

GUIDELINES FOR THESIS STUDENTS

Behavior Analysis Program



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General Guidelines for Conducting a Thesis at Florida Tech

Thesis Proposal

Your thesis proposal should be written IN THE FUTURE TENSE and adhere to the 7th edition of the APA style manual (American Psychological Association, 2020). All thesis students should purchase the APA Publication Manual, Seventh Edition. You may choose to write your thesis proposal as part of the Research Methods class that you will take during your first semester in the program, or write a new proposal once you begin working with your thesis advisor in the summer semester between your two years in the program. Your advisor will work with you to revise your proposal; you should expect at least a one-week turn-around time from your faculty advisor per revision.

Apply for IRB Approval

All thesis research projects must be submitted to the FIT Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. See the Florida Tech IRB website (<http://www.fit.edu/research/committees/irb/>) for the application and instructions about submission. You must include your methods section with the application and an informed consent form. Also, if your participants are part of, or receive services from, an agency or group, you must get written permission from the director of the agency or group to recruit participants (this includes the Scott Center). You should allow two weeks AT THE VERY LEAST to hear back from the IRB as to the status of your application. You may submit your IRB proposal prior to your thesis proposal meeting (discuss with your advisor - s/he may want you to submit AFTER your thesis proposal meeting), but if major changes are requested by your thesis committee, you may be required to submit an addendum to your IRB proposal to the IRB.

Registering for Thesis Credit

Register for 1 thesis prep credit during the summer between your first and second year, and thesis credits for all remaining semesters (e.g., Fall and Spring of 2nd year)

as long as adequate progress on the thesis has been made. Determination of adequate progress is made by the faculty thesis advisor. ABA + OBM students are expected to finish their thesis by the end

Data Collection

During data collection, you should meet with your committee chair AT LEAST once per week to discuss your progress. DO NOT MAKE ANY MODIFICATIONS OR PHASE CHANGES WITHOUT FIRST CONSULTING WITH YOUR COMMITTEE CHAIR! Also, during the course of data collection, if you make any major changes to the project, these changes must be approved by your entire thesis committee.

Number of Participants

For single subject designs, students are generally required to use 3 participants in a thesis. This number is based on a brief survey of existing ABA program requirements at other universities. However, this is a general guideline, and depending on the individual thesis project, two participants might be permitted in some circumstances. For example, if a thesis involves a detailed assessment procedure and a detailed treatment evaluation, or if it involves a sequence of detailed treatment evaluations, two participants might be acceptable. If a group design is used, generally a minimum of 10 participants per group should be used, but before starting data collection, the student should conduct a power estimate / analysis to identify the number of participants needed to obtain statistically significant differences between groups. Each thesis committee ultimately decides on an individual basis the number of participants they required of the student. This is the case with all theses across all units on campus - the committee is the final judge, but the committee uses guidelines from the school or department to inform the student and make a determination as to whether the student has passed.

Reporting Your Results

Write up your results and discussion section and modify your documents to reflect that data collection has now occurred in the past (i.e., use past tense). Submit your revised document to your Committee Chair for feedback. Once approved, set your final thesis defense meeting.

Thesis Defense Meeting

Set date, time, and room (contact Suzie Philbeck in the Main Office) for your thesis defense meeting. Be sure to allow at least 2 weeks for each committee member to read proposal before attending your defense meeting.

Prior to your thesis defense, please fill out the Announcement form

https://www.fit.edu/media/site-specific/wwwfitedu/registrar/documents/registrar-forms/Oral_Def_Ann_11-14.pdf

- see example Appendix A) 14 days prior to your scheduled defense. Plan on a 1-1.5 hour meeting. BE SURE TO DRESS PROFESSIONALLY! You will present each section of your thesis, with PowerPoint, for about 30 minutes. For this presentation, you should focus on your (ng.)] TJETQ.00000912 0 612 792 reW*nBT/F1 12 Tf1 0 0 nb1(82 Tm6hETQ.00000912 0 612 792 reW*nBT/

requests major changes to your thesis; or c) the committee asks to see changes to your thesis

- 6 Committee = 3 members (1 chair, 1 committee member in BehAn, 1 outside of BehAn but at Florida Tech). For outside member visit <https://www.fit.edu/office-of-graduate-programs/graduate-faculty-list/> September of Second Year
- 7 September of Second Year

8 At this point, you are ready to schedule your thesis proposal!

KEY: (F) Faculty; (S) Student; (#) Average number of weeks to complete

Oral Presentation Helpful Hints

Structure your presentation with a beginning, middle and end. At the beginning of your presentation: gain audience attention (e.g., greet your audience), and signal beginning of the presentation. During the presentation present: the findings of previous research, the objectives / aims of your thesis proposal, highlight the methods that you will use to achieve stated goals / aims / objectives. Sequence your ideas / slides (e.g., chronological or from general to specific) so they build up to your proposed project (e.g., previous research supports the method you propose to use and your proposal is a systematic replication). After presentation of method section, thank your committee for attending behavior and open the floor to questions from your committee members.

Pronunciation (proper names, concepts and principles) and presentation is important, practice at least twice beforehand.

Use proper body language (e.g., stand up, eye contact with audience, smile). Minimize time with back to audience, swaying back and forth, and hands in pockets.

Check to see that your presentation is compatible with the equipment in the presentation room

General Characteristics of each Section of a Thesis

Literature Review: general description of applied behavior analysis and the population you are using in your thesis, general description of the specific topic and why it is important, review of 10-30 relevant studies, purpose statement/research questions

Method: Participants and setting, materials, dependent variables and data collection, design, experimental conditions/procedures, interobserver agreement, treatment integrity

Results: *for proposal* - hypothetical data that show how the design chosen will be sufficient to demonstrate experimental control and a one paragraph description of hypothetical data per participant; *for final thesis* a detailed description of means, a measure of variability (e.g., range, standard deviation) and data trends for each phase per participant, graphs depicting the results of all portions of your study for each participant

Discussion *for proposal* A 2-3 paragraph description of what the hypothetical results will signify; *for final thesis* A1-2 paragraph review of the results, a detailed description and discussion of the implications of the results, a discussion of the possible behavioral mechanisms responsible for the results, a detailed description of limitations of the study, and a detailed description of suggestions for future research

Detailed Characteristics of each section of a Thesis

Literature Review (Introduction Section)

Locate relevant literature

- Identify key authors and journals
- Use bibliographic reference sources
- Use computerized literature searches
- Obtain reprints and preprints
- Look at literature from other relevant disciplines
- Scan tables of contents of key journals
- Use reference lists from articles, chapters, and books
- Use primary sources
- Avoid popular press and websites

Critically read the literature

- Identify themes
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of individual articles
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of field as a whole
- Collect photocopies or notes

Prepare to write

- Investigate length and format parameters
- Make a preliminary outline
- Include page allocations
- Limit the scope of your review
- Organize the literature you will cover

Discussion Section

Summarize your findings

- Avoid technical detail

- Use clear language

Interpret your findings

Place your findings in context

- Consider how your findings converge with, clarify, or contradict past findings

Consider the implications of your findings

- Theoretical implications

- Methodological implications

- Applied implications

Include a humility subsection

- Consider internal validity issues

- Consider external validity issues

- Consider measurement issues

- Consider statistical issues (if any)

Include comments about future directions

Appendix A

The [Oral Examination/Defense Announcement form](#) must be submitted to the SOBA administrative assistant (who will then send to the Graduate School) at least two weeks before your scheduled thesis defense (no exceptions). Defenses are not permitted during final exam week.

Appendix B(Thesis)
