There are two Master's degree program plans: thesis (plan A) and non-thesis (plan B). The thesis is the culmination of the student’s learning and represents a substantial effort by the student. The thesis is to be comprehensive, scientific, valid, and appropriately presented, while meeting the standards of HRS and the graduation school.

Guidelines: The student should discuss possible areas of study with his/her academic adviser early in the course of study. The adviser should encourage the student to pursue the potential topic for a thesis in course assignments. The academic adviser often becomes the student’s thesis adviser, but this should not be assumed. Switching advisers should be considered when the topic of interest is outside the academic adviser’s expertise. A primary advisor for the project must have an M status in the SHRS. Please refer to the MS Student Handbook Policy 1.8.

When the student plans to begin a literature search on the topic of interest, he or she will register for independent study credit, such as, HTHRHSC 7993. The adviser and student should decide the outcome of this independent study. Typically the outcome of this first semester’s (or summer session) work on the thesis is:

1) A concept paper. This paper is 5-6 pages in length. It articulates the research problem, gives a concise background to that problem and defines the proposed research objectives. The goal of this paper is to narrow the scope of the student’s research and to define the research objectives, i.e. give the student a direction for his/her research project.

2) Draft of Review of Literature: When the student has a research focus and proposed research objectives, he or she may begin by spending the semester/summer session reading and synthesizing the literature. The student will produce a draft of his/her literature review. This focus for an independent study is recommended for students who have selected research questions or for students who have identified a topic but do not know the literature well enough to begin to conceptualize research objectives.

Students may wish to utilize the Center for the Study and Teaching of Writing while preparing the thesis draft (http://cstw.osu.edu/writingcenter). It has been especially useful for students who are dual-language users.

Thesis Proposal: The next step is to prepare a preliminary draft of the first three chapters of the thesis. The first 3 chapters of the thesis constitute the Thesis Proposal. During the period the proposal is written, the student must be registered for HTHRHSC 7999 or HTHRHSC 7993. The advisor will determine the number of credit hours that are appropriate. The outline for the thesis proposal is found in the MS Handbook. The proposal defines the problem, justifies the study and explains in detail the methods to be employed. The student and advisor will determine how and when feedback on the drafts will be given. Some advisors may prefer to read all 3 chapters together while others may want to read, provide feedback and finalize each chapter in succession. The advisor will determine how polished the draft must be in order to proceed with scheduling thesis proposal meeting.

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Selection of Thesis committee members: The MS student and advisor will mutually decide on faculty to ask to serve on the Thesis Committee. Selection of members of the committee will be based on their expertise as it relates to the thesis topic; the goal is that these members provide support and advice to develop the thesis into a sound and valid research project. The HRS MS graduate program requires that the thesis committee be comprised of at least 3 graduate faculty, including the student’s advisor, with M or P status. One committee member is encouraged to be from outside the student’s discipline and/or division. Non graduate faculty members may be appointed to the thesis committee by approval of the MS Graduate Studies Committee and by petition to the Graduate School. Non-graduate faculty will serve in addition to the required 2 Ohio State graduate faculty. The student will ask the committee members and will proceed with scheduling the meeting once a full committee has been formed. When asking the committee members, the student should be able to articulate the purpose and scope of the study. In addition, potential faculty members often need to know the student’s timeline in order to plan their own workload.

Thesis Proposal Meeting: The thesis proposal must be approved prior to initiating the study. Distribution of the draft of the first 3 chapters of the thesis must occur well ahead of the thesis proposal meeting. The student should poll the committee members to determine how far in advance of the meeting they will need the document. The proposal will be given to the committee no earlier than 2 weeks prior to the meeting date and within 5 days of the meeting. The student will also need to determine the preferred type of document each committee member needs - electronic copy, hard copy or both – and provide those on time.

For the meeting, the student will prepare and give a presentation based on the Thesis Proposal Draft. Each committee member will ask questions and provide feedback on the Draft Proposal with the purpose of shaping the project into a rigorous scientific study. Expect questions and/or suggestions about experimental design, methods, written and oral presentation of material and scope and direction of the study relative to the literature/field of study. Once the discussion has ended, the committee may hold a discussion with or without the student present. The committee will have 3 choices: Approve the Thesis Proposal with any needed modifications identified during the meeting; Table the decision pending revision of the current thesis proposal; or Deny the Thesis Proposal. Denial of a thesis proposal may be required if any of the following occur:

- the scope, direction, methodology lacks scientific rationale
- the proposal duplicates published studies
- the approach raises concerns of responsible conduct of research

If a Thesis Proposal is denied by the committee, the student may not use this proposal for the thesis work and must develop a new Thesis Proposal.

If a Thesis Proposal is tabled, the student will be asked to address all concerns and suggestions in the revised proposal. Another Thesis Proposal meeting will be scheduled once the advisor deems the document ready for committee review. The student will consult with the Thesis
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committee to identify if and when they will need a revised written document. A tabled proposal is highly unlikely if the student and advisor work together to provide the committee with a sound idea, that is well-thought out and the first 3 chapters are well-written.

