Master of Science in Forensic Science (MS FOS)  
Master Thesis Guide  

June 2015  

Department of Sciences  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice  
City University of New York

Edited by Mechthild Prinz - August 28, 2014  
Approved by MS-FOS graduate faculty members - September 4th, 2014  
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Information contained in this guide is current as to the above date and supplementary to the information on the college website and the information and regulations contained in the John Jay College Graduate Bulletin.
Introduction

This Master of Science Thesis Guide is specific to the Master of Forensic Science (MS-FOS) program and supplants the previous Master's Thesis Guidelines issued by the John Jay College Office of Graduate Studies. This document aims to be a comprehensive resource guiding students on all practical aspects of doing graduate research and submitting a Master's thesis; it does not replace official college documents such as the Graduate Student Bulletin. Please contact the Program Director if you notice any inaccuracies or gaps in the content.
Thesis

Writing a special research project is a traditional feature of academic programs at the master's level. The primary purpose of the master's thesis is to demonstrate the student's capacity to conduct research in their field of study. For this reason, the student must complete a thesis in their field of study defined by their degree program. While the thesis is expected to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of Forensic Science, emphasis is placed on the student's ability to demonstrate mastery in the research methods proposed. All students are required to present their work in a public setting in front of their thesis advisory committee.

Prospectus Class

Students must successfully complete the Thesis Prospectus series (FOS795-797) in order to be allowed to submit the thesis. This series of three pass-fail seminar courses is designed to introduce the student to scholarly research, report writing, library research and documentation styles/techniques. Students should register for FOS 795 in their first semester of study. In FOS 795, students will be introduced to science faculty members and ongoing research projects. In FOS797 students are expected present their thesis research, from literature review and experimental design to preliminary data. In order obtain a passing grade for the last prospectus course, FOS 797, students must have submitted a Thesis Advisor Agreement and a thesis proposal/prospectus.

Thesis Advisor

A thesis advisor must be a full-time graduate faculty member in the MS-FOS program. Alternate arrangements may be made only if approved by the student’s Program Director and the Graduate Dean.

Thesis Advisory Committee

The composition of the thesis committee will vary according to the thesis sponsor's research direction. Each committee consists of at least three members. The thesis advisor acts as the chair of the committee. The second member also must be MS-FOS graduate faculty in the Department of Sciences at John Jay but can be either full-time or part time. The mandatory third reader must be external to the MS FOS Program; however he/she must have appropriate academic credentials (as determined by the program director) or appropriate scientific expertise related to the research project. External members of the thesis committee may be drawn from other John Jay College Departments, other CUNY colleges, other New York City research institutions, or from a relevant discipline of the different local crime laboratories. The Program director and the student need to approve this member.

Thesis Timeline and Tracking

A student should start inquiring about MS FOS faculty research and searching for a thesis advisor during the first year of study. Once the student and the faculty member have mutually agreed to thesis advisement, formulated a project title, and the Thesis
Advisor Agreement (Appendix 1) has been filled out and submitted to the Program Director, the faculty member will become the student’s thesis advisor. Only full time faculty members can be the primary thesis advisor. The program director will inform the prospectus course instructors about the various thesis projects students are working on. The Thesis Advisor Agreement and regular Thesis Progress Reports (Appendix 2) must be filed with the Program director. Upon completion of the approved thesis, the student will be eligible for a Master’s degree.

The public oral presentation of the thesis work will be planned based on the student’s progress either shortly before or after completion of the thesis manuscript. As long as all thesis committee members are present, the presentation can take place during either one of the FOS795-797 courses or be scheduled separately.

Students who are planning to graduate after their 4th semester in the program should plan on completing most of their thesis work in the first summer after the second semester. John Jay College requires all students to submit their thesis one year after completing all coursework required for graduation. Only in exceptional circumstances may the student request an extension by written petition to the faculty thesis advisor, program director and dean. If the request is approved, the student will be granted a limited time period to complete the thesis.

