I. Responsibilities

Primary Thesis Advisor

The role of the primary thesis advisor is to coach the student through the process of producing a “publishable-quality, book-length manuscript.” The primary thesis advisor should be mindful of the thesis deadlines, should coach the student through whatever revisions are deemed necessary to meet the quality and length requirements, and is required to sign off on the thesis proposal and the completed thesis manuscript when, in the Advisor’s opinion, the quality and length requirements have been met.
Second Thesis Advisor

The role of the second thesis advisor is to give the student an additional perspective on the thesis project, to offer advice on revisions to meet the quality and length requirements, and to sign off on the completed thesis proposal and thesis manuscript when, in the Advisor’s opinion, the quality and length requirements have been met.

Student

The student, of course, is ultimately responsible for deciding what and how to revise. The student must be aware of all deadlines and is responsible for collecting signoffs from the Primary and Second Thesis Advisors and for making the proper submissions at all stages of the thesis process.

MFA Coordinator

It is the MFA Coordinator’s responsibility to inform the student and advisors of the process and deadlines, to assist the student and Advisors where necessary, to serve on the MFA Committee, to present submitted theses to the MFA Committee, and to represent the MFA Committee to the student and Advisors.

MFA Committee

A committee of WestConn faculty who teach in the MFA program, including the Coordinator, will review each thesis project for appropriate quality and length.

II. Thesis Proposal Process

Thesis Proposal

No later than Sept. 15 in the fall semester or no later than February 15 in the spring semester, the MFA Coordinator must receive from the student a thesis proposal. The proposal will follow these requirements:

- Must include a completed Thesis Proposal Form with signatures from all Thesis Advisors on a single sheet (see Appendix: Forms or download from http://www.wcsu.edu/writing/mfa/)
- Must include a prospectus and bibliography (see Prospectus and Bibliography in Section III)

Completed proposals will be reviewed by the MFA Committee as quickly as possible. If the committee requires changes, the student and the advisors will be notified immediately.
If a proposal fails to include any of the above elements, it will be returned to the student without review, and the student will be ineligible for graduation at the end of the current semester.

III. Thesis Project

Quality and Length

The student will produce a “publishable-quality book-length manuscript.” In genres where the book may not be an appropriate measure (such as screenwriting, PR/Marketing, etc.), substitute “performance-quality and -length manuscript,” “substantial, production-quality project,” or the equivalent measure.

The thesis project will also include a prospectus, an abstract, and a bibliography, all to be approved by the Advisors and the MFA Committee.

Standard for Quality

The publishable quality of the MFA thesis will be evaluated by the thesis advisors and by a committee that includes editors who regularly determine publishable quality of work and will do so here on the basis of whether the work:

- Offers a recognizably new or fresh perception or understanding to its subject
- Demonstrates solid awareness of its genre
- Demonstrates notable stylistic facility

Standard for Length

The committee has the following expectations of thesis length (lengths below refer to pages of actual text). These are guidelines only, not strict requirements. Any shorter project should be approved by the MFA Coordinator in advance.

- **Novel**: 200 pages or more
- **Short fiction (novellas, short stories)**: 150 pages or more; (flash fiction): 100 pages or more
- **Poetry**: 60 pages or more
- **Screenwriting**: at least one full-length feature
- **Stage**: Two or three works that combine to at least 180 minutes of stage time.
- **Nonfiction** (including investigative reporting, feature writing, etc.): 150 pages or more
- **Creative nonfiction**: 150 pages or more
- **Non-book project**: consult MFA Coordinator
Important Thesis Terms

Abstract—a short, objective description of the book for the use of archivists and researchers so that they can tell in a glance how to classify the thesis and/or whether or not it is useful to them in their research. The abstract is not a part of the proposal, but it will be required as part of the final thesis submission.

Bibliography—a list of works consulted in the process of completing the thesis. The bibliography must be submitted along with the prospectus and final thesis submission, and adhere to MLA format. The bibliography need not be annotated, but must show proof of a significant amount of reading and research.

