

SENIOR THESIS POLICY

Psychology Department

Every student at AUCA must complete a year-long senior project. Depending on the student's program of study, the senior project can take a form of a senior thesis paper, independent, supervised scholarship on a topic of interest, which is intended to serve as a vehicle for developing the student's research and scholarly capability. The nature of the senior thesis research can be theoretical, empirical, historical, qualitative, ethnographic, or analytical, according to what is appropriate to the student's area of study. Working on a senior thesis paper involves critical reading, evaluation and analysis of research and theoretical literature, problem definition, research design and analysis, and the written and oral presentation of findings and conclusions.

To ensure uniformity of policies regarding senior projects as well as fairness in grading, it is necessary to have a single policy regarding senior projects across the university.

Part 1—Preparation for Senior Project

1. The program provides the Research Methods classes during the junior year and the Senior Thesis Writing seminar during the senior year in the second semester of the junior year. These seminars are to encourage students to think about the theme of their project and possible supervisors.
2. Each student should sign up for a course devoted to his/her senior project in both the fall and spring semester of the senior year.
3. The Program chair assigns a project supervisor after a meeting of the departmental committee on the issue. September 30 is the deadline by which students must have lined up a supervisor and at least a preliminary project topic. Students who have not managed to identify a supervisor and/or a topic by this time should be given some kind of special advising.

Part 2—Senior Project Grading

1. All Department faculty should have an opportunity to read the full text of any senior thesis at least a week before the pre-defense and a week before the defense in order to evaluate them based on full information. The grade for the pre-defense draft of the thesis and the presentation is factored into the Thesis Seminar course. In case of poor grade for pre-defense student automatically gets a 10-day notice or might be not recommended for the defense.
2. Senior Seminar faculty gives a grade for the course.
3. The faculty member who directs the project should not grade the completed project. Instead, each completed project should be reviewed and graded by two faculty members who were not supervisors of the project (inside or outside of the department).
4. The project supervisor can be present at the oral defense and is permitted to ask questions. His/her opinion must be solicited by the examiners, but he/she does not give a grade to the oral performance. The oral performance grade is determined by the examiners present.
5. The final text of the thesis is submitted to the department secretary no later than the due date. The department secretary and chair are to determine whether the submitted work meets the minimal criteria to be allowed to the defense.
6. The final grade consists of the following parts: the senior symposium grade: 20%; written thesis or completed project:40% (consists of the grades of two reviewers), and the oral defense constitutes 30% of the final grade.

Regulations on supervising

Created: November 03, 2022.

Why is this document needed?

This document is necessary to determine the workload of supervisors, the functions of supervisors and to facilitate professional collaboration between students and supervisors.

Document owner: Department of Psychology, AUCA.

The document comes into effect from the moment it is approved by the Department of Psychology and published on the AUCA website.

Next revision of the document: November 2024. The document may be revised earlier if necessary.

Who is the supervisor?

Master Dissertation Supervisors must have a PhD degree or higher degree in psychology or related fields and be full time faculty of Psychology Department. It is typical that supervisor and student agree on a timeline of Dissertation research completing and on the schedule of supervision meetings.

Procedure for appointing a supervisor. The student has the preferential right to choose a supervisor, and vice versa, the Department decides taking into account students' preferences. In the event that a student finds it difficult to do so, a supervisor may be appointed by the department.

Functions

The supervisor

- approves the purpose, objectives, and methodological approach of the senior thesis ***required**;
- directs the student's work and makes sure that all required sections are included, written in accordance with the chosen topic and senior abstract requirements, and submitted on time;
- if necessary, approves the schedule and milestones of the student's interim reports on the status of work.
- makes sure that the student has the necessary knowledge and skills, and helps to get access to the necessary resources, technical and financial assistance;
- advises the student on theoretical, methodological, stylistic and other issues of writing abstracts and systematically provides an adequate feedback;
- evaluates the work done and, on the basis of this assessment, recommends the student in writing for participation in the (1) symposium, (2) pre-defense and (3) defense. ***required.**

The student

- is fully responsible for the timely and high-quality preparation and submission of senior abstracts ***required**;
- initiates the receipt of advice and assistance from the supervisor;
- If necessary, at his own initiative or at the request of the supervisor, he draws up a work schedule and submits it for approval by the supervisor;
- identify and collect all the necessary materials, processes and discuss it, writes the text and present the senior theses according the schedule approved by the supervisor ***required.**

The Department

- organizes the process as a whole;

- makes deadlines and expectations clear for both students and supervisors;
- institutionalizes experiences and lessons learned in collaboration and on the initiative of supervisors, other faculty and students;
- ensures that relevant documentation complies with the requirements of higher authorities;
- ensures timely updating of documentation, storage and access to it for all interested parties.

The timing

Every supervisee has right to get supervisor's assistance for two hours per month per student, in the form of face-to-face consultations or in correspondence via email (20 min per e-mail) or other channels of communication. The time spent reading senior thesis texts is not included in this calculation.

This is the guaranteed minimum. The Supervisor may decide to give the student more time, but this is not required. This norm is introduced to avoid overloading the supervisor on peak days and reducing the quality of his work, especially in the last months before the pre-defense (in the spring semester).

It is forbidden to demand more hours.

Change of supervisor

The student can change the supervisor at will.

The supervisor can also be changed at the initiative of the current supervisor. In particular (but not only) the reason may be the systematic failure of the student to comply with the requirements of the current supervisor.

The burden of negotiating with previous and new supervisors rests entirely with the student. The final decision is confirmed by a letter from the student, which is sent to the former and new supervisors, to which both supervisors agree. This correspondence is copied by the student to the Department of Psychology.

The interaction between the supervisor and faculty who provides a seminar

If necessary, the supervisor can ask the faculty, leading the senior seminar, about how the student works and the difficulties he encounters when performing work on the course. Close cooperation between the course instructor and the supervisor will ensure a better understanding of the student's problems and gaps and effective counseling to overcome them.

The formal non-admission of the student to continue work on the project

A student may not be allowed to continue working on a senior thesis in case of systematic (5 times and more) violations of the deadlines for submitting the material for unjustified reasons, submitting the material in an inappropriate condition, as well as ignoring the requirements of the supervisor.

The exclusive competence of the Department

The department is the final authority that accepts, evaluates and approves the senior thesis. The supervisor is not administratively associated with the evaluation result and approving.

Important deadlines for thesis timeline that might affect the grade for thesis:

Choice of topic and supervisor – May of 3rd year

Research Symposium – October-November of 4th year

IRB application – after Research Symposium, November 4th year

Pre-defense – March of 4th year

Defense – May of 4th year