

AUGSBURG COLLEGE

Master of Social Work Program

Thesis Guidelines Booklet

2006-2007

**Augsburg College
Department of Social Work
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Why Should I Do a Thesis?

The study of research, like all of social work, comes alive with the implementation. A thesis is intended to allow MSW candidates to:

- experience and learn the utility of research for social work practice;
- contribute to the knowledge of social work practice;
- contribute to building social work theory.

The MSW thesis demonstrates the ability of the student to conduct independent research and should be based on an area of interest in the student's concentration. Research methodology is selected by the student in consultation with the thesis advisor.

Master's Program Goals

The following are goals of the Master of Social Work Program which are the basis for the curriculum and can be demonstrated through the thesis.

1. Prepare students to be competent, creative, and ethical social work professional practitioners who maintain a perspective which is multi-cultural and holistic (that is, one which encompasses the integrated needs of individual, family and community), with attention to the special needs of our migrant, immigrant, refugee and American Indian local populations;
2. Prepare students to excel in problem-solving within systems of many sizes, to become advanced practitioners who build on combined strengths of the client, group or community rather than focusing on individual pathology;
3. Prepare students for continuing advanced education, graduate or post-graduate in social work or related fields;
4. Prepare students to work for peace, social justice and human well-being at a variety of levels with a global perspective;
5. Prepare students to apply critical thinking skills within professional contexts and to demonstrate the professional use of self;
6. Integrate a liberal arts perspective that creates a holistic approach to practice;
7. Provide students with increased access to social work education.

Goals of the MSW Thesis

1. To provide opportunity for the student to demonstrate scholarship and research;
2. To demonstrate an ability to think analytically and to design and undertake independent research, program planning and administration, or to conduct a case analysis, in a way which contributes to social work knowledge;
3. To demonstrate achievement of program goals through the synthesis of coursework and field experience into a thesis.

Overview of Thesis Requirements

- The thesis should demonstrate the student's competence and comprehension in a special interest area, in addition to her/his ability to understand and apply theoretical frameworks.
- The thesis should demonstrate the ability to do independent research.
- The student should receive the approval of the thesis advisor at all stages of preparation. Early selection of the thesis advisor is recommended.
- The thesis will be a minimum of 40 pages (double spaced, approximately 250 words per page), excluding table of contents, reference, and appendices.
- The thesis is prepared using the American Psychological Association (APA) format. The thesis should be prepared in correct and clear English, demonstrating the student's written communication skills.
- The student will choose a committee of readers (in consultation with the thesis advisor) and prepare an oral presentation of the thesis to this committee. The thesis should be completed and distributed to committee readers no less than two weeks prior to presentation. The oral presentation should be completed by early June for a June graduation date (see Thesis Timeline, p. X).
- The thesis, as approved by the committee of readers, must be submitted to the MSW Program Office before the thesis requirement will be considered complete. A finished thesis is one that has been properly bound and submitted along with an identical loose-page copy and an additional (3rd) copy of the abstract.

Choices of Research Design

In consultation with the thesis advisor, the student may choose to prepare a thesis using one of the following research designs. All theses are to be practice-based research. In addition, the thesis will use a focus of study among the following areas:

- Case study - A practice/case evaluation with full documentation, theoretical background, practice orientation, synthesis of academic perspective and field experience as applied to the case and analysis of the efficacy of the practice method chosen and agency/organization forms of evaluation. (A "case" may refer to a family, community group, individual or organization/agency.)
- Historical research study deals with the meanings of events and utilizes both original and secondary sources. An interpretation of the facts and a synthesis of the insights are presented as well as the implications for contemporary practice.
- Empirical Research - Research study working with empirical data, explaining methodology, presenting and analyzing data and making practice or organization planning recommendations. Using quantitative or qualitative research design, the student may be part of a larger project where he/she has been included in an agency evaluation or research project.
- Program evaluation includes the design and implementation of a program evaluation including specification of program objectives, evaluation questions, methodology, including evaluation measures, data source, evaluation of findings and discussion of implications and recommendations.
- Program Design - Design and implementation of a program in planning or administration which clearly explores an issue, identifies goals and objectives, assesses alternative approaches, develops a proposal, and demonstrates steps in implementation (may include practical applications such as training materials, computer program, video).
- Policy analysis of an international, national, state, or local policy to include definitions of the issue, its history, goals and objectives, underlying values, strengths and limitations of the policy, identification of alternative strategies, and potential consequences.

