



Undergraduate Distinction in Anthropology:

Departmental Undergraduate Research Tract (DURT) Program Guidelines

The DURT Track Thesis

Departmental Undergraduate Research Track/Intensive Major is available to students majoring in Anthropology who wish to participate in significant research activities in collaboration with, or under the supervision of, a faculty mentor. The DURT Track Thesis is a chance for students to ask and answer meaningful questions about the natural world, social or political systems, history and culture, artistic expression, the creative process, or the application of knowledge to specific challenges. Students are free to choose their thesis topics and should be something students can point to with immense pride and satisfaction.

Though the thesis is primarily defined by the individual student working with a thesis chair, the Anthropology Department asks all students to fulfill the same basic requirements. This guide answers some frequent questions students may have about the senior thesis. These are the core expectations of the DURT Thesis:

- Students have a valid research question that is unique and would contribute something new to the literature.
 - Student formulates hypotheses and objectives which will be written out.
- Student tests hypotheses
 - Tests can be done through gathering original research data.
 - Data can be gathered from published literature.
- Students write papers using the standards of the field and the citation methods of whatever discipline is their focus.
- Students engage with literature in the discussion.
 - What did their research contribute to the literature?
 - What is important about their findings? What did it tell us?
- It has to be of publishable quality, well-written, exceptionally researched, well-cited and free from grammatical and spelling errors.
- Papers should be at least twenty pages; however, the page limit is ultimately the decision of the student and thesis chair. It all depends on the topic.
- Students must publicly defend or present thesis. Some examples of acceptable presentations include:
 - Utilizing a university classroom to present the thesis followed by a series of questions and discussion
 - Annual meeting of the Southern Anthropological Society (or another annual meeting of the appropriate professional organization)
 - A regular or special session of the Department of Anthropology Colloquium Series
 - USC Discovery Day
 - Submission to a professional journal
- A written sponsorship agreement, Form 498, must be completed by the student and thesis chair and placed on file in the Department of Anthropology office. This document should be completed no later than the beginning of the student's final semester.

Guidelines

General Requirements

All thesis projects meet the same general requirements, which these guidelines will describe at greater length. To graduate with Distinction in Anthropology from the University of South Carolina, students must:

- Submit a thesis proposal for approval by your Thesis Chair
- Complete a minimum of three credit hours of ANTH 498 with a grade of C or better.
- Successfully defend the thesis project
- Submit a final, approved version (i.e., the thesis chair has signed the title page) of the thesis by the date established for the semester in which the student completes thesis coursework.

A **traditional research thesis** is an extended original project designed to answer a question of interest to the student. Some common research aims might include interpreting and comparing primary texts; constructing and testing models that reflect theories of human behavior, social or political systems, or the natural world; making human action, symbols, and communication intelligible at the individual and collective levels; exploring how social meanings are constructed; and evaluating current practices and suggesting more effective ones (see Lipson's *How to Write a BA Thesis*, 2018).

ANTH 498: Senior Thesis Course

To meet the requirements for graduating “with Distinctive Undergraduate Research Track,” students must complete three credit hours of ANTH 498 with a grade of C or better. The Thesis Chair is the instructor of record for ANTH 498 and should be identified before enrolling in ANTH 498. Students should have the Chair complete and sign the Thesis Chair Contract and then return the completed form to the Program Coordinator. The thesis chair must be a full-time faculty member (e.g., professor, assistant/associate professor, clinical professor, research professor) in the Anthropology Department at USC. The thesis chair guides the student through the research and creative process and serves as the instructor of record for ANTH 498, establishing the criteria for grading and assigning a grade for the course. The chair is primarily responsible for supervising the thesis's content and research/creative process. Criteria to consider when selecting a thesis chair include the following:

- Expertise the thesis topic or primary method to be used in the project.
- Teaching style, expectations for independent study students, and grading methods
- Availability for regular meetings/email check-ins during the entirety of the thesis project

Students sometimes settle on a topic before attempting to locate an appropriate thesis chair and may need help finding a faculty member willing to collaborate with them on their proposed topic. The following strategies help identify potential thesis chairs:

1. Consider faculty members with whom you have taken a course that included your specific area of interest.
2. Determine whether specific courses related to the topic are offered at USC. Find out who typically teaches those courses and reach out to them.
3. Search the Faculty Research Database using keywords related to the thesis topic to see who might work in that area.
4. Consider the discipline(s) in which the thesis topic falls. Find the department website for that discipline and look for a link that says, "Our People." Individual pages for faculty members with a brief bio, research interests, and a list of recent publications may be linked to the faculty chair. Search these pages for information that suggests an interest or expertise in or aligned with your thesis topic.

After identifying a list of 3 or 4 possibilities, students should craft an email requesting an opportunity to meet. The email should incorporate a brief synopsis of the proposed project and how you see this connecting to the professor's research interests or courses taught.

The Thesis Defense

The thesis defense (part presentation/part conversation) allows students to demonstrate what they have learned throughout the thesis process. The purposes of the defense are:

- To examine relevant questions that did not arise during the thesis/project process but do arise during the defense.
- To discuss how the student might change the thesis/project given additional time or resources.
- To provide a sense of closure to everyone involved in this process.
- To give students valuable experience in oral expression gained from conducting the defense.
- To provide a public venue for students to present the work.

The defense also allows the thesis chair to offer further feedback and engage in a dialogue with the student about the project. The chair must be present at the thesis defense, and students are welcome to invite friends, family members, and interested others to participate. The defense can be held virtually.

