MA PROGRAM HANDBOOK

Updated July 2019
Graduating Class 2021 and beyond
Dear Students:

Welcome to the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study and Human Development at Tufts University! This handbook is a guide for current students enrolled in our MA program. For additional information on the program and faculty, students should refer to the Eliot-Pearson website, http://ase.tufts.edu/epcshd/. For information on guidelines for graduate study at Tufts University, students should refer to the Tufts’ Office of Graduate and Professional Studies Bulletin or visit their website http://gradstudy.tufts.edu/. If after reading the guide you have questions, you should consult with your program advisor or with Dr. Tama Leventhal, Director of Graduate Studies. On behalf of the Department, we are glad that you have joined us in our work to understand and serve children, youth, and families in the 21st century, and we welcome you as a part of our community.

Marina Umaschi Bers, PhD
Professor and Chair
Master Program in Child Study and Human Development

The Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study and Human Development is committed to making an impact on the lives of children, youth, and families. The department provides a vibrant, interdisciplinary community dedicated to applied research and preparing students for a variety of careers. This commitment is part of Eliot-Pearson’s foundation.

With a long history rooted in Abigail Eliot’s pioneering work establishing one of the nation’s first early childhood teacher preparation programs, Eliot-Pearson became an academic department within Tufts University in 1964. Since then, it has grown into a major interdisciplinary department focused on the study of children and families and the education of undergraduates and graduate students. A research/practice integration focus informs all aspects of an Eliot-Pearson education. Our research and teaching include every major influence on children’s and adolescents’ lives, including parenting, education, clinical-medical care, media and technology, and public policy. This work also focuses on issues of equity, diversity, and social justice so as to create more just and inclusive communities for children and youth from all backgrounds.

Eliot-Pearson’s location in the Boston area provides a wide variety of applied opportunities in teaching hospitals, clinics, therapeutic centers, museums, schools, after-school programs, juvenile justice facilities, the Massachusetts state government, children’s media and technology companies, and hundreds of agencies, organizations serving children and families and some of the organizations creating cutting-edge children’s media and technology programs and products. It also offers an applied setting, the Eliot-Pearson Children’s School (EPCS), one of the nation’s first research-based early childhood lab schools, located onsite in the department.

All entering MA students take the Master’s Proseminar in their first year and begin charting their course through the program and decide whether to pursue the thesis or applied track. This handbook provides further details on the MA Program.

Requirements for the MA Program

Each student is required to complete a minimum of 32 credits or semester hour units (SHU’s) as part of the fulfillment of the requirements for the Master’s degree.

The general MA program requirements, typically referred to as Individual Program of Study (IPS), are as follows:

- Master’s Proseminar, during 1st year, every other week (2 SHU’s)
  Course covers program requirements, professional development, and supplements course work

\[1\] Department name change was voted by Department in Fall, 2013 and approved by Board of Trustees, May 2014.
• 2 Foundation Courses (6 SHU’s)
  • Theories of Human Development, CSHD 211 (required)
  • One of the following:
    Advanced Intellectual Development: CSHD 151 or approved alternate
    Language Development: CSHD 155 or approved alternate
    Advanced Personal & Social Development: CSHD 161, 261 or approved alternate
    Infancy: Prenatal to Age Three: CSHD 163
    Adolescent Development and the Transition to Adulthood: CSHD 168
    Applied Developmental Science: CSHD 248

• 1 Research Methods Course (3 SHU’s)
  Research Design and Methods, CSHD 142
  Qualitative and Ethnographic Methods, CSHD 144
  Program Evaluation, CSHD 247

• 5 Electives Courses (15 SHU’s; at least 9 SHU’s must be from CSHD listings)
  Student should choose elective courses in careful consultation with advisor to prepare for
  internship or thesis; these courses are intended to develop an area of expertise or complete a
  concentration.

Applied or Thesis Track
Each student chooses whether to complete the applied or the thesis track. Students seeking
experience working in a setting with or on behalf of children, youth, and families typically
complete the applied track, and students seeking to complete an independent research project
typically complete the thesis track. Each track has the following requirements:

Applied. As described, Eliot-Pearson’s location in the Boston area provides a wide variety of
applied opportunities. Our faculty are well connected with agencies in and around Boston and
students on the applied track will be offered help in obtaining relevant and meaningful graduate
internships. Students may also explore websites of potential internships but may not contact a
site before meeting with the Applied Experiences Coordinator. Students pursuing the applied
track must complete and submit the “Master’s Program Applied Track Pre-Placement Graduate
Internship Information Sheet,” current resume, and unofficial transcript to the Applied
Experiences Coordinator by the end of their first year. The Pre-Placement Graduate Information
Sheet will be distributed at the start of spring semester and students are encouraged to submit as
early as possible to insure time to solidify placements.