General Steps in the Thesis Process

Make Your Decision

In the Spring prior to your final year, you should decide if the thesis is right for you. You may wish to consult with your academic advisor on this decision. Contact the Program Director to receive a list of available thesis advisors.

Choose a Thesis Topic and Thesis Advisor

After choosing your thesis topic, contact potential thesis advisors. Once you've found an advisor, submit the appropriate Selection form to the MSW Office. Meet with your thesis advisor and discuss your ideas for your research and begin to narrow your focus.

Conduct Initial Literature Search

Consult with your thesis advisor and begin the initial literature search. Students conduct searches using Lindell Library resources and work with the reference librarians for assistance in receiving source materials from other libraries.

Choose Research Design and Develop Thesis Proposal

In the Fall, students select a research design – again, in consultation with the thesis advisor – and develop a thesis proposal. Development of research questions will continue and the student will conduct a secondary literature review. The student will draft a timeline with the thesis advisor for completion of the thesis, identifying steps and adhering to the MSW thesis timeline (see p. X).

Submit IRB Proposal

If a student is conducting research using human subjects, a proposal for the Internal Review Board (IRB) should be prepared, in consultation with the thesis advisor, and submitted to the Board in late Fall or early Winter.

Data Collection and Analysis

With IRB approval (if using human subjects), the student will conduct data gathering and data analysis. Augsburg has computer software programs that assist in the data analysis.

Enroll in "Thesis Seminar"

For the final spring term, the student will enroll in a course (SWK 698 independent study) that can be used as the general elective credit. In this course the student will attend frequent meetings with the thesis advisor and write the thesis chapters. If needed, the student may seek help from the writing lab or the C.L.A.S.S. office to produce the thesis chapters.

Choose Committee of Readers

With approval from the thesis advisor, the student will choose a committee of thesis readers. The committee includes the thesis advisor, another faculty member and a social worker in practice.

Orally Present the Thesis

In the final Spring term, the student will produce a readable version of the thesis and provide a copy to each committee member. The student will coordinate a date and time with the committee members for the oral presentation of the thesis. The student will present the thesis, and if passed, will complete any revisions or corrections.

Submit Completed Thesis to MSW Office

Upon final approval of the revisions, the student will have the thesis copied by a printer and submit hard-bound and loose-page versions of the thesis to the MSW program office.

Thesis Advisor

List of Thesis Advisors

Students may contact the program director to request a list of full-time social work faculty who are taking thesis advisees for the academic year in which the student wishes to complete the thesis (i.e., the final year of study). This includes a description of each faculty member's area of interest/expertise, and a form to identify your Thesis Advisor selection.

Selecting a Thesis Advisor

Students choose a thesis topic and then contact one or two professors from the list whose expertise seems appropriate for that area of social work. Once a professor has agreed to serve as thesis advisor, the student should complete the form **Selection of Thesis Advisor** as soon as possible and submit it to the MSW office. The final deadline to submit the Selection form is **September 30th, 2003**. After that date you will need to consult with the MSW Director to determine if there is time for you to complete a thesis.

Meeting with the Thesis Advisor

Students should meet fairly regularly with their thesis advisor and consult with the advisor on all phases of the thesis project. The student is responsible for initiating meetings with the thesis advisor. The student is also responsible for rescheduling any missed appointments. The frequency of meetings will vary depending on the phase of the thesis. At a minimum, the student should meet with the thesis advisor **twice each trimester**.

Be Proactive with Concerns

As with any collaborative relationship, conflicts or disagreements can sometimes occur. It is important that the student speak honestly about any concerns he or she may have about the progress of the thesis project. This is YOUR project, and you are responsible for its successful completion. The thesis advisor is open to hearing your concerns, but cannot work through these with you if you do not bring them to his or her attention.

