Definitions • Graduate Research Options

Ball State University Department of Journalism graduate students are required to complete a capstone experience (e.g., research paper, creative research/professional project, thesis). Before students can begin their capstone work, they must complete CITI Certification through the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Subsequently, students may also be required to submit an application/protocol to the BSU Office of Research Integrity, which administers IRB-related issues.

A research paper (three hours) is a formally prepared review of literature and/or limited research study, e.g., a case study, showing that the student possesses the ability to attack successfully a genuine educational, journalistic, or public relations problem, and to draw valid and significant conclusions from the data. In general, the length of the paper will vary as situation and instructor indicate. Students enroll in RES 697 by presenting the appropriate Topic Approval Form (available on www.bsu.edu/journalism website ["Current Students’... Graduate]) and a one-page abstract (following Graduate School guidelines). Note: The research paper option (RES 697) is available only for those graduate students who enrolled in their master’s program BEFORE Fall 2011 semester.

A creative research project (three hours), or professional project, is evidence of superior technique and scholarship on the part of graduate students in journalism or public relations. Examples of creative research projects may include: original works of literary journalism, critical analyses of journalistic writing (literary compositions), instructional units in journalism or public relations education, books, manuals, photographic exhibits, or a series of nonfiction stories concerning an appropriate topic. The creative research project must be supported by a formally prepared written report which includes background research, a description of the project, and at least two outside/external evaluations of the project. Students enroll in CRPRJ 698 (3) by presenting the Topic Approval Form (available on the www.bsu.edu/journalism website ["Current Students’... Graduate]) and a one-page abstract (following Graduate School guidelines).

OR

A thesis (six hours) is a formally prepared original study showing that the student possesses the ability to address successfully a genuine educational, journalistic, or public relations problem and to employ proper historical or behavioral research methods to draw valid and significant conclusions from the data collected. The length of the thesis may vary as thesis committee (three persons) indicate. Students enroll in THES 698 by presenting the Topic Approval Form (available on the www.bsu.edu/journalism website ["Current Students’... Graduate]) and a one-page abstract (following Graduate School guidelines).

A creative research project (six hours), or professional project, is evidence of superior technique and scholarship in journalism or public relations. Examples of creative research projects may include: original works of literary journalism, critical analyses of journalistic writing (literary compositions), instructional units in journalism or public relations education, books, manuals, photographic exhibits, movies, or a series of nonfiction stories concerning an appropriate topic. The creative research project must be supported by a formally prepared written report which includes background research, a description of the project, and at least two outside/external evaluations of the project. Students enroll in CRPRJ 698 (6) by presenting the Topic Approval Form (available on the www.bsu.edu/journalism website ["Current Students’... Graduate]) and a one-page abstract (following Graduate School guidelines).

Adviser/Student Responsibilities*

One of the responsibilities of graduate faculty members is to guide a graduate student through that student’s capstone experience. As you will discover, it can be a challenging process for the student, which you can expedite and facilitate by means of your own knowledge of the procedures required.

Once you have consented to advise a capstone experience for a graduate student, you and the student must sign a Graduate Paper Agreement form. It is your responsibility to make every effort to see that the student completes the experience successfully and has met all the deadlines and requirements necessary to meet department and Graduate School guidelines. You should make sure that the student understands the importance of deadlines and make every effort to help the student plan reasonable and achievable deadlines. In short, it is recommended that capstone experiences be completed 10 days before deadlines established by the Graduate School.

The approved graduate studies style guide for the Department of Journalism (M.A., Journalism and Public Relations) is Turabian’s A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. However, graduate faculty may select another style guide (e.g., APA, MLA) for use in class assignments and in research papers, creative research/professional projects and theses.

The first task of the student who wishes to complete a research paper or creative research/professional project is to prepare a proposal. The adviser should consider the proposal as a contract with the student. Therefore, the proposal should be as detailed as necessary to ensure that the student has a clear indication of how to proceed. A Graduate Student Proposal Guide is available on the www.bsu.edu/journalism website ("Current Students’... Graduate). The proposal should contain a statement of the problem, a review of the literature, and a discussion of methods to be used to study the questions proposed, which is the minimum amount of information suggested by the Graduate School.

When the proposal is approved by the adviser, a Topic Approval Form is signed and is submitted with a one-page abstract to the Graduate School. Then the student may register for RES 697 or CRPRJ 698. But before any human subjects may be initiated, the student must receive approval from the BSU Office of Research Integrity re: any IRB issues.

As the research process continues, the adviser will instruct the student whether to submit chapters or the complete paper/project for review. The final version of the paper/project should follow designated style guidelines. The adviser should consult with the department’s Graduate Studies Director (GSD) regarding departmental and Graduate School deadlines.