All students on the applied track must enroll in CSHD 203: Graduate Internship and Seminar for
the entire second year (total of 6 SHUs), by enrolling for 3 SHUs in the fall semester and 3 SHUs
in the spring semester. This year-long course is inclusive of the required 225 graduate internship
hours and seminar. The Graduate Internship and Seminar (CSHD 203) meets bi-weekly
throughout the fall and spring semesters and requires a set of written assignments, a capstone
presentation, and culminates in a capstone paper. All applied track students will be matched
with a graduate internship Faculty Team Leader who will meet with them throughout the year to
oversee the applied work in their internships and support them in making the theory-research-
application competency that Eliot-Pearson requires. Further details of applied track instruction will be provided in the Graduate Internship and Seminar course syllabus.

**Thesis.** Students in this track conduct a research project that culminates in a thesis. Students are mentored on an individual basis through regular meetings with their Faculty Thesis Advisors. The thesis research may originate from or be a part of faculty research projects. Some Master’s students may conduct independent projects, under the guidance of their thesis advisor. Students in this track conduct literature reviews, locate participants, collect data, analyze data, and write up research reports, articles and books for publication. In addition, students guide a research proposal through the IRB process and may have opportunities to gain grant proposal writing skills.

The Director of Graduate Studies or another designated faculty member will schedule three check-in meetings for all students as a group during the academic year in Year 2 to ensure that students get timely answers to questions regarding general policies and guidelines for this track. See section **Thesis Guidelines** for additional details.

Students in this track have an additional requirement as follows:

- 1 Statistics Course (3 SHU’s)
  - Problems in Research: Statistics, CSHD 140
  - Applied Data Analysis: CSHD 146
  - Structural Equation Modeling, CSHD 243
  - Applied Multivariate Data Analysis, CSHD 249

- Thesis, during second year (3 SHU’s required; maximum of 6 SHU’s)
  Students can choose to register for 1-3 SHU’s for the Thesis each semester, giving them some flexibility in the number of electives they can take and remain with the 32 SHU’s allocated for the MA degree.
  - CSHD 245, First Semester (Fall): 1-3 SHU’s; CSHD 246, Second Semester (Spring): 1-3 SHU’s

*Note: All students will present at Student Presentation Day in either poster or presentation format* (see section on **MA Program Competencies**).

**Concentrations of Study**

Although concentrations are not required, students wishing a more focused program of study than the IPS may choose a concentration (listed below along with specific requirements for those concentrations). All students, whether pursuing a concentration or an IPS, must also meet the general requirements as described, and thus, will receive a strong theoretical and research foundation in child and family development. Students learn about the IPS and concentrations during the Master’s Proseminar and decide at the end of the first semester whether they intend to pursue an IPS or a concentration. If one of the department-offered concentrations is selected, it will appear on the transcript. The concentrations offered are as follows:

*Clinical-Developmental Health and Psychology*
2 Foundation Courses (6 SHUs)

- Theories of Human Development, CSHD 211 (required)
- One of the following:
  - Advanced Intellectual Development: CSHD 151 or approved alternate
  - Language Development: CSHD 155 or approved alternative
  - Advanced Personal & Social Development: CSHD 161 or approved alternate
  - Infancy: Prenatal to Age Three: CSHD 163
  - Cultural Sensitivity/Diversity, CSHD 164/262
  - Adolescent Development and the Transition to Adulthood: CSHD 168
  - Children with Special Needs, CSHD 190
  - Developmental Psychopathology & Adaptation, CSHD 191
  - Pediatric Psychology, CSHD 193
  - Applied Developmental Science: CSHD 248

2 Concentration Courses (from electives courses and not taken as foundation course; 6 SHU’s):

- Assessment of Children, CSHD 120
- Evidence Based Interventions with Children and Youth, CSHD 149
- Consultation and Collaboration Strategies, CSHD 281 (must be taken second year)
- Cultural Diversity in Child and Family Services, CSHD 164 or Cultural Sensitivity in Child and Family Research/Practice, CSHD 262
- Children with Special Needs, CSHD 190
- Developmental Psychopathology and Adaptation, CSHD 191
- Pediatric Psychology, CSHD 193
- Autism Across the Lifespan, CSHD 143
- Sexuality and Gender, CSHD 143
- Health Promotion for Youth and Adults with Disabilities, CSHD 143
- Adolescent Health, CSHD 110
- Theories of Preventive Health, CSHD 111
- Child Life and Children in Hospitals, CSHD 143

