

THESIS TRACK

Steps to Completing your Thesis at WCU (West Chester University)

1. Secure a faculty sponsor as soon as possible – review the **Faculty Research Interests** list [here](#)

- Email individual faculty members directly to see if you can join their research team (to conduct research as part of the faculty member's larger research program or work on an individual study)
- Faculty members are more likely to commit to sponsoring your thesis if they have already worked with you in PSY510 Research Experience for a semester (PSY510 is not required for I/O students; only the General program students)
- General M.S. program students: It would be a good idea to enroll in PSY510 Research Experience during your *first* semester. This is a great opportunity to “test” whether a particular area of research is something you want to continue for your thesis. Enrollment in PSY510 requires permission of instructor. Once you have permission, please email your advisor and ask them to list your name on the “Graduate Enrollment” sheet for the specific semester to enroll you in the course.

This class is highly recommended to take before you begin your thesis. *Note: If you did not complete PSY 510 in your first semester but would like to do the thesis track, you can still complete the remaining steps to complete your thesis in a timely manner.*

2. Enroll in PSY600 Research Report typically during the Spring semester of your first year in the program

- Research Report is essentially the first half of your thesis – it is a literature review and study proposal for a research topic of your interest
- Enrollment in this course requires the permission of the instructor. A faculty member must agree to supervise your project at this point. Once you have permission, please email your advisor, and ask them to list your name on the “Graduate Enrollment” sheet for the specific semester to enroll you in the course.
- At this point you should start thinking about forming your thesis committee. The committee must approve your thesis topic before you begin data collection – but no formal defense of proposal is necessary.

3. Start processing the required paperwork to prepare for your thesis.

- Review the Thesis guidelines [here](#) (Graduate Studies).
- Submit the [Research Compliance Form](#) before starting data collection.
- Submit your study proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

4. Enroll in PSY610 Thesis during the Fall semester of your second year in the program.

- Enrollment in this course requires the permission of the instructor. A faculty member must agree to continue to sponsor your thesis at this point. Once you have permission, please email your advisor, and ask them to list your name on the “Graduate Enrollment” sheet for the specific semester to enroll you in the course.

5. Finish your thesis

- It typically takes more than one semester to complete your thesis, so your faculty sponsor will give you an IP (in progress) grade until everything is complete. Alternatively, you could enroll in PSY610 a second time, but this will use up another one of your elective courses. *Note that the thesis grade can only be changed after the thesis has been formally defended.*
- The deadline to submit your final thesis to the Graduate Dean is usually mid-semester (e.g., April of your second year in the program). Watch for the specific due date on the graduate calendar or [check this page](#) for deadlines.
 - **PRIOR TO THAT DEADLINE** you need to have: (1) finished your final draft, (2) announced your thesis defense date two weeks in advance to the department, (3) provided a copy of your thesis to all faculty (must be in the PSY mailroom for at least two weeks), (4) held your thesis defense, (5) made any final corrections.
- Make sure your final draft follows the formatting template found under “Forms” [here](#)
- Get the required signatures on your Approval Page found under “Forms” [here](#)
- Review the Submission Guide found [here](#)
- If you have any questions about your final thesis submission, email thesisdoc@wcupa.edu

Please review [Guidelines from the Graduate School regarding Thesis Responsibilities](#)

West Chester University Faculty and Student Responsibilities in Culminating Graduate Research Projects

It is the responsibility of all students, faculty, and staff to comply with all applicable university, state, and federal policies and regulations. This manual outlines some of the responsibilities of students and the Faculty Advisor/Committee Chairperson for culminating graduate research projects. Students should also review additional guiding documents available at the department or program level.

Graduate Student Responsibilities

1. Work with your Faculty Advisor/Committee Chairperson to select a committee.
2. Communicate often with the Faculty Advisor/Committee Chairperson until you graduate.
3. Check your WCU email daily. This is the official method of communication with you from WCU.
4. Obtain and complete the Research Compliance Form by the required deadline. If changes occur to the topic or the advisor, a new form must be completed and approved.
5. Submit a protocol for review by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) if appropriate.
6. Submit a protocol for review by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) if appropriate.
7. Compose a clear and correct thesis or dissertation manuscript while working closely with the committee at every stage of the composition process. Follow your department's prescribed style manual (APA, MLA, ACS, etc.).
8. Work with Faculty Advisor/Committee Chairperson to fulfill all departmental obligations related to thesis or dissertation preparation.
9. Complete all forms required by the Graduate School. Forms can be found at www.wcupa.edu/thesisdoc
10. Upload the thesis or dissertation to Digital Commons by the appropriate deadlines. Deadlines for submission can be found at www.wcupa.edu/thesisdoc.
11. Request that the Faculty Advisor/Committee Chairperson submit a grade change form for all thesis or dissertation credits that have not received a letter grade.

