DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
SENIOR HONORS
THESIS GUIDELINES
2017-2018
1. Be a senior.

2. Be in good academic standing. (You will be considered for academic probation by the Committee on Academic Standing at the end of any semester in which you earned one credit or fewer or have GPA lower than 1.67. If you are put on academic probation, you will no longer be in good academic standing. For more information please visit: http://students.tufts.edu/academic-advice-and-support/academic-advising/what-we-offer/guidance-academic-policies/academic-alert-and-probation

3. Have been on the Dean’s List at least twice before the senior year. There is a waiver process for transfer students and others who have not met this criterion.

4. Meet departmental criteria for the major or program in which you will pursue the honors thesis.

5. Have approval of your major department chair or program director (indicated by a signature on your Honors Thesis Candidate Form).

*Student who do not meet the eligibility criteria specified above can work with their faculty chair to petition the CH department to receive approval to complete a Senior Honors Thesis. The petition should be sent in the form of an email letter, from the chair to Dr. Jennifer Allen (Chair of CH) attesting to the student’s ability to successfully complete a thesis.*

Source: http://students.tufts.edu/academic-advice-and-support/academic-advising/what-we-offer/senior-honors-thesis

Senior Honors Thesis CH Department Guidelines

1. If you are writing a senior honors thesis in CH, your chair must be a CH faculty member.

It is highly recommended that students take relevant coursework to support their thesis work in their junior year or first semester senior year. Relevant methodological classes include the classes listed below, in addition to other relevant content based classes:

CH 30: Community Health Research Methods or approved alternative

CH 31: Introduction to Statistics for Health Applications or approved alternative

CH 99-20: Introduction to Data Management in Stata (for quantitative theses)

CH 99-02 Qualitative Methods (for qualitative theses)
Outcome #1: Chair/readers recommend student transfer to an independent study

Outcome #2: (11c) Chair/faculty readers recommend student proceeds with thesis and states in writing that he/she agrees with 1) the proposed scope for the thesis, 2) the methods proposed for the thesis, and 3) the final products projected from the thesis. If the chair is a non-CHA faculty member, they should also state that they have read, understood and agreed to the thesis guidelines that CH has set for its students and understand that CH students will be held to CH standards for the thesis, even if those standards differ slightly from the standards of their own home department.
**SUGGESTED TIMEFRAME**

**SEPTEMBER 2017:** Finalize committee/discuss how you will work with committee, determine IRB need (reach out to the IRB), pick topic, commence literature review for statement of significance section, determine how to access your data (if secondary), begin thinking about your data collection methods (if primary)

**OCTOBER 2017:** Receive IRB approval, access data and develop MOU (if secondary) or begin planning for data collection by creating tools and developing data collection protocols (if primary), submit CH proposal to committee

**NOVEMBER 2017:** Complete statement of significance, commence data collection (if primary), access and begin to work with data (if secondary), draft approach section and submit CH first draft,

**DECEMBER 2017-JANUARY 2018:** Continue working with data (if secondary) and commence/complete data collection (if secondary),

**FEBRUARY 2018-MARCH 2018:** Complete methods/analysis section and draft results and discussion, submit 2nd draft to committee for review, schedule defense date

**APRIL 2018-MAY 2018:** Defend thesis, incorporate corrections/changes from thesis defense
Community Health Senior Honors Thesis Proposal Guidelines

The outline below provides you with information on developing the components of your senior honors thesis research proposal. This proposal is due on October 20th, 2017 to your committee. The reason you are being asked to develop this proposal is to demonstrate to your advisor and committee that your proposed research is sound and that you have the capacity and skills to complete the thesis in the time allotted. A Senior Honors Thesis Proposal should typically be 4-6 pages in length, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. Students are required to discuss the research proposal, prior to submission, with their thesis chairs.

Typically a research proposal should include the following (see below for additional details):

1. Cover page
2. Specific Aims and Hypotheses, if relevant
3. Statement of Significance/Background
4. Approach/Methods
5. Thesis Timeline
6. Committee Members (Chair and Reader)
7. Reference List

Tips on developing these components are provided below.

1) THE COVER PAGE

The cover page should include the following information:

1. Student name
2. Student ID #
3. Student Email Address
4. Department in which you are completing your honors thesis
5. Thesis chair
6. Thesis readers

2) THESIS SPECIFIC AIMS AND HYPOTHESES IF RELEVANT

The specific aims are succinct statements that describe your research proposal. Specific aims are often accompanied by hypotheses. In order to write your specific aims you can follow the steps below:
1. Find an issue/topic that interests you.