21st Century Literacies: Media & Technology

2 Foundation Courses (6 SHU’s)

- Theories of Human Development, CSHD 211 (required)
- One of the following:
  - Technological Tools for Playful Learning, CSHD 145
  - Children and Mass Media, CSHD 267

2 Concentration Courses (from electives courses and not taken as foundation course; 6 SHU’s):

- Technological Tools for Playful Learning, CSHD 145
- Children and New Technologies, CSHD 114
- Children and Mass Media, CSHD 267
- Children’s Literature, CSHD 176
- Children and Mass Media, CSHD 167
- Understanding Children through Film, CSHD 159
Declaration of Applied or Thesis Track and Concentration
After the first semester in the program (or completion of at least 7 SHU’s), students choose whether they want to pursue the applied or thesis track, and whether they wish to concentrate in a specific area. Students will receive background information in the Proseminar and should consult with their Program Advisors in making these decisions. Declaration is made by completing the Intention of Track and Concentration form available on the Eliot-Pearson website. This form must be signed by the Program Advisor and submitted to the Administrative Coordinator for Graduate Programs.

Approval of Alternative Courses toward MA Requirements
Students who wish to have a course other than those listed count toward a requirement must get that course approved by their Program Advisor first, and then the Director of Graduate Studies must give final approval. Students should present a brief written request describing the rationale for course approval along with the proposed course syllabus. Approved alternatives may be taken outside the department. (e.g. Psychology) or outside the university (e.g. the New England Consortium Schools; Boston University, Boston College, and Brandeis University).

Transfer of Credit for Courses Taken Prior to MA Program
Students may receive credit for up to two graduate-level courses (or 6 SHU’s) completed prior to admission to the MA program and apply them toward the MA degree—provided the courses were not already applied toward the BA degree. The graduate course must be consistent with the general MA Program requirements; topical courses should be in the area of children, youth, and or families. Petitions for transfer of credit for courses completed outside of Eliot-Pearson should be made to the Student Affairs Coordinator, who oversees approval of transfer of credits, by the end of student’s first semester in the program. Petitions must include appropriate documentation, including course syllabi and transcripts of grades received.

Program Advisor
Upon entry into the program, graduate students are assigned a faculty advisor who provides advice about registration for courses and program requirements. The interaction between the graduate student and a faculty member is one of the most significant aspects of a graduate student’s time at Tufts.

Progress Reports
After the first year in the MA Program, students complete a Progress Report in early fall. The Progress Report is intended to track students’ coursework, grades, and fulfillment of program requirements and competencies. Forms and deadlines will be sent to all students by the Administrative Coordinator for Graduate Programs. All forms, along with a transcript must be submitted to student’s Program Advisor for signature and approval. Progress Reports will be used to determine if students are in good academic standing (please refer to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences [GSAS] Handbook, found on the Tufts GSAS website, for additional details on the Academic Standing policy).

Conferral of Degree
When the degree work has been completed, the student must complete a degree sheet listing all courses. The student should then obtain his/her Program Advisor’s signature on the Degree Sheet and submit final documents to the Administrative Coordinator for Graduate Programs for the Department Chair’s signature. These forms confirm the completion of course work leading to the degree of MA. The student’s name will be placed on the list of those graduating at the next scheduled date for graduation.

Degrees are conferred at several times during the year. Students should refer to the Graduate School Calendar for information on due dates for submission of final materials for graduation. Graduation ceremonies are held in May of each year.

MA Program Competencies

Our MA Program is committed to training our students to be scholars and practitioners who want to make a difference in the lives of children and adolescents from diverse backgrounds, families, and community contexts. Although we are concerned about the many challenges faced by children and families today, we identify strengths and promote positive attributes of children and adolescents so that they can thrive in the rapidly changing local, national, and global contexts of the 21st century.

To achieve these goals, the MA program aims for the highest standards of excellence in all areas of preparation: courses, supervised applied and research experiences, and individual mentoring. Students will take multiple trajectories in their MA training, served by a common foundation of preparation that includes competency in the core areas identified. This competency-based approach ensures that all Eliot-Pearson MA students obtain the skills necessary for success in their professional development in line with the program goals. Faculty members help each student design a program that both reinforces individual strengths and complements previous experiences.