Keeping On Track

If during the course of your thesis process you find you must revise your thesis plan which then delays your timeline for completion, it is imperative that you keep your thesis advisor informed. Should you find you will not finish the thesis by June 30th, 2003, please bear in mind, it is *unusual* for thesis advisors to be available during the summer months, so do not expect this without talking to your thesis advisor first..

In the event the thesis advisor is *not* available during the summer, you will need to make arrangements to finish your thesis in the following Fall, which will involve payment of a continuation fee (see page X). Please also note, thesis advisors will have a new set of thesis advisees to work with in that following year and will give priority attention to those students.

MSW Courses Supportive of the Thesis

Research Methods I: This course provides an introduction to social science research methods and ethics, including practice and program evaluation. The course presents research designs, both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and various ways to organize, compare and interpret findings. Students will be introduced to the use of computers in data analysis. Basic knowledge of statistics is required.

Research II: (Practice or Program Evaluation): Building on the basic research skills developed in Research I in relation to both a student's current agency experience and her/his preferred practice setting (micro, mezzo, macro), this course offers a practice-oriented exploration of the range of research methods used in social work. There will be a particular focus on evaluative research, a critique of the role of research in assessing efficiency and effectiveness in social service delivery, and identification with the responsibility of social workers "to expand the knowledge base" of social work. A research project will be designed, but not actually carried out, to complete the summative project requirement for graduation. Students completing the thesis will have additional assignments fitting the thesis. (Prerequisite: Research I)

Independent Study "Thesis Seminar": Students opting to complete a thesis will complete Thesis Seminar in the final spring trimester and use this course for the general elective credit. Thesis Seminar follows an independent study format in which assignments, meeting dates, and course objectives are determined by the professor and the student. (Prerequisite: Research II)

Internal Review Board (IRB)

Research involving human subjects must be approved by the IRB. The IRB is a College committee made up of professors from across campus, a student, and a community member, all with research expertise. If a student plans to do research for the thesis that involves the use of human subjects, he or she will prepare an IRB proposal, in consultation with the thesis advisor and using the appropriate IRB form.

Components of the IRB Proposal

- Briefly review and give a preliminary outline of the existing knowledge on the topic or case;
- Describe the research question(s) and methodology or plan for the thesis, outlining resources you expect to use;

- Clarify how the thesis will extend, modify, or build on existing knowledge in social work, thus justifying your decision to pursue this topic;
- Explain how you will protect human subjects.

IRB Process

The IRB will review a student's proposed research to determine if appropriate protections are afforded the human subjects in the research to be conducted. After review of the proposal, the student is sent a letter outlining the results of the review and any corrections or re-submissions needed. The timeline for review of proposals varies depending on the workload of the IRB. Alert your thesis advisor if you have questions about the turn-around time of proposal reviews.

IRB Chair, Schedule and Forms

An IRB chair is designated each year and IRB proposal forms and the meeting schedule are made available by the chair. These forms and the schedule can be found on the Augsburg web site at <www.augsburg.edu/irb> .

Submitting the Proposal

The IRB typically meets September through April. To allow for reasonable progression on the thesis and adequate time to collect and analyze data, students should do their best to submit IRB proposals in late Fall or early Winter term. IRB proposals must be approved and signed by the thesis advisor prior to submission. Consultation with the thesis advisor in preparing the IRB proposal is crucial to avoid unnecessary mistakes and repeated proposal submissions. It is very important that students understand they are to do NO research involving human subjects without IRB approval.

Committee of Thesis Readers

In consultation with the thesis advisor, the student will select two thesis readers who, in addition to the thesis advisor, will make up the Committee of Readers. Each thesis reader is paid \$50, with the exception of full-time social work faculty at Augsburg. You will submit the names of your committee using a form that will be given to you during Research II. The committee can be chosen anytime from Fall through Winter. It is best to choose early if you have a strong preference for a particular faculty member on your committee, as each faculty member typically only agrees to serve on 2 to 4 thesis committees.

