

Master Thesis Track

A thesis should deal with a significant question and involve some original insight. Compared to a project, a thesis has a much higher level of expectation in terms of background research and justification. A thesis should also result in a paper submitted to a conference, a journal or other forms of public dissemination. More specifically, the difference between a project and thesis is the technical depth of the work involved. Computer science projects and theses both have a computer programming aspect and science/engineering component. The requirements for a project are less stringent than for the thesis. The thesis requires more depth and the student should develop a substantial understanding of the topic through library journal research, experimentation, etc. The thesis should take about as much effort as that devoted to two three-credit courses. The thesis report will be bound and reside in RIT Library's archives and at least ten years in the Computer Science Department's reading room. Copies must also be provided to your committee.

The purpose of a Master's thesis is to be of educational value to the student and to independently create and present a large, interesting, piece of work. Any acts of plagiarism or other acts of academic dishonesty will result in an automatic 'F' for the thesis. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism you should contact your committee chair before you complete your write up or make your presentation.

Additionally, by forming your committee and registering for Thesis you have effectively created a contract between your chair and yourself. Your chair will contribute a substantial amount of time guiding activities. Failure to complete your thesis within the agreed upon schedule may result in receiving a grade of 'F'.

In either case, you will need to write a new Proposal, form a new committee, and register for thesis again. In both cases the 'F' will remain on your transcript. Additionally, by signing your proposal the committee members agree to serve on your committee for one year. After one year they can resign from the committee if they feel the student is not making adequate progress.

Your Committee

Your thesis committee is composed of three members:

- chair
- reader
- observer

The function of the chair is to direct the technical aspects of your thesis and to ensure that your thesis meets the department's technical and administrative requirements. The chair has to be a member of the CS faculty or extended CS faculty. The extended CS faculty are:

- Justin Domke, Ph.D., PhD Program Computing and Information Sciences
- PengCheng Shi, Ph.D., PhD Program Computing and Information Sciences
- Carol J. Romanowski, Ph.D., Center for Multidisciplinary Studies
- Linwei Wang, Ph.D., PhD Program Computing and Information Sciences

Normally, you will meet with your chair weekly. Monthly progress reports must be posted on your RIT student web page. The reader may also review your monthly reports and provide feedback on your progress or concerns they may have to your chair. Your committee must be provided with a final copy of your report ten days prior to your defense. The reader or observer does not have to be a member of the CS faculty, but must hold a MS degree in CS or a related discipline.

Other faculty members may also review your work and make recommendations to your chair. All advisement will come directly from your chair. The chair, reader and Graduate Coordinator must sign off on your Proposal before you register for project or thesis. The third member of your committee, the observer, will attend your defense and ensure that department guidelines are met. It is most important that you establish a committee before you begin serious work on your project. Failure to do this may cause significant delay in the completion of your degree.

The 1-year Rule for Capstone

Your thesis proposal is valid for one year from the time of committee signature. After a period of one year the proposal is obsolete. By signing your proposal, the committee members agree to serve on your committee for one year. After one year, they can resign from the committee if they believe the student is not making adequate progress.

MS Thesis Proposal

Each student completing the MS Thesis track shall find a chairperson and a thesis topic.

- The student writes a pre-proposal.
- The student submits the pre-proposal to the faculty chairperson.
- The pre-proposal gets accepted or sent back to the student for modifications.
- The student writes the proposal, after the pre-proposal gets accepted.
- The proposal gets accepted or sent back for modifications.
- The student sets up a web site, after the proposal gets accepted.
- The student corresponds with faculty chairperson on a regular basis.
- The student updates their web site at least every two weeks.
- The student writes the final report.
- The student defends the thesis, after the final report is accepted.

The proposal should contain the following sections:

- A summary describing what you will do.
- An overview of the area of your thesis.
- A hypothesis.
- How the proposed work will be evaluated against existing work.
- Architectural overview of the planned system; i.e., the design specification. This may be less well understood, hence somewhat shorter.
- A list of the principal deliverables of your thesis and the form that these will be delivered, such as: technical paper or report, input/output examples or demonstration, code (the complete system should be given to your principal advisor archived on a single file, user manual, design documentation and maintenance manual.
- Annotated references. This should include the following: previous master's theses, books, papers, URLs.
- Detailed schedule, including target defense date.
- Status of the work at the present time. Monthly updates must be posted on your RIT web page.

MS Thesis Registration for Credit

To register for Thesis, you must give the office a copy of your Proposal signed by the Graduate Coordinator, the chairperson and reader. The Department has a form for you to complete. If you do not finish your Thesis in the first term in which you register for credit, contact your Academic Advisor regarding registration of Continuation of Thesis. You should continue to post monthly progress reports on your RIT web page until you finish.

Checklist for the Defense

The last step in the process is the defense. After the student has completed the write up of his/her work and the chair and the reader have approved it, the student defends his work during a 50-minute presentation. The defense is open to the public.

The student is required to follow the procedures outlined below:

- Schedule the defense and register that scheduling with the Computer Science department office; assure all committee members are able to attend; reserve the room with the department staff.
- Assure that the room has all the facilities you require (board, markers, projectors, Internet connection, etc).
- Post announcements at least 10 days prior to the event (www.cs.rit.edu/programs/grad/forms/Announcement).
- Verify with the department staff that all necessary paperwork has been completed (including current application for graduation).
- Review your presentation with at least one of your committee members typically the committee chair before presenting it formally. The defense should take 50 minutes, but you must allow time for questions and discussion. When you rehearse, it should take 40 minutes.
- A rehearsal is highly recommended.
- Prepare handouts for your presentation consisting of copies of your visuals in 4-up or 6-up form. Discuss with your committee chair how many copies to prepare.

MS Thesis Deliverables

The final paperwork for a thesis requires that you arrange for a bound copy of the thesis for the RIT Library, the CS Department, and each committee member. (that makes six copies, counting your own). Plan to work with our college liaison at the Wallace Center regarding proper layout and requirements of submission. Please submit the following to the CS Department:

- [the thesis binding receipt](#)
- [the thesis abstract](#)
- [the signed cover page](#)

You will not be certified for your degree until these steps have been completed. Also all graduate students who complete a thesis are required to submit the thesis in two formats to the Wallace Center:

1. ProQuest
2. Print

***A standard fee applies and is the sole responsibility of the student.**

Please see <http://infoguides.rit.edu/thesis-services> for step by step checklist additional information.