Program Competencies:
1. Students will have knowledge of the major theoretical perspectives and knowledge base in the core domains of human development as well as knowledge of the complexities of diverse realities and pathways towards healthy development.

2. Students will have knowledge of how research is conducted in the field of Applied Child Development.

3. Students will be informed consumers of scholarship in the field of human development; i.e. will have experience in the process of reviewing, critically evaluating empirical research, policy reports, and synthesizing extant literature on a topic.

4. Students will demonstrate ability to assume the role of a professional (e.g. as a scholar and practitioner) in the field.
5. Students will demonstrate an understanding of Research Practice Integration in the context of programs and policies for children and families that optimize development by promoting strength-based approaches.

6. Students will actively engage in research or applied work that promotes health and an asset-based approach to development among children and families.

7. Students will demonstrate cultural awareness and sensitivity in their professional roles as well as members of the community within and outside of Tufts.

The formal requirements of the MA program are the primary mechanism through which the competencies will be obtained. Several additional program requirements are intended to complement these requirements and ensure mastering of these competencies. These additional program requirements include:

- Attending at least two Eliot-Pearson Department-sponsored academic events (e.g., colloquia, workshops, brown bags) per year, not including Student Presentation Day
- Attending Student Presentation Day in Year 1
- Presenting at Student Presentation Day in either poster or presentation format in Year 2

**Thesis Guidelines**

These guidelines were developed to assist students in planning and carrying out the thesis that partially fulfills the requirements for this track. The thesis is intended as the culmination of graduate study for students choosing this track.

All stages of the thesis process are described as follows to serve as a guide to help students plan, initiate, evaluate, and successfully complete the thesis requirements. The GSAS Handbook, found on the Tufts GSAS website, should also be consulted to ensure the thesis meets the University requirements as well as the department’s requirements, which are generally consistent with the department requirements.

**What is a Thesis?**
The Thesis track provides students with the opportunity to choose a topic of research to investigate under the supervision of a faculty member who serves as the Thesis Advisor. Students may choose to: a) undertake a thesis that arises from and is part of the Program Advisor’s or other faculty member’s ongoing program of research, or b) pursue an independent research project, typically under the supervision of the Program Advisor or another faculty member who is willing to serve as the Thesis Advisor.

The thesis serves to provide students with a supervised research project through which they can integrate knowledge and skills gained through coursework, gain experience in conducting research and prepare for further graduate work.

**Overview of Steps in Process and Timeline for Thesis Track**
The following overview and suggested timeline for completing the requirements for the Thesis track are followed by more specific guidelines for each step of the process.

**Selecting Thesis Track** – Year 1, Fall term

**Initiating Thesis Planning** – Year 1, Spring term

**Preparing Thesis Proposal** – Year 1, Spring – Summer terms

**Thesis Proposal Defense** – End of Year 1, Summer, or Beginning of Year 2, (early)

**Completing Research & Preparation of Thesis** – Year 2

**Thesis Defense** – Year 2, Spring term (usually in April of Year 2)

**Selecting Thesis Track**

Students are provided the opportunity to explore the Thesis and Applied Tracks during the required Prosem in the Fall term of Year 1. In addition, students should consult with the Program Advisor who can answer questions about both tracks and can guide students in their decision making, by helping them consider feasible research areas or topics that are aligned with the students’ interests, program goals, and professional aspirations and plans. The decision to pursue a thesis must be made by the end of the Fall Term of Year 1. The required form should be completed and submitted to the Administrative Coordinator for Graduate Programs.

**Initiating Thesis Planning**

During the Spring term of Year 1, students should begin gathering information on potential areas of research interest. In addition to consulting with the Program Advisor, students should talk with other faculty members and fellow students and attend informational research sessions. Students are advised to review examples of MA Theses that have been completed and submitted to the Department to get a sense of the range and feasibility of research that meets the MA Thesis requirements.

The typical thesis is conducted within an ongoing faculty research project and laboratory. For a complete list of projects and laboratories visit the Eliot-Pearson Child Study and Human Development website. The thesis project might include new data collection within an existing research project, or the use of ongoing and existing data with new data analysis. If the student wishes to conduct a thesis within Eliot-Pearson, typically the principal investigator of that lab will serve as the student’s Faculty Thesis Advisor.

Sometimes a student does research in a lab outside Eliot-Pearson and/or outside of Tufts. In this case, the Program Advisor consults with the principal investigator of the outside lab to make sure a thesis is possible. In this case, the student’s Program Advisor usually serves as the Faculty Thesis Advisor and the principal investigator of that lab serves as second advisor.

