

BA Senior Thesis Student Guide

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1. Introduction

What is a thesis project?

The BA thesis project is the capstone element of the degree program and is undertaken in the final year of the program. The thesis is an independent research project grounded in one of the student's fields of concentration. The subject of the bachelor dissertation is decided together with an advisor as part of the BA Thesis Module. By the end of the thesis, students will have the:

- Capacity to pursue and complete independent work in the student's field of specialization
- Ability to present research work in a way that conforms to the standards and criteria of academic and scholarly requirements
- Capacity to develop and refine an argument that draws extensively on already existing scholarship while presenting a persuasive and valuable new perspective
- Ability to prepare effectively for the completion of an individual research project by following the guidance of an experienced researcher in the selection of a research question, appropriate research material, and useful methods of interpretation and analysis

How is the thesis structured?

The BA thesis module consists of:

- Supervised individual research, serving as a preparation for the BA thesis and including regular meetings with the thesis advisor, to plan, consult about, and discuss research results and writing,
- A research colloquium or seminar in semester 1 of the final year of study in which the student receives feedback from peers and must present works in progress, and
- A final BA Thesis of 10,000-12,000 words, submitted in the second semester of the final year of study, and defended in an oral presentation.

Alternatively, HAST students trained in artistic/creative practices can opt to write a written thesis of 7000-8000 words and add a creative component to their research. The creative component is a research project in its own right that includes creative/artistic means.

- Students wishing to undertake a creative component should have taken a minimum of 3 classes which include creative and/or artistic research methods. This can be practicing arts classes or classes from other fields of the BCB curriculum which embed creative approaches.
- Students who decide to make use of this option will have to address the same research question by means of both academic and artistic/creative research. The outcomes of the latter will be submitted as part of a public presentation of all Creative Component art works.
- The art medium should not be chosen arbitrarily but should have a direct formal, methodological, and/or conceptual relation to the general subject matter and research question. It should NOT be a single piece of art to be added by the end as an illustration of the

written component, but it should include a *clearly defined artistic concept and process of artistic research* during which students experiment, create art works in their chosen medium, reflect, get feedback, and eventually build a final (body of) work.

- Students should keep a journal in which they reflect on their process, research, interim findings and further decisions.
- Students should submit a short written reflection on the artistic process, concept and findings of the creative component (ca. 1000-2000 words) to be submitted on the day of public exhibition.

