The UW School of Social Work's MSW Program includes an OPTIONAL thesis option, which works well for a small number of students, particularly those who are interested in continuing on into a doctoral program or in academia. The thesis credits (9) may count toward the student's elective credits. A student graduating with a thesis has this noted on their transcript along with the title of the thesis.

A thesis (SOC W 700) must involve empirical research focusing on issues of human service practice, social service organization, or social policy. A literature review is acceptable only if it is a systemic or meta-analytic review with a methods section.

FINDING A THESIS PROJECT
Many students may find potential research ideas and faculty to work with by checking current research occurring at the UW School of Social Work:

- School of Social Work Research website: [http://socialwork.uw.edu/research/research](http://socialwork.uw.edu/research/research)
- Current SSW Research Search: [http://socialwork.uw.edu/research-projects](http://socialwork.uw.edu/research-projects)

TIMELINE
Most students who are interested in completing a thesis have begun preliminary conversations regarding a research topic and have lined up at least a Thesis Committee Chair before the end of their foundation curriculum (for day students, by winter/spring of their 1st year, for EDP students, by fall/winter of their 2nd year.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>What?</strong></th>
<th><strong>When?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Submit Preliminary Statement of Intent</td>
<td>Before end of foundation curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete IRB proposal</td>
<td>Before end of foundation curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Committee Selection</td>
<td>Before the start of first registered quarter of Soc W 700</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>Often before, but complete by end of 1st quarter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal and 1st Committee Mtg</td>
<td>First 3 weeks of first registered quarter of Soc W 700</td>
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<tr>
<td>Methodology draft to Committee</td>
<td>End of first registered quarter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data-collection/coding</td>
<td>First and second registered quarters</td>
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<td>Data analysis and writing</td>
<td>Third registered quarter of Soc W 700</td>
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<tr>
<td>Near-to-final draft to committee</td>
<td>Week 7 of last quarter of registration of Soc W 700</td>
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REQUIRED COMPONENTS
- Must involve complete process of empirical research
- Must involve a minimum of 9 credits typically over 3 quarters
- Committee must include at least 2 members, one of which must have Graduate Faculty Status with the Graduate School.
- Must include:
  - Problem formation (This includes review of the literature, concept exploration and development, and the specification of questions and hypotheses.)
- Development of a design (This includes selection of and rationale for type of design, sampling procedures, data-gathering methods, instruments, and measures. Instruments may be existing ones or developed for the study.)
- Data collection/coding and data analysis or re-analysis. (This includes gathering, collating, and coding data.)
- Interpretation and implications for practice.

STATEMENT OF INTENT (submitted through STAR – or via word doc)
- Student Name
- Student Email
- Proposed Thesis Committee Chair
- Proposed Thesis Committee Chair email
- One page description of problem to be studied with preliminary thoughts regarding methodology, data collection and analysis.
- Preliminary assessment of whether IRB review is necessary.
- Proposed timeline
- Signatures, including student, chair and director of research programs

PROPOSAL (submitted through STAR – or via word doc)
A proposal for research should contain clear descriptions of the plans for accomplishment of the particular combination of research tasks, which will be implemented, plus human subjects review. Where the research is concerned only with implementation of previously designed research, the proposal should include a statement summarizing the problem formulation and design tasks. Where the research is a secondary analysis of previously collected data, the proposal should contain a summary of the original problem formulation, design, and data-collection procedures as a framework for considering a newly proposed hypothesis which will be examined via the available data.

- Student Name
- Student Email
- Thesis Committee Chair
- Thesis Committee Chair email
- Other committee member(s) names and email addresses
- Research Plan
  - Proposed Thesis Title
  - Problem to be studied
  - Methodology
  - IRB Review information
  - If project occurring in practicum/agency, is there a review required there?
  - Any resources needed? How will they be provided?
  - How the data will be analyzed
  - Projected timetable for completion
- Signatures, including dates, for student, committee chair, and committee members.
- Signature and approval by the Director of Research Programs.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP
The committee chair MUST be a member of the Graduate School Faculty and be approved to chair thesis committees for the School of Social Work. Students must verify that their proposed chair has such an appointment at: http://www.grad.washington.edu/gradfac/

The committee must have a minimum of 2 members and the second member may be a teaching or research faculty member at the UW (in or out of the department), a practicum instructor or agency supervisor, but if a student would like a 3rd member, that 3rd member must again be approved by the Graduate School (but may be in a department other than social work.) This ensures that at least half of the committee are UW Graduate Faculty on any committee.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS
Committees should meet as often as necessary, but at a minimum, the following meetings are required:

First Committee Meeting (No later than the 3rd week of the first quarter in which the student is registered in Soc W 700.) The student will provide a draft proposal to the committee at least 3 weeks before the meeting. The committee members will critically review the proposal, noting questions, concerns, and suggestions and provide these in writing to the student and chair at least 1 week before the meeting so the student will have time to examine the review statements and the chairperson can coordinate the meeting around the concerns of committee members. At the meeting of the committee, faculty will reach agreement about any proposal revisions needed through a process of compromise and negotiation.

