MFA Thesis Guidelines

Thesis Content: MFA candidates write a book-length, publishable manuscript to complete the program. For fiction writers, the thesis could be a collection of short stories, a story cycle (linked stories), or a novel. The minimum length would be 150 pages. For nonfiction writers, the thesis could be a collection of themed essays and/or magazine articles or a book of creative nonfiction. The minimum length would be 150 pages. For poets, the thesis would be a book-length collection of poems. The minimum length would be 45 pages.

Students should begin thinking of thesis topics from the moment they reach campus and be prepared to submit to their Thesis Advisor a completed manuscript draft of the project by the first day of classes in their final semester.

Credits: The thesis is worth eight variable academic credits, which means that the credits can be earned in one semester or over the course of two or more semesters. Students will register for English 899 to earn thesis credit.

Thesis Committee: Prior to their next-to-last semester, MFA students will submit to the MFA Faculty Director a one-page summary of their thesis project and their choice for a thesis advisor plus names of other faculty members to serve on their thesis committee, which comprises the thesis advisor plus two other UNH faculty members, one of whom must teach in the student’s writing genre. The third reader may be another MFA writing faculty member, or an English faculty member, or in some cases, a faculty member in another department if the student’s area of study is connected to the faculty member’s area of study. For example, an MFA fiction student may seek a history professor as a third reader if the student is writing a historical novel or a nonfiction MFA student may seek a criminologist if the student is writing a true crime book. The MFA Director will consult with faculty members, taking into consideration the student’s requests as well as equitable distribution of theses between writing faculty and coordinate a committee for the student. When the committee is selected, students must submit a committee nomination form to the graduate school. The form is available online at http://www.gradschool.unh.edu/forms/mastercommittee.pdf or in the Graduate School Office in Thompson Hall. Students should have the thesis committee nomination form completed and submitted by the time they register for their final thesis credits.

Thesis Deadlines: The student will work primarily with the Thesis Advisor on the writing project. Students will begin working with their Advisor on the material for the manuscript in their next-to-last semester. The Advisor will establish a schedule for completion as well as read, edit, and suggest revisions. The Student will submit a completed manuscript draft to his/her Advisor on the first day of classes of his/her final semester, and the Advisor will make comments and suggestions. Further revisions will be made by the student following this. The student then provides a copy
of the manuscript to the second and third readers (no later than October 15 of the Fall semester and March 1 of the Spring semester). Second and third readers will provide their comments during the thesis defense.

Because the thesis is a work-in-progress the goal is to have it as polished as possible by the defense. That doesn’t mean perfect. It does mean that the student has a clear vision of where the manuscript is headed to make it publishable.

**A week before the defense**, students will submit to the thesis committee a letter detailing what has been revised and why, as well as providing in the letter a thorough, thoughtful explanation of the student’s plans for the manuscript based on the Thesis Advisor’s comments and his/her own insights. This letter will provide the foundation of the defense discussion.

**Defense**: Each student must pass an oral defense conducted by the three-member thesis committee. The oral defense, in which the student will answer questions posed by the committee about his/her manuscript, should take place either in late November/early December for the Fall semester or late March/April for the Spring semester. N.B—Students are responsible for arranging the time and date of the defense with the thesis committee members and notifying the graduate secretary, who will arrange the location of the defense.

**Public Reading**: In one of the final steps, the student will read from the book or collection to an audience of peers, faculty, and the general public no later than the last day of classes of the student’s last semester. The MFA director arranges the readings, which take place either at the university or in a local bookstore. At each event, three to five MFA students will read from their work.

**Final Manuscript**: Students must submit one copy of the thesis’s final manuscript, formatted to the Graduate School requirements, to the Graduate School, no later than the last day of classes of the semester in which the student hopes to graduate. Please check the Graduate School calendar for other deadlines. MFA students do not submit their thesis for microfilm or Internet publication. The thesis manuscript must follow Graduate School formatting. Read on for details.

**Thesis Format**: The UNH Graduate School has adopted standards for form and organization for all theses. Students are asked to read the Graduate school’s thesis preparation manual (which is available online at [http://www.gradschool.unh.edu/pdf/td_manual.pdf](http://www.gradschool.unh.edu/pdf/td_manual.pdf) or can be picked up in hard copy at the graduate school) and to attend a thesis preparation workshop sponsored by the Graduate School. Students are strongly urged to bring their thesis drafts to the Graduate School for review before submitting final copies. Incorrectly formatted theses will not be accepted.
Check List for MFA in Writing Students in Preparation for Submitting Final Thesis Copies for Binding to the Graduate School

- Has your thesis committee been nominated and approved by the Graduate School? Yes____ No____

If No, please take a committee nomination form to your department and return the completed form to the Grad School as soon as possible. Theses will not be accepted by the Graduate School without an approved committee form.

If Yes, please continue to the next item.

For the Graduate School, You will need to bring:

- **One** copy of your entire thesis on thesis paper with committee members’ original signatures.

- **Two** additional copies of the title page and abstract on 20 lb white paper

- **Plus as many** copies of your entire thesis on 20lb white paper (thesis paper not required), family and friends. **NOTE:** Students are responsible for all printing and binding costs. Remember if your department is paying for any or all of the costs listed below, you **must** bring a letter from your department stating this with the amount and the department PO number to be charged!

- Below is a breakdown of the cost for binding, copyright, and pockets if requested. The number of copies listed below is an average number requested by students.

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Total due: $100.00
• Payment: Cash, Checks, or departmental account to be charged, required when submitting final copies to the Graduate School. The Graduate School does **not** accept Credit Cards!

**Note:** A sheet of colored paper must separate each of the copies.