Guidelines for beginning your MA thesis

This document is meant to help you start your MA thesis project in the best way and to ensure you get the most out of our supervision meetings.

Do not be overwhelmed by this list: it includes nothing you will not be doing anyway, and it will help you be as effective as possible.

Before coming to your first advisor session, please read this document and complete the tasks mentioned.

You are not expected to have lengthy answers for any of the points below, but please be prepared to discuss them. Some of them require well-thought ideas, but most of them are simply meant to get you to start thinking about your project.

If you are unsure of what you are expected to do, don’t hesitate to contact me.

# Introductory matters

1. Please note that MA Thesis Contracts (*Specialeaftaler*) can only be entered into during the periods
   1. December 1—March 1 or
   2. June 1—October 1
2. Read the academic regulations ([2007](http://www.au.dk/fileadmin/www.au.dk/fakulteter__institutter_mv_/administrationen/studieforvaltningen/studieguide/studieordning/humaniora/studienaevn/slk/slk_eng_ka_2007.pdf)) or ([2011](http://studieordning.au.dk/studieordningHTML/856_24-06-2011_Kandidatuddannelse%20i%20engelsk.html)) for the thesis
3. Download and fill in the Department of English MA Thesis Contract ([*Specialeaftale*](http://studerende.au.dk/fileadmin/studerende.au.dk/Arts/Kandidat/Speciale/MastersThesisContractEnglish.pdf)).
   1. E-mail the completed MA thesis contract (except for meeting dates) back to me before our first meeting.
   2. We will schedule meeting dates at the first meeting so please remember to bring your calendar.
4. If you have any questions about your hand-in date or extensions, please consult Studiesekretær [Brit Knudsen](http://pure.au.dk/portal/da/imvbk@hum.au.dk) AU Studieadministration, Arts 1451, 3. sal. lokale 322.
5. What is the tentative length in pages of your thesis: \_\_\_\_

# Advisor sessions

1. Draw up a *tentative* time schedule.
   1. This will help you get started and will probably have to be revised occasionally during the process – this is to be expected.
   2. Start at the date you want to be finished and work backwards. Include only your target due date as well as when you would like to hand in your first draft.
      1. When do you plan to hand in your thesis? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   3. We will schedule our meetings at our first meeting.
   4. Consider whether you need to travel in relation to finishing your thesis. You can apply for a grant if you have a good reason for traveling (such as conducting archival research or interviews) (See Faculty of Arts Resources below).
2. Consider your expectations for me as your advisor.
   1. In our first session, we will discuss your expectations for me as your advisor.
   2. I may not be able to meet all your expectations, but I will discuss them with you in order to give us both a clear picture of how to work together successfully.
3. My expectations for you include (but are not limited to):
   1. Please be punctual (at meetings, handing in drafts, etc.).
   2. Please take notes at advisor sessions.
   3. Stick to your schedule and advise me of any changes and explain why. I will help you revise your schedule if necessary and discuss any problems that might occur.
   4. Please format all drafts according to the *Department of English Style Guide*. Make sure drafts are spell and grammar checked, and otherwise proofread.
   5. Please note that I will only read 20% (12-16 pages) of your thesis.
4. To make for a more efficient meeting and to give you an opportunity to reflect over my comments before we discuss your drafts, you should always submit drafts *three days* before our scheduled meeting.
   1. I will send you my comments before we meet. Please print out and bring a copy with the comments visible. Please do not bring a different draft to our meeting.
5. Create an account with an online cloud storage service such as [Dropbox](https://www.dropbox.com/), if you do not already have one.
   1. Back-up your files for your MA thesis on your cloud service account. Besides providing you with a back-up copy of your files, it will enable us to access any files you don’t have with you at any meeting, if we need to so.

## Suggested advisor sessions

1. Introductory session (group) (include accessing research materials and using Chicago)
2. Objects of analysis determined and finalized
3. Theory and methods session: students must have determined and grasped and shown how they will utilize their theory and method (includes 5 pages)
4. Sample analysis of social and cultural issue
5. Sample analysis of film or other media product

# DVDs and other Materials

1. Please bring a DVD of any film that you are considering analyzing to the first session.
2. If you are working with another medium than film, please bring a digital copy to the first session.

# Writing and Research

## Content matters

1. Determine general subject area and possibly topic.
2. Consider what your interest in the topic is and why you want to write about it.
   1. Are you seeking to analyze, explain, interpret, or document your topic?
3. Be prepared to discuss your ideas more specifically at the first meeting.
4. Consider what you can draw on intellectually from your major and minor areas of study for your thesis.
5. Consider a topic that might be relevant for bridging your experience as a student with you upcoming career.
6. Initial project description.
   1. It is important that you begin to determine what you want to argue/interpret/prove) in your project and what the focus of your topic will be. A working thesis statement will enable you to focus your writing and research.
   2. Working thesis statement:

## Formal matters

1. All written work that you hand in must be formatted properly and free of spelling and grammatical errors. *Draft* in this context means unfinished, not sloppy. Please remember to put page numbers on all drafts.
2. Familiarize yourself with English’s [Style Guide for Research Papers and Theses](http://engelsk.au.dk/uddannelse/opgavevejl/style-guide/), if you are not already familiar with it.
   1. Formatting according to the Style Guide is **mandatory**, even for drafts.
3. All written work that you hand in mustinclude a reference list formatted according to the *Chicago Manual of Style* (16th edition*)*. The State and University Library provides access to the [*Chicago Manual of Style*](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:2048/home.html).
   1. Note that the Department of English does *not* use either footnotes or endnotes for citations.
4. Determine whether you are writing in British or American English. Be consistent with spelling, word choice, and punctuation.

# Research resources

1. Gather materials on your topic and compile a brief bibliography.
   1. Include books and journal articles.
   2. Format the reference list (based on the [Chicago Manual of Style](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:2048/home.html)) according to the *Department of English Style Guide for Research Papers and Theses*.
   3. The reference list/works cited should give me an idea of your sources. It will also help you determine whether resources will be available through the State and University Library or whether you will need to use other libraries.
2. List five academic [databases](http://www.statsbiblioteket.dk/databaseliste) available through the State Library that you believe will be most relevant for your research.
3. Create an account for each of the above databases that allow you to do so.
4. Create an account for [Refworks](http://ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:2048/login?url=http://www.refworks.com/Refworks/login.asp) through the State and University Library.
   1. To access RefWorks off-campus, you must enter the correct group code. The State Library Group Code is <RWStatsbiblioteket>.
5. If you are unfamiliar or out of practice using Refworks, take one of the State and University Library’s Refworks [courses](http://www.statsbiblioteket.dk/nyheder/kom-pa-kursus-i-refworks).

# Faculty of Arts resources

1. Test your thesis ideas at [Scribo](http://www.scribo.dk/pagefront/index/lang/1) via the [Study Metro](http://www.studiemetro.au.dk/).
2. Consider whether you might benefit from the Centre for Teaching Development and Digital Media (*Center for Undervisningsudvikling og Digitale Medier*) MA thesis writing course. For details, contact the Centre for Teaching Development and Digital Media.
3. If you are considering traveling in order to conduct primary research in conjunction with your master’s thesis, you can apply for travel funds from the Faculty of Arts. See the [guidelines](http://www.humaniora.au.dk/uddannelse/studiestoette/rejser).
4. Attend a State and University Library / Nobel Park Library seminar on the writing process and literature searching. Check the ENG Student Forum and SLK Studenterforum on FirstClass for time and date.
5. If you would like to work on campus, sign up for one of the Faculty’s “specialepladser.” Get further details from the *Nobelbiblioteket*.