When should an MA student select a thesis chair (also called a thesis advisor) and committee?
No sooner than 1st year/2nd semester (midway), and no later than the end of 1st year/2nd semester.

What is a thesis chair?
The thesis chair guides the student through the entire thesis process: beginning with discussing the idea, through writing a script for a fiction film, and/or a treatment, planning the shoot and post-production. Thesis projects can take any shape: fiction, documentary, experimental, and/or some imaginative combination thereof. The thesis advisor also works on all prospectus documents with the Masters student, which include pre-production, and provides feedback on all rough and fine cuts during the editing process.

How should I go about choosing my thesis chair and committee members?
Students are highly encouraged to take classes from each graduate production faculty before they choose a thesis chair. The Committee Chair needs to be a graduate production faculty. Working with different professors provides students with different working relationships that can inform their thesis project and the composition of their committee.

How many committee members does each student need?
The entire committee should consist of a thesis chair and two additional committee members who are members the graduate faculty of the School of Film, Media & Theatre. An additional non-tenured faculty can be added as a fourth member of a thesis committee if need be.

What role do thesis committee members play in the thesis prospectus defense?
While committee members are free to offer feedback if solicited, they are only responsible for responding to the final version of all prospectus documents, including a script.
What is a Thesis prospectus?
The thesis prospectus is a collection of written documents that address specific aspects of the student’s project that must be successfully defended before thesis production work can occur. There are very specific guidelines, within the prospectus, the student must adhere to, and this can be found in the MA Handbook, particularly on pages 20 and 21 of this document.

When do I schedule my thesis prospectus defense?
Students can schedule a meeting to defend their prospectus as soon as the thesis chair has deemed it defensible, which means the thesis chair has approved all Prospectus documents. Unless agreed upon in advance by the thesis committee, students defend their prospectus in the semester before thesis production work begins. A finished copy of the prospectus must be emailed to the full thesis committee no later than two weeks before the scheduled prospectus defense.

How do I prepare for a thesis prospectus defense?
Be prepared to discuss any aspect of the written material in the prospectus. Be open to suggestions and prepared to confidently express your vision. Students should follow the guidelines in the MA Handbook and, if need be, add additional materials (photos, graphics, drawings) that will help a student communicate their vision and intentions to the committee.

When do I schedule gear for my thesis shoot?
Equipment is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Students can schedule checkout of gear as soon as they successfully defend their thesis prospectus. Keep in mind that thesis equipment reservations must be made at least 2-weeks in advance.
MA THESIS PRODUCTION
FAQs cont'd

How long does my thesis project need to be?  
A thesis project is typically no longer than 15 minutes and must be a substantial project that represents a graduate student's growth as a film-maker over the course of 2-years of the program.

How long do I have to complete my thesis?  
A student is encouraged to finish a thesis project within 1-year after all course work is completed.

What is a thesis defense?  
The thesis defense is a meeting with the entire thesis committee and student, where the thesis project is screened and evaluated as pass or fail. If the thesis doesn't pass the student cannot earn their MA degree until it has passed the entire committees’ approval.

When do I defend my thesis project?  
The final defense for any semester needs to be scheduled for defense by midterm of that semester October 15, February 28, and June 15. Thesis candidates are strongly discouraged from defending both their prospectus and final film in the same semester. Students can defend their thesis project once their thesis chair approves a final version of the project for defense.

A near finished version of the thesis project must be uploaded to YouTube, Vimeo, or another accessible online site and shared with the full thesis committee a week before the final thesis defense. The student is highly encouraged to defend their thesis at least two weeks before the graduation deadline. A late thesis defense puts a student a risk of having to return for an additional semester if post-thesis defense revisions are requested and not finished in time to meet the graduation deadline.

Can I schedule a Thesis defense in the summer?  
A summer thesis defense can be complicated due to committee member availability. A thesis defense during the fall or spring semester is preferred.
What should I expect at a thesis defense?
The committee, including the thesis chair, will watch the final project and offer critical feedback.

How do I prepare for a thesis defense?
Be prepared to discuss the strategies, intentions, and ideas that inform and appear in the thesis project. The student is accountable for all facets of their thesis project. The project presented in the defense should be a polished and in a finished state.

How and where do I screen/exhibit my thesis project for defense for the committee?
Students will need to secure a reservation on the 1st floor of One Park Place Theater in advance of the defense date by reaching out to Marilyn Stiggers at mstiggers@gsu.edu. Students should reserve the 1st floor Theater for a two-hour block that provides 30 minutes of setup and breakdown time before and after the thesis defense. Students must email Matt Rowles at mrowles1@gsu.edu in advance for theater access and assistance with playback/exhibit setup.

What is a Thesis Signature Form?
The thesis signature form needs to be presented to the entire committee at the thesis defense so each committee member can sign the form if the thesis passes. The student can find this form on the FMT website.

What is the deadline for submitting my completed and signed thesis project?
Students are encouraged to schedule the final thesis defense two weeks before thesis submission deadline, which is earlier than and not the same as the last day of classes. As this deadline varies each semester, please contact Karin Smoot at ksmoot@gsu.edu in advance to know the date of this deadline.
MA THESIS PRODUCTION FAQs

How many thesis hours do I need to take with my advisor?
Students should complete a total of six credit hours over the course of two semesters.

When do I apply for graduation?
A semester before you graduate.

What does a student need to submit for graduation?
A signed thesis defense signature sheet.

Do I need to do anything with my thesis film after I successfully defend my thesis?
Please submit a copy of the thesis to the graduate director and your thesis chair using the codec H.264 for archiving.

Please refer the MA handbook for more details. This FAQ is not a substitute for information provided in the MA handbook.