

B.A. 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 the student's field of concentration. Through the project, students demonstrate:

- the capacity to pursue and complete independent work in their field of specialization
- the ability to present research work in a way that conforms to the standards and criteria of academic and scholarly requirements
- the capacity to develop and refine an argument that draws extensively on already existing scholarship while presenting a persuasive and valuable new perspective
- the 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.

Projects that include a creative component (CC)

- 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 CC counts 30% of their overall final grade. HAST 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.
- For APS students a creative component is mandatory and counts 50% of the overall final grade. The written thesis for APS students has a word count of 5000-6000 words.
- The creative component is a research project in its own right that includes creative/artistic means. It is concerned with the same research question as the written component. The final artistic work is shown in a public exhibition.
- 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 rather 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.

2. Preparing your research paragraph and thesis proposal

Before the beginning of the semester, you are asked to submit an approximately 250-word research paragraph to the Registrar, together with the names of three possible thesis advisors. HAST students who intend to include an optional Creative Component must additionally provide the names of three possible Creative Component advisors. As the Creative Component is mandatory for APS students, APS students must provide the names of three possible Creative Component advisors in addition to their three possible thesis advisors.

As you prepare the research paragraph, keep in mind that your thesis project should be closely connected to the concentration, courses, and areas of study you have already addressed at Bard College Berlin. You will be assigned to an advisor best suited to guide your research, so ensure that your project aligns with the expertise and teaching interests of your preferred advisors. The project can deepen areas of study that have already been part of your BA—for example, by returning to and expanding on specific course material or artistic practices—or it can apply methodologies you have learned to a topic related to one of your courses. Think of your thesis as the final stage of your work in your chosen concentration: how might it best reflect the interests and expertise you have developed and wish to pursue further?

During the first weeks of the semester, you will develop your research paragraph into a more comprehensive 500-word thesis project proposal as part of your coursework. The thesis project proposal is due by the end of Week 2 and should build on and further develop the topic, research question, context, and methodological approach introduced in your initial research paragraph.

Here is a guideline for writing your research paragraph:

- The first sentence introduces the main topic or idea of your project and provides a clear focus for the reader.
- Include relevant background information or context necessary for understanding the research topic.
- State your research question. The question should be focused and well-defined, addressing a particular aspect or problem within your field of study. Avoid broad or vague questions that are difficult to answer.
- Include a description of the research methods or approaches you plan to employ.
- For students who pursue a creative component: include a short description of your artistic project and how it relates to your overall research question.

3. Timeline

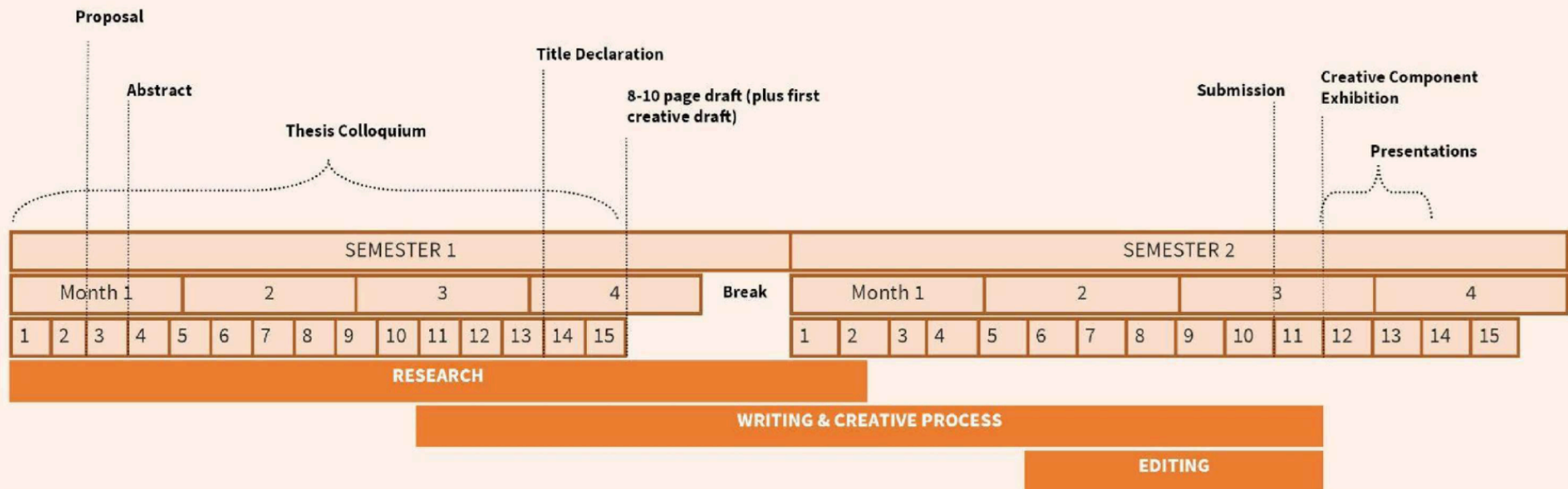
Date	EPST + HAST	HAST with CC	APS
	Written Thesis 10,000-12,000 words	Written Thesis 7000-8000 words Creative Component + written reflection (1000-2000 words)	Written Thesis 5000-6000 words Creative Component + written reflection (1000-2000 words)
Before the start of the semester	Submission via a form: research paragraph and list of 3 potential advisors Assigning advisors through the senior thesis colloquium faculty committee	Submission via a form: research paragraph and list of 3 potential advisors + 3 potential creative component advisors) Assigning advisors through the senior thesis colloquium faculty committee	Submission via a form: research paragraph and list of 3 potential advisors + 3 potential creative component advisors Assigning advisors through the senior thesis colloquium faculty committee
Semester 1; end of week 2	Advisor confirmation from the registrar Submission of thesis proposal (500 words)	Advisor confirmation from the registrar Submission of thesis proposal (500 words)	Advisor confirmation from the registrar Submission of thesis proposal (500 words)
Semesters 1 + 2	Regular meetings with advisor	Regular meetings with advisor (written and creative component)	Regular meetings with advisor (written and creative component)
Semester 1; weeks 7-14	Research/ draft presentations	Research draft presentations including CC draft	Research draft presentations (including CC draft)
Semester 1; end of week 13	Thesis title due to Registrar	Thesis title due to Registrar	Thesis title due to Registrar
Semester 1; end of Completion Week	10 page draft due to advisor	7 page draft due to advisor	7 page draft due to advisor
Semester 2; end of week 10	Two hard copies of thesis due to the Registrar	Two hard copies of thesis due to the Registrar	Two hard copies of thesis due to the Registrar
Semester 2; ca. week 12-14		Creative component exhibition + CC written reflection due to the Registrar	Creative component exhibition + CC written reflection due to the Registrar
Semester 2; weeks 12-14	Thesis presentations	Thesis presentations	Thesis presentations

4. Project at a Glance

Bard College Berlin
A LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY

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.

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 for HAST and 5000-6000 words for APS students). 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.

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.

Creative Component written reflection

At the end of the artistic research process students should write a short reflection of 1,000-2,000 words to be submitted ca. 3 days after the creative component exhibition (exact date will be confirmed according to the date of the exhibition). 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 the final work and exhibition/performance
- Reflection on findings in relation to the overall argument of the general thesis project

The reflection should be sent to both advisors (written and creative component), the Registrar and the Dean.

7. Presentations

The public presentation of theses will take place during weeks 12-15 of the final semester. Students will be notified of their allotted date/time in advance of their presentations. 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.