CSUDH
Department of Psychology
THESIS GUIDELINES
for Master of Arts in Psychology (Clinical Option)

1. Students who complete a Master’s thesis in the Department of Psychology must have a minimum graduate GPA of 3.5. Students whose cumulative graduate GPA is lower than 3.5 should plan to take the MA Psychology Comprehensive Examination.

2. Students should download the CSUDH Thesis Project Guide (http://www.csudh.edu/graduatestudies/thesisproject.htm#2) or buy a copy from the bookstore.

3. Students who plan to complete a thesis are expected to be proficient in SPSS/SAS. If a student completed a Testing and Measurement class rather than an advanced statistics class as an undergraduate, he/she should take PSY 330. Students are strongly encouraged to take PSY 530—Advanced Analysis of Variance and Multivariate Techniques or another graduate course in advanced statistics.

4. The student should choose a chair for their thesis committee after discussing research ideas with faculty in the department. A chair should be chosen by the end of the Spring semester of a student’s first year as a graduate student.

5. The student and his/her chair should then choose two full-time CSUDH faculty or Emeritus faculty to serve on his/her thesis committee. At least two faculty (including the chair) must be faculty from the Department of Psychology.

6. The student should then prepare a thesis proposal, which must include a literature review and methodology section (including statistical analysis plan). The proposal should be consistent with American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines. The thesis chair and committee members will guide students through the thesis process and provide feedback regarding the content of the thesis; they are not expected to correct for grammar, spelling, punctuation and syntax. Graduate students are expected to be able to write at an advanced level and should ensure that thesis drafts have been analyzed for errors before submitting the document to committee members.

7. If the thesis project involves human subjects, the student should submit their proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. See the IRB website for submission information (http://www.csudh.edu/RF/rfpro3.html). Students who plan to use human subjects in their research MUST complete the online training course in Human Subjects Protection and provide a copy of your certificate to the IRB. The link to the course is - http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php.

10. The student should then arrange a proposal meeting with his/her committee. **Students cannot begin collecting data until their committee members approve their proposal and they have received IRB approval.**

11. Once data is collected and the thesis is written, the student should submit the thesis to his/her chair and they should decide on a defense date.

12. The student should then send the thesis to all committee members for approval. The thesis should be given to committee members at least **4 weeks** prior to the scheduled defense.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **What kind of thesis is allowed?**

A thesis exploring a psychological theory or theories, one demonstrating a psychological research project, or one evaluating a psychological program is permitted. Theses that involve secondary analyses (archival data), rely on case histories, or that are very applied, should include psychological theory. Students are encouraged to work on a thesis topic that closely relates to the research of their thesis chair. This will help ensure that the chair can help provide feedback regarding their thesis project.

2. **What prerequisites are necessary before one can begin thesis work?**

Approval of your thesis proposal (by committee members)

3. **What are the thesis proposal guidelines?**

Generally, your proposal should include an introduction with hypotheses and a methodology section. The purpose of the proposal is to spell out clearly what you propose to do for your thesis project and why. Please see the CSUDH Thesis Project Guide for more information.

4. **What if my proposal is not accepted?**

Written comments will be provided to the student whose proposal is not accepted by his/her thesis committee. The student may then choose to write a revised proposal or choose another topic for a thesis and write a new proposal.
5. How many academic units are given for the thesis and when do I sign up for them?

You can sign up for Directed Reading and/or Directed Research (1-3 units) while you are working on your thesis. In the semester you plan to defend, you should sign up for PSY 599 Thesis (1-3 units).

6. How long do I have to complete my thesis?

Students typically spend 1-2 years completing a thesis. The thesis generally marks the completion of the requirements for the MA Psychology degree. Therefore, students should be mindful that they have a maximum of 5 years to complete the MA degree.

7. Who can be on my thesis committee?

The chair of your committee must be a full-time faculty member from the Department of Psychology. The full committee, selected in consultation with the committee chair, should include three persons, all of whom are to be CSUDH full-time, tenured/tenure-track faculty members, or Emeritus faculty. The student may select one committee member from another CSUDH department in order to secure special expertise relevant to the thesis topic. Approval of requests for additional committee members should be obtained from the committee chair. Changes in committee membership must be approved by the chair of the thesis committee or the coordinator of the MA Psychology program.

8. When I submit my completed thesis what form does it have to be in?

All theses should be consistent with APA guidelines. You should also consult with the CSUDH Thesis Project Guide for information about thesis formatting.

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