**Thesis Proposal/Prospectus**

The proposal is to be prepared by the student in close discussion with the thesis advisor and should be approximately 3-5 pages long. It should include the following sections:

- An **introduction** to the problem followed by a review of the 4-6 most important articles that describe what has already been done in this field and how they contribute to the topic. This section needs to include a brief impact statement on how the proposed research will potentially affect a forensic discipline.
- A brief outline on **methods, materials and equipment** to be utilized in the project.
- A section on **ethical issues** and, for projects involving human subjects, plans for obtaining John Jay College Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.
- A rough **timeline** for the research, organized by blocks such as months, semesters, etc. Categories for the timeline may include
  - Preliminary testing (e.g. feasibility studies)
  - Materials/supplies and sample acquisition
  - Testing phase
  - Data analysis
  - Thesis writing (plan on multiple drafts)
  - Oral presentation
  - A discussion on expected results, and how they will affect current knowledge and practices
- **References** (in APA citation format)

It is the thesis advisor’s responsibility to request this proposal from the student, review and share it with the thesis committee, and provide feedback to the student in a timely
fashion to ensure steady progress of the planned work. The prospectus class instructor will support this effort. The thesis proposal must be signed by the student and the thesis advisor. It is the student’s responsibility to submit the signed proposal to the student’s prospectus course instructor.

**Human Subject Research**

Any thesis research involving biological samples, surveys or other research on human subjects requires a review and approval by the College’s Human Research Protection Program (formerly IRB). This also applies to studies involving samples having been subject to IRB approval from another institution. Do not make any assumption about being exempt. Students should contact the IRB for information regarding how to submit their proposed research to the IRB committee at (212) 237-8961 or jj-irb@jjay.cuny.edu. More information is available at [http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/human-research-protection-program-formerly-irb](http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/human-research-protection-program-formerly-irb)

**Thesis format**

Strict adherence to the format will prevent delays caused by library submission issues.

1) **Paper:** All thesis drafts should be printed on regular paper.

2) **Final copies** must be printed on one of the following:
   - Bond paper (also called fine business paper) 24 lb./25% cotton watermarked **OR**
   - Thesis paper (available at Staples)

3) **Spacing:** The thesis, including the reference pages, must be double spaced.

4) **Margins:** The left margin must be one and a half inches (1-1/2”) for all drafts and final copies. The right, top and bottom margins must be one inch (1”).

5) **Pagination:** Thesis page numbers should be in Arabic numerals and should be placed in the upper right-hand corner or top center of the page; introductory pages should have lower case Roman numerals. The abstract, title page and approval pages should not be numbered, nor should they be counted in the pagination.

6) **Citation:** The APA style of documentation requires the author-date method of documentation. The surname of the author and the year of publication are inserted in the text at the appropriate point. All references cited must be included in the reference list at the end of the thesis. Consult the Publication Manual for additional details.

7) **Quotations:** The Fair Use Clause of the Copyright Act must be observed in quoting copyrighted materials. It is advisable to request the copyright owner’s permission for any quotation exceeding 150 words. It is wise to consult the individual publisher, because as an author you are liable for copyright violations on the basis of the particular use.

Unpublished material may be protected under copyright law. Students are advised...
to contact the Library of Congress to request information regarding how to register unpublished material:
   The Register of Copyrights
   Library of Congress
   Washington, D.C. 20559

8) **Footnotes:** Content footnotes are numbered consecutively throughout the thesis using superscript Arabic numerals, and are placed at the bottom of the page on which they are referenced.

**Thesis Title Page**

The thesis title page must contain the following information (centered, see Appendix 3 for sample):

1) The full title of the thesis.
2) A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Forensic Science, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York
3) The author’s full legal name.
4) The month and year of graduation, *ex. November, 2015*

**Thesis Approval Page**

The Program Director will receive, approve, and sign two original approval pages after the other requisite signatures have been obtained. Students need to make sure the original signature page is printed on the same paper as the final copy.

