

SMEA Student Guide to the Thesis Process

In your course work at SMEA you have been exposed to various research methodologies (economics, policy analysis, legal analysis, marine science) and to research results in the field of Marine and Environmental Affairs. The SMEA thesis is an opportunity for you to research a marine affairs topic and to report that work formally. Traditionally, a written thesis contains an introduction, a description of research method, an analysis of a problem or issue, and a concluding section that discusses the import of the subject and prospects for future action or research. Some non-traditional theses have been completed at SMEA. These could consist of a film or videotape, a demonstration project, or other largely non-written piece of work. But both traditional and non-traditional theses must meet the Graduate School requirements and contain an. Your abstract will be published in the SMEA Annual Directors Report, as well as on the SMEA website. Be sure it accurately reflects your thesis.

The thesis contains a title page, copyright page, an abstract, and other elements required by the Graduate School. It is reviewed and approved by your thesis committee. One copy is submitted to the Graduate School online via the UW Electronic Thesis or Dissertation (ETD) Administrator Site, and these are shelved in the Suzzallo-Allen and Fisheries-Oceanography libraries. One additional copy needs to be delivered to Tiffany Dion, Graduate Programs Assistant at SMEA. Successful completion of the thesis is the capstone event of your career as an SMEA student.

Thesis Committee

Each student is responsible for initiating his or her thesis committee. The committee consists of at least two members of the Graduate Faculty, at least one of which should be a regular SMEA faculty member. Members of the Graduate Faculty from the School of Aquatic and Fisheries Sciences or other UW departments and schools may be included as one of the two committee members. SMEA affiliate faculty (non-UW faculty) often participate on thesis committees, especially when the affiliate has special knowledge or skills relevant to the research topic. Affiliate faculty generally act as third committee members.

Thesis Schedule

By Spring quarter of their first year, we expect and recommend that SMEA students initiate discussion of thesis topics and committee membership with the first year advisor or with another faculty member who has research interests in the area of the prospective thesis topic. Students are to outline the proposed thesis research in a Thesis Prospectus, and have that Prospectus approved by a thesis committee chair.

Some students work on the Prospectus as part of a class project or as Independent Study (SMEA 600). Once the Prospectus is submitted to the Graduate Program Advisor, the student may begin registering for the required 9 credits of SMEA 700. Many students devote time during the summer between the first and second years to background research (e.g., problem formulation or literature search) or field research for their theses. We recommend that students aim to prepare a draft thesis for review of the Thesis Committee by the beginning of Spring quarter of the second year of study. This provides the committee and the student ample opportunity to review, revise, and complete the thesis before the end-of-quarter deadline. During your last quarter enrolled at SMEA, you should register for SMEA 570 Thesis Presentations.

Thesis Prospectus

The thesis prospectus is a research design which lays out the intended course of work leading to the completed thesis. A typical prospectus consists of 5 -10 pages of text plus a bibliography and timetable. It should be developed in consultation with a prospective thesis committee chair or with a full committee. When approved by the thesis chair, the prospectus should be submitted to the Graduate Program Advisor. The Prospectus should contain the following items:

1. Prospectus Summary Page (See below).
2. Description of Problem or Opportunity Addressed
3. Listing and Explanation of the Major Questions to be Posed
4. Identification of Relevant Data or Information Needs
5. A plan for Information Collection
6. Methodology or Analytical Approaches to be Used (What are their strengths/limits?)
7. Draft Table of Contents
8. Potential Findings or Tentative Conclusions (if any available)
9. Anticipated Problems (e.g. access to data, time constraints)
10. A Bibliography of Papers, Books, Materials
11. A Proposed Time Schedule for Completion

Budget

Optionally, the student may want to develop a budget for the thesis. This exercise is a useful adjunct to scheduling and planning your time for thesis research. You may be surprised at the result! Dr. Fluharty has prepared a short outline of the Thesis Research Budget. It is attached below.

THESIS RESEARCH BUDGET

David Fluharty
Research Associate Professor

Assume that you are a consultant proposing to perform this research for a funding entity (government, business, NGO). Assign yourself a pay rate of \$30/hr. Estimate the time commitment that you will need, e.g., how many hours per day do you anticipate working to complete the thesis? -for how many months? Estimate equipment, travel, photocopying, telephone, office and other expenses as needed. Calculate benefits at 20% of salaries. Compute overhead (sum of salaries and other costs) at the UW rate of 52% for on-campus research projects or 26% for off-campus research.

Be realistic about your anticipated expenses for doing the research. Do not include costs for peer review and other consultants (e.g., faculty thesis committee). No, you may not hire an SMEA Research Assistant! If you allow yourself the luxury of a word processor staff person, figure in his/her salary and benefits.

I think you'll be surprised when you complete your budget. Think of this as your investment in your future!

Budget Outline

Salaries (show estimated hours/rate)

Hours/Days _____ X Rate _____ = _____

Benefits (@ 20% of salaries) _____

Expenses

Equipment _____
Travel _____
Photocopying _____
Telephone _____
Office _____
Other (per your specific research proposal) _____

Subtotal _____

Overhead (@ 52% of above) _____

Grand Total _____