As noted earlier, creative research/professional projects require two outside evaluators to review the final draft of the project. The review process should include commentary as noted on p. 3 of this document (See: "C. Creative Research Project/Professional Project F: I-VI").

Once the adviser has approved the final draft, a Final Approval Sheet and an Electronic Transmission Data form must be signed as hard copies and submitted to the Graduate School, prior to electronic submission by the student. After submission of the paper/project, the adviser should file a grade change form to replace an Incomplete (I) with a Credit (CR). "The preceding narrative also applies to three-hour creative research project/CRPRJ 698 (3) responsibilities."
Thesis Chairperson/Student Responsibilities*

Once you have consented to chair the thesis committee of a graduate student, you should understand that it is your responsibility to make every effort to see that the student completes the thesis experience successfully, and has met all the deadlines and requirements necessary to meet department and Graduate School guidelines. You should make sure that the student understands the importance of deadlines and make every effort to help the student plan reasonable and achievable deadlines. In short, it is recommended that theses be completed 10 days before deadlines established by the Graduate School.

The approved graduate studies style guide for the Department of Journalism (M.A., Journalism and Public Relations) is Tarabini's A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. However, graduate faculty may select another style guide (e.g., APA, MLA) for use in class assignments and in research papers, creative research/professional projects and theses.

The first task of the student who wishes to complete a thesis is to create a thesis proposal. The thesis chairperson should look upon the student's proposal as a contract between the student and his committee. Therefore, the proposal should be as detailed as necessary to ensure that the student has a clear indication of how to proceed to complete the thesis. A Graduate Student Proposal Guide is available on the www.bsu.edu/journalism website ("Current Students"...Graduate). The proposal should contain a statement of the problem, a review of the literature, and a discussion of methods to be used to study the questions proposed, which is the minimum amount of information suggested by the Graduate School.

Once the proposal is prepared to the satisfaction of the thesis adviser, the student should be instructed to call his thesis committee together for his first meeting with the committee. Responsibility for choosing committee members (one member can be chosen by the student from outside of the department if that faculty member has expertise in the subject matter and is a member of the graduate faculty) and setting up thesis committee meetings rests with the student. Copies of the thesis proposal should be presented by the student to the other members of the student's thesis committee in ample time before the full thesis meeting. A thesis chairperson should make sure the student is well-apprised of appropriate deadlines to ensure that unreasonable time constraints are not placed upon committee members.

The thesis chairperson should try to be an advocate for the student in this meeting. The goal of the meeting is to make sure that all three faculty committee members can agree on the plan which the student has created to complete his thesis. Having the student meet with all three committee members at the same time will alleviate the problem of having the student shuffle back and forth between committee members—thereby wasting time and effort—to seek approval for various details in the thesis. A suggested format for the thesis proposal meeting is as follows:

a. Thesis chairperson meets with committee members at the beginning and before the student is allowed into the meeting room. Chairperson should make sure that committee members understand the procedures to be followed, and he should discuss with committee members any major problems they may have with the thesis.

b. Once the student has entered the committee room, the chairperson asks the student to give a 5-10 minute summary of what he proposes to explore in his thesis. Once the student makes his presentation, then committee members should be encouraged to address questions they think pertinent to the student. The tone of the meeting should amiable, non-threatening, and helpful.

c. After committee members have completed their discussion with the student, the chairperson should ask the student to leave the committee room.

d. Depending on the quality of the thesis proposal, the thesis chairperson asks direction from the committee. If committee members agree that that student is ready to proceed with his thesis and enroll in THES 698, then the chairperson should request that all committee members sign the appropriate form so that the student can submit a one-page abstract and Topic Approval Form (available: www.bsu.edu/journalism ("Current Students"...Graduate) to the Graduate School. But before any human subjects research may be initiated, the students must receive approval from the BSU Office of Research Integrity re: any IRB issues. The journalism department office will assist in preparing registration materials necessary for enrollment in THES 698. If committee members have minor problems with the thesis proposal, the chairperson should ask how they can be resolved and if he can be responsible for their resolution. If major problems exist, and committee members cannot agree to sign the thesis topic approval form, then the chairperson should try to work out an orderly resolution to the problems posed by committee members. This might entail having the student visit each member of the committee, for example. The chairperson should seek to resolve all problems with one more thesis proposal meeting.

Once the student is registered for THES 698, and has embarked on completion of his thesis, the chairperson should instruct the student to check with his committee members to see if they would like to see the draft copy of thesis by chapter or as a complete draft. The student is responsible for complying with requests of committee members.

