

Rules about Supervising Graduate Professional Paper or MA Thesis

Graduate students enrolled in the Masters or BA/MA program should feel free to approach me regarding their MA thesis or professional paper. In order to decide if I would be willing to serve a first or second reader, I want them to consider the following information:

1. They should send me a brief (1-2 page, double-spaced) outline of the paper or thesis that includes: (a) topic; (b) research question; (c) literature that would be addressed; (d) expected theoretical and policy findings and implications of the research.
2. Based on the proposed outline, I have the right to decline a request to serve as a reader if I feel that the topic does not correspond to my area of expertise and/ or academic interest, or I am unable to serve as a reader for some other reason. In this case, the students should find another faculty member (could be from another department as long as they are approved by the grad director).
3. Students should **plan 3-6 months** to write their MA paper/ thesis if they can **realistically dedicate** substantial part of their time to research and writing (i.e. if they don't have other commitments like full time job, family, etc.) and 1-2 additional months to go through several rounds of revisions before the paper or thesis is accepted by the committee. This means I should be able to see the paper/ thesis outline **no less than 6 months** prior to the expected graduation date.
4. Upon submission of the paper outline, if necessary, I would ask students to meet with me to discuss in details their research project. Such a meeting should happen at least 3-4 months before the expected submission of the professional paper (and 5-6 months before the expected graduation date).
5. Please, understand that the department maintains high academic standards and will not accept sub-par work. The fact that a Master's student has applied for graduation does not constitute responsibility or commitment on my part as a reader to accept their work.

6. In cases when I have agreed to serve as a reader, students should expect several additional rounds of revisions and should plan at least two months to revise their work prior to their expected graduation date. This is an iterative process and I am asking students for their patience because it is intended to prepare them as scholars and professionals in their field(s).

7. Students can include in their MA paper/ thesis previous work (e.g. lit review or data) completed and/ or presented in another graduate-level class or final paper (e.g. 6000 or 7000-level graduate classes). However, they should note that the professional paper/ MA thesis requirements are much more rigorous. For details please consult with the Graduate Handbook or grad director.

8. The professional paper (a strongly recommended option to complete your MA degree) usually follows the format of academic articles published in the leading journals in the field that incorporates original author's ideas, data, and theoretical and policy implications. Once again, students should plan ahead the topic and content of your MA paper/ thesis and discuss it faculty members.

-- Dr. Ivanov