Optional MA Thesis Guidelines

Graduate students in NELC should decide whether they will undertake the optional MA thesis no later than the spring quarter of their first academic year. A student's MA advisors automatically serve as a student's MA thesis committee, though a third faculty member can be added to the MA thesis committee if agreed upon by the student's advisors and the faculty member. The MA thesis option in NELC contains three primary components: 1) a prospectus, 2) a written thesis, and 3) an oral exam. Each of these follows a schedule and requires attention to deadlines.

Download the Optional MA Thesis cover sheet

Prospectus

In their second year of study students must submit to the department a prospectus for the MA thesis approved and signed by the student's MA committee. It should be submitted no later than the fifth week of the first quarter (i.e., mid-quarter). The prospectus should outline the thesis and provide a representative bibliography. A prospectus is a chance for students to make certain that they, their chair, and their committee all understand and approve of the work they are about to undertake. The more detailed and precise the prospectus, the less chance there is for misunderstanding as one proceeds. Different committee chairs have different ideas as to how many pages it takes to accomplish these tasks, and much also depends on the research topic and the student's progress to date.

In general, a prospectus is between 10 and 30 pages, including tables, references, and representative bibliography. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss the prospectus with the chair of their committee to make sure that all expectations are clear. They must be enrolled and in good standing in order to submit a prospectus. (Students may not submit it if on leave of absence from the Graduate School or if they appear on the Graduate School Low scholarship list.) When the committee has approved the prospectus, students should submit a copy of the approved proposal with original signatures of the committee to the NELC Office (Denny 229). They then will be eligible to register for NEAR E 700. At this time, students should work with their committees to establish a feasible schedule for completing the MA thesis on time. Students also should make sure to make the appropriate updates to their MA checklists.

Format and Style

The MA thesis must demonstrate mastery of a student's primary and secondary Near Eastern languages and should show a strong knowledge of a student's research language(s), especially as it relates to secondary source materials. MA theses in NELC are between 60 and 150 pages in length including bibliography and are composed in 12-point Times Roman font (both text and footnotes) and double-spaced. For all other specifications concerning style and format students must consult the Policy for Deposit and Dissemination of Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations. It is the student's responsibility to make sure that all style and format issues are in accordance with NELC and the Graduate School's policies.

Oral Exam

NELC requires that students undertake an oral exam based primarily, but not exclusively, on the MA thesis. Students are responsible
for scheduling the exam in conjunction with their committee. Typically students schedule the oral exam in the spring quarter in the year they will graduate.

Completing the MA Thesis

Most students submit a Graduation Request to the Graduate School at the beginning of their last quarter and are prepared to turn their finished thesis in to the UW Graduate School by the end of that quarter. Students should consult the current Style and Policy Manual for Theses and Dissertations for deadlines and important instructions about applying for graduation and submitting the thesis. It is the student’s responsibility to adhere to the guidelines and policies.

Note: Committee members are not required to approve a thesis that is incomplete to meet a pressing deadline imposed by the Graduate School.

Grading

NELC requires a total of 9 MA thesis credits. Students may take all thesis credits in one quarter, but students usually distribute them over two or more quarters. The committee chair assigns a grade of N for each quarter until the thesis has been completed and signed by the committee. The chair assigns a final grade for the thesis. The final grade may be either credit or a decimal grade. A thesis must meet the standard for a grade of 2.7 or higher before a committee can accept and sign it.