

UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

**College of Humanities
and Social Sciences**

Department of English

English M.A. Master's Project

Students may choose to complete a Master's Project, which is worth three hours of course credit. The Project usually takes the form of a research paper of approximately thirty pages, often on a topic initially developed in a graduate course. However, the Master's Project may also involve a creative work (poems, short stories, or chapters of a novel, for example). In order to complete the degree requirements, the student makes a public presentation of the Project before an audience of students and faculty. The public presentation of the Master's Project is an approved equivalent for the comprehensive examinations.

This document outlines the following steps of the process:

- [Forming a Committee and Proposing a Project](#)
- [The Project as a Finished Product](#)
- [Scheduling a Presentation](#)
- [Presenting the Project](#)

Forming a Committee and Proposing a Project

Second Semester:

During their second semester, at the very earliest stages of conceiving a project, all graduate students meet with the DGS, in order to discuss their ideas for projects, and to identify potential chairs for the project supervisory committee. Students should consult a list of faculty specialties, including secondary fields, available from the carousel or from the DGS. Students should feel free to approach any graduate faculty members, whether they have worked previously with them or not, in order to discuss their project at this point. The chair must be a member of the graduate faculty in the English Department. Students are strongly encouraged to base their Masters Project on work submitted for a graduate course in the program.

At the end of the second semester, in collaboration with the chair of her committee, the student produces a proposal, which includes a list of works to be read over the summer and a 3-5 pp. essay outlining the proposed project. The reading list serves as a provisional basis for the “Backgrounds & Implications” section.

The reading list should include:

- **GENRE:** works in the genre of the project’s primary object. If the primary object belongs to more than one genre, it may be desirable to represent this variety, depending on the focus of the analysis. Selections here should extend to two other chronological periods. (Here a period is defined roughly by the breakdown of undergraduate period courses. Moving one period forward and one backward from the study’s primary object would be the most obvious tack here, but students may choose alternative routes, as long as they can point to a coherent and persuasive rationale for their choices.)
- **PERIOD:** representative works from the period. Should also include one more or less synthetic, book-length treatment of the period by a literary or cultural historian. (E.g., Ann Douglass’s *Terrible Honesty* for early twentieth-century U.S., Amanda Anderson’s *The Powers of Distance* for Victorian literature, etc.)
- **CRITICISM & THEORY:** Six to seven articles, book chapters, or books. Should cover major contributions to criticism on the primary object. For projects with a theoretical focus, include major theoretical statements from that school of thought.

Third Semester:

At the beginning of the third semester (before the first day of classes), the student turns in a second, revised and expanded proposal to her committee chair. This should include a) a revision of the original proposal essay (7-8 pp.) and b) a bibliographical essay (8-10 pp.), discussing all of the works on their reading list. (The reading list may have undergone revision based on the findings of the student’s summer work.) The bibliographical essay should be written with an eye towards the “Backgrounds & Implications” section of the final presentation. Finally, the proposal should include two brief selections of close reading (2-3 pp. each), demonstrating how the proposed approach gives rise to productive textual analysis.

The committee chair may ask for revisions of the proposal at this point. If the chair deems the proposal satisfactory, the chair and student may choose the rest of the committee. Again, the student is welcome to propose meeting with any graduate faculty member in order to ascertain their potential interest and usefulness as a committee member. The second and third members of the committee must be graduate

faculty of UNC, and at least one must be a faculty member in the English Department. Once a full committee has signed on to a project, the student shall inform the DGS in writing or by email.

The chair will ask the student to pass the proposal on to the entire committee and schedule a meeting of the committee. (If, at this point, the committee decides that the proposal needs further revision, committee members may sign off, eventually, without further meetings.) All members of the committee must eventually sign off on this document, and it should be completed within the first month or so of the student's third semester.

Students seeking spring graduation should submit to their committee a completed first draft of their project by the first week of November in the semester preceding their intended graduation. Committee members will read and comment on the draft before the Christmas break so that students may have the break to make revisions to their project. (Students seeking fall graduation should submit to their committee a completed first draft of their project by the beginning of April during the spring semester preceding their intended graduation. Committee members will read and comment on the draft before summer break so that students may have the break to make revisions to their project.)

