

FIU Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

Thesis Process

Note: This information is intended to provide a general overview of the steps leading to the defense of your Thesis and graduation. Once you begin the Thesis process, you will receive specific instructions and deadlines each semester until you defend and graduate.

Self-advising Form

As you progress in your coursework, you need to keep track of what you have taken using the Self-Advising Form (SAF). It's a good idea to keep your SAF up to date, and to make sure you are balancing your progress in both CRW and Literature. If necessary, refer to your academic transcript to update your form. (NOTE: DO NOT rely on the Panther Audit to monitor your progress.) You must have completed a substantial portion of the coursework and have a plan for completing all of your requirements within the next academic year before you begin the Thesis process.

Submit Thesis Worksheet/Self-advising Form

Each Fall and Spring semesters there will be an email sent out calling for students who are ready to begin Thesis to fill out and submit the Thesis Worksheet proposing the Thesis project. The Thesis Worksheet form must be accompanied by an updated Self-Advising Form that shows your progress towards completing your required coursework. These forms are submitted directly to the Program Chair/Director, Les Standiford. Be sure to cc the Graduate Advisor, Lynne Barrett, and the Creative Writing Program Assistant. There will be a window in the term when these forms can be submitted, as the assigning of the CRW Thesis committee members is done at one time. When your Thesis Worksheet is approved, you will be assigned a Thesis Director and second reader from the Creative Writing graduate faculty. It will be your responsibility to ask a member of the Literature faculty to serve as your third reader. All Thesis committee members must be members of the FIU Graduate Faculty.

Prepare and Submit Form M-1

After you have been approved to begin your Thesis, you will formalize your committee by completing all the required info. (see below), signing, and turning in Form M-1, found on the UGS Student Forms page:

<http://gradschool.fiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/M-1-Instructions-and-Form-02192020.pdf>. This form is due to CRW to move up to CASE and UGS by a due date well before the end of classes in the semester in which you submit the Thesis Worksheet. We keep students informed of these due dates.

All Thesis M forms, including the M1, require signatures, including those of various administrators beyond the MFA program. These signatures are now collected digitally. It is your responsibility to download and fill out the M1 with your personal information, the names of your Thesis Committee Members, the Chair/Program Director (Les Standiford), the names of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (CASE) and the University Graduate School (UGS), your name, signature, and date. Also fill in the appropriate check box at the bottom of the form that serves as a reminder to include your current course schedule. You must then convert the forms to .pdf files and email them as attachments to the CRW Program Assistant at ngarnett@fiu.edu. The Program Assistant will circulate the forms to your Thesis Committee and Program Director for their signatures, then forward the M1 and proof of your current enrollment to the College of Arts and Sciences (CASE) and then on to the University Graduate School.

Filing the M-1 and having it accepted by UGS will put you on a list of those eligible to defend one year later. Your progress in writing the Thesis will be determined in consultation with your Thesis Director.

Register for Thesis Credits

Having filed the M-1, you are eligible to register for Thesis credits. Depending on when you filed the M-1, you will begin the following Fall or Spring term with the 3-credit Thesis course (CRW 6971). This must be taken twice (a total of 6 credits) and can only be taken in Fall and Spring terms. If after the completion of those 6 credits you have not defended your Thesis, you must take Thesis Continuation (CRW 6972-1 credit), each

semester, including summers, until you do. You have up to eight years from the semester in which you first enrolled in the MFA Program to graduate.

Communicate with Your Thesis Director

During the process of writing the Thesis, you should be communicating with your Thesis Director. The second and third readers generally do not become involved until the defense semester, when they read and prepare feedback on the Thesis. If your project evolves or changes drastically, you should consult with your Thesis Director. It is your responsibility to show your Director ongoing drafts, to schedule appointments for consultation, etc. You should also be planning for and discussing the Reading List requirement, described below. Your Thesis Director may suggest works you should read, which may help you in the development of your Thesis.

Prepare the Informal Proposal, The RCR, the M-2 Form, and Formal Thesis Proposal

When you have progressed far enough on your Thesis that you and your Thesis Director feel you will be ready to defend in the following Fall or Spring semester (generally this means that the Director has seen at least one full draft of your Thesis and has established with you what further writing and revisions will be necessary to have a defensible draft ready by the start of the defense semester), you will be eligible to submit the M-2 and Formal Thesis Proposal, which are due in the Fall or Spring semester preceding your defense semester.