The thesis approval page must be bound into the thesis, directly after the title page, and must be on the same bond paper used for the thesis. The approval page should not be numbered and it should not be counted in the pagination of the thesis. The approval page must have the following information (centered, see Appendix 4 for sample):

1) The full title of the thesis.
2) The author’s name beneath the title.
3) The approval page statement that must read as follows:

   *This thesis has been presented to and accepted by the Office of Graduate Studies, John Jay College of Criminal Justice in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Forensic Science*

4) The four signatures** indicated below:
   1) Signature of the thesis advisor
   2) Signature of the second reader
   3) Signature of the third reader
   4) Signature of the Program Director
**Note:** The signatures indicate that the faculty members in question have reviewed the thesis in detail, approved its substance, and as far as possible, ensured that the student wrote the thesis clearly and correctly.

**Abstract**

An abstract summarizes the thesis and should not exceed 120 words. The abstract page should be titled “Abstract” and must be submitted with the thesis.

The abstract must be bound into the thesis directly after the thesis approval page and should not be numbered and it should not be counted in the pagination of the thesis.

**Thesis Submission**

Students must complete the thesis and receive final approval in order to receive their degree. The thesis work must have been presented in a public meeting and all three committee members must indicate their approval by signing the approval page. For the final sign-off, submit a hard copy of your thesis, including two originals of the signed approval pages, to the Program Director by the specified semester deadlines. Students are encouraged to submit their thesis before the deadline.

- Spring Semester: May 1st
- Summer: July 31st
- Fall Semester: November 30th

This review copy should be on regular paper and not bound yet. After the program director has approved the thesis, and the thesis clearance from has been received by the registrar a passing grade (P) will be posted.

**Thesis Clearance from Registrars, Bursars, and Library**

Once the approval pages have been signed, the student must do the following:

1) Get a Master’s Thesis Clearance Form from the Program Director.
2) Make a copy of the approval page.
3) Print two copies of the approved thesis on bond paper.
4) Submit the binding fee (cash only) to the Office of the Bursar and have them sign the Clearance Form.
5) Submit the Clearance Form with two bond paper copies of the approved thesis and two signed approval pages to the library reference desk.
6) After the Clearance Form has been signed by the Office of the Bursar and the Library, it must be returned to the Office of the Registrar (Room 1280N). They will also need the copy of the approval page.

**Library Record**

After the library receives a thesis, it is bound and cataloged by the library. After a few months, a record of the thesis will appear in the CUNY+ and WorldCat international database. One copy of your thesis will become available to CUNY borrowers and by interlibrary loan and the second copy will be available for library use only.
MS-FOS Thesis Advisor Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis advisor:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis topic or preliminary title:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Advisory Committee members:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd MS-FOS reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd external reader</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This is to certify that I accept the sponsorship of the student named above during the course of his/her thesis research. As the thesis advisor, I agree to serve as Chairperson on his/her thesis advisory committee. I will keep the program director informed about the progress of the thesis project and will report changes made to the Thesis Advisory Committee.

Thesis Advisor Signature_______________________ Date ________________

Received by Program Director:

Initial/Date

Prospectus Instructor informed:

Initial/Date
# MS-FOS Thesis Progress Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis advisor:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thesis topic or preliminary title:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Evaluation of Student’s Progress:

- Was the topic finalized? \( Y/N \)
- Has the thesis proposal been submitted? \( Y/N \)
- When is the expected completion date? \( Y/N \)
- Were there any changes in the committee, topic, project plan? \( Y/N \)

If yes, please explain briefly:

Other comments:

Thesis Advisor Signature_____________________ Date ________________

Received by Program Director:

Initial/Date
Appendix 3 – Sample Title Page

[Full Title of Thesis]

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Forensic Science
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
City University of New York

[Author’s Full Legal Name]

[Month and Year of Commencement]
Appendix 4 – Sample Signature Page

[Full Title of Thesis]

[Author's Full Legal Name]

This thesis has been presented to and accepted by the Office of Graduate Studies, John Jay College of Criminal Justice in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Forensic Science

[Full name]
Thesis Advisor  Signature  Date

[Full name]
Second Reader  Signature  Date

[Full name]
Third Reader  Signature  Date

[Full name]
Program Director  Signature  Date