

GSC 6960 Master's Thesis Guidelines and Policies

This document summarizes Geology Department expectations and deadlines pertaining to the culminating experience required for a Master of Science degree in Geology. For a short list of steps and important links, please consult <https://www.cpp.edu/gradstudies/steps-towards-completing-your-thesis-or-project.shtml>

Described below are all the important / essential details. Please read this document carefully!!:

Thesis Document

- A written document (Master's Thesis) is a very important requirement for the degree of Master of Science in Geology. We suggest you begin writing this as soon as you complete GSC 6930. Use your GSC 6930 Thesis Proposal document as a starting point.
- Aim for a total length (body of text plus figures) of approximately 50 pages. This is only a general guideline. Your text must be succinct and specific to your topic. Please avoid redundancies; do not cut and paste superfluous information just to add length to your document. This will infuriate your reviewers!
- The Library has specific requirements on document formatting, including pagination, margins, font size, table of contents, lists of figures and tables, sequence of parts, etc:
<https://www.cpp.edu/gradstudies/formatting-masters-projects-and-theses.shtml>
- Here is the current Thesis formatting template:
https://libguides.library.cpp.edu/ld.php?content_id=58869851

The Library will defer to Geology Department preferences regarding **style** (reference citations, bibliography format, figure captions and citations, organization and wording of major headings). **Please use the style required by your primary thesis supervisor.** This will likely be a citation style and bibliography format consistent with journals in your discipline, e.g., GSA Bulletin, Geology, Journal of Geophysical Research, Bulletin of SSA, Journal of Environmental Hydrology or Hydrogeology Journal. In all cases, figures with captions must be collated within the body of the text.

- Certain materials like large maps, cross sections or other drawings, long data tables or collections of plots with similar theme should be placed in the Appendices. The Library is able to include large plates as folded documents in envelopes at the back of your thesis. There is also an option of including such appendices, or even movies, on a CD or DVD.
- **Attend a "Thesis Formatting and Electronic Submission" workshop at least 6 months prior to your defense.** Here is the link:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1pSa7GpYxyxqW8KZoKD25cEZGICRXypZSa9IHOZkEed0/viewform?edit_requested=true#
- The Library requires formal review of your document before submitting the thesis to committee. The purpose of this review is to ensure the thesis is properly formatted for electronic submission to Bronco Scholar. Send an email to libraryformat@cpp.edu to schedule your review.

Important Deadlines and Links – also refer to our supplemental Table of Deadlines:

<https://www.cpp.edu/sci/geological-sciences/docs/deadlinesforgeologymstudentsaug2018.pdf>

- Meet with your primary thesis supervisor at least 6 months before your anticipated defense to present a detailed outline and a draft of your Introduction. At this time data analysis will likely be ongoing and you probably won't have all the results, but you should know more or less where your thesis is headed.
- Meet regularly with your thesis supervisor to update your progress and discuss implications of your data and results.