Your specific aims can be informed by your personal experiences, the peer-reviewed literature, things you may observe in your work, social issues you care about, and/or theories you have about why particular issues exist.

*Example Issue/Topic*

Poor health outcomes among men of color

2. Conduct a preliminary exploration of your issue/topic and find one aspect of the issue/topic to focus on. Remember this preliminary exploration does not have to be restricted to materials you will ultimately cite in your thesis. However, do remember to carefully assess the reliability of the resource even at this preliminary phase.

a. Medline (OVID)
b. Web of Science
c. Lexis-Nexis
d. Google scholar
e. JSTOR

*Aspect of Issue/Topic I’m interested in*

Disparities in cardiovascular disease outcomes in men of color

3. Focus your issue/topic statement. One way to do this is to focus on a more specific population or geographic area, narrow your topic to one specific health outcome or identify one aspect of the problem that you want to focus on.

*More focused statement of Issue/Topic*

Limited knowledge about the strategies that work to mitigate poor CVD outcomes in Black men

4. Develop a preliminary specific aims statement based on your exploration of your issue/topic.

a. A good specific aim statement
   i. Is one you can argue, defend and explore
   ii. Doesn’t have multiple opinion answers.
   iii. Is narrow enough that you can realistically tackle it within the scope of your thesis.
b. Be sure to include the who/what/when/where in your question
c. Define all the key words you use in your specific aims

*Specific aims*

How effective are interventions that utilize community health workers in mitigating poor CVD outcomes among men of color.
3) STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE/BACKGROUND

It is important that your research proposal presents a convincing case to your committee, that the specific aims you pose are important, relevant, and have not been fully explored in the existing literature—namely that your proposed project is significant. Developing a statement of significance will require that you conduct a brief (recommendation is to cite 3 to 5 sources) literature review. Eventually, you will include additional literature for your full thesis. For this research proposal, you must cite credible, relevant, recent references in your statement of significance. The literature review allows you to discuss what other scholars have written about your topic and allows you to situate your thesis in this broader context. A well-researched and written literature review will eventually allow you to demonstrate the significance of your thesis by identifying areas that require additional research or represent gaps in the current literature. Incorporating this literature, your statement of significance should specifically:

   a. Explain the importance of the topic/issue you are exploring to community health
   b. Explain how the topic/issue you are exploring will ultimately improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice in Community Health.

Students can utilize any format for citation as long as they utilize this format consistently and include a reference list at the end of their research proposal.

4) APPROACH/METHODS

This is the section of your research proposal where you will outline the methods and procedures you will utilize to achieve your specific aims. This section should describe the overall strategy and methodology to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project including how the data will be collected (if the student is proposing primary data collection) and preliminary information on how the data will be analyzed. If possible, students should also discuss potential problems, alternative strategies and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve their aims.

This section should specify the following components:

1. Methods to be used: You should describe whether you will use qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. Be mindful of the fact that these terms are sometimes used slightly differently in various disciplines, so clarify your choice of methods, describe it adequately, and obtain clearance from your committee chair about appropriate terminology.
2. Data collection plan:
   a. If you are using secondary (i.e. existing) data, state the following:
      i. The source of the data; keep in mind that we in CH strongly recommend that you obtain a ‘data use agreement’, which could be just a simple email signed by the ‘owner’ of the data that says that you will have access to the data for a full year and are allowed to analyze the data for the purpose of writing a senior honors thesis
      ii. Your primary outcome of interest
1. For a quantitative study, briefly describe the outcome variable (e.g. blood pressure, executive functioning).
2. For a qualitative study, briefly describe the concepts (e.g. attitudes towards what you are exploring in your research).
   iii. Methods by which the data were collected, from whom, and using what measures/instruments
   iv. Your plan for obtaining IRB approval
b. If you are collecting your own data (i.e. primary data collection), state the following:
   i. How the data will be collected (e.g. surveys, interviews etc.)
   ii. From whom the data will be collected and how these individuals will be identified
   iii. What tools will be developed to collect the data and what process you will utilize to develop these tools (e.g., use or adaptation of existing, validated measures, or development of new instruments or questionnaires)?
3. Your plan for analyzing your data
   a. If relevant, the software programs you will use to conduct your analysis
   b. A brief (<100 word) description of the analytic methods (e.g. descriptive statistics) you will use

5) TIMELINE

A Gantt chart is one useful way in which to outline your plan for your thesis activities displayed against the time that you will take to achieve each of these activities. The following (Figure 1) is an example of a Gantt chart. This chart can be created in Microsoft Excel or Word. You may add to and modify the column headings (e.g. Month 1) to make them more suitable for their own thesis and you may include as many rows as necessary to allow for your thesis activities. The cell shading indicates the month in which a particular activity will take place and be completed.