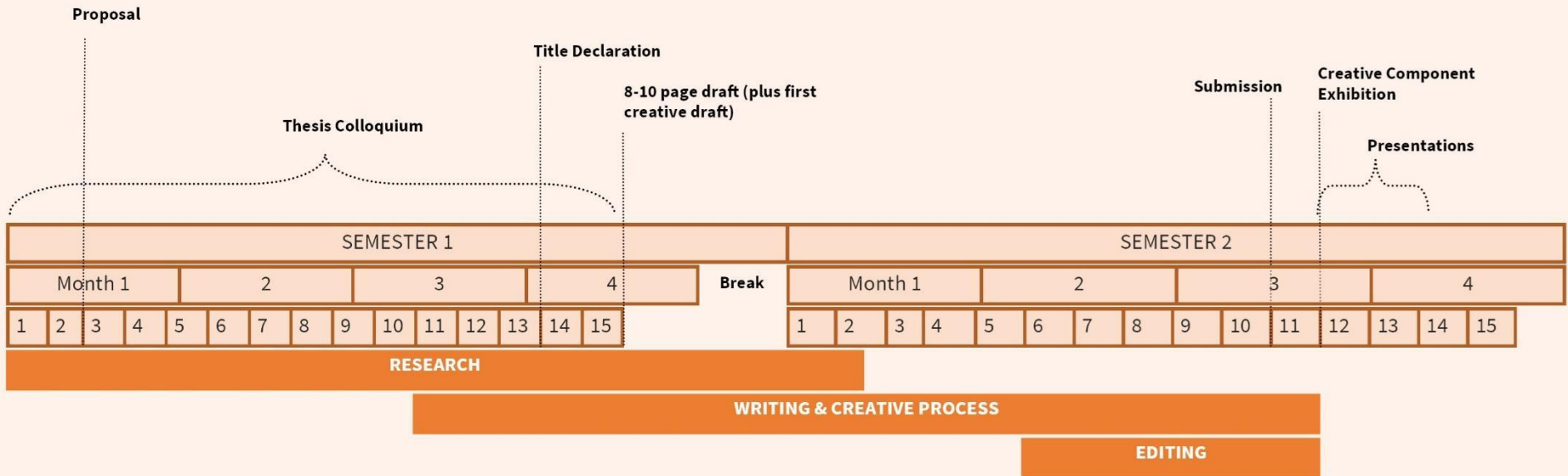
2. Timeline

Date	OPTION 1:	OPTION 2 (HAST only):
	Written Thesis 10,000-12,000 words	Written Thesis 7000-8000 words Creative Component + short reflection
Semester 1; end of week 1	Proposal with advisor confirmation due to the Registrar	Proposal with advisor confirmation due to the Registrar
Semester 1; weeks 4-14	Research/ draft presentations	Research/ draft presentations
Semester 1; end of week 13	Thesis title due to Registrar	Thesis title due to Registrar
Semester 1; end of Completion Week	8-10 page draft due to advisor	5-6 page draft and creative draft due to advisor
Semester 2; end of week 10	Thesis submission deadline	Thesis submission deadline (“written component”)
Semester 2; end of week 12 by 17:30	Two hard copies of thesis due to the Registrar	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Two hard copies of thesis due to the Registrar 2. Creative component exhibition (exact date tbc) 3. Reflection submission
Semester 2; weeks 12-13	Thesis presentations	Thesis presentations

Project at a Glance

THESIS PROJECT at a GLANCE

BA SENIOR THESIS OVERVIEW



These phases are suggestions; individual scheduling will vary. Discuss with your advisor what structure will work best for you.

3. Proposal

As part of the thesis process, students are asked to submit a 500-word thesis project proposal to the Registrar and to confirm a thesis advisor by Friday of Week 1. Students may already inquire with members of the faculty over the break if they are willing to supervise their project. Students may change their title or modify the scope of their project as it develops.

4. Advising

Each student has a thesis advisor who also acts as their academic advisor for the last year of study. The thesis advisor supervises the student's project, providing research expertise, feedback, and recommendations for further research. Students approach faculty members during the proposal phase and request faculty to confirm their supervision via their proposal form. Students should consider which faculty member is best suited to oversee their project in both thematic knowledge and research methods. For example, students pursuing a project with a creative component should seek an advisor who can advise on both academic and artistic research in their area of interest.

Throughout the course of the project, students will meet on a regular basis to discuss their project and progress. When meeting with their advisors, students should consider what they need to accomplish in each meeting in order to move the project forward. This means coming prepared with questions or discussion points.

- Do you have comprehension questions or questions about applying a methodology?
- Is there somewhere where you are stuck and input would be helpful?
- Were you asked to prepare something for the session (draft revisions, sources, etc.)?

By the end of the first semester of thesis work, students will be asked to confirm a second reader for their project. Each thesis is evaluated by two faculty members and the second reader will primarily function as an evaluator of the thesis project.

5. Research Materials

Library

Students may request books and/or DVDs that they will need for their thesis projects through the library. The cost cannot exceed 150 EUR per project and the items must be approved by their thesis advisors. All requests have to be submitted to the library (library@berlin.bard.edu) by their advisors, containing the ISBN of each item. Requests can be sent on a rolling basis until the final thesis deadline. Only items that are not already available at the library can be purchased and they will remain part of the [library collection](#).

In addition, students may borrow items that they need for research for the entire fall semester, after which they may request renewal for the spring semester.

Theses from past years are available in the circulation office as reference items that can be browsed through only in the library. Further examples of past theses can be found at the [Digital Commons](#).

All members of the BCB community have access to the online resources available at the [Bard Stevenson Library](#). Use the search bar on the homepage or select a [database](#) in order to be prompted to an EZ proxy page where you have to submit your BCB email address. Once this is done, you can browse freely without having to provide any further login credentials.

Creative Component

CC students can use their 150 Euro budget for purchasing books for their written component as well as material for their creative component (art supplies, props, etc.). Purchases require the advisor's approval. Leftovers and usable remnants will stay on campus after graduation.

Some students might need a steady work space to pursue their creative component. The factory building can provide one shared studio space for CC students.

