Choosing Your IM Culminating Experience

For your culminating experience you may choose to do Plan A Thesis, Plan B Starred Paper or Plan C Portfolio. Each option is intended to show that you have mastered the content of and made a contribution to the field of Information Media. See the chart on page three for a comparison of each of the options.

Step 1: Meet with Advisor
Regardless of the option you choose, the culminating experience and final paper is a multi-semester process that starts with a meeting with your advisor, prior to taking IM 608, to discuss the options and your topic choices.
After you have selected a plan, work with your adviser to fill out your Program of Study form to file with Graduate Studies. (If, for some reason, you decide later to change plans, you may make the change through filing a new program of study.)
One of the hardest parts of each paper is selecting a topic. Early in your program, start thinking of a topic that will be your focus:
- Topics covered in classes may capture your interest or problems you have observed on the job may cry out for solutions.
- Select a topic in the field that will keep your interest through completion.
- Select a topic that might help you get a job, keep a job or advance in your career.
- As you take classes, keep research articles that are pertinent to your topic. You may choose to write assigned papers in the general area of your topic, which allows you to become more familiar with your topic.
- If you develop familiarity with your chosen topic and a file of articles to begin with, you will be well prepared to take the IM608 class and write your project proposal.
- Discuss the general idea of your topic with your adviser to determine if it is worthwhile and feasible or too broad or too ambitious.
- Examine samples of finished projects on reserve at the Miller Center Circulation Desk (ask for IM reserve items) or in the IM Office to help refine your understanding of the differences between the options.
- Discuss your understanding of the plans with your adviser. You may also wish to discuss it with other students in the program or graduates of the program.
- Review the Culminating Project information on the Graduate Studies website for a checklist of official steps and detailed information to help guide you through the process.
- Remember to keep in close contact with your adviser throughout the process of planning and completing your final paper.

Step 2: Take IM 608
In this course, you will begin to prepare a proposal for your thesis, starred paper or portfolio.
- The proposal must follow University and APA based IM guidelines.
- Consult with the Write Place or a private editor, familiar with APA and university formatting requirements, to assist with the writing process.
- Allow two weeks for your adviser to review and comment on each revision of the proposal.
Step 3: Advisors Approval and Preliminary Meeting
After completing IM 608, obtain your advisors approval of your proposal, and form your graduate committee.

- The committee consists of your graduate adviser, one additional member of IM graduate faculty and one member of the graduate faculty from another department.
- Your adviser may be able to offer suggestions for committee members.
- If you are considering conducting meetings during the summer, make sure your adviser and other committee members will be available during that term.

Schedule a Preliminary Meeting of your graduate committee for your proposal submission.

- The meeting must be scheduled at least four weeks before the end of term, and cannot be scheduled during the last week of classes or during finals.
- Notify the School of Graduate Studies of your meeting date at least two weeks in advance.
- Submit a printed copy of your adviser-approved proposal to each committee member and Graduate Studies at least two weeks in advance.
- Your preliminary meeting and final meeting may not be held in the same term.

Once you receive graduate committee approval of the proposal, make all required revisions. If substantial revisions are required, an additional meeting of the committee may be necessary.

Step 4: Complete your paper
Complete the research/projects described in your proposal write chapter 4, the results of research or project. Write chapter 5 reflecting on the research/projects. Submit chapters 4-5 to your advisor for approval.

Step 5: Final Meeting and Submission
You must be enrolled in at least one graduate credit during the semester in which you complete all requirements for your paper and Master’s degree.

Once you have completed all the required revisions and obtained your advisor’s final approval, schedule a meeting of your graduate committee to defend your paper.

- The meeting must be scheduled at least four weeks before the end of term, and cannot be scheduled during the last week of classes or during finals.
- Notify the School of Graduate Studies of your meeting date at least two weeks in advance.
- Submit a printed copy of your adviser-approved paper to each committee member and Graduate Studies at least two weeks in advance.

Once your receive your graduate committees approval for your paper, submit four final copies of the thesis or starred paper to the School of Graduate Studies, or three copies of the portfolio to IM Office, by the appropriate deadline.
## Comparison of the Options

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Plan A - Thesis</th>
<th>Plan B – Starred Paper</th>
<th>Plan C - Portfolio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credits</strong></td>
<td>6 credits</td>
<td>2 credits</td>
<td>2 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Registration</strong></td>
<td>Register for IM699 the semester you intend to complete</td>
<td>Register for IM697 the semester you intend to complete</td>
<td>Register for IM696 the semester you intend to complete</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Persons involved</strong></td>
<td>Committee (minimum of 3 members) • Adviser • IM graduate faculty • Graduate faculty outside IM</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Basic or applied research involving original data gathering</td>
<td>Applied research involving original data gathering</td>
<td>Typically 3-5 projects based on a theme. At least one must be created solely for portfolio. A component of applied research/assessment may be included.</td>
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<td><strong>Meetings required</strong></td>
<td>Two formal meetings with committee • Proposal meeting: Schedule in semester after you complete IM 608 and after you receive approval from your adviser. A printed copy of the proposal must be submitted to the committee members 2 weeks prior to meeting. Notify Graduate Studies of the meeting date and time. • Final meeting: Occurs in the final semester. After receiving approval of your adviser submit a printed copy of the completed thesis to committee members 2 weeks prior to final meeting. Notify Graduate Studies of the meeting date and time. Meetings are not scheduled during the last week of classes or during finals week. You must be enrolled in at least 1 credit the semester you complete your program.</td>
<td>Two formal meetings with committee • Proposal meeting: Schedule in semester after you complete IM 608 and after you receive approval from your adviser. A printed copy of the proposal must be submitted to the committee members 2 weeks prior to meeting. Notify Graduate Studies of the meeting date and time. • Final meeting: Occurs in the final semester. After receiving approval of your adviser submit a printed copy of the completed starred paper to committee members 2 weeks prior to final meeting. Notify Graduate Studies of the meeting date and time. Meetings are not scheduled during the last week of classes or during finals week. You must be enrolled in at least 1 credit the semester you complete your program.</td>
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<td><strong>Format</strong></td>
<td>Five chapter model in APA format Ch. 1 - Statement of problem Ch. 2 - Literature review Ch. 3 - Methodology Ch. 4 - Results/data Ch. 5 - Analysis/Conclusions/Recommendations/Reflection</td>
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<td>Adaptation of five chapter model in APA format Ch. 1 - Statement of theme Ch. 2 - Literature review Ch. 3 – Description of projects (see Content section above) Ch. 4 – Projects Ch. 5 - Analysis/Conclusions/Recommendations/Reflection</td>
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Beginning with new students in fall 2010, SCSU requires that you be registered for at least 1 graduate credit during the semester you complete your graduate project. If you do not complete within the semester you register, you will receive an “IP” (In Progress) grade until the thesis or paper is completed. You will also be required to register for another credit in the semester in which you complete the project.