

# Preparation of the EAS Senior Thesis Guidelines

January 18, 2019

**Introduction:** Students who wish to devote themselves to pursuing an original research question in East Asian Studies under the guidance of our faculty may consider undertaking an EAS Senior Thesis. Completing a Senior Thesis requires a substantial investment of time and work corresponding to two full-semester “regular” courses (students pursuing a Senior Thesis enroll in 99D Senior Research for both fall and spring semesters). Successful conclusion of the Senior Thesis requires a deep interest in the subject, on-going collaboration with one’s thesis advisor(s), and dedicated hard work throughout the academic year. In order to be eligible to write a thesis, the interested senior must have an EAS GPA of 3.5 or better.

The following set of guidelines is intended to let the candidate know what is expected, including the timing and deadlines for certain milestones in the thesis preparation process. Most of the scheduling of meetings, drafts, etc. is arranged solely between the student and the Principal Advisor (PA). However, as a major departmental/program and university enterprise, the senior thesis process should at certain times during the year (e.g., the defense) be accessible to all EAS faculty and students. The thesis-writing process will also be bounded by established deadlines set by the University Registrar.

Here are the critical steps:

1. Prior to the beginning of the fall semester or no later than the first week:

Interested thesis candidates should contact one or more prospective thesis advisors - preferably before the end of the junior spring semester or during the summer prior to the senior fall semester. That meeting or meetings will give the candidate an opportunity to discuss with faculty members specific subjects/questions of research interest, including the feasibility of investigating these issues in a senior thesis. Preferable, the student will have taken a course with the advisor, so that the student has an established sense of the advisor’s area of expertise, expectations, and style of advising. This is preferable but not required.

2. Within 2 weeks following the first day of fall classes, the candidate and PA need to attend to the following:
  - a. The candidate prepares a thesis prospectus (two or more pages with a preliminary annotated bibliography) to be discussed with the faculty Primary Advisor (PA). If an interested senior does not have a PA, then the senior should discuss advising options with the Senior Thesis Program Coordinator (Senior Thesis Coordinator), who presently is also the Chair of the EAS Program.
  - b. The PA presents the prospectus either at the first EAS faculty meeting of the academic year or through email communication with the other members of the EAS faculty. The purpose of the general faculty review is to inform the faculty of major intellectual and academic initiatives within the EAS program, to solicit useful feedback and suggestions in support of the thesis enterprise, and to determine which faculty may be interested in serving as the second and third readers for the thesis and its eventual defense.
3. Sometime prior to the end of the fall semester, the Senior Thesis Coordinator, in coordination with the active thesis writers and their PAs will schedule a meeting for all of the thesis writers.

- a. The purpose of the meeting is to enable each thesis candidate to have a short (e.g., 30 minutes) presentation and discussion with the faculty. All thesis writers are expected to attend. The meeting

allows the thesis candidates an opportunity to share and discuss with the EAS faculty and with fellow students the work, progress, and strategy for completing the thesis, and any challenges arising from the project.

- b. All EAS faculty will be invited to the meeting. Some five days prior to the meeting, the thesis candidates will distribute drafts of their fall semester work to the EAS faculty members.
- c. In some cases, it may be evident that the topic or progress or both are not suitable for a completed senior thesis. In this case, the senior thesis seminar (EAS99d) can be converted to a one-semester EAS independent study (EAS98a).
- d. Whether the student continues with the Senior Thesis or switches to an independent study, the PA will assign a grade for the fall semester.

4. If the second and third readers have not been recruited prior to the end of the fall semester, the student, PA, and Senior Thesis Coordinator shall discuss and decide on the faculty that would be appropriate to serve as second and third readers for the project. At least two of the three committee members must have their primary appointment with different departments.

5. Completion and distribution of the thesis.

- a. For continuing theses, in or about the first week of April, on a date agreed upon by the PA and the candidate, the candidate will submit a complete draft of the thesis to the PA and to the Second and Third Readers.
- b. The PA and the Second and Third Readers may offer feedback to the student leading to revision and editing of the thesis.

6. At least two weeks before the end of classes the student and the readers plan for a defense.

- a. The candidate shall coordinate with the PA and two readers and with the help of the Program Administrator to set a time and location for the oral defense of the thesis. The defense shall occur prior to the end of the exam period.
- b. At least 5 days prior to the scheduled defense, the student will provide each member of the defense committee with a copy of the thesis to be defended.

7. The defense.

- a. Immediately following the defense, the student shall vacate the room, so that the members of the committee can discuss and decide whether or not to recommend the project for honors to the full EAS faculty. They may inform the candidate of their decision to recommend or not to recommend some form of honors. If the committee decides to recommend honors, they shall decide what level of honors (basic, high, highest) to recommend to the full faculty. The committee will not inform the candidate of the level of honors they intend to recommend.
- b. Members of the committee may request the student to implement minor revisions and edits to the thesis presented at the defense. The committee members shall agree on an agreed upon time for completion of the revisions prior to submitting the thesis to the Brandeis archives.

8. The end-of-year EAS faculty committee meeting.

The EAS faculty will discuss the theses, hear the recommendations, and decide for each thesis project whether to award departmental honors in EAS, and if so, determine the level of honors (i.e., no honor honors, high honors, or highest honors) for each thesis project. Following the decision of the full faculty, the PA may inform the thesis candidate of the level of departmental honors to be awarded.

9. The senior thesis candidate is responsible for meeting the relevant deadlines.