Once the thesis chairperson is satisfied that the student has completed the thesis draft, he should instruct the student to schedule a thesis defense meeting with his committee. By the time the thesis defense meeting is called, committee members should have edited the student's work thoroughly and returned the edits at least two days before the thesis defense meeting. A suggested format for the thesis defense meeting is as follows:

a. Thesis chairperson meets with committee members before student is allowed to enter the committee room. At this time, the thesis chairperson asks if any major problems exist in the final thesis draft. If not, then the chairperson invites the student into the committee room.

b. The chairperson asks the student to give a summary of the thesis completed by the student including a full discussion of the thesis findings. Committee members should not hesitate to ask questions of the student's work and findings to ascertain if the student possesses the requisite knowledge and understands the significance of his thesis.

c. When committee members and the chairperson are satisfied that the student has met the challenge of their concerns in the thesis, the chairperson should ask the student to leave the committee room in order for the committee to deliberate on the success or failure of the student's work. If all committee members agree the thesis was successful, the chairperson should circulate the Final Approval Sheet for signatures.

d. Committee members should be free to leave then, or they can remain and offer congratulations when the chairperson informs the student that his efforts were successful. If minor errors are found in the thesis draft, or slight modifications need to be made, the chairperson should retain the Final Approval Sheet until the student has complied with all the changes required. Once the chairperson is satisfied that the final draft is complete and typed, then he can return the Final Approval Sheet to the student.

Once the thesis chairperson has approved the final draft, a Final Approval Sheet and an Electronic Transmission Data form must be signed by all committee members as hard copies and submitted to the Graduate School, prior to electronic submission by the student. After submission of the thesis, the chairperson should file a grade change form to replace an Incomplete (I) with a Credit (CR). Chairpersons should notify the Graduate Studies Director (GSD) when theses are completed so that the GSD can prepare and submit to the Graduate School the student’s course check sheet, which is a requirement before the student can be certified for graduation. *The preceding narrative also applies to six-hour creative research project/CRPRJ 698 (6) responsibilities.
Submission Requirements • Deadlines

Style Manual
The approved graduate studies style manual for the Department of Journalism (M.A., Journalism and Public Relations) is Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. However, graduate faculty may select another style guide (e.g., APA, MLA) for use in class assignments and in research papers, creative research/professional projects and theses.

Graduate School Formatting and Submission Requirements
The most current version of the BSU Graduate School Formatting and Submission Requirements can be downloaded from the BSU Graduate School website: [http://cms.bsu.edu/academics/collegesanddepartments/gradschool/preparingforgraduation/writingguidelines](http://cms.bsu.edu/academics/collegesanddepartments/gradschool/preparingforgraduation/writingguidelines).

Reminders: 1) On the cover page and abstract, please list the College as: College of Communication, Information, and Media 2) On the cover page and abstract, please list the intended month of graduation (e.g., May, July or December).

Deadlines
Final approval copies of research papers, creative research/professional projects and theses must be received by the adviser or committee/thesis chair at least ten class days before the Graduate School deadline. The Graduate School deadline is typically four weeks prior to the close of fall and spring semesters. During the summer, the deadline is two weeks prior to the close of summer semester. Check with the Graduate School or the department’s graduate adviser for specific dates.

GENERAL FORMS OF PRESENTATION

A. Research Paper
Note: The research paper option (RES 697) is available only for those graduate students who enrolled in their master’s program BEFORE Fall 2011 semester.

1. Title Page
2. Table of Contents
3. List of Tables
4. List of Figures
5. Body of the Paper:
   A. Problem
   B. Review of Related Literature
   C. Method
   D. Findings
   E. Summary and Conclusion
6. Bibliography
7. Appendix

B. Thesis

1. Title Page
2. Acknowledgments: a statement of indebtedness to other persons for assistance
3. Table of Contents
4. List of Tables
5. List of Figures
6. Body of the Thesis:
   A. Problem
   B. Review of Related Literature
   C. Method
   D. Findings
   E. Summary and conclusions, including suggestions for further research
7. Bibliography
8. Appendix

C. Creative Research Project/Professional Project

1. Title Page
2. Table of Contents
3. The Project
   A. Introduction/Rationale
   B. Literature Review
   C. Methodology
   D. Body of the Project (e.g., stories, critiques, photo exhibits)
   E. Summary/Conclusions/Implications - Future Research
   F. Two Outside Evaluations/Reviews of the Project (which must include all of the following)
      I. Brief discussion of evaluator’s credentials (e.g., knowledge and experience of the subject area)
      II. Relationship to the student and subject matter
      III. Evaluation of the topic as appropriate for the creative endeavor
      IV. Evaluation of the student’s approach
      V. Evaluation of the body of the project
         a) Quality
         b) Depth of treatment
         c) Coverage
      VI. Evaluation of the student’s work as contributing to the field (e.g., body of knowledge)
   G. Bibliography
   H. Appendix