Mid-Project Committee Meeting(s) The committee will meet at the request of the chair to review the progress of the student and make sure that all is proceeding as planned. It is recommended that this meeting take place when the student is beginning data collection. It is often helpful to have an additional meeting when the student is determining a final plan for data analysis.

Completion Committee Meeting (Typically around week 7 of the final quarter of Soc W 700 enrollment). The student will provide a rough draft of the thesis to the committee at least 3 weeks in advance of the meeting. Each committee member will examine the draft prior to the meeting and submit written comments to the chairperson and the student at least 5 days prior to the meeting so (1) the student can examine the comments and be ready to respond in the meeting; and (2) so the chair is able to coordinate the meeting around the concerns of the committee. During the meeting to review the draft of the final product, faculty will reach consensus about what the student needs to revise for the final draft. After the meeting, the chair will prepare a written summary of the agreed-upon recommendations for the committee and submit it to all committee members and the student. During the remainder of the third quarter, the student will develop the final report of the research. Should any committee member have concerns about the final product, the chair should be notified and a meeting of the committee will be called for the purpose of reaching committee agreement.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Student Responsibilities: The student is ultimately responsible for the completion of the project, following up with committee chair as needed, asking questions as necessary and reaching out to committee to solve any unanticipated challenges. Student is responsible, especially, for scheduling committee meetings (at least 3-4) and giving drafts of each section as completed, giving the committee at least 3 weeks to review and give feedback. Under no circumstances should committee members be given fewer than 2 weeks to review work.
**Chair Responsibilities:** The chair is responsible for assessing whether there is evidence that the student has the capability to do the research through a preliminary screening of the statement of intent and other documents, such as research papers done in courses. The chair is responsible for the integrity of the process and ensuring that all parties understand their responsibilities. The chair often assists the student in identifying other committee members and other resources necessary for success. The chair guides the student in developing the research proposal which will serve as a contract between the student and the committee. The chair also usually provides initial input into the Human Subjects issues and need for review, as well, and guides the student through that process, if necessary. If there are concerns regarding the student's ability to complete the project, the chair is responsible for initiating a conversation with the student to discuss. The chair grants credit each quarter as the work is completed.

**Committee member responsibilities:** The committee members agree to work with the student to improve the proposal and provide knowledge and guidance as they are able. They will also be available for meetings and consultation with students at all stages of the research planning and execution and agree to provide written feedback on written drafts to the student within 2 weeks of receiving the draft from the student. All committee members are equally responsible for the quality of the research and should bring any concerns they have first to the student and then to the whole committee.

**REGISTRATION FOR THESIS CREDITS**
Students will submit their Statement of Intent (see above) through STAR and, once all permissions have been granted, will be given (in STAR) a faculty ID code which will be used to register for their first quarter of Soc W 700. Students will need to return to STAR to submit their full thesis proposal to receive the code to register for their subsequent quarters of thesis. Until STAR is functional for Soc W 700 credits, word docs with signatures containing the same content may be submitted to Lin Murdock in Student Services to receive the codes needed for registration.

**HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW**
Students should discuss early any need for an IRB review with their proposed chair, since getting human subjects approval can take an extended period of time. All students using human subjects data should review the information at: [http://socialwork.uw.edu/research/human-subjects](http://socialwork.uw.edu/research/human-subjects)

**UW GRADUATE SCHOOL THESIS PROCEDURE**
Students considering a thesis should watch the video concerning the UW Graduate School processes, which includes the process for submitting the thesis electronically, at: [http://www.grad.washington.edu/students/etd/](http://www.grad.washington.edu/students/etd/)

**WHAT HAPPENS IF SOMETHING DOESN'T WORK OUT?**
Students who have started a thesis but find that they are unable to complete the full scope of the project will have any completed Soc W 700 credits converted to Soc W 600: Independent Research in Social Work on their transcript and will be able to continue to use those completed credits toward their MSW elective requirement.

These standards were updated from those approved by the MSW Curriculum Committee during the 1993-94 academic year.