A vote for approval or denial of the thesis proposal will be conveyed on the HRS Approval of Thesis/Non-Thesis Project Proposal Form (See appendix for this form). Each member of the thesis committee will sign the form indicating their decision to approve or deny the proposal. The form must be submitted to the HRS Graduate Program Coordinator Lisa Terek within 48 hrs of the thesis committee decision.

Thesis Completion: Once the proposal is approved, the student may proceed with the steps necessary to conduct the study. If IRB approval has not yet been secured, this will be the next step. If IRB approval or exemption exists for the study, then the study may begin. Students implement the study and collect data independently. The advisor and committee members are available for consultation, but it is the responsibility of the student to inform the committee regarding issues or problems and need for consultation. Major changes in the design need to be reviewed and approved by the adviser and, when substantial, by the entire committee. During data collection, the student is expected to register for course credits if he or she is using the university’s resources, including faculty consultation. Completion of the study and data analysis will be followed by writing the results and discussion under close supervision by the advisor.

Thesis Format: The thesis format will be determined in consultation with the advisor. One thesis format uses chapter 4 for the results and chapter 5 for the discussion. Another format is to write a journal manuscript as the 4th chapter. The benefit of preparing a manuscript for Chapter 4 is to allow a seamless submission for publication. It requires that a new introduction be written which conforms to publication standards. The methods from Chapter 3 may need to be shortened or streamlined. Examples of both of these formats are available through the HRS Graduate Program Coordinator Lisa Terek. The thesis should follow one of the publication style manuals, e.g. APA or AMA. The thesis must conform to the Graduate School Guidelines. When the Graduate School Guidelines do not address an aspect of format, the selected publication style manual must be followed.

Application to Graduate: The thesis defense occurs after submitting the Application to graduate form and during the semester or summer session in which the student plans to graduate. The

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form must be submitted to the graduate school no later than the 3rd Friday of the semester (or third Friday of May session for summer session commencement) in which graduation is expected. The application is valid for that semester or summer session only. A student must be registered for at least three graduate credit hours during the semester or summer session the defense occurs.

Submitting the Application to Graduate Form indicates the student is expected to complete all degree requirements that semester or summer session. The form must be signed by the student, the advisor, and the Graduate Studies Committee Chair. The degree plan the student is pursuing and the proposed master’s thesis defense committee members must be listed on the form.

Thesis Defense: For students using a thesis option, written submission of the thesis as well as the oral defense of the thesis will serve as the Master’s examination and the thesis committee is responsible for conducting the defense. The advisor serves as chair of the thesis committee and examination. All members of the thesis committee must be present during the entire examination and are expected to participate fully in questioning during the course of the examination and in the discussion and decision on the result. The thesis committee will meet for a 2 hour oral defense of the thesis.

After the defense date has been set, a copy of the complete thesis must be provided to each committee member in their desired format – hard copy, electronic copy or both – no earlier than 2 weeks and no later than 7 days in advance of the meeting. The student should confirm with each committee member whether they will require the thesis 7 or 14 days in advance and identify their desired format. The thesis committee must approve that the thesis draft is sufficient to proceed to oral defense. This approval must occur well in advance of the scheduled oral defense. By graduate school rule, the student may not proceed to the oral defense without prior approval of the written thesis draft.

The defense will be comprised of an oral presentation of the thesis project. The student may be able to build the defense presentation by adding onto the computerized presentation used for the proposal meeting. The oral presentation should be approximately 15 to 20 minutes and allowing more than one and half hours for the questioning by the committee members. The presentation should demonstrate the design of the study, the outcome measures, results and conclusions. Each committee member will ask questions. The graduate school specifies that the questions need not be confined to the thesis topic, the student should expect questions ranging from theories of health and rehabilitation sciences, to rationale of the thesis to specific details of the work. At the conclusion of the defense, the student will leave the room while the thesis committee discusses the quality. The committee will have two choices: Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. It is common for the committee to require written changes to the thesis before signing the Master’s Examination Report form (See Appendix) or the committee may ask the advisor to oversee the revisions before signing the Report. The thesis committee will also indicate approval of the thesis by signing the Thesis Approval Form (See Appendix). The

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Thesis Approval Form and Master’s Examination Report Form must be submitted to the Graduate School by the published deadline for the semester or summer session of graduation. When the vote of the thesis committee is Unsatisfactory, the committee must decide whether the student will be permitted to take a second Master’s examination which includes the written thesis and the oral defense. This decision must be reported on the Master’s Examination Report form to the graduate school.

Second Thesis Defense: If a second thesis defense is held, the thesis committee must be the same as the original one, unless a substitution is approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. A student who fails the thesis defense twice is not permitted to take another defense or examination.

Submission: The final, approved thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School by the published deadline for the semester or summer session of graduation. The final thesis must be submitted electronically as a PDF document to OhioLink, the Ohio Library and Information Network.

Publication: Most advisors will expect their advisees to prepare and submit their thesis work for publication. The student and advisor will mutually identify the best journal for publication and discuss whether or how other committee members might also contribute as authors to the manuscript.

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