

Department of Communication Disorders
Guidelines for Capstone Research and Comprehensive Examination

As part of the summative assessment process for the Master's degree in Communication Disorders, students are required to complete a research project and a final comprehensive examination. The student may select between a thesis/oral examination option or a nonthesis/written examination option. The following guidelines describe procedures for completing the capstone research project (thesis or nonthesis) and comprehensive examination (written and/or oral) required for the Master of Arts degree in Communication Disorders.

I. Time Frame/Deadlines for Completing the Capstone Research and Comprehensive Examination

Spring Semester, 1st Year

1. The student enrolls in CD625 – Research in Communication Disorders
2. The student begins developing a plan for their capstone research project. Students who are interested in academic or research careers may plan for a thesis. Most students elect a non-thesis option. A comparison of thesis versus the nonthesis research options is provided in Appendix A.
3. During this capstone research planning semester, it is important that the student identify and communicate with faculty members with whom they would like to work or with whom they share an area of interest. By the end of the spring semester, the student should have received a verbal agreement from a faculty member to supervise his/her capstone research. It is important to understand that faculty members are not required to supervise any particular number or type (thesis/nonthesis) of capstone projects, but most faculty members are very willing to supervise some research projects each academic year. In the event that a research advisor has not been secured by the end of the spring semester of the first year, the student should notify the instructor of CD625.

Summer Semester, 1st Year

1. During the summer semester, it is highly desirable for students to continue planning his/her capstone research project. This may mean meeting with the faculty supervisor for guidance, expanding the literature review, arranging clients or cases for a case study, and preparing the human subjects research proposal for review. The student should consult the current human subjects research proposal guidelines available on the College of Health and Human Services website.
2. **IMPORTANT:** Students who anticipate using a client from the Center for Speech and Hearing as a single-subject study or case study must discuss this with the clinic coordinator before the end of the summer semester so that proper planning may occur. In addition, the student must have received approval from the human subjects research committee and proper consent must have been obtained before any research procedures may be initiated.
3. Thesis students should have identified a faculty supervisor for their research no later than the summer semester of the first year. In addition, it is recommended that the second and third

committee members of the thesis committee be identified and the human subjects proposal be prepared by the end of the summer semester of the first year. The student should consult with the thesis supervisor regarding the request for second and third committee members.

4. Nonthesis projects do not require a committee. The project is completed under the direction of and approved by the research supervisor. The nonthesis capstone research project must also be submitted to the graduate advisor for approval as a second reader. In the event the graduate advisor and the research advisor is the same person, an alternate graduate advisor will serve as the second reader.

Fall Semester, 2nd Year

1. Thesis and nonthesis students must enroll in CD683.
2. Thesis and nonthesis students will meet as a group on a weekly basis with the instructor of CD683. The purpose of these meetings is to assist the student in completing the capstone research project. Early in the fall semester, the student should develop a time frame for completion of the capstone research. If not already completed, the human subjects review proposal should be submitted early in the fall semester as well.
3. When the thesis student has developed the initial sections (i.e. introduction, review of the literature, and methodology), the prospectus meeting should be scheduled. The prospectus date is selected by the student in consultation with the thesis advisor.
 - a. The student must determine a time to meet for the thesis prospectus that is agreeable with all members of the committee.
 - b. After a time and date has been confirmed for the meeting, the student must schedule a room for the meeting. The student should determine if the room will have the necessary technology (i.e., computer, overhead projector, computer projector, etc.) for the prospectus presentation. The department office administrative assistant may assist with this reservation.
 - c. The student should confer with the thesis advisor to determine the nature of the presentation expected at the meeting. Unless there are unusual circumstances, thesis meetings should be limited to one hour. The student presentation portion of this meeting should take no more than 30 minutes to allow adequate time for the committee to discuss the proposal with the student.
 - d. No later than 1 week prior to the meeting, the student should provide each committee member with a written copy of the thesis proposal along with a reminder of the time, date, and location of the prospectus meeting. Typically, the thesis proposal includes the introduction, review of the literature, and methodology sections of the thesis.
 - e. At the thesis prospectus meeting, the student must bring the Thesis Topic Approval Form (see Appendix B), which must be signed by all members of the thesis committee.
4. Both thesis and nonthesis students are required to submit a proposal to present their capstone research projects during the spring semester of the 2nd year. Deadlines for some spring presentations occur during the middle of the fall semester so students must plan accordingly. The venue and format of the presentation should be determined through consultation between the student and the research advisor. Typical presentation venues and formats include poster sessions at the annual Missouri Speech-Language-Hearing Association conference, brief oral

and/or poster presentations at the Southeast Missouri State University Annual Student Research Conference, etc. There are typically other invited presentation opportunities that occur during the spring semester that meet the presentation requirement as well.

