

## THE NON-THESIS OPTION PORTFOLIO

Students seeking the M.A. degree may opt to complete a project instead of a thesis. Any student wishing to take this route must complete the Declaration of Intent form during the first semester of graduate enrollment and complete a Non-Thesis Option Portfolio.

Additionally, the following requirements apply to students who choose the non-thesis option for the M.A.

- The student must indicate upon entering the program that he or she intends to pursue the non-thesis option by completing the Declaration of Intent Form.
- The student must complete a 33-hour curriculum that includes (1) completing the required core courses for the regular M.A. curriculum (ENG 501, ENG 505, and LING 501),
- (2) completing 18 hours of electives in English or other fields (with the restriction that only 6 hours may be taken outside the department),
- (3) taking two additional courses from the following list:  
ENG 570 Technical Writing, ENG 586 Practicum in Teaching Composition, ENG 591 Independent Study (for students working on projects), ENG 620 Classical Rhetoric, ENG 622 Seminar on Writing Problems, LING 504 Applied Linguistics, LING 509 Modern Trends in Grammar, LING 511 Linguistics and Pedagogy, LING 512 Second Language Teaching, or LING 514 Linguistics in Education.
- **and** (4) completing a non-thesis option portfolio that adheres to the criteria in the following list.

### Non-Thesis Option Portfolio

General portfolio criteria

The purpose of the portfolio for the non-thesis student is to engage the student in the process of scholarly research and writing in order to produce a publishable, article-length research paper.

The following items will be included in the portfolio. The function of each item or other requirements related to each item will be detailed in the list.

- A research paper written by the student as part of a graduate course in English at JSU. The professor of record for the course will usually serve as the portfolio committee chair for the non-thesis option portfolio.
- An abstract of the original research paper. The advisor for the non-thesis option portfolio will be a member of the graduate faculty in the department.
- Revised original research paper. **After finding a graduate faculty member to serve as the non-thesis portfolio advisor, the student will revise the original research paper under the direction of the advisor chair and in preparation for submission of the paper to a journal.**
- List of proposed journals. Prior to completion of the revised paper, the student will locate three to five scholarly journals (print or electronic) that would be appropriate for the publication of an article on the topic covered by the research paper. The student will type a list of these journals along with a brief, two to five sentence, explanation of why each

journal was selected. The list will be shared and discussed with the portfolio advisor and included in the portfolio file.

- Review of literature. The review of literature will be incorporated into the revised, article-length paper, so it will not be a separate item in the portfolio. However, the weight which will be given to the review of literature necessitates special mention in this list of criteria. The review of literature will consider a minimum of ten (10) approved sources; the final minimum number may be adjusted by the portfolio advisor. The revised, article length paper will not be accepted without the review of literature.
- Revised, article-length paper. After consulting with the portfolio advisor, the student must complete an article-length research paper appropriate for publication in one of the selected journals. The paper is considered complete when the portfolio advisor and possibly another graduate faculty member have reviewed the paper and recommended it for submission. This process should involve multiple revisions of the paper.
- Article Approval Form. Once the portfolio advisor indicates that the paper is ready for submission to a journal, the advisor will sign the Article Approval Form indicating that the revised, article-length paper is suitable for publication.
- Copy of submission email or letter. Once the portfolio advisor approves the paper, the student must submit the paper to one of the selected journals, using the format designated by that journal. A copy of the submission letter or email must be included in the portfolio.

#### Criteria for a passing portfolio

- The written work demonstrates a substantial knowledge of and facility with the underlying principles of and central concepts in the subject area relevant to each paper.
- The paper must show that the student has the ability to establish an original thesis or hypothesis, an original interpretation or analysis, or a substantial and original synthesis.
- The paper appropriately frames the original material in the project within the context of established work or relevant traditions in the discipline, provides documentation appropriate to the discipline, contains few and relatively minor grammatical or typographical flaws, and is clear, well-organized, and stylistically sound.
- The work itself is of very high quality. The paper has been carried out competently, diligently, independently, and in a manner that fulfills the basic standards of the discipline.

#### **Time Limit**

The student has one year from the end of the semester in which he or she passes the GACE in English to complete the non-thesis portfolio. The portfolio must be complete and designated as passing by the entire portfolio committee at least three weeks prior to the date the student expects to graduate.