In recognition of the fact that a creative writing project is unlike a research one, the MFA program does not use the Formal Thesis Proposal that is described on the UGS website. Instead, UGS accepts the CRW Formal Proposal which must be approved by the Program Director. To help you in this process, the MFA program requires that you begin by writing an Informal Proposal. You will work on this with your Thesis Director, and then, with your Director's approval, turn in the Informal Proposal to the Program Director, Les Standiford. The deadline for submitting the Informal Proposal will be announced at the start of each term and will come in the first half of the semester before your intended defense

semester to allow for time for revisions. The Program Director may have questions and suggestions. Once you have a version approved by the Program Director, your Informal Proposal becomes the Formal Proposal, to be submitted along with the M-2. For examples of Formal Proposals in various genres, visit: <https://case.fiu.edu/english/mfa-creative-writing/Thesis-process/index.html>

Also, during the early part of this term, you must complete the Responsible Conduct of Research Training and Certificate (RCR):

<http://research.fiu.edu/rcr/training/#:~:text=FIU%20provides%20access%20to%20the%20CITI%20Course%20in,partially%20funded%20by%20DHHS%E2%80%99s%20Office%20of%20Research%20Integrity>. FIU

graduate students who file Thesis proposals must provide a training certificate, including the scores, which document the completion of the online RCR training course and exam. When you sign up for the training, select the Humanities Module. Once you have taken and passed the course, you will need to include the training certificate and scores with the M-2 and Formal Proposal. The RCR certification process can be lengthy. Give yourself plenty of time to complete it.

The M2 form and instructions are located here:

<http://gradschool.fiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/M-2-Instructions-and-Form-04062020.pdf>. As you did with the M1, you will fill

out and forward the M-2, along with the other required documents as .pdf files to the CRW Program Assistant for the collection of signatures and distribution to CASE (by their deadline) and UGS (by their deadline).

Confirm Course Schedule

When you have an approved M-2 and Proposal, you should also check to make sure that you are on schedule to complete all required coursework for the MFA by the end of the defense semester. Update your Self Advising Form (using your academic transcript) and send it to the Graduate Advisor, Lynne Barrett, indicating what course (s) you are planning to take in your final term (and in summer, if applicable). Also, be sure to address any issues that would affect your academic transcripts—an incomplete, for example.

Please note that having completed the M-2 and Proposal does not preclude you and/or your Thesis Director from determining that the Thesis is not yet ready to defend. In this case, you will simply postpone the defense. See Postponement.

Postponement

If, as you head into the potential defense term, you and/or your Thesis Director determine that the Thesis is not yet ready, all that you need to do is inform us. Once you do, you will be moved to the list to receive information about defending in the following Fall or Spring term. You do not have to do anything about the M-2; it stays in place and will not need to be redone. If you have done the reading list and had it has been accepted, it stays in place as well. Keep in mind that you must defend your Thesis no later than eight years from the semester you entered the MFA Program.

Submit Literature Component of the Thesis Defense Reading List

Part of your degree is your study of Literature (in both Literature and Form & Theory coursework). At a date to be announced ahead of the defense semester you will need to submit a draft of your Reading List (which must be approved by your Thesis Director) to the Graduate Advisor, Lynne Barrett, who checks it for compliance with the rules and who may make suggestions. For more information, see Literature Component of the Thesis Defense: <https://case.fiu.edu/english/mfa-creative-writing/Thesis-process/index.html>

Format Your Thesis

Consult the UGS ETD Preparation Manual <https://library.fiu.edu/c.php?g=159937&p=1047175> for formatting of the Thesis. Early in the defense semester you will be submitting copies of the Thesis to your committee before they sign the M-3 and also to CASE and UGS for format review, so **do not** leave this task until the last minute. Creative Writing faculty and staff cannot answer questions regarding formatting. All questions regarding formatting must be directed to UGS. Contact the ETD Coordinator, if you have any questions regarding the

ETD process at etd@fiu.edu. You may also view completed, bound MFA theses in the BBC library.

Prepare the Abstract

The Defense version of your Thesis, which will be sent to your committee and to UGS, must include an Abstract, which is similar to your Formal Proposal, but limited to 150 words. The Abstract should be developed in consultation with, and approved by, your Thesis Director.

Any changes that have resulted from your writing and revision since the time of the Formal Proposal and M-2 should be reflected in the Abstract. For instance, if the title has changed from the time of the Proposal, simply use the new title.