Faculty Advisor/Committee Chairperson Responsibilities

The Faculty Advisor/Committee Chairperson is expected to guide and counsel the Candidate during the thesis or dissertation preparation. The counseling process involves the following specific responsibilities:

1. Communicate often with your student. If you have not heard from your student in a while, contact him or her.
2. Work with your student to select a committee.
3. Ensure that your student is progressing normally; intervene if you have information suggesting that a problem is occurring.
4. Be aware of the time limits for master's and doctoral students. University policy dictates students have a maximum of six years to complete their degree. A link to the policy can be found here: <https://catalog.wcupa.edu/graduate/academic-policies-procedures/enrollment-policy/>. Please review program and department specific policies in case of a different time limit.
5. Assist your student in submitting the protocols for the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) and/or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).
6. Ensure that your student is working closely with the committee at each stage of the thesis or dissertation process.
7. Ensure that your student has corrected formatting, spelling, and/or punctuation errors in their thesis or dissertation. Confirm that the format of the signature page is too standard before you sign it. WCU formatting guidelines can be found at www.wcupa.edu/thesisdoc.
8. Administer all departmental and college requirements such as the defense, and notify the Graduate Coordinator when requirements are completed.
9. Approve and sign the completed thesis or dissertation. Ensure that all other members of the committee have signed before the document is sent to the Graduate School's email at thesisdoc@wcupa.edu.
10. Remind the Candidate to submit a copy of the final approved thesis or dissertation for formatting review to the Graduate School through Digital Commons. Deadlines for submission can be found at www.wcupa.edu/thesisdoc. Any questions should be sent to thesisdoc@wcupa.edu.
11. Process a change of grade form for all thesis/dissertation credits.

Safety and Academic Integrity

All research must be conducted in an ethical manner. Graduate students are required to follow the guidelines indicated below if research includes human or animal subjects, and the use of copyrighted materials, and any print or media materials.

If there are concerns about another's conduct and a desire to discuss the matter with a university official or make a formal incident report, the appropriate contact is the Office of Student Conduct at 610-436-3511. Concerns involving sexual misconduct or sexual harassment, or any form of discrimination, should be reported to the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at 610-436-2433.

Animal Subjects in Research

WCU complies with federal regulations and takes responsibility for the humane care and use of animals in research projects. If a student's research involves the use of laboratory animals or even the use of wild animals studied in their natural habitat, the student must have the research approved by the university's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Students can obtain the protocol form from the Office of Research and Sponsored Program's website: <https://www.wcupa.edu/admin/research/>.

Human Subjects in Research

WCU complies with federal regulations regarding the use of human subjects in research. Research sponsored by, supported by, or conducted by its faculty, staff, or students **must not expose** people who participate as subjects to unreasonable risk to their health, general well-being, or privacy. Student research projects that involve human beings as subjects must be conducted according to the university policy for the protection of human subjects.

Students apply for Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) review by completing a protocol form which can be downloaded from: <https://www.wcupa.edu/admin/research/irb.aspx>

Plagiarism

Issues of misrepresentation of another individual or organization's work are serious offenses. As with copyrighted materials, students must acknowledge the work of others that they include in their own research. Students must follow the guidelines for citing other authors' work in the appropriate style guide in their academic field. For details on WCU's policy on plagiarism, visit the Graduate Catalog at www.wcupa.edu/gradcatalog.

Use of Copyrighted Material

Permission to use works in the public domain, (i.e., works on which copyright never existed and those on which the copyright has expired) is not necessary, but all works must be acknowledged. If the material has been published, or if an entire creation (e.g., a cartoon, a photograph, a test, or a completed form) is to be used, written permission from the copyright holder must be obtained that allows the student to use the work in the thesis or dissertation. The purpose of a permission letter is to ensure that you are asking permission for the use of copyrighted material and to make sure that it encompasses the full scope of what you will be using the material for. The objective is to eradicate any ambiguities that could occur and make certain that your letter covers all your needs in using/reproducing the copyrighted material.

Students should inform the copyright holder that the manuscript is being submitted to West Chester University of Pennsylvania and will be available as part of the library's digital holdings in Digital Commons.

A copy of the permission letter must be provided in the appendix of the thesis or dissertation. Proper credit (as instructed in the letter of permission) must be given in the text. More information about use of copyrighted material can be found on Digital Commons or on the website of the Library of Congress at <http://www.copyright.gov/>.