Introduction—has two different meanings in the thesis process. First, it refers to the first section of the thesis proposal: whatever comes before the synopsis and then the bibliography. It can be longer than a couple paragraphs, and, ideally, it should be something more than just a summary for creative genres, but for non-fiction theses can be simply a summary. For thesis projects in poetry, drama, and short fiction, the introduction should tell the thesis committee a bit more about the project—maybe its genesis, its inspirations and influences, its goals, etc. It should give the thesis committee a frame within which to read the thesis (as in an artist’s statement). Secondly, when the final thesis project is submitted, the thesis prospectus (or a revision of it) becomes the “introduction” to the whole thesis project.

Prospectus—term used to describe the thesis proposal, submitted with a bibliography. Upon submission of final thesis project, the prospectus will serve as the “introduction” to the thesis. The prospectus (or a revision of it) will appear in its entirety at the beginning of the final submission; the bibliography should be placed at the end of the final thesis submission rather than after the prospectus.

Summary—one to a few paragraphs that describe the work as a whole and appear in the prospectus. Students should consult Prospectus and Bibliography below to determine whether or not the summary is necessary for their projects. Typically, agents for fiction and nonfiction books expect to see summaries in the proposal, so summaries are expected in thesis proposals in those genres.

Synopsis—appears in the prospectus of projects that require scene by scene; chapter by chapter; story by story; and/or section by section descriptions. Students should consult Prospectus and Bibliography below to determine whether or not the synopsis is appropriate for their projects.

Works Cited—appears in the prospectus before the bibliography (and then at the end of the introduction to the final thesis submission) if the prospectus refers to other works.
Prospectus and Bibliography

The student will submit early in the final semester a thesis prospectus and MLA-style research bibliography for approval by the Thesis Advisors and the MFA Committee.

If the thesis project does not require extensive research, the student instead will provide a bibliography of secondary texts that have been useful to the student during thesis production.

The committee has the following expectations for prospectus length:

- Nonfiction, Investigative Reporting, Feature Writing, other brands of journalism: 1250-2500 words following conventions of nonfiction book proposals
- Creative Nonfiction: 1000-1250 words following conventions of agent solicitation and synopsis
- Fiction: 1000-1500 words following conventions of agent solicitation and synopsis
- Poetry: 1000-1500 words in an artist’s statement
- Screenplay: 1000-1250 words of synopsis
- Stage: 1000-1500 words in a synopsis/artist’s statement
- PR/Marketing/Advertising/Technical Writing/Business Communications
  - Book: 1250-2500 words following conventions of nonfiction book proposals
  - Project(s): 1000-1500 words describing the scope, goals, and focus of the project(s)
- Other genres: Consult the MFA Coordinator

Thesis Format

Length
See Standard for Length above for expected length of thesis.

Style
The bibliography must be in MLA format. In the text, the student must follow the appropriate style for his/her genre (generally, MLA style for literary works, AP style for journalistic projects, PR/Marketing/Advertising, etc.). Follow MLA guidelines where there is no other genre-specific standard. Note that we do not use the medium tag at the end of bibliographical entries in the MFA program.

Layout
Students must use the Thesis Template available on the MFA website (http://www.wcsu.edu/writing/mfa). The template provides the proper order of sections and pagination elements. For layout, page design, tables and figures, etc. follow the guidelines in A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, Seventh
Edition, by Kate Turabian. If there are any contradictions between Turabian and the template, the template takes precedence.

*Paper*
Each page of the abstract, prospectus, and thesis must be provided on 20# paper of at least 25% rag content.

**Thesis Submission**

No later than two weeks before the end of the semester (and advisably earlier), two complete copies of the thesis submission must be received by the MFA Coordinator in separate thesis binders (the black cardboard spring-spine variety, also known as manuscript binders, are available through the campus bookstore or can be purchased online via a link at the MFA web page).

Each copy of the thesis submission must include the following parts in this order:

1. The “Fulfillment of the requirements for a MASTER’S THESIS” form (see Appendix or download from http://www.wcsu.edu/graduate/forms/thesis.pdf) with the top section completed (faxed signatures are acceptable, but all signatures must be on the same sheet)
2. The other elements of the Thesis as indicated in the Thesis Template.

In addition to the two copies of the thesis as described above, the submission must include six additional copies of the abstract.

**Thesis Review and Approval**

Soon after receiving the complete thesis submission, the MFA Committee will review and either approve or immediately return the thesis to the student with an explanation of required changes.

