

How to Write Your MA Thesis Graduate Programme in Communication Studies

When: We recommend that you aim to begin working on your MA thesis during the summer after your first year in the programme.

What you need to start:

- An advisor. We recommend that you choose an advisor by the end of your first year.
- A topic. You should have a good idea of what you want to write on. It's a good idea to start brainstorming sometime during your second semester. Feel free to consult faculty members and look over previous MA theses in the programme.

Step 1: Discuss the suitability of your topic and approach with your advisor. Some advisors may ask for a short, relatively informal thesis proposal to help focus the discussion.

Step 2: Research and write the thesis. Don't wait until you are "finished" researching to begin writing. Write and revise as you go – a little every day.

Step 3: When you and your advisor determine that the thesis is ready to submit, decide upon three potential external examiners, who may be faculty in the department or in another program or university. DO NOT contact these potential readers yourself!¹ Their names are submitted to the McGill thesis office, who will then select which of the three potential examiners will read the thesis. Note that the thesis office tends to prefer McGill faculty as external examiners (for reasons of expediency).

Step 4: Submit the thesis. Between having the thesis bound and getting the necessary signatures, this may take a few days. For forms and requirements, see [<http://www.mcgill.ca/gps/programs/thesis/guidelines/>] and [<http://www.mcgill.ca/gps/programs/thesis/forms/>]. Also note that thesis submission deadlines are absolute and completely inflexible (there are no extensions), so plan accordingly.

Step 5: Several weeks after you submit the thesis, examiners' reports from the advisor and the external examiner will arrive. If both examiners pass the thesis, meet with your advisor, go over any changes required, and make the final submission to the department and the thesis office. If one of the examiners fails the thesis, you have the option of either revising and resubmitting, withdrawing the thesis and submitting a new one, or challenging the fail in cases of bias, error or serious misrepresentation by the examiner who failed the thesis. In either case, see [<http://www.mcgill.ca/gps/programs/thesis/guidelines/>] for more details.

Last update: Aug 2005 -- JS

¹ The McGill thesis office asks external examiners if they have been approached by you regarding the thesis. If they answer "yes," they are disqualified as examiners.