The Committee of Readers will be:

1. **Thesis Advisor** – full-time Augsburg social work faculty with doctoral degree (Ph.D./DSW) or MSW and research experience.
2. **Faculty** from Augsburg or wider academic community with research experience. (This person may or may not be a social worker.)
3. **Social Worker** from a social work agency with MSW or Doctorate in social work.

The Committee of Readers is expected to read the draft of your thesis prior to the presentation and to offer comments, changes, and improvements at the oral presentation. If you have questions about who qualifies for the Committee of Readers or would like to inform one of your readers of the expectations of a thesis reader, consult with your thesis advisor. Each thesis reader will be paid \$50 following your completion of the thesis, with the exception of full-time social work faculty who are employed by Augsburg.

Oral Presentation

You will prepare an oral presentation of the thesis to your Committee of Readers. The thesis should be completed and distributed to readers *no less than two weeks* prior to the presentation. The oral presentation usually lasts about an hour and is chaired by the thesis advisor. It is your time to explain a topic on which you have become an expert.

In consultation with the thesis advisor and the thesis readers, you will coordinate a date and time for the oral presentation that is convenient for all members to attend. Once agreement is reached on a date and time, submit thesis form 2: "Scheduling of Oral Presentation." This form is due in the MSW Office *two weeks* prior to the date of the presentation, to allow time to reserve a room and presentation equipment.

To finish with a June 30th degree date, your oral presentation should take place by June 1st. This allows 2 weeks to complete and receive approval of revisions, and 2 weeks to have the thesis bound and submitted. If you present after June 1st, but still want the June 30th degree date, please know you are borrowing time from the revision and binding phase. Be sure to keep your advisor apprised of your desired degree date.

For the presentation, most students request a seminar room in the Christensen Center or Foss Center. If, instead, you wish to use a conference room in the Library, you will need to schedule the room and any presentation equipment yourself. Library conference rooms are reserved by signing up at the door of the room (a sheet should be posted). Equipment is reserved through the Classroom Technology and AV department (612-330-1203 or av@augsborg.edu). You will still submit the form "Scheduling of Oral Presentation," but this will be treated as information only by the MSW Office.

Following your oral presentation, you will submit thesis forms 3A and 4: "Result of Oral Presentation" and "Request for Payment of Readers" to the MSW Office. This should be done within 24 hours of your finished presentation. If a second presentation is required by the Committee of Readers, ask the MSW Office for another room form and follow the above steps, then submit thesis form 3B: "Result of Second Oral Presentation".

Revisions

The student will complete all corrections required by the Committee of Readers. Any revisions to be made must be made before the thesis is bound. Your thesis advisor must approve the revisions by signing thesis form 5: "Approval of Final Revision of Thesis." This form is submitted to the MSW Program Office either with or prior to the submission of the thesis to the MSW Program Office. Your thesis advisor's approval must be secured prior to having the thesis copied and bound.

Thesis Copies

With corrections approved, you may have the thesis copied and bound by a printer. You will request two thesis copies, a hard-bound version and an identical loose-page (unbound) version, plus an additional (3rd) copy of the abstract page, all to be submitted to the MSW Office by the appropriate deadline (see Thesis Timeline, page X). Both copies are forwarded to Lindell Library by the MSW Office, after verifying the thesis was properly copied and bound. The hard-bound copy will be placed in the library archives and the loose-page copy will be comb-bound by the library staff, then cataloged and made available for circulation.

Continuation Fee

You are expected to complete and submit the thesis at the end of the Spring trimester 2003. If you do not make this deadline, you will be charged a Continuation Fee. The fee is \$350 and is levied when you complete the thesis.

Questions?

If you have questions about any information contained in this booklet or about the thesis process in general, please direct your questions to your thesis advisor or to Dr. Lois Bosch, MSW Director (612-330-1633 or bosch@augsborg.edu).

Good Luck!!