A student may conduct an independent project and does not have to work in an existing research project or laboratory, provided a suitable Faculty Thesis Advisor can be identified by the student. This pathway requires considerable planning and guidance, so the decision to take this path should be made relatively early in the Spring term.

By mid-way through the semester, students should meet with their Program Advisors, to initiate planning for their thesis research. It is the student's responsibility to schedule this meeting and
any follow-up meetings as necessary. It is the Program Advisors’ role to guide students as they explore opportunities in various research labs or ongoing research projects, and help the student find an appropriate Faculty Thesis Advisor.

Program Advisors will also guide students to ensure that the necessary supporting courses, sequence of courses, and the timetable for fulfilling these requirements are taken into consideration during this initial planning process. In addition, the Program Advisor can serve in the role of Thesis Advisor or help students in selecting someone else to serve in that role.

Preparing the Thesis Proposal
Preparing the Thesis Proposal is a major task in the thesis process. The various steps, requirements and guidelines to accomplish this task are delineated and organized in to sub-sections as follows. The purpose of preparing the thesis proposal is to get the topic and research plan approved by a 3-member thesis committee, before undertaking the research. The Faculty Thesis Advisor’s role is to guide the student in all steps of preparing the thesis proposal, including ensuring that the research to be undertaken is feasible and not overly ambitious. The student defends the proposal in a meeting with the thesis committee to get the research plan approved. A thesis proposal includes the following:

- The Introduction Chapter, which provides an overview of the research topic, the rationale and significance of both the research question/s and the method/s to be used to answer the research question/s
- The Literature Review Chapter, which includes a synthesis of existing research on the topic to provide the rationale for the research topic, research question/s and hypotheses, the conceptual framework that guides the research question and the methods, the constructs as represented in the existing empirical knowledge base and the research design of the proposed study
- The Method Chapter, which includes details about the sample/participants, the procedures to be used to collect data, organize and manage the database, code, and analyze the data to address the research questions
- A timeline for conducting the research and preparing the thesis

Proposals for the MA Thesis are typically about 20-25 pages and need to follow the guidelines of the APA Publication manual. Consult the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) for information about writing format, specific information about using culturally sensitive language, and APA style.

**MA Thesis Committee:** The role of the MA Thesis Committee is to approve the research study undertaken by the student. The Committee meets twice, first to review and approve the Thesis Proposal, and then at the end of Year 2 to review and approve the final Thesis at the MA Thesis Defense. The committee is constituted of three members as follows: The Faculty Thesis Advisor serves as the chair of the committee and must be a member of the Eliot-Pearson full-time faculty; the second member must also be a faculty member from the department, and the third member must be from outside the department and may be outside Tufts. All members of the committee must have an MA degree or higher.
The committee members’ involvement varies from simply reading and approving the proposal at the initial meeting and the defense, to being closely involved in the research and writing. The involvement of specific members depends on their availability, their expertise, and their willingness to mentor the student. The Faculty Thesis Advisor, of course, provides close supervision all along the way; individual committee members may also provide mentorship, though at a minimum they are required to review the proposal and the final thesis and participate in the Proposal Defense and Thesis Defense.

The process of identifying members of the Thesis Committee should begin in consultation with the Faculty Thesis Advisor. Committee members are typically selected based on alignment of interests related to the thesis topic, expertise of committee member, and availability for the full year of the thesis project. Typically, the committee is constituted so that individual members represent different and complementary areas of expertise pertinent to the thesis topic.

After discussing potential committee members with the Thesis Advisor, students contact potential committee members, and meet with them individually, in person or, if appropriate, send an email asking if they are available and stating why you would like them to serve on your committee. Some Faculty Thesis Advisors ask students to prepare a 1-2 page thesis prospectus which is helpful to share with potential committee members before meeting with the student.

**Navigating the IRB**

All research must be authorized by an approved Institutional Review Board (IRB) before the project begins. It is the students’ responsibility to visit the IRB website ([https://viceprovost.tufts.edu/sberirb/submission-process/submit/](https://viceprovost.tufts.edu/sberirb/submission-process/submit/)) and review all of the information and guidelines provided at that site. For Eliot-Pearson Child Study and Human Development (CSHD) graduate students, it is the Tufts Medford Campus Institutional Review Board, which is overseen by the Vice Provost. The process of getting approval by the IRB can be long and arduous, so it is essential to start early, as soon as you have enough information about your study to complete the IRB application. Many students have been delayed in their thesis progress because they are waiting for IRB approval. The Medford IRB typically meets monthly (but not during holidays) and there are deadlines to submit required applications and supporting documents several weeks in advance of the monthly meetings, so students need to get an early start on this process.

