

IDT 605 Graduate Thesis Guidelines

Each master's degree candidate in Instructional Design and Technology (IDT) must select and complete a capstone project from one of the following options: portfolio, applied project, and thesis. This document describes the thesis option.

A thesis is an experimental or qualitative research study. Students wishing to continue their education in an EdD or PhD program may want choose this option. The student should confer with the IDT Coordinator regarding the program's expectations about the nature of the thesis (e.g., quantitative or qualitative research methodology). Students choosing a thesis must complete 29 hours of coursework, plus the three-hour thesis course (IDT 605).

Thesis Advisory Committee

The thesis advisory committee consists of three IDT faculty members: a committee chair and two committee members. The chair of this committee is the thesis advisor and will direct the thesis planning and subsequent activities. The committee chair will assist with:

- Formation of plans for the thesis activity;
- Supervision of thesis activity and subsequent writing;
- Preparation of research protocol material for the Western Illinois University (WIU) Institutional Review Board (IRB); and
- IDT program and university procedures for completing and defending the thesis.

Thesis Procedures and Timeline

Permission to proceed with the production, assembling, and defense of the thesis is dependent on the completion of all requirements for the IDT master's degree. If necessary, a student may take one or two classes along with IDT 605 during the last semester, but it is strongly discouraged. The Western Illinois University's [Guidelines for Preparation and Submission of Theses and Dissertation](#) provides additional information on preparing the thesis report.

The procedures and timeline steps are described below:

1. After completing 15 to 18 hours of coursework, the student initiates a discussion of possible ideas for the thesis with the IDT Program Coordinator. For example, options may be explored about the student's purpose in doing a thesis, its focus, possible faculty members to work with, possible audiences for content, and a potential timeframe.
2. The student contacts an IDT graduate faculty member to see if the faculty member is available to serve as the thesis committee chair. The IDT Program Coordinator can help the student identify a possible committee chair.
3. The student submits a completed IDT 605 Request for a Thesis Graduate Advising Committee Form. Note that the faculty member must agree to serve as the chair and simply identifying this person on the form is not sufficient. The form must be submitted at least eight weeks before the last day of the semester prior to the semester the student plans to register for IDT 605. The student will be notified when a committee chair and members have been assigned.

4. Once the thesis committee has been assigned, the student will dialog with the committee chair about a thesis plan for the project. The plan must be three to five pages in length and contain a description of the following components:
 - Purpose
 - Research statement
 - Research questions or hypothesis
 - Brief description of the methodology planned (e.g., survey, interview, (quasi) experimental design, etc.)
 - Conceptual framework of relevant existing studies and projects (1/2 page)
 - Evaluation plan (1 page)
 - Project timeline
 - Literature review (month/date estimate)
 - WIU Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for research
 - Data collection and analysis
 - Oral defense
5. Once the thesis plan has been approved by the committee chair, the student can enroll in IDT 605 by completing the IDT 605 Request for a Thesis Graduate Advising Committee Form and obtaining the committee chair's signature. The thesis plan must be attached to the form.
6. Once the request form and thesis plan has been approved and signed by the committee chair, the chair will then submit them to the IDT Program Coordinator who will review the form and contact you that the material is approved. At that time, you can register for IDT 605.
7. In communication with the committee chair, the student will write a proposal that consists of the first three chapters of the thesis. When the committee chair deems the proposal ready for review by the committee, he/she will share the proposal with the other committee members for approval. The committee may request a meeting with the student before approving the project.

Students are to send draft versions of the proposal to the committee chair, not to the other committee members unless there is agreement to do so. **The student may not begin the thesis until the proposal has received approval from the committee.**

8. If the thesis involves the participation of human subjects, the student must work with the committee chair to fill out the IRB form (http://www.wiu.edu/sponsored_projects/compliance/hs_human_subjects.php) and obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB).
9. Once the proposal and the IRB material have been approved, the student will work directly with the committee chair in completing the thesis activities (e.g., creating and implementing solutions; and collecting and analyzing data).
10. Once the activities of the thesis have been completed, the student will continue to work directly with the committee chair to write up the final chapters of the thesis report. When the committee chair deems the final report is ready, he/she will share it with the other committee members for feedback, suggestions, and/or approval.

At least two weeks of turn-around time is expected when any of the committee members and chair reviews the thesis work or updates submitted. Therefore, the IDT Program encourages the student to submit the best and most complete work to reduce rounds of waiting. All communications between the student and the members must go through the committee chair.

Note: In planning the timeline for oral defense or graduation, the student must understand that: a) this step of writing the final report is a time consuming process, b) it normally requires a few or several revisions when working with the committee chair, c) the chair (and also the committee members) requires up to two weeks for reviewing any update, and d) the final report must be approved by the committee before the student inquires about the oral defense timeline.

The approved final thesis report must follow Western Illinois University's [Guidelines for Preparation and Submission of Theses and Dissertation](#). American Psychological Association (APA) style guidelines must also be followed.

11. Once the committee has determined that the final thesis report is ready for a defense, the defense may be scheduled on WIU's Macomb campus at least two weeks prior to the end of any semester/term. Online defenses must be approved by the committee.
12. Note that the student needs to be in his/her last semester when the thesis is defended. Any exception to the defense date must be approved by the committee chair. If a student cannot complete the defense by the end of the planned semester, different requirements apply based on the student's starting year. If that situation happens or is expected, those who started in Fall 2013 or later must register for the one-credit hour course, UNIV 695, for each semester until the thesis is defended. For more information, see the [Continuous Enrollment in Thesis, Dissertation, or Exit Option](#). If a student does not complete the defense in the semester that he/she is registered for IDT 605, then the student will receive an incomplete. The student will have up to one year to complete the IDT 605 requirements.

The student will defend his/her thesis in a formal defense meeting with the thesis committee. After the defense and committee questioning, the student will be asked to leave the room while the committee makes a decision: pass without changes, pass with (minor or major) changes, or do not pass. The committee will then call in the student to hear the decision and discuss any needed revisions. A student cannot pass IDT 605 until the committee approves the thesis defense and report. If revisions are requested at the time of the oral defense, such revisions must be completed and approved by the committee chair. Other faculty members, students, and family may attend the presentation but will be asked to leave before the committee meets to make a decision.

13. After the committee has signed the approval forms, the student will submit the Thesis/Dissertation Approval form to the School of Graduate Studies as well as submit documentation to the ProQuest server. See Guidelines for Preparation and Submission of Theses and Dissertation for more information on this process.
14. Students must fill out and submit an Application for Graduate by the due date stated on the School of Graduate Studies website. It is the student's responsibility to make final arrangements with the Archives Office and to make two copies of the thesis, one for the IDT Program and one for the director.
15. An incomplete or "I" grade in IDT 605 must be cleared within one year after enrollment in the course. Oral exams will not be scheduled during the final two weeks of a semester, or during the last week of the summer semester.