measurement procedures.** Please include discussion of:
  1. Research design
  2. Cases or subjects used (if applicable)
  3. Sampling design
  4. Data collection procedure
  5. Validity and reliability of measurements
  6. Data analysis procedure
    - 6a. Quantitative: specify statistical analyses planned, including statistical software.
    - 6b. Qualitative: specify use of coding scheme, use of computer software in the analyses, historical documents, participant observations techniques, unobtrusive measures, etc.
  7. Statement of Limitations
  8. IRB approval (if applicable)
- **References**
- **Tentative calendar for completion for each phase or chapter** (enables coordination of deadlines and realistic turnaround time for rewrites)

When your committee approves the proposal and signs the permission to register form, and you have registered for the thesis hours, you may then conduct the research activity related to the thesis and complete the final document.

## **Thesis Guidelines:**

### **Title**

The title should capture the primary purpose of your thesis; a search of key words should lead a researcher to your work.

### **Abstract**

An abstract is an overview that is about 300 words in length.

### **I. Introduction**

Introduce your topic, provide a brief overview of literature you will draw on, the methods you use, and clearly articulate your research question.

### **II. Literature Review**

Here you articulate the substantive areas of relevance to your topic—such as social psychology, social movement theory, or theories of the state, etc.

You may find yourself wanting to focus on a particular area of literature within a subfield; thus, instead of social psychology you may address symbolic interaction or labeling theory. Students are generally advised to focus on about three substantive areas of relevance.

### **III. Methods**

Describe your methodological approach. How do you intend to answer your research question? What kind of data will answer your research question? What is your research design? How will you obtain your data? Indicate your level of analysis, your hypothesis or expectations, your sample or participants, etc.

### **IV. Data Analysis**

The data analysis depends on the methods section. Whether you are relying on survey research, in-depth interviews, participant observation, or a content analysis will determine how you will analyze your data.

### **V. Conclusion**

Conclusions generally summarize your findings, but also note the limitations of your research. All research has limitations by definition of the focus. However, in addition to these, we generally discover approaches we wish we had taken in the course of doing our research. It is important to convey these to the community of sociologists so they may anticipate these issues in their research. Furthermore, given your findings suggest directions for future research and/or directions for social policy or social change.

### **VI. Appendix**

Generally, appendices are used to share the instruments that you used in your research. Depending on your methods, this can include forms related to the Institutional Review Board, such as Human Subjects Consent Forms or your Interview Guides. Additionally, it may include your survey, forms, statistics, or templates relevant to your research.

## **VII. Bibliography**

This will include all the substantive and methodological literature that you cite in your thesis—including journal articles, books, and the web pages with the dates you retrieved them. Be sure to consult the American Sociological Association or the American Psychological Association formats.

Although all of these components constitute a thesis, you can be creative in how you entitle and organize your thesis—depending on the advice of your committee chair.

### **Thesis Formatting:**

Review the following forms on the Graduate College's website for thesis formatting at: <https://home.nau.edu/gradcol/thesis.asp>

- [Checklist for thesis students](#)
- [Continuous Enrollment Policy](#)
- [Instructions for submitting final copies of thesis](#)
- [Checklist for proper document format](#)
- [Thesis title page](#)
- [Dissertation title page](#)
- [Abstract](#)

### **Thesis Examples:**

Past theses are available for review/checkout. Please see the department front desk for details. In addition, there are thesis proposal examples on our website.

### **Thesis Defense:**

When the committee approves the final work, a meeting is scheduled and the thesis is presented to interested faculty for their approval. After the defense, your committee will need to sign the Master's Oral Exam form, available on our website.

Six credit hours will be included on your program of study when the thesis is approved by the chair and members of your committee, and the final copy is on file in the NAU Graduate College office. Follow the graduation procedures as indicated on page 9 of the Student Guide, providing the appropriate copies of documents to the department office.