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 reside electronically in RIT Library's archives. Bound copies of your thesis report may also be required by 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 believe the student is not making adequate progress.

The Committee

Students are required to secure the thesis committee, 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. If unsure about who is formally affiliated as extended CS faculty, check with the Graduate Program Director prior to beginning thesis work.

Normally, the student will meet with the chair weekly. Monthly progress reports must be posted on the student's RIT student web page. The reader may also review the monthly reports and provide feedback on progress or concerns they may have to the chair. The committee must be provided with a final copy of the report ten days prior to the thesis 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 the student's work and make recommendations to the chair. All advisement will come directly from the chair. The chair, reader and Graduate Director must sign off on the Proposal before Thesis registration. The third member of the committee, the observer, will attend the defense and ensure department guidelines are met. It is most important the student establishes a committee before beginning serious work on thesis. Failure to do this may cause significant delay in the completion of the degree.

The 1-year Rule for Thesis

The 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 the proposal, the committee members agree to serve on the 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 Development and Defense

- The student secures MS Thesis faculty chairperson/advisor and 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 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
- 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

MS Thesis Registration for Credit

To register for Thesis, the student must provide the office a copy of the Proposal with the signed MS Thesis Proposal Approval Form. If Thesis is not completed in the first term in which it is registered for credit, contact your Academic Advisor regarding registration of Continuation of Thesis.

Checklist for the Defense

After the student has completed the write up of their work, and the chair and the reader have approved it, the student defends their 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 date and time in conjunction with the committee members. Room reservations must be made through the RIT EMS website: https://reserve.rit.edu/

- Prior to scheduling confirm that the room has all the facilities you require (board, markers, projectors, internet connection, etc.)
- Submit the defense announcement form at least 10 days prior to the scheduled defense: www.cs.rit.edu/programs/grad/forms/Announcement
- Make sure you have an active application for graduation on file in SIS
- Review your presentation with at least one of your committee members before presenting it formally
- The defense should take 50 minutes total; allow time for questions and discussion
- Prepare handouts for your presentation, as needed

MS Thesis Deliverables

The University requires submission of thesis reports to the Wallace Center. Plan to work with our college liaison at the Wallace Center regarding proper layout and requirements of submission. Students must meet the requirements outlined in the guiding documents, found here: http://infoguides.rit.edu/thesis-services. It is the student's responsibility to provide all necessary documents in order to secure submission approval in a timely manner.

Upon meeting the submission requirements of the Wallace Center, students will receive the *'Congratulations, your thesis submission has been approved'* email from the Wallace Center. This email must be printed out by the student and delivered to the Computer Science Department as confirmation they have met the deliverable requirement of the University. Students will not be certified for their degree until these steps have been completed.

Students are also required to confirm with each member of their thesis committee if a bound copy is required by them as an additional expected deliverable.