

Guidance and Resources for CHC Primary Thesis Advisors

Contents

- p. 2 [Introduction to the CHC Thesis Project](#)
- p. 2 [Overview of Primary Thesis Advisor Responsibilities](#)
- p. 5 [Thesis Committee Roles and Responsibilities](#)
- p. 6 [Thesis Evaluation Criteria](#)

Do you have a concern or question not answered in this document?

- The CHC website has detailed information on the thesis including [an overview](#), [defense and submission instructions](#), and an extensive [FAQ](#).
- If you are a **prospective primary thesis advisor** and have questions you would like answered before agreeing to work with a student, please contact Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies Daphne Gallagher (daphne@uoregon.edu).
- If you are a **current Primary Thesis Advisor** and have questions about procedural aspects of the thesis, please contact or refer students to the CHC's Academic and Thesis Programs Manager Miriam Jordan (mjordan@uoregon.edu). Miriam can also connect you with the CHC representative on the thesis committee or with a student's HC 477H Thesis Prospectus instructor.
- If you are a **current Primary Thesis Advisor** and have questions or concerns related to academic and student success topics such as difficult student situations, clarification of CHC evaluation criteria, clarification of committee roles, etc. please start by consulting with the CHC representative on the committee. You may elevate concerns to Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies Daphne Gallagher (daphne@uoregon.edu).

Introduction to the CHC Thesis Project

The CHC thesis project is an opportunity for students to combine the knowledge and skills they have gained in their major with the critical reasoning and communication skills they have developed through their core education in the CHC. Since CHC students are enrolled in every major on campus, the CHC's thesis requirements accommodate different disciplinary norms and expectations, as well as diverse career readiness goals.

It is important to convey to students that theses are diverse in form and can encompass creative and professional projects as well as scholarly research. While there is always a written component, the project should not necessarily be conceptualized as a long research paper. The length and format of a student's thesis will depend on their project and field of study, although we encourage primary thesis advisors to be mindful of the fact that their advisees are completing honors theses and not master's projects. The CHC relies on the expertise of the primary thesis advisor, who can help ensure that a student's thesis project is an appropriate senior capstone for their field of study. Please see this comprehensive [overview of the CHC thesis process](#).

Each CHC thesis project is supervised by a [two-person committee](#) consisting of:

- The **Primary Thesis Advisor**: a tenure-related or career faculty member at the UO who is a specialist in the student's field of study. The primary thesis advisor mentors them throughout the thesis process, providing regular guidance and feedback.
 - *If you are not career or tenure-related UO faculty but would like to serve as a PTA, please contact Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies Daphne Gallagher (daphne@uoregon.edu).*
- The **CHC Representative**: a member of the CHC core faculty who typically provides a non-specialist perspective on the project and assists with process related questions and issues.

Committees may include a third committee member. Addition of a third committee member is ultimately at your discretion as primary thesis advisor (except in the case of students enrolled in the 3+3 law program, which requires a committee member from the law school). Third members are frequently graduate students or post-doctoral scholars who have worked closely with the student. In some cases, the major department requires a second faculty member from the major department to ensure simultaneous fulfillment of departmental honors requirements.

Overview of Primary Thesis Advisor Responsibilities

As an expert in the field of study, primary thesis advisors are responsible for ensuring that student projects employ project design, methods, and frameworks appropriate to the thesis field. They guide the student in focusing their project and preparing a thesis prospectus, meet with the student regularly, provide feedback on the project, participate in the oral defense, and approve the final version of the thesis.

The Thesis Prospectus Class

CHC students are required to recruit a primary thesis advisor prior to registering for HC 477H Thesis Prospectus (a 2 credit P/NP required class). They work with their primary thesis advisor while enrolled in the class. As primary thesis advisor, you will be asked to:

- agree to work with the student (you will receive a confirmation email when the student registers for HC 477H and lists you as their Primary Thesis Advisor)
- meet with the student during the term and provide feedback on their prospectus
- attend an in-class oral prospectus presentation (~30 minutes including Q&A), or, if you are not able to attend the presentation, consult with the HC 477H instructor on alternative options
- sign-off on the final version of the prospectus at the end of the term

While the CHC faculty member teaching the course will provide generalized guidance on the writing of the prospectus, the student will need your disciplinary expertise to ensure that their planned project is well-conceived, contextualized within the field, and appropriately scoped.