Thesis Timeline for 2006-2007

Take Research I	Spring 2005
Choose Thesis Topic.....	Fall 2006
Select Thesis Advisor (discuss thesis topic)	Fall 2006
Submit Thesis Advisor Form.....	Within 24 hrs of obtaining signature to MSW Program Office
Conduct initial literature search	Fall 2006
Take Research II	Fall 2006
Develop thesis proposal and research question(s).....	Fall 2006
Draft Timeline to Complete Thesis	Fall 2006
Prepare IRB Proposal (submit to IRB / make revisions).....	September – February
Data Collection and Analysis	(with IRB approval) September -- May
Revisit Timeline to Complete Thesis	Winter 2007
Choose committee of readers and submit form.....	Winter 2007
Enroll in Independent Study	Spring 2007
Begin Writing Thesis Chapters	Spring 2007
Set date for Oral Presentation and submit form	Spring 2007
Submit readable version of thesis to	2 weeks prior to oral presentation Committee of Readers

The timeline for the remaining steps are dependent on the degree date sought

<u>Degree Date:</u>	<u>June 30th</u>	<u>Aug 31st</u>	<u>Dec 16th</u>
Conduct Presentation By:.....	June 1 st	August 1 st	November 15 th
Submit Results of Presentation/Reader Pay form...	Within 24 hours of presentation		
Submit Final Revision Approval form.....	Prior to binding thesis		
Submit bound & loose page	Jun 30	Aug 31	Dec 16
thesis to MSW Office			
CONGRATULATIONS!!			

Thesis Format

Make certain you follow these guidelines as your thesis may be rejected by the MSW Office if it does not comply with these standards.

The thesis is a minimum of 40 pages, 250 words per page, double spaced, excluding the table of contents, references and appendices.

Style: It is expected that you will use the style outlined in the American Psychological Association (APA) Manual. All theses must contain a *title page* (see appendix A), a *certificate of approval page* (see appendix B), an *abstract page* (see appendix C), table of contents, sequential page numbering, and a reference list. Samples of the title page, certificate of approval page, and abstract page can be found in this booklet and should be used as a guide. You are to recreate these pages using your computer.

Page Order: Page order for the thesis is as follows: title page, certificate of approval page, dedication page (optional), acknowledgments (recommended), abstract page, table of contents, list of tables, list of figures, body of the thesis, reference list, appendices.

Pagination: Chapter 1, or the first page of the main text of the thesis is numbered page 1 (Arabic numerals). All pages preceding this, beginning with the title page and up to the first page of text, should be counted in lowercase Roman numerals (example: the title page is an implied page i, the next page is page ii, and so on.) Appended information and bibliographies can be handled in one of two ways:

1. Continue pagination from the main text (e.g., the last page of the thesis text is page 98; the first page of the bibliography is 99, and so on).
2. Begin new pagination with a mnemonic prefix (e.g., the last page of the thesis text is page 98; the pages of the appendices are A-1, A-2, A-3, and so on).

Type: A computer, word processor or typewriter may be used to produce your thesis. The type must be readable standard type in pica or elite (10 or 12 pitch respectively), of 10 points or larger. Computer print must be letter quality or near letter quality. All print must be in black ink and must appear on only one side of each page.

(Thesis Format continued)

Paper: Paper size must be 8 1/2 by 11 inches.

Margins: The left margin of all pages including appendices, notes, and references will be 1 1/2 inches. The top, bottom and right margin for all pages will be 1 inch.

Spacing: The body of the thesis must be double-spaced.

Appendices: The appendices are an integral part of the thesis and must conform to all the format specifications.

Your Name for Your Thesis: It's important that you choose the form of your name by which you are commonly known, then use this name consistently throughout the document. However, if your name is very common (e.g., Kathy Anderson), it would be helpful if you use the full version of your name, plus a middle initial (e.g., Katherine T. Anderson or Katherine Truitt Anderson). This will help everyone differentiate between your name and others like it in the future.

The name you use on your title page will be transcribed literally by the library staff when they catalog your thesis for the collection. Using one form on the title page (Katherine T. Anderson) and another on the spine (Kathy Anderson) ends up being very confusing for the library patrons.