Spring Semester, 2nd Year

1. During the spring semester of the second year, students who are completing a nonthesis research project should enroll in CD683. Students who are completing a thesis should enroll in GR695.
2. During the final semester of graduate study (note that this may be spring or summer depending on the student), the student must enroll in the comprehensive examination. **This enrollment may not occur prior to the final semester.** Nonthesis students should enroll in GR698 (written examination) and thesis students should enroll in GR699 (oral examination). If a student is permitted to take an examination prior to the final semester, the examination result will not be submitted until the appropriate examination enrollment has taken place.
3. Typically, all research data collection should be completed by the end of January of the spring semester. The final draft of the research paper/thesis should be submitted to the research advisor no later than the end of February. For thesis students, the thesis should be submitted to the full thesis committee for review by spring break of the spring semester and the oral examination (defense) of the thesis should be scheduled within 2 weeks following spring break. While these deadlines are somewhat flexible, the final date to submit the graduate research to the graduate office is a published deadline designated each semester. This date is not flexible and it is the student's responsibility to insure that this deadline is met. The final research paper in digital and hard copy format as well as the appropriate research paper approval form or thesis acceptance form must be submitted to both the graduate research advisor and the graduate school by the published deadline. It is the student's responsibility to make sure that all final drafts of research adhere to any graduate school requirements pertaining to format.
4. Students who fail to meet the final research submission deadline may be given either an incomplete or a grade of less than "A" for the research, at the discretion of the research supervisor. Students who are given a grade but have yet to complete their research must enroll in at least 1 hour of research during the following summer semester in order to complete their research. Students who are given an incomplete must complete the research by the end of the following summer semester or receive a grade of "F".

II. Format of Capstone Research Projects

All research projects must be submitted in digital form with appropriate documentation and formatting. Referencing must adhere to formats found in the most current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)*. In addition, theses must adhere to additional guidelines required by the School of Graduate Studies and which are available on their website. It is the student's responsibility to review the most current guidelines to insure compliance.

The organization and style of the written research project should be in a format that is acceptable to the research advisor. Theses should adhere to the "chapter" format as seen in the guidelines of the School

of Graduate Studies. This format is also acceptable for nonthesis projects although nonthesis have the option of being submitted in article format suitable for submission for publication.

IV. Final Examination Process

Written Examination (Nonthesis students only)

There are two ways that a nonthesis student may satisfy the written examination requirement:

1. The student may elect to take the PRAXIS examination during the period after the fall semester of the second year to the end of February of the spring semester of the second year. A passing result on the PRAXIS examination meets the written examination requirement. In order to count as the written examination, the PRAXIS examination date must occur during the specified period above.
2. In regard to students who elect not to take the PRAXIS examination during the period specified above or students who take the PRAXIS but do not achieve a passing score, these students must take a department-administered written comprehensive examination. A score of 70% or higher is considered passing on the department-administered examination.

Oral Examination (Thesis students only)

The oral examination consists of 2 components: 1) a presentation of the research with an emphasis on the results and conclusions (note that the presentation should not exceed 30 minutes); and, 2) an oral examination of the thesis research conducted by the thesis committee; For all aspects of the examination, the student is expected to prepare in an independent manner and should exhibit the highest professional conduct throughout the examination. It is the student's responsibility to schedule the examination date as well as a location suitable for the examination. At the conclusion of the examination, a passing or failing grade is assigned following a brief meeting by the thesis committee. If the student achieves a pass consensus from the committee, he/she should have available the Thesis Approval Form (Appendix G) which will be signed by the thesis committee members.

Approved by Department Faculty: March 27, 2015

Appendix A

Comparison of Thesis and Nonthesis Research Options

	Thesis	Nonthesis
Scope of the research	Typically larger in scope and utilizing larger sample size although single-subject designs may be appropriate as well	May be small qualitative or quantitative experiments, or case study/single-subject design study
Academic ability	High level of critical thinking required - ability to think on your feet and problem solve are expected	Critical thinking is involved but may be more directed/assisted by the research advisor
Level of Independence	High level of independence expected - supervisor will guide but not direct	Moderate level of independence expected - supervisor will assist more in the planning of the research and assist student as needed
Writing skill	Independent, high quality writing is expected, even on initial drafts, with minimal editing required on the part of the research advisor	Good quality writing is expected but supervisor may provide more editorial assistance for students with difficulty in writing
Length of research paper	Variable but considerably longer than a nonthesis project	Variable but typically shorter than a thesis
Familiarity with research and statistical concepts	Good foundation of basic research skills and knowledge of basic statistical analysis are essential.	Some knowledge of basic research concepts and statistical analysis but more from a research consumer point of view.
Research Committee	3-member faculty committee reviews/approves research proposal and conducts the oral examination at conclusion of thesis	Research conducted in consultation with 1 research supervisor; a 2 nd reader reviews the final product at conclusion of the study.
Examination	Oral examination conducted at conclusion of research – this examination focuses on the thesis research.	A written, multiple-choice examination is required; this examination is comprehensive in nature covering major topic areas addressed in the ASHA certification standards.
What happens if initial examination is not passed?	Thesis students must wait until the following semester to take the oral examination.	Students who fail the multiple-choice portion of the examination are allowed one re-take opportunity during the same semester.