6. Submission

The bachelor thesis is due on the Friday of week 10 in semester 2 of the final year of study by 15:00. Late submission of the BA Thesis will result in a failure. The length of the thesis must be 10,000-12,000 words (where practice-based methods learned to advanced level in the student's chosen concentration are applied, the thesis should comprise 7,000-8,000 words). The word count should not include the footnotes or bibliography. The thesis should be formatted using MLA Style, unless otherwise arranged with the Advisor.

Theses should be emailed in both Word and PDF document formats to the following parties:

1. Registrar's Office (registrar@berlin.bard.edu)
2. Thesis Advisor
3. Thesis Second Reader
4. Catherine Toal, Dean (c.toal@berlin.bard.edu)
5. James Harker, Director of Academic Services (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu)

The thesis must include a cover page, a title page (indicating word count), and a statutory declaration signed by the student that the work was produced independently and without recourse to any sources but those named in the paper.

Creative Component

At the end of the artistic research process students will present their artistic research as part of the creative component exhibition (week 12). On the same day they should submit a short reflection of ca. 1,000-2,000 words. The reflection should address the following aspects:

- General idea of the creative component: artistic concept, relation to the general subject matter, chosen art form, research steps
- Reflection on the artistic process
- Reflection on findings in relation to the overall argument of the general thesis project

Binding

In addition to the digital submission of the thesis, two paper copies of the thesis must be submitted to the Registrar's Office by 17:30 on Friday of Week 12. Each copy must be properly bound (stapling is not sufficient). Physical copies may be printed double-sided. The signed statutory declaration should be included at the end of your thesis, i.e. after your bibliography. You should plan ahead to have your thesis printed and bound at a copy shop. Keep in mind that copy shops will likely need a couple days to complete your order.

Tip: When at the copy shop, there are different rates for color and black and white prints. Only print color pages in color and all other pages in black and white.

7. Presentations

The public presentation of theses will take place during weeks 12-13 of the second semester. Students will be notified of their allotted date/time two weeks in advance. Each student will be given a 30-minute slot, which should involve a 20-minute presentation and 10 minutes for discussion. The presentation will be evaluated by the Thesis Advisor. Your thesis advisor, your second reader, and interested members of the BCB community will be in attendance.

An effective live presentation is different from an effective text intended to be read. If your thesis is written in dense academic prose, you might need to revise it for oral communication.

The most effective presentations tend to be ones in which the presenter:

- speaks from detailed notes but isn't necessarily reading word-for-word from a completely written-out document
- is supported by a slideshow
- has practiced the presentation.

Some read aloud from a completely written-out text, but this can easily lead to a monotonous presentation. If you plan to write out the whole presentation, think about what you can do to keep the presentation lively.

Presentation tips and guidelines

- A good opening is to explain how you became interested in the topic.
- Be aware of time. Twenty minutes means twenty minutes. Practice. Also be aware of whether the added nervousness of having an audience will tend to make you go faster (happens for some) or will make you go slower (this happens if you tend to add asides, further explanations, etc.). Try to factor in your personal habits so that your presentation will be the right length.
- Consult with your thesis advisor about the scope of the presentation. Depending on your topic and field, it might make sense to give a 20-minute summary of the full scope of your research and its conclusions. However, for others, it might make sense to focus in detail on just one part of your research (this is usually the case when your project was based on a lot of close reading or interpretation of specific works of art).
- Incorporating a Slideshow
 - Most presenters prepare a slideshow on Google Slides, PowerPoint, etc. A few things to keep in mind when preparing a slideshow:
 - Don't include too much text per slide.
 - It's helpful to read aloud all the text on the slide, as it's difficult for your audience to listen to you while being shown other information.
 - If you are reading aloud a long quotation, put it on a slide so that your audience can follow along.
 - Data shown in graphic form is very helpful, as is an explanation of the slide.
 - Practice showing slides! You don't want your presentation to spiral out of control because you have trouble sharing the slides while also reading from your presentation text, especially if you're relying on your laptop screen for both. A practice round is especially important for online presentations!

Tip: Unlike Powerpoint, Google Slides is web-based. If you share your screen when connected to a monitor, you will no longer be able to see your slide notes. Be sure to print out your notes because you will not be able to see them if using Google Slides and sharing your screen.