Apply for Graduation

Early in the semester in which you intend to graduate, you must apply for graduation online through PantherSoft. Deadlines for graduation appear on the FIU Academic Calendar. Be sure you have paid any and all outstanding fees. Even an unpaid library fine can delay your graduation.

Arrange for a Defense Date

You cannot arrange for a defense date until the start of your defense semester. Also, your Thesis Director should not permit you to schedule a defense date unless they are certain the Thesis is ready for a defense. Once classes begin in your defense term, you will need to determine the schedules and availability of all members of your committee and come up with a mutually agreeable date and time to hold your defense. You must allow an hour and a half for the defense. There will be various date windows, before and after which you can't defend, and deadlines for submission of the completed M-3 packet. These dates change each semester and will be clearly noted in the list of specific Tasks we will provide you. Once you have set a defense date and time, that information will be included in your Announcement (see below).

Submit Formatted Thesis and Reading List

By a date that we will set two weeks after the start of the defense term, you will need to submit (as pdf files, via email) a formatted copy of your Thesis (the version you will defend), your Reading List, and Abstract to each member of your committee AND the Creative Writing Program Assistant.

Prepare Announcement and Distribute M3 Form

The Announcement is a refinement of the Formal Proposal you submitted with your M-2, updated to reflect changes in the thesis and to include the date and time of your defense. See your Thesis Director to approve the wording. The Announcement must be no longer than one page. See examples of Announcements here: <https://case.fiu.edu/english/mfa-creative-writing/thesis-process/>. After the Announcement has been approved, email the announcement as an attachment to the Graduate School at ugs@fiu.edu and to the Program Assistant.

Next, you are ready to complete form M3, the Preliminary Approval of Thesis and Request for Oral Defense. Download the M3 form and instructions here: <http://gradschool.fiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/M-3-Instructions-and-Form-02192020.pdf>.

Fill out the form, sign and date it, and send it, along with your Announcement and current class schedule, as .pdf files to the CRW Program Assistant. These items are due to Creative Writing **at least 5 weeks before your defense**. The Program Assistant will distribute the form to your committee for signature, then forward the M3 packet, including your formatted Thesis, to CASE by their deadline and to UGS by theirs.

Prepare for Your Defense

Once you have submitted the signed M-3 and Announcement to Creative Writing, your next step is your defense. Contact your Thesis Director if you have any questions or concerns. The feedback you receive on your Thesis during your defense can be invaluable. You may want to take notes or record the defense so that you can review those comments later.

After the Defense

You must make any changes to your thesis required by your Thesis Committee. Your Thesis Director is responsible for reviewing and approving these revisions. You will also receive feedback from UGS about any formatting problems in the version of the Thesis you submitted with the M-3. You must comply with all Thesis formatting instructions.

Submit the Final Thesis

The final, formatted thesis is submitted electronically. The electronic thesis is called the Electronic Theses and Dissertation, or ETD. The ETD includes information about placing a permanent embargo of your thesis (see below). Please go to <http://gradschool.fiu.edu/the-final-etd-process/> for instructions on how to complete and submit the EDT. Please contact the ETD Coordinator if you have any questions regarding the ETD process at etd@fiu.edu.

UGS will contact you when they have approved the ETD approval form and Embargo. They will give you instructions on how to upload your materials.

Embargo of Your Thesis

In lieu of publication of the full thesis, Creative Writing MFAs have been permitted to choose a permanent embargo and instead provide a "sample" of their thesis, which will include a synopsis (which can consist of the Abstract) PLUS a short sample (5-10 pages, which could consist of a chapter or essay, part of a chapter or essay, part of a story, or 5-10 pp. of poetry). It is to the advantage of students that the synopsis and sample be published, rather than the full thesis, which could make later publication more difficult, as it would be readily available online. For more details regarding the embargo process, please see the ETD

Approval Form at: [http://gradschool.fiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Final ETD Approval Form05312019.pdf](http://gradschool.fiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Final_ETD_Approval_Form05312019.pdf)

Responsibility and Motivation

While the Creative Writing faculty and staff will do all they can to assist you, it is your responsibility to stay on top of the tasks and deadlines necessary to develop and defend your Thesis and to graduate. The key to success is to plan ahead, ask questions, and don't procrastinate. Also, stay positive. Remember, hundreds of students before you have successfully navigated this process. So can you!

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