Mentoring the Thesis

The CHC recognizes that different fields have their own expectations and norms around the mentorship of student thesis projects and that faculty have different mentoring styles. As a baseline, we expect that primary thesis advisors will:

- early in the thesis process, share expectations around topics such as preferred modes of communication, meeting frequency, and lead time needed to provide feedback on drafts
- meet regularly with their advisees
- provide clear expectations and substantive intellectual and practical guidance for the project
- ensure the student obtains any needed research permissions (e.g., human subjects)
- review the thesis draft and provide feedback prior to circulation of the thesis to the full committee for the defense

Students may also ask you to supervise [independent study credits related to the thesis](#), which can be offered through your home department or the CHC. Scheduling of regular meetings, follow-through on faculty guidance, provision of drafts with sufficient time for feedback, and completion of the project is ultimately the student's responsibility (see [Thesis Committee Roles and Responsibilities](#)). However, please keep in mind that for most students this is their first time completing a project of this scope; your patience and mentorship are appreciated. If a student stops communicating, please contact the CHC representative on the committee.

The Thesis Defense

The CHC thesis defense serves as both an evaluation of the thesis and an opportunity to celebrate the student's accomplishment. It consists of a 20-30 minute presentation from the student, Q&A from the committee and audience, and private deliberation by the committee with immediate conveyance of the result to the student. The thesis defense must take place by the **Friday of Week 9** in the defense term. The thesis defense typically takes place from two terms to a full year after the HC 477H term.

The primary thesis advisor is expected to:

- mentor the student in their preparation for the defense (presentation and Q&A)
- read the thesis and provide feedback at or immediately following the defense on needed final changes to the text
- attend and participate in the defense, including evaluation of the thesis in accordance with disciplinary standards and the [CHC thesis evaluation criteria](#)
- review and sign off on the final version of the thesis

Scheduling: Students are responsible for scheduling the date and time for their defense as well as reserving a room (or setting up a zoom link). We encourage students to consult with their primary thesis advisor as to whether there is an available space for the defense in their department; if not, the CHC will assist in identifying a location. The Academic Thesis and Programs Manager will send an email confirming the defense date, time, and location approximately 20 days in advance of the defense. The student should circulate a final copy of the thesis which has been [formatted according to the CHC's specifications](#) to the committee and to the Academic Thesis and Programs manager 10 calendar days before the defense. If the student has not circulated the defense draft of the thesis in that timeframe, the primary thesis advisor and CHC representative may ask the student to postpone the defense.

Confirmation: Following circulation of the draft, the CHC representative will initiate an email conversation re-confirming the date, time, and location of the defense, communicating about logistics, reminding the committee of the CHC evaluation criteria, and ensuring that the thesis will meet CHC requirements for completion. This not only ensures a smooth process (e.g., Who will facilitate? Who will introduce the student? Will the audience or the committee ask questions first?), but also gives committee members a chance to ask questions and surface any concerns in advance of the defense. If there are serious concerns that that the student will not pass the defense, the CHC representative will consult with the CHC Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies. Defenses in which a decision of “Not Completed” is expected should not go forward.

Evaluation: During deliberations, the committee will determine whether the student has successfully completed the thesis requirement. The primary thesis advisor will bring their disciplinary expertise to the evaluation of the thesis following the [CHC thesis evaluation criteria](#). Keep in mind that all students, even those whose thesis is considered “Complete” at the time of the defense, may make minor revisions prior to submitting the final document. “Decision Withheld Pending Revisions” is only for situations in which the committee determines that the thesis requirement cannot be considered complete unless the requested revisions are made. If revisions are needed, make sure there is a clear plan in place to communicate them to the student; typically, the primary thesis advisor takes the lead in supervising revisions. If the thesis is of a particularly high caliber, we encourage you to nominate the thesis for a CHC thesis award. The CHC will send you an email with a link to the nomination form within a week of the defense.

Following Up: Following the defense, the CHC representative will send an email with the other committee member(s) and the student cc’d notifying the CHC’s Academic and Thesis Programs Manager of the outcome. The primary thesis advisor will typically meet with the student shortly following the defense to convey any suggested or required edits to the thesis. Unless the committee decides otherwise, the primary thesis advisor is solely responsible for reviewing revisions and signing off on the final thesis.

Final Submission of the Thesis

The student will electronically submit their thesis to the CHC by noon on the Thursday of Week 10 in the term in which the defense took place. The student should share the final version of the thesis with their primary advisor prior to submitting it. Once the student has uploaded the document, an automated email will be sent to the primary thesis advisor notifying them that the final thesis has been submitted. If you have not approved the final version, please follow the directions in the email to reach out to the CHC.

