

MSAG Non-Thesis Independent Project Guidelines

The scope and magnitude of the independent project is established by the committee but is generally not as involved as a thesis. A master's project presents the results of a more limited original investigation. Alternatively, it may review the state of a particular scholarly or scientific problem. A master's project report must be a minimum 30 pages (double-spaced, 12 pt font, including tables and figures).

PROCESS FOR COMPLETION

In order to successfully accomplish the independent project, students should complete the following:

1. Meet with your advisor to identify two other faculty members to serve on your committee that can provide expertise or guidance with your intended project.
2. Meet with committee members to seek advice and counsel to clarify project scope, focus, methods, and desired outcome from the independent project.
3. After the meeting, develop a formal proposal that briefly but clearly describes the scholarly project.
4. Email the proposal to your advisor and copy the MSAG academic coordinator.
5. Once approved, conduct the project while staying in contact with your advisor to maintain progress and focus in the work. Consult committee members as needed.
6. Submit the independent project report to all committee members at least two full weeks before the scheduled exam.
7. Schedule final exam.
8. Prepare a presentation on the independent project.
9. Give the presentation and complete the final exam.
10. Submit an electronic copy of the final independent project report to the MSAG academic coordinator once the final edits are made.

CREATING AN INDEPENDENT PROJECT PROPOSAL

The following sections are appropriate for the Independent Project Proposal:

Introduction and Theoretical Framework (Why?)

This section should build the case for the project. While this will be based primarily on a literature review, anecdotal evidence or personal views to support the explanation also may be considered. Citations for the references should be included in the body of the text to build the case and support the need for the study. Also, gathering of information via survey (i.e. demographics, attitudes, etc.) on the population or group for whom the project would be completed is appropriate and helps build the case for the proposed work. The following questions should be addressed:

- Why is this important to my field or profession?
- Why is this important to me and my current or future position?
- What theory or concepts will be the framework for the project?
- What coursework will I utilize in completing this project?

Purpose and Objectives (What?)

The purpose statement should clarify the overall intent of the project. The objectives should outline the paper and/or products that are to come from this project. Such a list can

be in bulleted format. A good list of objectives answers the question: What will you physically hand over to the committee for review?

Methods (How, Where, and Who?)

This explains how the student intends to complete the project. The following questions should be addressed:

- How will I complete this project?
- What literature (knowledge resources) will be used in completing the paper?
- Who will assist in the process and how will they assist?
- What non-knowledge resources will be used (computers, equipment, etc.)?
- Where will this project be completed?
- What are the plans for evaluating the project?
 - This is one of the key components that differentiates a project that can be assigned in any class from this scholarly master's degree project. A project done in a vacuum lacks insight.
 - Some ideas for completing this component include (if appropriate):
 - Conducting the actual project or program and completing an evaluation with the participants.
 - Establishing a panel of experts or conducting a peer review of the materials and synthesizing the feedback.
 - A clear link should be drawn from the literature review to the evaluation to serve as a rationale for the evaluation.

Timeline (When?)

Create a timeline starting at the proposal date to the presentation defense. Identify major benchmarks in the process and approximate their completion dates.

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