If the committee approves the thesis, the student will be informed immediately and the thesis will be passed to the Office of the Dean of Arts & Sciences.
IV. Summary of the Process for Thesis Advisors

1. Coach the student on the completion of a high-quality thesis project. Ensure that the thesis project meets the guidelines for length and quality described in Section II.
2. Review the student’s thesis prospectus and bibliography.
3. Sign off on the student’s Thesis Proposal form so that it can be submitted to the MFA Coordinator with signatures from both Thesis Advisors no later than September (Fall)/February (Spring) 15. Proposals received after this date will not be considered for end-of-semester graduation.
4. Sign off on the student’s Thesis Completion form early enough that the MFA Coordinator may receive no later than two weeks before the end of the semester (exact date TBD) the student’s thesis submission. Submissions received after this date will not be considered for end-of-semester graduation.

V. Summary of the Process for Students

1. Focus on the integrity of your book/project.
2. Compose a prospectus and a bibliography under the guidance of your Thesis Advisors.
3. Collect signatures from your Thesis Advisors on the Thesis Proposal Form and submit your proposal to the MFA Coordinator. It must be received in the MFA office no later than September (Fall)/February (Spring) 15. Proposals received after this date will not be considered for end-of-semester graduation. Note: the WestConn mail room is unreliable. You are strongly advised to use FedEx well in advance of the deadline.
5. Collect signatures from your Thesis Advisors on the “Fulfillment of the requirements for a MASTER’S THESIS” form and submit your completed thesis project to the MFA Coordinator. It must be received in the MFA office no later than two weeks before the end of the semester (exact date TBD). Proposals received after this date will not be considered for end-of-semester graduation. Note: the WestConn mail room is unreliable. You are strongly advised to use FedEx well in advance of the deadline.
VI. Deadlines

Thesis Proposal
Fall: September 15
Spring: February 15

Thesis Submission
Two weeks before the end of the semester (exact date TBD by MFA Coordinator)

VII. Additional Time

In the event that a student is unable to complete a thesis project to the satisfaction of the Thesis Advisors and the MFA Committee within the allotted time, the student may take a maximum of two additional years to satisfactorily complete and file the necessary copies of the thesis submission. The student may be required to register for “Continuous Registration” hours through the Graduate Studies office.

Appendix: Forms

See following pages.
MFA in Professional Writing
Thesis Proposal Form

This form must be completed and submitted with the thesis proposal to the MFA Coordinator no later than Sept. 15 for fourth-semester students in the fall or no later than Feb. 15 for fourth-semester students in the spring.

Candidate Name ________________________________________________________________

Preferred Email Address ________________________________________________________

Telephone # ______________________

Thesis Title _________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Thesis Genre _______________________

Signatures of the following thesis advisors and MFA Coordinator indicate their approval of the thesis proposal.

Primary Thesis Advisor _________________________________________________________

Name

__________________________________________

Signature*

___________________________

Date

Second Thesis Advisor _________________________________________________________

Name

__________________________________________

Signature*

___________________________

Date

Third Thesis Advisor (where appropriate) __________________________

Name

__________________________________________

Signature*

___________________________

Date

MFA Coordinator (on behalf of the MFA Committee) ____________________________

Name

__________________________________________

Signature

___________________________

Date
Western Connecticut State University
Fulfillment of the requirements for a
MASTERS’S THESIS

THESIS COMPLETION
Department: _____________________ Degree Program: _____________________
Student:

Name: ________________________ ID# ________________________
Thesis title: ______________________________________________________
Date Completed: ______________________
Thesis adviser(s): Sign below upon satisfactory completion of thesis requirement.

1. ___________________________________________________________
   2. _________________________________________________________

3. _________________________________________________________
   4. _________________________________________________________

PROGRAM AND DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW (as appropriate)
I have received a copy of the final version of the thesis as approved by the Department
and find it in compliance with the program and University requirements.

Program Coordinator ___________________________ Date ___________________________
Department Chair ___________________________ Date ___________________________

SCHOOL DEAN
I have received a copy of the final version of the thesis as approved by the Department
and find it in compliance with program and University requirements.

Dean ___________________________ School ___________________________ Date ___________________________

GRADUATE OFFICE
A copy of the thesis was submitted to the Graduate Office as evidence that the thesis
requirements has been met. The copy was forwarded to the University Library for
archiving.

For the Graduate Office ___________________________ Date ___________________________