The CHC encourages students to archive their theses on Scholars’ Bank, where they may opt to make the thesis publicly available or restrict access to those on the UO campus.

Thesis Committee Roles and Responsibilities

	Student	Primary Thesis Advisor	CHC Representative	Academic Thesis and Programs Manager Miriam Jordan
DESIGN YOUR PROJECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain a foundation in your field through coursework Generate ideas for thesis Build relationships with faculty Enroll in HC 277H Thesis Orientation Ask faculty to serve as committee members Submit application to take HC 477H Thesis Prospectus and enroll in the class Meet with your primary thesis advisor regularly about your thesis plan beginning early in the term you take HC 477H 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a considered decision regarding commitment to mentor student as primary thesis advisor Discuss field-specific mentoring expectations with advisee Mentor advisee as they refine their project concept Work with advisee on thesis plan as they take 477H and attend a 30-minute in-class oral presentation Sign off on final version of thesis prospectus at end of 477H 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree to serve when asked or assist student in finding an alternative CHC representative if unavailable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist students with registration issues around HC 477H Check eligibility of committee members Maintain list of available CHC representatives
ACT ON YOUR IDEAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up meetings and communicate regularly with primary thesis advisor Follow through on commitments to project and primary thesis advisor Seek out grant funding as appropriate If doing collaborative work, follow guidance Take steps necessary to obtain any needed research permissions (e.g., human subjects) Keep full committee up to date on progress and projected defense term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to advisee questions and be reasonably available for meetings Provide regular feedback and guidance Supervise independent study thesis credits if asked and available to do so Write letters to support appropriate grant funding applications Ensure advisee obtains any needed research permissions (e.g., human subjects) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer questions from student and primary thesis advisor about CHC processes Support student when challenges arise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer questions from student and primary thesis advisor about CHC processes
SHARE THE RESULTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide drafts to primary thesis advisor with ample time for feedback Engage productively with primary thesis advisor feedback Schedule defense and reserve room Circulate final, primary thesis advisor approved copy of formatted thesis to committee and CHC 10 calendar days before defense Prepare for oral defense Make needed revisions promptly Submit final thesis and Scholars' Bank authorization form to CHC If applicable, fulfill any dissemination/archiving steps required by research group or permissions (e.g., human subjects) and close out process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review draft of thesis and provide feedback in advance of circulation to CHC representative and any additional committee members Mentor advisee in preparation for the defense (for their presentation and Q&A) Attend the defense, including evaluation of the thesis in accordance with CHC and disciplinary standards Review final draft of thesis and communicate any required revisions to the thesis to the advisee If appropriate, nominate advisee for CHC thesis award Approve final submitted version of the thesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read the thesis, providing feedback from a generalist perspective Share CHC evaluation criteria with the committee, attend the defense, and participate in evaluation of thesis Send an email to CHC's Academic and Thesis Programs Manager Miriam Jordan after the defense notifying her of the outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm scheduled defenses Facilitate pre-defense formatting review process Check final theses for formatting issues Submit final approved thesis to Scholars' Bank Notify registrar's office that thesis requirement is completed

After a thesis defense, Clark Honors College thesis committee members evaluate the quality of the overall thesis project and make a decision. The decisions are:

- **Completed:** The student has produced work that is satisfactory in the five evaluation areas. Students may make minor revisions prior to final submission of the thesis.
- **Decision Withheld:** In cases where revisions are required for the thesis to be considered completed, the committee may opt to withhold their decision. A timeline should be set for completion of revisions that provides time for them to be reviewed and the thesis submitted by the Thursday of Week 10 at noon.
- **Not Completed:** This decision is for work that is unacceptable in most or all of the five areas. Very few Clark Honors College theses are given a "Not Completed" evaluation, not only because of the general high quality of the work turned in by Clark Honors College students, but also because thesis committee members discourage students from standing for oral examination if they are not prepared and the committee members have not read and approved of the thesis, at least conditionally.