Fourth Semester:

At the beginning of the fourth semester, students hoping to graduate in the spring should submit a substantially revised draft of the project, and the committee will meet again as a whole after reading this draft (as long as the project chair deems the student's progress sufficient). The project chair may require further drafts and schedule further committee meetings as necessary. Students hoping to graduate in the spring should contact their chairs a couple of weeks before Spring Break in order to schedule a meeting before Spring Break. At this meeting, the chair can assess the feasibility of the project's reaching a stage at which it can be signed off in time for spring graduation. Ultimately, students hoping to graduate in the spring must submit have their project signed off three weeks in advance of the Graduate School's deadline for notification of the passing of the comprehensive exam. (N.B. Allowing for two weeks' reading time, this necessitates the submission of a final draft at least five weeks in advance of the end of the semester.)

Each member of the committee has the right to refuse to sign the project. In the event that members of the committee cannot resolve a conflict regarding signing the project, the committee may request that the DGS adjudicate the conflict.

Once the project is signed off, the student should turn again to the "Backgrounds & Implications" section. The student should draw on the committee chair and, possibly, the entire committee and DGS for advice on transforming the bibliographical essay into a 8-10 pp. essay to be read as part of the final presentation. The purpose and range of this essay should coincide with the principles for selection of texts in the original reading list.

N. B. The above is an ideal timeline. While students must fulfill all of the above requirements and are strongly encouraged to adhere to the schedule above, they are not obliged to complete the project precisely on this timeline.

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The Project as a Finished Product

Project Length

Project is approximately thirty pages of a quality suitable for submission to a refereed journal. Length and scope of project, however, is ultimately the responsibility of the student and his or her committee.

Project Format

The only formatting requirement is that the first page or title page of the Master's Project conforms to the title page style sheet which is available from the DGS and in the carousel in the office.

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Scheduling a Presentation

Oral Presentations must be scheduled with the DGS at least three weeks in advance of the presentation date. Students are responsible for scheduling their presentations when their committee members can attend.

In order to schedule an Oral Presentation, the student must:

- Present the project with the cover sheet, including all required signatures, to the DGS
- Place in the English Department office two copies of the finished project
- Find out what dates and times her committee is available to attend the presentation
- Email an abstract of the project to the DGS, to be included with the DGS's announcement to the Graduate Student listserv.

*Copies placed in the department will be made available to graduate faculty and graduate students who wish to read the project before the oral presentation.

Please make note of the following:

- Scheduling must precede the graduate school deadline for comprehensive exams by at least three weeks. However, given the number of presentations that are made, especially in the spring, students are strongly encouraged to arrange their presentations in February and October.
- Oral presentations will not be scheduled during summer or after the posted Graduate School deadlines for reporting results of comprehensive examinations.
- Oral presentations will not be scheduled during finals week.

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Presenting the Project

Attendance at the oral presentation will be limited to UNC faculty, English graduate students, and others by permission of the DGS.

One hour will be scheduled for oral presentation. The hour will be split into three parts:

1. Twenty minutes will be devoted to the presentation of the project, basically an eight to nine page conference-style presentation based on the Master's Project. This presentation should be reviewed by at least the chair of the student's supervising committee.
2. Another twenty minutes will consist of a presentation in which the student reads their "Backgrounds & Implications" section. (This may precede or come after the presentation of the project.) Students are strongly encouraged to write out this part of the presentation, receive feedback from members of their committee, and read it aloud.
3. The final third of the hour will be a question and answer session with graduate faculty and students in attendance at the presentation. Questions may extrapolate widely from the topic at hand, but students are responsible essentially for the material in their presentation and the works on their list.

With regard to Creative Masters Projects, the same guidelines will apply, and students will locate their creative work within the literary and theoretical foundations of the discipline.

At the conclusion of the presentation, everyone except graduate faculty will be excused from the room. Graduate faculty will then discuss the presentation, and English graduate faculty present will receive a presentation scoring form with which to score the presentation. The scored rubric and any additional comments are due in the department mailbox of the DGS by five o'clock pm on the next workday. DGS will tabulate the results and inform the graduate faculty and the student of the results. Students who fail the oral presentation are permitted to make a second presentation, but must wait until the following semester to do so.

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