The university requires students to have training and/or experience in research methodology to be eligible to serve as principal investigators on research studies. Examples of training/education/experience for students include a research methods course, previous experience conducting human subjects research, or related professional experience (see IRB website for additional details: [https://viceprovost.tufts.edu/sberirb/research-training-requirements/additional-student-requirements/](https://viceprovost.tufts.edu/sberirb/research-training-requirements/additional-student-requirements/)).

It is also critical to consider the process of getting IRB approval in the context of planning the Proposal Defense meeting. If the IRB approves the thesis research BEFORE the Proposal Defense, any changes that will be made to the thesis as a result of feedback from the Committee will need to be submitted as a modification to the IRB. The IRB can usually approve modifications quickly by expedited procedures (this takes approximately 5-10 days). If the
Proposal Defense meeting occurs BEFORE IRB approval is obtained, the student should schedule a tentative follow up contact, or meeting if necessary, with the Committee in order to review any changes the IRB deems necessary for approval of the thesis research plan.

**Thesis Proposal Defense**
The student’s MA Thesis Committee has the responsibility of approving the thesis proposal. This typically occurs during the Proposal Defense meeting. As noted earlier, the process of initiating thesis planning should begin during the second semester of Year 1. Students typically work on the proposal in late spring through the summer between the first and second year. The Thesis Proposal defense may take place over the summer (if the Faculty Thesis Advisor and committee are available, which is not always the case) or, at the latest, at the beginning of the first semester of the second year. The proposal meeting is held to review and vote on the approval of the thesis proposal.

The Faculty Thesis Advisor is responsible for guiding the student through the process of preparing the thesis proposal, which includes approving the full proposal draft before it is given to the committee members for the proposal defense meeting. The proposal is usually provided to the Thesis Committee at least 2 weeks before the Proposal Defense meeting. The advisor is also responsible for guiding the student through the process of scheduling and preparing for the Proposal Defense meeting, including completing any necessary paperwork, and other relevant tasks such as the IRB submission and revision process.

The Thesis Proposal Defense meeting is structured as follows:
- The Faculty Thesis Chair, in the role of coordinating the meeting, opens the meeting and explains the format to all present.
- The student makes a 15-20-minute presentation of the thesis proposal
- The chair then opens the meeting for questions to the student from the committee members
- After the questions and discussion, the student is asked to leave the meeting while the committee deliberates on the feasibility and merit of the proposed research plan, and any modifications they think are necessary. The committee decides on whether to approve the proposal as is, with modifications, or to recommend a major revision of the proposal
- The student is then invited back to the room, to hear the decision reached by the committee and any recommendations and requirements for modifications.
- The thesis proposal approval form is then signed by the members of the committee. It is usually the role the Faculty Thesis Advisor to oversee the required changes and authorize the final version after the proposal meeting. Sometimes the entire committee may wish to see the revised thesis before it is approved.

The Proposal Approval Form (found on E-P website) has to be signed by all members of the committee before the student is authorized to begin the thesis research.

**Conducting Thesis Research & Preparation of Thesis**
Students should have completed at least five courses before beginning a thesis. Conducting the research process constitutes the bulk of the work for the MA thesis. Over the course of Year 2, students can enroll in a minimum of 3 SHUs of Thesis credits to a maximum of 6 SHU’s of Thesis credits.
The student conducts the proposed research under the mentorship of the Faculty Thesis Advisor, through regularly scheduled meetings over the course of Year 2 of the MA program. The faculty advisor guides the student through all steps of conducting the research and preparing the full thesis draft. It is especially useful to set up regular meetings, set step-by-step goals to proceed systematically through the process of conducting research and data analysis, and set deadlines for writing—this process will ensure timely progress in completing the research and thesis writing.

As noted earlier, the Introduction, Literature Review, and Methods chapters have already been written as part of the Thesis Proposal. These chapters are typically updated and revised, and the Results and Discussion chapters are prepared once the research study is nearing completion. Faculty advisors usually guide students through multiple drafts of each chapter. Students are strongly advised to work with a writing consultant through the Academic Resource Center.