Printing

Both the hard-bound and loose-page copies of the thesis are expected to be on 75 or 100% cotton rag (the water mark on the paper indicates the cotton content), 20 or 24 pound weight to insure longevity.

The pages of the hard-bound and loose-page thesis copies may be printed directly from your computer onto your own stock of **cotton rag** paper provided you use a high quality **laser printer**. Otherwise, you may prefer to produce a set of good quality originals (still using the laser printer) on regular computer paper and have them photocopied onto cotton rag paper by a printer. If photocopies are used, it is your responsibility to insure they are acceptable reproductions. All pages must have high contrast with consistently dark print throughout the thesis. The print must be permanent, and must not smudge or fleck.

Reduced photocopies of tables, charts and graphs are acceptable if legible and within the specified margins. Charts and graphs using color are acceptable only if the thesis advisor approves.

India ink may be used if hand-lettering or drawing is necessary.

Having Your Thesis Bound

As mentioned previously, one copy of the thesis must be hard-bound. The student is responsible for the cost of the binding. The student is also responsible for ensuring that pages are bound in the correct order and that the ink print is dark and free of smudges.

The signatures of your Committee of Readers on the *Certificate of Approval* page must be **original signatures** (not photocopied) for the **bound copy**. Many past students have found it convenient to first have the thesis bound and then collected signatures from their committee. If you prefer to collect signatures in advance of binding, make sure you print the *Certificate of Approval* page on the appropriate cotton rag paper and provide the printer with the signed document and instructions on where to place it in the hard-bound copy.

The bound thesis must not exceed two inches in thickness after binding. If the thesis is more than two inches thick, it must be bound in two or more volumes, not to exceed two inches each. Include volume number on the spine and on the title page (of each volume).

The bound thesis must be sewn either on an oversewing machine or by hand whip-stitching. All theses are to be bound in ***black heavy weight buckram***. Fabrikoid, leatherette, or similar cloths are not acceptable.

Spine lettering must be in ***gold*** and must specify the type of degree awarded (MSW), the year degree is awarded (2003), your full name, and volume number (not necessary with only one volume), in that order. Please ensure that your name on the spine is the same as your name on the title page.

Example:

MSW	2006	Jane Addams	Vol. II
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Loose-page Copy

The second copy of the thesis must be a “loose-page” copy. This copy is the same as the bound copy and should be printed on cotton rag, but is not bound. No holes should be punched and no binding (i.e., coil, comb, tape, wire, etc.) should be requested. The loose-page copy will be comb-bound by Augsburg’s library staff at a later date. The *Certificate of Approval* page for the loose-page copy can be a photocopy of the page with original signatures (if you collected them in advance). Correction fluid must not be used to make corrections in the final hard-bound or loose-page copies of the thesis.

Printer Instructions

For your convenience, you may wish to tear off the below information and provide it to your printer to ensure proper specifications are followed. If you'd like additional copies of your thesis for yourself, your family or members of your Committee of Readers, make adjustments to the instructions accordingly.

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Attention Printer:

This student requires two copies of his or her Master's Thesis: one hard-bound and one loose-page copy. The student will provide you with a clean set of originals. Please provide the following services:

1. Make TWO copies of the set of originals, each on 70 to 100% cotton rag, 20 to 24 pound weight. Each set should be single-sided and collated.
2. One set of copies should be bound in *black heavy weight buckram*, sewn either on an oversewing machine or by hand whipstitching. The bound thesis must not exceed two inches in thickness after binding. If the thesis is more than two inches thick, it must be bound in two or more volumes, not to exceed two inches each. Include the volume number on the spine of each in the event of two or more volumes.

If the student provides a *Certificate of Approval* page with original signatures, this should be included in the *bound* version following the title page.

Spine lettering must be in *gold* and must specify the degree awarded, the year degree is awarded, the student's full name, and volume number (when applicable), in that order.

Example:

MSW	2006	Jane Addams	Vol. II
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(Note: Name on spine must match exactly name on title page.)