

Engineering Studies Thesis Requirements

(August 2021)

A thesis is an opportunity to conduct in-depth research on a topic of interest and to contribute to scholarship in the field. It requires two semesters of courses, one of which is a writing course. If you are pursuing a double major, you can write a joint thesis with the approval of both departments/programs. Candidates for honors must have by graduation a cumulative GPA of 3.00 and a GPA of 3.20 within their honors department.

You should discuss the possibility of pursuing a thesis with your faculty advisor and potential thesis advisors during your junior year. By the summer before your senior year, you should have identified a thesis advisor and a topic that has been approved by your thesis advisor and the EGRS Program Chair.

Fall Semester

In the Fall, you will enroll in the first thesis course (EGRS 495). You will then submit a thesis proposal to your thesis advisor and the Program Chair by the end of the second week of that fall semester.* This proposal should include a statement of the objectives of the honors project—including the initial research question to be pursued—a sufficient summary of the literature to justify the value of the proposed project, a detailed plan for meeting the objectives of the project, an explanation of how the work will advance the field of study, and a list of the members of the honors committee. That committee will be composed of the primary thesis advisor, at least one other member of the EGRS program, and one person from outside the program or from outside the College when feasible. Thereafter, you should plan to meet regularly (~weekly) with your thesis advisor. You should also periodically check in with the other committee members about progress.

By the end of fall semester, you will produce a draft of the introduction, a substantial literature review, a methods section (where appropriate for the focus of the research), a preliminary results section, and any relevant figures and references (~10-15 pages is typical, including figures and references) for evaluation by the thesis committee. You must submit that progress report to the honors committee no later than the last day of class of the fall semester. You then present your work to date in a ~10-15-minute presentation to your thesis committee and any interested faculty, students, and staff before the end of the finals period.

The thesis committee evaluates your progress and makes a recommendation about continuing the thesis during spring semester or converting the Fall work to an Independent Study.

Spring Semester

If the thesis committee makes a positive recommendation at the end of fall, you will enroll in the Spring thesis course (EGRS 496). You and your research mentor will then complete and submit a Notice of Graduation with Departmental Honors form to the Academic Progress Committee by the end of the second week of classes spring semester.

* It is not likely that you will be able to complete the work required for the proposal in the first two weeks of the semester. You will need to develop the proposal during the preceding spring semester and/or over the summer months.

As a thesis student, you will submit a final thesis draft to your thesis committee no later than one week before your final thesis presentation. Typically, by then you will have submitted and received comments from your thesis advisor on each chapter/section of the thesis draft multiple times before the submission of this final draft to your committee. (Reviews of draft material by other members of the committee is up to the discretion of those members.)

During finals week in the spring semester, you will give a final thesis presentation sharing the results of your work with the committee, interested faculty and students, and any other guests who wish to attend. This should be a ~30-minute presentation suitable for a general audience, followed by a question-and-answer period open to all attendees. That open session is then followed by a closed-door question-and-answer session with thesis committee members. After this session, the honors thesis committee will evaluate the quality of the thesis to determine whether or not honors will be awarded. By the time of this review, committee members will have made any suggestions for revisions to the text of the thesis. The research mentor then submits a completed “approval of thesis” form to the Academic Progress Committee after the senior thesis presentation. Before the end of the finals period, a final revised copy of the thesis with signatures of the thesis committee members should be submitted to the research mentor and to the program chair.

At the end of the above process, you must give a final copy of the thesis to your thesis supervisor and the Program Chair for filing by the program for future readers. An electronic copy also goes to Skillman, which keeps a repository of all Lafayette theses.