The structure and format of the thesis should be crafted according to the guidelines in the Graduate Student (GSAS) Handbook. In addition, Eliot-Pearson theses use American Psychological Association (APA) style. Consult the Publication Manual of the American Psychology Association for vital information on not only the technical aspects of writing, but also on the content, organization of a manuscript, writing style, grammar, and guidelines to reduce bias in language.

As stated in the GSAS Handbook, the thesis should include:

1. Title page
2. Abstract (150 words or less, double-spaced)
3. Acknowledgments (optional)
4. Table of contents
5. List of tables (if applicable)
6. List of figures (if applicable)
7. Text (main body of thesis)
8. Appendix or appendices (if applicable)
9. Endnotes (if compiled at the end of the text)
10. Reference list

For specific information on spacing and margins, pagination, and other technical requirements consult the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

Master’s Thesis Defense
The thesis is presented to the community in a public forum called the Master’s Thesis Defense. The purpose of the defense is to provide the student with the opportunity to present and defend the thesis research. Once the Faculty Thesis Advisor has approved a full draft of the Thesis, the student sends the draft of the thesis to committee members, usually at least two weeks in advance of the Thesis Defense date.

The meeting for the Thesis Defense must be scheduled with the Faculty Thesis Advisor and committee members. Students should email the Administrative Coordinator for Graduate
Programs and the Director of Graduate Studies as to the proposed time and location of your defense, along with the title of the thesis. The Administrative Coordinator will send out an announcement to the community. To meet GSAS deadlines for a May graduation, the thesis defense needs to be held in March or April of Year 2.

The Thesis Defense meeting is structured as follows:
- The meeting is typically scheduled for 1.5 to 2 hours.
- The Faculty Thesis Advisor chairs the meeting and opens the meeting, makes introductions, and explains the format to all present.
- The student makes a 20-minute public presentation of the study reported in the thesis.
- The chair may then invite the audience to ask a few questions (very brief), after which everyone present except the student and committee members leave the room.
- Committee members ask questions and the student defends the research study reported in the thesis.
- After the questions and discussion, the student is asked to leave the meeting while the committee deliberates on the merit of the thesis and decides if any modifications are necessary. The committee will make one of the following recommendations: “pass,” “pass with revisions,” or “do not pass,” the thesis requirements at that time.
- The student is then invited back to the room, to hear the decision reached by the committee and any recommendations and requirements for modifications.
- If the decision of the committee is to “pass” or “pass with revisions,” the committee members sign the “Certificate of Fitness” form that the student brings to the Thesis Defense meeting. That form must be turned in to the Administrative Coordinator for Graduate Programs.
- After the defense, if the committee suggests revisions, the student composes a “Memorandum of Understanding” which outlines in an email the required revisions necessary for the thesis to be accepted. This is sent to the committee members for their approval.
- The student, with guidance from the Faculty Thesis Advisor, is required to make the recommended changes. Once the thesis is in its final forms, this requirement for the Thesis track is complete. Typically, the Faculty Thesis Advisor oversees the final changes and edits, but sometimes the committee members may also review the final thesis.

Students should consult the GSAS Handbook for deadlines regarding the final online submission of the thesis; typically, it is the last Monday in April. Students should expect that there will be revisions and edits recommended by the committee, so it is critical to schedule the date of the defense to allow at least a week for making final revisions and the paperwork to be submitted before the GSAS deadline.

**Thesis Forms and Submission**

GSAS requires that students complete several forms. The forms should be filled out electronically and then printed to gain the appropriate signatures. *Students must make a copy of each signed forms and give them to the Administrative Coordinator for Graduate Programs before they are submitted to Student Services (in Dowling Hall).*
➢ For the Thesis Defense, students must bring the “Certificate of Fitness” form (http://asegrad.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/students_fitness_0.pdf). This form is signed by the committee, signifying approval of the thesis.
➢ After the final version of the thesis is approved and ready for submission to GSAS, the “Approval of Thesis for Submission” form (http://asegrad.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/students_thesis_0.pdf) is signed by the Faculty Thesis Advisor.

In addition, students are required to submit the thesis on-line to: dissertations.umi.com/tuftsase. Once submitted, students are given the opportunity to order bound copies of the thesis from ProQuest, or they may choose to get it bound themselves.

Finally, students give a copy of the final thesis to the Administrative Coordinator for Graduate Programs, who will arrange to have it put in a folder and into the Eliot-Pearson library for display.

