MA Fall-Spring 2nd Year Timeline

This is intended as general guideline for your progress through the thesis, not as fixed timeline. *Students should figure out thesis/report topic and supervisor during spring/summer of their first year.

May-September:
- Confirm supervisor and 2nd reader
- Meet to structure research and writing timeline
- Submit preliminary bibliography review to supervisor

October:
- Form writing groups: schedule bi-monthly meetings
- Supplemental reading and draft of final bibliography

November:
- Develop timeline for completion of thesis with supervisor
- Thesis presentations to 1st-year cohort
- Submit abstract of thesis to graduate adviser by Thanksgiving
- Complete bibliography

December:
- Thesis consultation with graduate adviser
- Outline of thesis complete before Spring semester

January:
- First class day: Submit “Masters Graduation Application” Online
- Meet supervisor to rehearse approach to first draft
- Check with 2nd reader to discuss schedule/relationship with supervisor

February:
- Very rough first version of thesis (sections sketched out or completed)
- Set up schedule with supervisor for submitting/revising sections of the thesis

March:
- First (very) rough complete draft to supervisor by March 1st
- Make an appointment for a conference to discuss draft
- First draft returned with comments by Spring Break
- Complete 2nd draft by end of March
- 2nd draft to supervisor (and 2nd reader?) by March 31st

April:
- Present thesis at Graduate Conference
- Make final revisions and submit final version to supervisor/2nd reader
- Beginning formatting (see OGS for details)
- Complete writing and formatting by April 30th

May:
- Degree check and formatting check (OGS)
- SUBMIT!!!! (by last class day)
MA Thesis FAQ

1. How should I choose a supervisor and 2nd reader?

Most students choose their supervisor because they have already taken a class with that professor but this is not the only (or even the most important) consideration. Having taken a class with a professor in your area of interest might have alerted you to issues that will adversely affect your progress toward the thesis. You cannot ask a professor to supervise your thesis until you know fairly clearly what your topic is. Do not expect the professor to come up with suggestions about what you should research; it is your task to interest the professor and persuade her that she will enjoy working with you.

2. How should I approach a potential supervisor and 2nd reader?

The best way to approach a potential supervisor for your theses is by email – this gives you a chance to present your best argument for why the professor should work with you. An email also allows the professor to consider you as a student without the personal pressure of a direct appeal. If your supervisor has recommended a 2nd reader, use that recommendation in an email to introduce yourself and ask for a chance to discuss your project in person.

Remember: faculty members affiliated with WGS do NOT have to take you on as a student. Everything they do for us costs them in some way because it takes them away from their own departmental responsibilities. Being turned down is not a reflection on you or your project (unless you have failed to articulate it)—it just means that the professor is already overworked. Do ask for the names of potential supervisors if the professor cannot work with you.

3. What should I know about my supervisor/reader before I make a decision?

If you have already taken a course with the professor, you probably know whether you can work with this faculty member. Recall if you were satisfied with the speed and quality of their feedback on your papers or with conversations you had with them in the semester. A minor irritant in one course can be a major problem in writing a thesis.

If you don’t know the professor, check out the online Teaching Evaluations (http://www.utexas.edu/academic/mec/cis/) or contact another student who might be able to give you some insight.

Make sure you clarify the specific arrangement you have with the supervisor and 2nd reader—meetings, schedule, relationship between supervisor and 2nd reader, etc.
4. How long should the thesis be?

A min. of 40 pages to a max. of 60 pages (including footnotes and works cited). While you can go beyond the maximum, you should not drop below the minimum. It is quite proper to divide your thesis into chapters and to subdivide those chapters even further into sections if your argument calls for it.

5. What format should I use for citations and footnotes? And what about the format of the thesis in its final form?

You should choose the format appropriate to the primary discipline in which you are working or according to the preference of your supervisor. In English, for example, we use either Modern Language Association (MLA) or Chicago style.

The OGS website has all the information you need about formatting, with templates, so that the thesis will be acceptable to the Graduate School.

6. What about footnotes and bibliography?

The notes will either be footnotes or endnotes depending on the format you use. Your bibliography will appear as “Works Cited.”

Check into automatic citation software—Endnotes or NoodleBib (available through the PCL). The PCL gives classes on both and you can buy Endnotes through the Computer Store on Campus for a great discount.