Appendix B

Note: the original form may be downloaded from the current student section of the School of Graduate Studies webpage.



Southeast Missouri State University TOPIC APPROVAL SHEET FOR THESIS OR CREATIVE PROJECT

My signature herewith is to effect that I agree to serve as chair for the thesis committee or creative project for the student named below.

This form is to be accompanied by a brief and tentative description of the proposed thesis or creative project including the problem and the research method.

This form may be signed by the second member as an indication of tentative approval of the concept. The appointed committee member and chairperson should withhold their signatures until all members of the committee have met with the candidate and have agreed on the proposal. The chair of the committee and student should make arrangements for the proposal meeting as soon as the third member has been appointed by the Dean of Graduate Studies & Research.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1. Committee Chair
_____ *(Printed Name)* _____ *(Signature)* _____ *(mm/dd/yy)*
2. Second Committee Chair
_____ *(Printed Name)* _____ *(Signature)* _____ *(mm/dd/yy)*
3. Third Committee Chair
_____ *(Printed Name)* _____ *(Signature)* _____ *(mm/dd/yy)*
(To be approved or appointed by the Dean of Graduate School)

Department Chairperson (printed name) _____ *(signature)* _____ *(date)*

THESIS CREATIVE PROJECT (Check one)

Title: _____

Student's Name: _____ E-mail Address: _____

SO# _____ Major Area: _____

Current Address: _____

(Student's Signature)

(mm/dd/yy)

Graduate Office Approval:

(Dean of Graduate Studies)

(mm/dd/yy)

Appendix C

**ACCEPTANCE SHEET FOR
NON-THESIS PAPER**

SOUTHEAST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

This is to certify that:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State & Zip Code: _____

has satisfactorily completed an acceptable non-thesis paper.

Title: _____

(Department)

(Signature, Paper Supervisor)

Three copies of the acceptance sheet must be completed and signed. One copy of the acceptance sheet will be filed in the Graduate Office, one copy will be returned to the advisor, and the third copy will be returned to the student. The supervisor is responsible for the quality of the content, form, and general acceptability of the non-thesis paper.

I hereby certify the completion of this paper during the following term:

_____ 20_____

(Signature, Major Advisor) (Date)

(Signature, Second Reader) (Date)

If the Supervisor and the Advisor is the same person, a second member of the Graduate Faculty in the department must countersign.

Appendix D

Department of Communication Disorders Comprehensive Examination Guidelines (for Non-Thesis Students)

I. Examination Date

Comprehensive examinations are typically administered to students during the fifth semester (spring) of graduate study. For students completing a non-thesis option, the non-thesis paper approval form must be filed prior to taking the comprehensive examination. The examination date is announced during the semester preceding the examination and typically occurs during the week following spring break in the spring semester.

II. Format

The comprehensive examination consists of a 132 question multiple-choice examination. Content for the examination questions are derived from the PRAXIS syllabus which includes the following areas, number of questions, and proportions:

- Foundations and Professional Practice / 44 / 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ %
- Screening, Assessment, Evaluation, and Diagnosis / 44 / 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ %
- Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation of Treatment / 44 / 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ %

III. Administration Procedures

Students are provided two and a half hours (150 minutes) to take the multiple-choice examination. Students may not bring any materials into the exam area except a covered beverage. They may bring a snack/lunch, which must be eaten in a designated area. Students are free to take breaks as needed in a designated area. Cell phones and the Internet may not be utilized during the examination except in the case of an emergency. Any student requiring special accommodation during the examination should notify the examination coordinator prior to the examination day.

IV. Pass Criteria

A score of 70% or higher is considered passing,

V. Examination Re-Write Policy

In the event the examination is not passed, a student may re-take the examination one time during the same semester. Any student who does not pass the re-write examination must develop a student assistance plan (SAP) in consultation with his/her academic advisor. This remedial plan should address weaknesses identified in the comprehensive examination. If the student successfully completes the requirements of the SAP, the student will be permitted to re-take the comprehensive examination during the following semester.

Appendix G

Note: This form is typed by the student and inserted as a preliminary page in the thesis after all signatures have been obtained. The student should bring 3 copies of this sheet to the oral examination so that the committee may sign it at the conclusion of the examination. A copy is forwarded to the School of Graduate Studies, a copy is inserted in the thesis, and a copy is placed in the student's academic file.

THESIS ACCEPTANCE SHEET

Submitted by *[insert student name]* in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication Disorders.

Accepted on behalf of the Faculty of the School of Graduate Studies by the thesis committee:

[insert faculty name], Ph.D.
Thesis Advisor

[insert faculty name], Ph.D.

[insert faculty name], Ph.D.

[insert faculty name], Ph.D.
Department Chairperson

Date

[insert graduate dean's name], Ph.D.
Dean, School of Graduate Studies

Date