The length of a defense usually ranges from thirty minutes to an hour. The thesis chair can assist in determining the format. Still, the usual procedure is for the student to make a brief presentation on the thesis/project and then respond to questions. Suggestions for revisions will be made both during and after the defense. At the defense's conclusion, the students and any guests are excused while the thesis chair can determine any modifications that must be made before the thesis is accepted. Finally, the student is recalled and informed of the final decision and required changes. At this point, arrangements should be made to deliver the final thesis or project paper to the thesis committee to acquire their signatures on the title page. Electronic signatures on the thesis title page are permitted.

The thesis defense should occur at least one week before the semester's thesis submission deadline, as determined by the thesis chair. The specific date and time will be agreed upon by the student and their thesis chair. It is the student's responsibility (with help from the thesis chair) to schedule the defense, find a location, and inform the department of the thesis defense plans by the deadline established by the Thesis Chair.

Two weeks before the defense, the student must submit a complete draft of the thesis paper to the thesis committee members to ensure they have adequate time to review the student's work before the defense. That said, this should not be the first time thesis committee members see the student's thesis. *Successful thesis projects involve regular cycles of drafting, feedback, and revising.*

Paper Guidelines

Details, such as length, style, and format, are left to the discretion of the thesis chair. The length of a research-based thesis should mirror the length of a chapter or journal manuscript in that field. All thesis projects are required to have a written component, and the paper must include the following elements:

- Thesis title page (Use the template provided online https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/artsandsciences/anthropology/my_anthropology/undergraduates/index.php). The Thesis Chair and Undergraduate Director must sign the title page for the thesis to be approved by the Department. Electronic signatures are permitted.
- Thesis summary or abstract. For traditional, research-based thesis projects, an abstract is preferred. This is a brief description of your research aim or purpose, the methods used, key findings, and implications for research or practice. A summary written in less formal language than an abstract or introduction might be a more appropriate choice for creative or project-based theses.
- Table of contents.
- Body of thesis paper with pages numbered consecutively. For a research-based thesis, the paper may adopt the organization of a manuscript that could be submitted to an academic

journal. It identifies specific individuals, artifacts, or genres that shaped the approach and may describe pitfalls the student sought to avoid. The introduction describes the overall approach to creating the project and situates it within the context of the specific influences cited. The essay might also discuss a specific question the work explores or its purpose.

Appendices. Depending on the type of project, students may choose to include appendices or supplementary information (e.g., documentation of a creative or applied project, plan set for engineering capstone) in their thesis submission. These can be incorporated into the primary thesis submission or uploaded as a separate file. Supplementary files can be DOCX, PDF, JPG, or MP3; and should be submitted to the Undergraduate Coordinator.

Keys to Success

Students are expected to remain in close contact with their thesis chair, providing regular updates about their progress, asking for help when they feel stuck, and submitting drafts of thesis sections throughout the project. It is essential for students to attend scheduled meetings and send updates if they have gotten behind or feel overwhelmed. The most significant cause of thesis distress is inadequate communication between students and chairs. That said, students must have realistic expectations about Thesis Chair responsiveness and allow a reasonable amount of time for committee members to review their work, especially before the thesis defense. Setting mutual expectations about how and how often to communicate early in the thesis timeline can avoid many issues.

Students are encouraged to save copies of their work in progress in multiple places: on a secure cloud server, sent as email attachments to themselves, or on an external drive. Labeling files with the date or a version number ensure students can easily find the most recent version. Such practices will save much anxiety and time in the event of loss, theft, or accidental erasure of a file.

Most problems arising with a senior thesis can be fixed relatively easily when students seek the necessary help and do so sooner rather than later. In addition to the senior thesis team, students can access support from the following campus resources:

- The University Writing Center
- The Student Success Center
- University Counseling & Psychiatry Services

Basic Timeline

Most students start planning their undergraduate thesis during the spring semester of their junior year. This early start allows you to focus on refining your research question and securing a thesis advisor.

In the earlier years of your academic journey, consider exploring research opportunities, study abroad programs, or internships to identify your academic passions. These experiences can provide valuable insights and help you shape your thesis topic.

Remember, starting your thesis early will give you ample time to conduct research, write drafts, and refine your arguments.

Here are some suggested focal points for thesis planning.

Years 1 & 2

- **Explore Your Interests:** Dive into research opportunities, study abroad programs, internships, and service-learning to discover your passions. Learn more about undergraduate research and fellowship opportunities that might serve as a springboard for your thesis.

Year 2

- **Develop Your Ideas:** Take course work related to possible thesis topics. Engage with faculty to determine who might be a good fit for you and your thesis.

Year 3

- **Finalize Your Proposal and Agreement:** Formulate an initial proposal and work to secure your Thesis Chair. Complete and sign the ANTH 498 Contract with your Thesis Chair.

Summer Between Years 3 & 4

- **Deepen Your Research:** Build a robust reading list and refine your proposal.

Year 4

- **Organize, Communicate, Present:** Develop effective time-management and research skills, keep in regular contact with your thesis chair to seek guidance and feedback. Prepare for your thesis defense and share your research findings with the academic community.

Remember, your thesis journey is unique. Feel free to adjust this timeline to fit your specific needs and interests.

This contract must be completed by the instructor, signed by both student and instructor, and filed in the Department before the student can be cleared to register for ANTH 498.

Student Name:

VIP ID:

Instructor Name:

Course: ANTH 498

Section:

CRN:

Semester:

Year:

Thesis Title and brief description of material to be covered, work to be done:

Schedule of meetings between student and instructor:

Final grade to be based on:

Beginning Date:

Planned Completion Date:

Student Signature and Date:

Instructor Signature and Date: