Your Responsibilities as a Graduate Student writing a Thesis

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This document is meant to assure that you as a graduate student are aware of your responsibilities with respect to your thesis.

It is important that you remember that I am your advisor, not your slave driver, mother, or bad consciousness. Ultimately it is your own responsibility to make sure things are done in a timely fashion, but this document will briefly outline dos and don'ts.

Forms

As you probably know, a number of forms must be handed in. At this point I would like to refer you to the graduate college's timeline (which can be found at http://graduatecollege.unlv.edu/current/guidance/). It lists the following forms:

* 14 Appointment of Advisory Committee Approval Form
* 28 Proposed Masters and Specialist Degree Program (this is part 1 of the form, part 2 you should obtain from the computer science office)
* 34 Prospectus Approval Form.
* Graduation form

Please be aware of deadlines associated with all these forms – they are ultimately your responsibility.

Programming

You must be done with your programming before you can hand in your thesis; you are encouraged to take notes and read background material before and during your programming, and even perhaps start writing things down that pertain to the written part of your thesis. There are no rules stating that you should finish programming before you start writing.

Thesis

If you are working with me you will have chosen the Thesis Option (not the Project Option). This requires that you write a thesis (!) – a substantial amount of pages outlining what you have done, how you did it, why anyone should care, what other people have already done, what the results were, and what you could do in the future to make it better.

Not all theses are organized in the exact same way but a good starting point might be something like this:

- Abstract (20 lines of 'what did I do')
- Introduction. (Describe the problem and explain why this is interesting and what your approach is, and perhaps the expected result)
- Related work. (You must have read a number of papers about related work; in this chapter you outline what other approaches have been taken and what they achieved and how they differed from your approach). It is a good idea to start this before you start your programming.
- Your system/program. (Now you get a chance to explain what you did, and how you did it)
- Conclusion. (What were the results, and did the measure up to what we expected)
- Future Work. (What further work could be done to this project)
- References

I always suggest that you create a skeleton of your thesis with chapters, section and perhaps subsection and then fill them in. It seems to be a good way to start.

Finishing up your thesis and defense

Keep in mind that you must hand a copy of the final draft of your thesis to the committee members no later than 14 days before the defense; this draft may not be given to the committee without my approval; a final draft is as close to the final thesis as you can get, only minor changes may be needed to finish of the write up.

I will be more than happy to help you with questions about the write up, and of course I will read everything you have written (probably several times), but please keep in mind that it is a service that is offered to you, so you should do everything in your power to assure that what you hand in (even though it might only be a draft) is in the best possible state, and that includes:

- Check your spelling. I absolutely hate having to be your spell checker. All computers have spell checkers today – there is no excuse.
- Make sure you use proper punctuation, correct use of `font` and effects like **bold** and *italics*. You should familiarize yourself with the requirements from the graduate college, and observe all formatting rules. Code should be set in a fixed width font, and figures should have proper captions (terminated by a period!)
- A good idea is to have a friend read through chapters before you hand them to me; especially a friend who knows computer science but does not know anything in detail about your project.
- Don't use contractions and try to avoid spoken language when you write.
- Make sure everything is consistent and looks nice!

Once you have handed you thesis to your committee you should spend the next 14 days preparing your presentation – we expect I to take around 20 minutes. You should prepare a nice Power Point presentation with no more than roughly 15-20 slides. Do not fill the slides with code or 20-30 lines from your thesis. Make it nice, interesting and light.

After the defense you might be asked to make some corrections to your thesis by the committee members; please get that done in a timely manner so you can actually hand in your thesis to the graduate college.

I hope this helps a little bit, but I want you to remember that ultimately you are in charge of your thesis programming and writing process, so if you delay it hurts only you. Please assure that you are doing things in a timely manner, as there is nothing I can do to change deadlines set by the university.