Thesis FAQs

Is it possible to complete a thesis in a two-year program?
Yes, it is very possible to complete a thorough and highly competent thesis within the time frame of a two-year program and almost all full-time students (who choose to do the thesis track) do so. It does require careful planning and hard work, but most students have been successful at fulfilling all thesis requirements within the two-year MA program.

Do I need to copyright my research?
Students are the copyright holders of their thesis. No additional steps are necessary. University Microfilm International maintains pertinent copyright information and can advise candidates on intellectual property issues, their website is www.proquest.com. During the electronic submission process a student may have ProQuest/UMI file for copyright on their behalf should they want the extra benefits of registration. For additional information visit www.copyright.gov. In addition, Tisch library offers periodic workshops on copyright, fair use and seeking permissions. If the thesis involves secondary data analysis or was based on data that were drawn from a faculty or other research lab or project, students will need to follow guidelines set by the Faculty PI or Lab regarding publication.

Who gets a copy of my finished thesis?
As noted earlier, an electronic copy of the final thesis must be submitted to dissertations.umi.com/tuftsase (See GSAS website). The student may also give a print copy or, if preferred, an electronic copy of the finished thesis to the Faculty Thesis Advisor and to each committee member.

The Department must also receive a hard copy of the final thesis to display in the library; this copy should be submitted to the Administrative Coordinator for Graduate Programs.

Should I publish my research?
The Faculty Thesis Advisor and committee members can guide the student regarding whether, and in what form, the thesis might be published. Typically, MA theses are not published as is, but often a condensed version might be published. If the student is using data from a faculty project for a thesis based on secondary data analysis, then decisions regarding publication are made following guidelines set by the principal investigator or the Lab. The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* has valuable information on determining authorship of academic work.

**Resources for Thesis Students**

Tufts University offers numerous resources to help students navigate the thesis route. Students are encouraged to reach out to Program Advisors and to take advantage of university resources, including research methods courses within the Department that provide information on completing research that may lead to a thesis.

**GSAS Workshops:** Throughout the year the GSAS offers workshops on effective writing, copying writing a thesis, data management, editing skills, presentation skills and more. See the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences website [http://ase.tufts.edu/gsc/](http://ase.tufts.edu/gsc/) for a calendar of workshops.

**Academic Resource Center:** The center offers free one-on-one tutoring and workshops in writing, presenting, studying skills and time management skills. To learn more about the ARC, go to [http://students.tufts.edu/academic-advice-and-support/academic-resource-center/information/graduate-students](http://students.tufts.edu/academic-advice-and-support/academic-resource-center/information/graduate-students) or call 617.627.4345.

**Counseling and Mental Health Services:** Students are encouraged to reach out to the Counseling and Mental Health Services if they need mental health support and guidance. CMHS is located in Sawyer House at 120 Curtis Street. Appointments can be made by calling 617.627.3360. All contacts with the counseling center are confidential.

**International Center:** The International Center provides support and resources for international students including help with student’s writing and presentation skills. For more information visit the website [http://ase.tufts.edu/icenter/](http://ase.tufts.edu/icenter/).

**Tisch Library:** The library has numerous resources for students including experts in research pertaining to Child Study and Human Development. The library offers research support services, teaching support, publishing support and workshops, and multimedia help, including poster printing, in the Digital Design Studio. For more information go to [https://tischlibrary.tufts.edu](https://tischlibrary.tufts.edu).

**Student Accessibility Services:** These services are committed to providing support and equal access for students with disabilities. Information about services can be found on the SAS website, [http://students.tufts.edu/student-accessibility-services](http://students.tufts.edu/student-accessibility-services).

**Tufts Technology Services:** TTS offers a wide variety of technological help and services to all members of the Tufts community. They offer computer help, accessing the Internet and tufts web services help, and software help. For more information go to the website [https://it.tufts.edu](https://it.tufts.edu).
Academic Integrity
Students are expected to meet the highest standards of academic integrity. Plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, cheating, and other acts of academic dishonesty, or abetting the academic dishonesty of another, will result in sanctions and may lead to academic dismissal. The Tufts booklet Academic Integrity provides a primer on ethical academic work. It also includes a description of computer ethics and appropriate use of electronic resources. Students should familiarize themselves with the standards and policies outlined in the booklet, which is online at uss.tufts.edu/studentAffairs/publications. The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association also has valuable information about professional, ethical writing. It is recommended that all students submit their written thesis to the Turnitin program before submitting the final draft. The Faculty Thesis Advisor also may decide to submit your thesis to Turnitin.

Alleged violations of these policies will be considered and addressed within the Student Judicial Process.