

ENGLISH MA Thesis Prospectus: An Overview

Below is an overview of completing a thesis prospectus, a process that involves three steps:

- (1) forming a thesis committee,
- (2) writing the prospectus, and then
- (3) submitting it to the Graduate Studies Committee for approval.

What is a Prospectus?

Simply put, a prospectus is a proposal for your project, and, like most proposals, conveys several different kinds of information.

One way to look at such a document is to see it as **BOTH** a description of your excitement about pursuing an in-depth study or writing about a topic that greatly intrigues you **AND** as a document that informs other professionals about practical matters (who? what? when? why? and so on).

Here's a breakdown of the kinds of information your document should include:

Practical Information (about the document and the writing process)

1. What's the title of your project?
2. When do you plan on writing the thesis?
3. Who is your advisor? Who are your readers?
4. What is your timeline for completing the thesis?

Conceptual Information

1. What exactly are you proposing to write about?
2. What is the rationale for your project?
3. What is the scholarly/creative context for your project?
4. Does your project have parts or sections to it? What are these? How do they fit together? If you're writing a creative writing thesis, you should indicate approximate number of items (dependent on the genre) that you plan to write.
5. What is your preparation for completing this project? Have you taken classes in this (or related) area? Have you already written about this topic before?

Your Role in the Prospectus

This is your project. You should take control of it (before the prospectus stage) by setting up meetings (or corresponding with) potential advisors, and (after the prospectus) keeping to your timeline and continuing to seek guidance from your committee members.

Advisors & Readers

Selecting an advisor is the most important part in the process and one that takes time. If you're planning on writing a thesis within the next two semesters, you should begin selecting advisor right away. If you're not sure where or how to begin selecting an advisor, contact the Coordinator of Graduate Studies.

Typically students select the readers in consultation with the advisor. Readers are there to assist your project and you can choose readers for a variety of reasons. Readers **do not** have to be specialists in the field of your interest. Also, readers can be from other academic departments and even from outside of the university. You must have at least two readers, though you may have more if you choose to.

Your readers that they need to be present in the room at your defense. A thesis defense may be completed through an online video conference.

Submitting Your Prospectus

Once your advisor and your readers have approved your prospectus, you may then submit the prospectus to the Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Studies Committee using the online submission form below:

<https://www.eiu.edu/english/machform/view.php?id=15348>

Two Important Notes:

- (1) The submission form asks you to indicate how many credits of English 5950 (Thesis Writing) you want—3 or 6 credits. The Graduate Coordinator will enroll you in this course.
- (2) The material you provide in the “Brief Overview” section will be presented to the Graduate Studies Committee and the department at large. Therefore, it’s a good practice to work carefully with your thesis advisor on editing this language for outside readers.