The evaluation must reflect the student's performance in the following five areas:

Initiative and Self-Direction:

- independence and initiative to conceive and see a project through to completion
- evidence of strong problem-solving skills
- productive, proactive, and effective communication with their committee

Relevance and/or Originality of Project:

- ability to conceive of a project topic that is highly relevant within the field and for society more broadly
- poses a problem that demonstrates critical analysis and interpretation or creative engagement
- asks relevant research questions or situates project in a way that builds on four years of study within a specific major and within a particular area

Project Quality and Mastery:

- demonstrates use of relevant methods, skills, and practices to thoroughly and effectively investigate a research topic or complete a project according to the standards of the field
- shows mastery of the relevant content, data, secondary literature, and research material; logically and clearly articulates the project goals, research questions, arguments, and/or outcomes
- shows mastery of information related to the project topic, field, and discipline
- demonstrates concrete evidence of critical analysis and interpretation

Writing Quality:

- ability to conceive, frame, and convey arguments eloquently and with compelling evidence
- demonstrates one's own intellectual contributions and conclusions that are accurate and compelling to their audience
- ability to organize project documentation with sophisticated ideas in a clear, well-organized, structured, accessible way
- the writing adheres to discipline-specific styles while also speaking across fields and audiences
- clear and concise writing that is free of errors and uses correct citation style for the field

Oral Defense Quality:

- delivered a well-organized, engaging, and polished presentation with information that is accurate and compelling
- showed ability to communicate orally one's project questions, arguments, results, and broader conclusions
- conveyed complex and difficult concepts clearly to both specialists and a broad audience
- demonstrated capacity to think in the moment and respond effectively to questions from the thesis committee and audience

Thesis Evaluation Checklist (Optional):

Initiative and Self-direction	Research Questions and Topic	Research Quality and Mastery	Writing Style and Quality	Quality of Oral Defense
<input type="checkbox"/> Superior	<input type="checkbox"/> Superior	<input type="checkbox"/> Superior	<input type="checkbox"/> Superior	<input type="checkbox"/> Superior
<input type="checkbox"/> Very Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Good
<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory
<input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable	<input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable Research Quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable	<input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable	<input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable

Thesis Award Nominations (For Theses That Are Superior in Every Category):

Prize-winning theses evoke comments from advisors such as "a model for future students"; "deserves to be published as a scholarly article"; "comparable to doctoral work"; "stunning". Students who win these prizes maintained a strong academic record, while independently designing and executing research projects. They not only wrote flawless theses, but performed at the highest level in the oral thesis defense.

We ask the committee to consider whether the thesis should be nominated for one or more of the CHC thesis awards (while a thesis may be nominated for more than one award, they may only win one). Following the defense, primary thesis advisors will be provided with information on how to submit their nominations.

- **The President's Award**, the oldest and most prestigious commencement award, is given for an outstanding scholastic record at the University of Oregon and completion of a thesis of especially distinguished quality.
- **The Aaron Novick Award**, named in honor of the world-renowned scientist and founding head of the UO Institute of Molecular Biology, recognizes a student or students who have conducted especially distinguished research in the field of science.
- **The Robert D. Clark Award** commemorates our college's founder and rewards a commitment to the liberal arts as well as an impressive thesis.
- **The Barbara Corrado Pope Award**, named in honor of a former director of the Clark Honors College and head of the UO Women's Studies Department, recognizes a distinguished thesis in the area of diversity, including gender and ethnic studies.
- **The Henry Melton Alley Literary Thesis Award**, named in honor of a Clark Honors College emeritus professor with a strong commitment to the development of writing skills, recognizes a distinguished thesis and thesis defense in the area of literary criticism or creative writing. It was first awarded in 2008.
- **The Scientific Frontiers Award**: This award goes to distinguished theses that demonstrate innovative scientific techniques or novel trans-disciplinary approaches to solving problems on the leading edge of scientific research.
- **The Creative Thesis Award** recognizes a distinguished thesis of a creative nature.
- **The Interdisciplinary Thesis Award** honors a thesis that crosses the boundaries of traditional academic disciplines.
- **The International Thesis Award** goes to a distinguished thesis that involves significant research abroad, or in second-language sources. It was first awarded in 2009.
- **The Applied Research Award**: This award goes to distinguished theses that implement novel scientific research approaches for real-world applications. For example, topics might include resource management and distribution, global climate change, medical field applications, etc.
- **The Social Justice Thesis Award** recognizes a thesis that demonstrates a strong commitment to social and political causes for the betterment of society. It was first awarded in 2012.
- **The Social Sciences Thesis Award** recognizes a distinguished thesis in a social science field.
- *(Award for Exemplary Service)* **The Robert D. Clark Service Award**, is awarded when a graduating senior has made remarkable contributions to the CHC community.