MCD THESIS OPTION

Students enrolled in the Master of Communication Disorders (MCD) program may elect to complete a thesis. This option requires designing and completing an original research project of publishable quality. Students who pursue the thesis are exempt from the master's comprehensive examination.
A thesis provides opportunities to develop skills in research design, critical thinking, data analysis, and scholarly writing. Success requires strong organization, planning, and commitment. The MCD program follows the thesis guidelines outlined by the LSUHSC-NO School of Graduate Studies.

Frequently Asked Questions:

When do I need to decide? Ideally, begin discussions with the program director or a potential advisor during your first or second semester. Complete the Thesis Interest Form early. Because the process requires narrowing a research question and securing IRB approval, it cannot be rushed. Your thesis proposal and committee approval must be in place by the end of your first year. The meeting must be documented in accordance with the guidelines of the Graduate School (https://graduatestudies.lsuhsc.edu/dissertation_guidelines.aspx).

How do I choose an advisor? Your advisor must be a full-time doctoral-level faculty member in the Speech-Language Pathology program. Faculty listings are available here. Your committee must include three graduate faculty members (including your advisor). While most members come from Communication Disorders, qualified faculty from other LSUHSC departments may also serve if approved by the Graduate School.

How do I gain approval to write a thesis? The program director reviews your request and presents it at a faculty meeting for a vote. Approval requires good standing in coursework and clinical training, plus a minimum GPA of 3.5. Once approved, you and your advisor sign the Thesis Contract Form, confirming your commitment to the project.

What if I change my mind?
Students who discontinue the thesis option may instead complete a capstone project.

Guidelines for the Thesis Process

Graduate students in Speech-Language Pathology may elect to complete a thesis as part of the MCD degree. A thesis involves designing a research project, collecting and analyzing data, preparing a written document, and defending it orally. This process develops advanced research and writing skills and enhances professional credentials.
Students are encouraged to begin planning early (ideally Summer 1), but most finalize their decision after completing SPTHAUD 6100: *Research in Communication Disorders*. A minimum GPA of 3.5 and good standing in coursework and clinical training are required.

Suggested Timeline

First Year – Summer/Fall

- Submit Thesis Interest Form.
- Select a topic and receive faculty approval; a thesis advisor is assigned.
- Sign Thesis Contract Form.
- Begin literature review, define research questions/hypotheses, and draft rationale.

First Year – Spring

- Register for SPTHAUD 6298 (Independent Study).

- Develop literature review and methodology.
- Identify two additional committee members.
- Submit first draft of research proposal to advisor.

Second Year – Summer

- Register for SPTHAUD 6298.
- Revise proposal and present to committee.
- Submit proposal to IRB and await approval before data collection.

Second Year – Fall

- Register for SPTHAUD 6500 (Thesis).
- Prepare and conduct data collection and analysis.

Second Year – Spring

- Register for SPTHAUD 6500.
- Draft and revise results, abstract, and conclusions.
- Submit full thesis to advisor and committee.
- Defend thesis; make final revisions.
- Submit approved thesis electronically to Graduate School.

MCD Thesis Contract

LSUHSC-NO Department of Communication Disorders
Speech-Language Pathology Program

Student Name: _____

Commitments of Graduate Student

1. I acknowledge that I hold the primary responsibility for completing my degree requirements. I will demonstrate professionalism, motivation, engagement, curiosity, and ethical conduct in the classroom, clinic, and research settings.
2. I will meet with my thesis advisor on a regular basis (at least once per month, or as mutually agreed) and provide updates on progress and outcomes.
3. I will work with my thesis advisor to design a feasible thesis project, establish a timeline, and strive to meet deadlines.
4. I will work with my advisor to select a thesis committee and will meet with the committee at least annually (or more often as required). I will respond constructively to committee feedback.
5. I will remain informed about all program, graduate school, and institutional policies and requirements, and I will adhere to them.
6. I will follow the timelines established by the department, my advisor, and my committee to ensure timely completion of the thesis.

Commitments of Thesis Advisor

1. I will be committed to mentoring the graduate student as a developing member of the scholarly community.
2. I will help the student design and carry out a thesis project with clear goals, realistic scope, and an agreed-upon timeline.
3. I will meet with the student regularly to monitor progress and provide guidance.
4. I will support the student in identifying necessary resources (e.g., methodological guidance, IRB process, or access to clinical populations) within the limits of LSUHSC-NO guidelines.
5. I will guide the student through relevant requirements and deadlines of the program and the LSUHSC-NO Graduate School.

Signatures

Student: _____ Date: _____
Thesis Advisor: _____ Date: _____
Program Director: _____ Date: _____

MCD Thesis Interest Form

LSUHSC Department of Communication Disorders
Speech-Language Pathology Program

Name: _____

Current GPA: _____

1. Why are you interested in completing thesis research?

2. Describe your area of interest or the type of project you would like to pursue (you may attach a document if you wish).

3. Will your project involve human subjects?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Unsure
4. Which faculty member(s) do you believe would be a good fit to serve as your thesis advisor? Why?

Program Director Approval

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
  Comments/Conditions (if applicable): _____

Program Director Signature _____ Date _____

Thesis Advisor Signature _____ Date _____