

Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Guidelines for the Independent Research Project

Introduction

Students enrolled in the Master's program in Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies can opt to do an Independent Research Project (IRP) as part of their degree. The following guidelines are offered to facilitate the successful completion of IRPs within the one-year time frame, and to articulate clear expectations for both students and supervisors. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of scholarship in the fields of gender, sexuality and women's studies, these guidelines have been developed with the intention of maintaining sensitivity to interdisciplinary differences.

Description, form and scope of the IRP

The IRP replaces a full-year course and is intended to provide Master's students with an opportunity to develop their ideas and analytic thinking on a topic of their choosing. IRPs may, but are not required to, make an original contribution to knowledge.

In the IRP, students are expected to conduct an independent piece of research and develop a critical analysis of a topic in a paper that is clearly informed by feminist thinking and/or theory. Typically, students will write an essay in which they articulate and develop a particular thesis or argument. The form of the IRP is somewhat flexible, however, and should be negotiated between the student and supervisor. The scope of the IRP should be guided by the supervisor, and should be revised as necessary as the IRP develops, in order to distinguish the project from a thesis and to facilitate the timely completion of the IRP. It is possible to combine the written paper with other creative projects, such as a film.

Students who intend to do research that involves human subjects are required to go through an Ethics Review and should consult the appropriate Ethics Committee for deadlines and requirements. See <http://www.uwo.ca/research/ethics/info/which-reb.htm> for more information.

Length of the IRP

The length of the IRP should be appropriate to the field of study in which it is being written. The IRP is meant to replace a full-year course, and thus its length should be comparable to that which would be expected as a final paper for a full-year Master's level course. As a general guide, the completed IRP should be between 30 and 50 pages (excluding the bibliography).

Process

Students and supervisors are expected to meet on a regular basis. It is expected that supervisors will give students feedback on their writing and ideas in an ongoing fashion, and that students will provide supervisors with a complete draft of the final paper by approximately June 24 so that supervisors have sufficient time to review it and provide feedback.

Deadlines

The final paper is due August 1. To facilitate meeting this deadline, by December 1, students should complete an IRP Proposal that includes the following sections:

(i) a working title; (ii) a paragraph that introduces the reader to the topic of the IRP; (iii) a research statement or question that will guide the development of the IRP; (iv) a tentative thesis statement or hypothesis, if applicable; (v) a description of the methodology that will be used; (vi) the significance

of the topic and the paper for research in gender, sexuality and women’s studies. A preliminary bibliography should be attached.

Bibliographic annotations are not necessary. The paper proposal should be 3 to 4 pages, double-spaced and in 12 point font, with normal margins. It is to be submitted to the Graduate Chair for approval. Students will present a component of their IRP at the Annual GSWS Graduate Student Conference that is held in May-June. This provides an opportunity for students to receive feedback on their work-in-progress from GSWS peers, core faculty, and affiliate faculty members, and gain experience doing conference presentations.

Timelines

Date	Task/Milestone
November 1	By this date, you should meet with your supervisor to discuss your IRP proposal
December 1	IRP proposal due to supervisor and Graduate Chair
Mid-January	Meet with supervisor to discuss and decide on: (i) focus and structure of IRP and (ii) what portion of IRP will be submitted after reading week
February	After reading week, you are expected to submit a portion of your IRP to your supervisor for review and feedback. Feedback to be provided to student within 2 weeks of submission.
Early May	Submit draft of IRP-in-progress to supervisor. This should be a revised and extended version of what you submitted in February and may focus on what you will present at the conference in May/June. Students and supervisors should meet to discuss feedback and direction of IRP.
late May – early June	Annual GSWS Graduate Student Conference
June 24*	Full draft of IRP submitted to supervisor for feedback. Feedback to be provided to student within 2 weeks of submission.
August 1*	Final IRP to be submitted to supervisor and second reader
August 15*	IRP grades submitted by supervisor and second reader
August 30*	Final grades submitted to SGPS

**These dates vary slightly from year to year*

The supervisor and a second reader will mark the IRP and the final grade will be the average of the two. Students will receive the averaged grade and comments. The Graduate Chair will select the second reader in consultation with the supervisor. The grading criteria used to assign final grades to papers is located below. Second readers will provide comments on the IRP to justify their grade.

Format for the final IRP

The final IRP should be double spaced with normal margins, and should include a title page that includes the student’s name, the supervisor’s name, the name of the Department, and the title of the IRP. The bibliographic style used should be suitable for the scholarly approach used and should be consistent throughout the paper.

IRP and Graduate Course Grading Criteria

90-100% Work at this level is of exceptional calibre and exceeds expectation; it demonstrates highly advanced critical analysis. The arguments/ideas are complex and nuanced, reflecting an expansive and sophisticated understanding of the broader implications of the findings. The writing is compelling. At the higher grade point (**95+**), the work contributes new insights to the selected field of inquiry or creative practice, and is suitable to submit for publication or exhibition, with or without revision.

86-89% Work at this level is above expectation; it generally demonstrates excellence via persuasive argumentation and sophisticated critical thinking. The ideas are insightful and well nuanced, the research thorough, and the writing strong. The work is potentially publishable with revision.

82-85% Work at this level is clearly conceptualized and theoretically coherent, the research thorough, and the analysis, overall, well-written and argued. While there may be minor problems in one or more of these areas, achievement in this category ranges from solid to promising, and may suggest potential to proceed to a PhD.

78-81% Work at this level is adequate and satisfies requirements, but substantive improvement is needed in one or more of the following areas: conceptualization, theoretical coherence, thoroughness, writing quality, and/or strength of the analysis or argument.

70-77% Work at this level is minimally passable, but demonstrates multiple, often serious, problems with conceptualization, theoretical coherence, thoroughness, writing quality, and/or strength of the analysis or argument.

< 70% Work at this level does not meet the scholarly standards expected of graduate performance. There are serious deficiencies in conceptualization, theoretical coherence, thoroughness, writing quality, and strength of the analysis or argument.