Figure 1: Example of Gantt chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Month 1</th>
<th>Month 2</th>
<th>Month 3</th>
<th>Month 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop and submit of IRB application</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct literature review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6) LIST OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Include a list of committee members on your committee and a short statement about how each person will contribute to the thesis. This can include their relevant content areas of expertise.

7) REFERENCE LIST

Include a list of references in your research proposal. You should include 3-5 references and when possible, at least one review article. The reference list should be divided into two categories: 1) the list of references that you cited in your research proposal and 2) the list of references you plan to cite, in the future, in your thesis. Place an asterisk next to any references that represents a seminal or key article in the content area of your thesis.

2017-2018
Community Health Senior Honors Thesis

First Draft Guidelines

The outline below provides you with information on developing the first draft of your senior honors thesis research. **This first draft is due by December 8th, 2017 to your chair and readers.** The reason you are being asked to develop this thesis draft is to demonstrate to your advisor and committee that you have made substantial progress towards developing, conducting and writing up your research project.

A CH Senior Honors Thesis first draft should typically be 25-35 pages in length, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. Students can utilize any format for citation as long as they utilize this format consistently and include a reference list at the end of their research proposal.

Students are asked to turn in the following components as part of their first draft.

1. Cover page
2. 3-5 key comments/questions (e.g. challenges, methodological questions etc.) for the committee to consider related to the execution of the senior honors thesis
3. Updated Statement of Significance/Background
4. Updated Specific Aims and Hypotheses, if relevant
5. Updated Approach/Methods
6. Preliminary results including tables/figures
7. Updated Thesis Timeline to reflect progress made to date
8. Update of Committee Membership (highlighting any changes made to the committee composition)
9. Reference List
10. Appendix
11. Data Use Agreement (if relevant)
12. IRB certification (if relevant)
13. Copies of data collection instruments (if relevant)

While it is expected that students will update and make progress in expanding on all the components listed above, the first draft should, in particular reflect substantial progress and provide additional detail in the following three areas:

1) the statement of significance/background

It is expected that students will have conducted a more substantial literature review (a minimum of 25 sources) in preparation for their first draft and synthesized this literature, highlighting the importance of the topic/issue they are exploring to community health and explaining how the topic/issue will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice in Community Health.

2) the approach/methods

It is expected that students will have made substantial progress in outlining the methods and procedures required to achieve your specific aims in this first draft. The approach section should describe the overall strategy and methodology that student is using to accomplish the specific aims of the research.
For primary data collection this should include:

a) a detailed data collection and analysis plan including
   a. How the data will be/or has been collected
   b. A description of the development of tools (e.g., use or adaptation of existing, validated measures, or development of new instruments or questionnaires) used for the data collection and if possible, inclusion of a copy of all the data collection instruments
   c. A description of how all the key measures (e.g. outcomes, covariates etc.) will be constructed from these tools
   d. A detailed analytic plan

For secondary data analysis this should include:

b) a detailed data collection and analysis plan including
   a. The description of the data source
   b. If relevant, a copy of the data use agreement as specified in the CH proposal guidelines
   c. For a quantitative study a description of the primary outcome of interest and how this outcome is constructed (e.g. continuous, binary etc.) from the dataset and a description of all other key variables
   d. For a qualitative study, a description of all the key concepts (e.g. attitudes towards what you are exploring in your research) being explored

It is also expected that students will have obtained IRB approval for their senior honors thesis by this date and they should include a copy of their IRB approval letter in the Appendix.

3) preliminary results including tables/figures

If possible, students should include a preliminary results section with their thesis. If relevant, students should highlight any noteworthy findings.

For quantitative studies, this section should follow these guidelines:

1) Restatement of research aims
2) Descriptive statistics (e.g. frequencies, means, standard deviations)
3) Primary inferential statistical analysis
4) Additional statistical analysis
5) Preliminary tables and figures

Students should label all figures and charts as appropriate and refer to the Data Visualization presentation from the CH Senior thesis seminar for tips on presenting charts and tables.

For qualitative studies, this section should following these guidelines:

1) Restatement of research aims
2) Description of the sample from which the data was collected
3) Description of the key themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis and the inclusion of illustrative quotes when relevant

Other Relevant Resources


Tufts Academic Resource Center: http://students.tufts.edu/academic-advice-and-support/academic-resource-center

Formatting and Style Guide: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

Tufts University Library Link: http://library.tufts.edu/