

Psychology Guidelines for a Distinguished Thesis (COLG 396) Proposal

Completing a Distinguished Thesis in Psychology requires a minimum GPA of 3.4.

The Distinguished Thesis is a three-semester-long independent research project. Students enroll in COLG 396 in the second semester of their junior year to develop their proposal and identify their thesis committee. Students enroll in COLG 398 during their senior year to complete the thesis, typically for 3 credits in the fall and 1 credit in the spring. A total of 4 credits of COLG 398 is needed for the Distinguished Thesis to satisfy the capstone requirement in the Psychology major.

Junior Year – Spring Semester:

Students should identify their thesis moderator as soon as possible in this semester. The thesis moderator will help the student develop their research ideas and assist in selecting additional thesis committee members for their project. The thesis committee consists of the faculty moderator and two readers.

- **The thesis committee should be identified by April 1st at the latest.**
- **The student will meet with the full thesis committee by May 1st at the latest to receive feedback on their preliminary thesis proposal. The preliminary proposal must be sent to the thesis committee at least one week prior to the meeting.**

During the preliminary proposal meeting, the thesis moderator and the readers will provide feedback on the proposal and will negotiate tasks and/or additional roles to be adopted by the readers (e.g., assisting with computer programming, survey construction, data analysis, etc.). After the preliminary proposal meeting, the faculty moderator and the student will meet to identify the revisions the student will need to make prior to submitting a final proposal to the committee.

Students who are studying abroad in the spring semester of their junior year will need to have their preliminary proposal meeting in the fall semester of their junior year, no later than December 15th. Students planning to graduate in December should see the modified deadlines on the last page of this document.

Reader roles:

- Read preliminary thesis proposal and attend proposal meeting to provide feedback and direction to the thesis student
- Read final thesis proposal and sign off that all required modifications have been made
- Perform additional tasks as agreed to in proposal meeting
- Read final thesis paper, provide feedback, and attend final defense

The Preliminary Thesis Proposal – due at least one week prior to the committee meeting:

The Preliminary Thesis Proposal is designed to be a tentative document that will provide sufficient detail to establish the feasibility and appropriateness of the proposed research. The goal is to allow the thesis committee to provide the student with early feedback and direction in order to enhance the quality of proposed research. It does not preclude changes to the project that is ultimately conducted. In fact, we expect that the student will make changes based on the constructive feedback provided by committee members early on, which would then be included in the final thesis proposal. **The preliminary thesis proposal should be in the same format as the Final Thesis Proposal, which is described in the next section.**

The Final Thesis Proposal – must be approved by September 15th of the Senior Year:

After revisions are made to the thesis proposal, a final version of the proposal will be sent to the thesis committee for review at least one week before they meet to discuss the final proposal. The thesis committee will meet prior to September 15th to provide any additional feedback regarding changes that would be required in order for the committee members to approve the proposal. The deadline for the final proposal approval is September 15th of the senior year.

While the specific requirements of the preliminary thesis proposal could vary somewhat from moderator to moderator, all final proposals are expected to contain the following sections:

Title Page and Signature Page: A signature page should be included after the title page. This will be used to collect approval signatures from the thesis moderator and readers.

Introduction: The introduction should include a brief literature review sufficient to demonstrate that the proposal is grounded in the literature. This review need not be complete (a more comprehensive review is typically included in the final thesis paper), but it should demonstrate that enough background research has been explored to suggest or support the hypotheses proposed. The introduction will end with the hypotheses and the rationale for the hypotheses.

Proposed Method: The method section should include information about the anticipated number of participants, operationalization of key variables, procedures, and materials.

Predicted Results: The results section should describe the statistical tests the student intends to use to analyze the data and the pattern of results that the student predicts based on the hypotheses presented in the introduction.

Discussion: The discussion section should outline the interpretation of predicted results in the context of the reviewed literature, anticipated conclusions, and consideration of alternative explanations/anticipation of limitations.

References: The reference section should include all sources that are cited in the proposal and should be formatted in APA style.

Appendices: Any surveys questions, tests, or other materials that students plan to use in their study should be included as appendices.

All thesis proposals must be written following the current edition of the APA style manual.

Final proposal approval: Faculty moderators and readers will sign off individually on a final thesis proposal that addresses all of the changes they requested. A copy of the approved final thesis proposal must be submitted to the department chair by September 15th.

Summary of Distinguished Thesis Deadlines for Psychology Students

NOTE: Requirements and Deadlines in bold type below have been added by the Psychology department and are not necessarily required for students in other majors.

Activity	Spring Graduation Deadline	Fall Graduation Deadline
Register for COLG 396 – 1 credit Distinguished Thesis Proposal	Spring semester of the junior year	Fall semester of the junior year
Identify thesis moderator	Early in spring semester of junior year	Early in fall semester of junior year
Identify all committee members	April 1 in spring semester of the junior year at the latest	November 1 in fall semester of the junior year at the latest
Submit Preliminary Proposal	Due to committee at least 1 week prior to Preliminary Proposal Meeting	Due to committee at least 1 week prior to Preliminary Proposal Meeting
Preliminary Proposal Meeting	By May 1 in junior year (or by Dec. 15 in junior year if student will be abroad in the spring). Attended by student, moderator, and readers	By December 15 in junior year. Attended by student, moderator, and readers
Register for COLG 398 Distinguished Thesis	Senior year – 3 credits in fall and 1 credit in spring recommended	3 credits in the spring semester before graduation and 1 credit in fall semester recommended
Submit Final Proposal draft	Due to committee at least 1 week prior to Final Proposal Meeting for review and final edits	Due to committee at least 1 week prior to Final Proposal Meeting for review and final edits
Final Proposal Meeting	Before September 15 of senior year. Attended by student, moderator, and readers	Before February 1 in spring semester before graduation. Attended by student, moderator, and readers
Get Approval Signatures on Final Proposal	Before September 15 of senior year. Moderator and readers sign the Final Proposal to indicate their approval.	Before February 1 in spring semester before graduation. Moderator and readers sign the Final Proposal to indicate their approval.
Submit Final Proposal	Due to Department Chair and Distinguished Thesis Director by September 15	Due to Department Chair and Distinguished Thesis Director by February 1
Submit First Draft of Thesis Paper	Due to the moderator by February 15	Due to the moderator by September 15
Schedule Thesis Defense	Scheduling must be done by April 1	Scheduling must be done by November 1
Submit Second Draft of Thesis Paper	Due to the committee at least 1 week prior to Thesis Defense	Due to the committee at least 1 week prior to Thesis Defense
Complete Thesis Defense	Defense must be completed by April 15	Defense must be completed by November 15
Scholarship and Creativity Day Presentation	Oral presentation required	Oral or poster presentation recommended
Submit Final Version of Thesis Paper	Due to Department Chair and Digital Commons (with signatures) by last day of classes	Due to Department Chair and Digital Commons (with signatures) by last day of classes