- Set a deadline with your thesis supervisor for submission of the first draft. **This should be a minimum of one month before anticipated defense date.**
- Apply for graduation early during the quarter you intend to graduate. Here are the deadlines: <http://www.cpp.edu/~gradstudies/deadlines-masters-projects-and-theses.shtml>
- Submit the first draft of your thesis to your thesis supervisor **at least one month prior to anticipated defense date.** This **must be formatted properly** per the library guidelines described above. It should also contain the intended figures with figure captions or at least rough drafts of illustrations you plan to include.
- Considering the condition of your first draft (or subsequent revisions), your thesis supervisor will use his/her discretion to schedule your defense date at a mutually agreeable time for your Thesis Committee members.
- Defense date must be a **minimum of 10 days prior** to the final thesis submission deadline (binding deadline) established by the Library. **This date will not be during the last week of the quarter!!:** <http://www.cpp.edu/~gradstudies/deadlines-masters-projects-and-theses.shtml>
This will allow you time to make corrections and revisions required by your thesis committee.
- Submit the final draft of your thesis to your thesis supervisor for approval. **Leave sufficient time to make corrections required by your supervisor (see next item).**
- Thesis supervisor **must approve your final draft and submit to all Thesis Committee members at least 10 days prior to your scheduled defense date.** Your document should include all illustrations and must be formatted per Library and Geology Department specifications. **This is the document that will be evaluated for a grade.**
- Schedule your final review with the Library 10 days prior to your scheduled defense date (as soon as your supervisor has submitted this document to the Thesis Committee). Send an email to libraryformat@cpp.edu to request a review. Here is a checklist of the items they will review: https://libguides.library.cpp.edu/ld.php?content_id=65530405
- Present your thesis defense on the scheduled date. Please arrange an appropriate audience of peers and friends
- Make final corrections and revisions to your document. **Thesis Committee Chair will sign off only when the thesis is perfected and ready for Bronco Scholar submission.**
- Be sure your Thesis Supervisor submits a **Report of Culminating Experience (RCE)**. He / she can find **instructions at:** <https://www.cpp.edu/gradstudies/forms-and-procedures/graduate-forms.shtml>
After your thesis Supervisor submits the RCE, it moves on the Graduate Coordinator and Department Chair for approval.
- After your final, corrected version of the thesis is complete, obtain signatures of all committee members. Here is the procedure, with links to DocuSign: https://www.cpp.edu/gradstudies/documents/docusign-instructions-for-projects_thesis_update_2_23_21.pdf. You will need to upload your final thesis document.
- Obtain final library approval of your thesis, and submit your final document electronically. Here are the instructions: <https://www.cpp.edu/gradstudies/documents/library-review--docusign-instructions.pdf>
- **At this point, you are still not finished.**
- After final library approval, submit your final thesis document to Bronco Scholar: https://www.cpp.edu/gradstudies/documents/submit-approved-thesis-or-project_abstract-to-bronco-scholarworks-by-the-deadline-v3.pdf

Now you are finished—Congratulations!!

The Thesis Defense and Associated Grade

- Prepare an oral presentation of your thesis and pertinent results. This should be in Powerpoint format and approximately 30-40 minutes long. Confer with your primary thesis advisor ahead of time.

- Give a formal oral presentation on your scheduled defense date. Friends and family are invited to attend. At least three Thesis Committee members must be present either in person or linked in by remote communication.
- Following the presentation, the floor is open to questions from the audience. The Thesis Committee will hold their questions until later.
- The audience is asked to leave. MS candidate stays to field questions from the Thesis Committee. This will take approximately 30-60 minutes.
- The MS candidate leaves the room while Thesis Committee discusses his/her performance and assigns a grade.
- Grades for GSC 6960? The Thesis Committee will assign a **collective grade** based on three components: 1) The final thesis draft submitted ten days prior to defense, 2) The candidate's presentation, and 3) The candidate's response to questions during the defense. Possible letter grades and associated grade points are: A, 4.0; A-, 3.7; B+, 3.3; B, 3.0; B-, 2.7; C+, 2.3; C, 2.0; C-, 1.7; D+, 1.3; or Fail (D or F).

The Thesis Committee Chair (primary thesis advisor) has the authority to raise the final grade up to 2/3 of a grade pending corrections and revisions completed before the final binding deadline.

Remember that a final grade of C is passing; C- or lower is failing. Students need a B average to graduate with the MS, so it would still be possible to graduate with a C on the thesis if cumulative GPA is high enough. Please aim for higher than a C!

University policies state that students who fail the comprehensive exam (oral defense) may repeat the process once.

Other Details

- Your Graduate Thesis Committee must be composed of a minimum of three persons. The Committee Chair must be a full-time faculty member employed at Cal Poly Pomona. One of the committee members may be an adjunct faculty from a different institution or a professional person from industry. Temporary faculty members (Lecturers) from Cal Poly Pomona are also allowed to serve on the Committee.
- Geology Department may allow an adjunct faculty or industry person to serve as the primary thesis supervisor. However, this person is not allowed to serve as Committee Chair. A full-time Geology faculty member must fill this role.
- The Committee Chair and a minimum of two additional committee members must sign the signature page when the process is complete.
- **The University requires that all graduate students be enrolled in at least one class during the semester of graduation.** There are no exceptions to this rule. Therefore, most graduate programs have created zero unit 6990 classes (ours is called GSC 6990—Master's Thesis Continuation) for students who enrolled in thesis units during prior quarters but did not finish in time. If this is the case, be sure to sign up for GSC 6990 during your semester of intended graduation. This will also motivate you to finish the thesis, as the course fee is substantial.