



# UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

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Master of Arts in  
International Studies

**MAIS GUIDE TO COMPLETING A MASTER'S  
CAPSTONE PROJECT  
2018**

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The final requirement for the completion of the Master of Arts in International Studies (MAIS) Program is the thesis or applied project, which requires the application of the knowledge, insights, and skills acquired in the program. The thesis or applied project is begun in the second semester during the Research Methods course and completed in the final semester of the program.

The choice of whether you do a thesis or applied project is up to you. In your Research & Thesis Writing class you will start to get a sense of which option is most fitting for your career choices. Both the thesis and applied project are developed under the guidance of a faculty adviser. Students who plan to continue their education at the doctoral level typically select the thesis option. Those who do not plan to continue their education, but will instead apply their degree professionally, have taken both routes with equal success.

This guide outlines the elements of the thesis or applied project, roles of the student and adviser, content guidelines, formatting suggestions, submission procedures, and general criteria for evaluation. Given the breadth of topics available for study within International Studies, this guide is designed to produce consistency of style, while allowing flexibility.

### THESIS OR APPLIED PROJECT: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

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Both the thesis and the applied project require analysis of a contemporary global issue from an interdisciplinary perspective, as well as application of what students have learned throughout the MAIS program to an independent research project. **The two options differ, however, in their overall structure, the format of the final analysis, and the audience for whom the project is intended.** A thesis provides an answer a question that contributes to new knowledge and is generalizable beyond a single setting. The applied project provides a solution to a question of practical importance, or evaluates a curriculum, procedure, or policy within a particular organization or institution. Any questions as to whether you wish to complete a thesis or an applied project should be discussed with your adviser.

#### THESIS

A Master's thesis is a scholarly document that questions or otherwise contributes to an existing body of knowledge. Students wishing to complete a thesis will produce a paper of high quality, analyzing an existing concept, phenomenon, or text(s) in light of current theory and research. A Master's thesis is primarily aimed at an academic audience. The thesis typically includes:

- An introduction describing the purpose, scope, and significance of the topic;

- A section situating the topic in the context of the literature in the field;
- A section outlining the research methods or approach and rationale;
- A section analyzing the selection and collection of data and discussing the results;
- A conclusion that sums up the importance of the project and addresses avenues for future work.

Generally, the MAIS thesis should be 50-70 pages long and must show your ability to analyze, interpret, and synthesize information, illustrate appropriate methodologies and procedures, and demonstrate your ability to defend your conclusions. These criteria should be discussed in more detail with your thesis adviser.

## **APPLIED PROJECT**

Unlike a thesis, an applied project is not primarily aimed at an academic audience. Rather, an applied project is designed to provide an in-depth analysis of an issue or problem and provide potential solutions relevant to a professional audience. Such an audience could include non-profit/NGOs, community-based organizations, government, academic sectors, and industry. Applied projects have two components. Applied projects are intended for students whose career aspirations are best served by gaining practical experience in the design and solution of a problem and presentation of the results. Students pursuing this option will produce a specific product (e.g., comprehensive plan or a GIS system or component) and assemble a project report.

1. Introduction and Study Setting
  - a. General Introduction
  - b. Purpose and need for the project (the rationale)
  - c. Discussion of target audience or “client”
  - d. Description of study setting

*For example, if the project involves a GIS application for a regional planning agency, an identification of said agency and a brief discussion of what that agency does, who the application will ultimately benefit, and why it is important would be appropriate.*

2. Synopsis of the Field [somewhat akin to literature review for a thesis]
  - a. Discussion of context in which the project is taking place
  - b. Connection to larger themes
  - c. Discussion of state of technology or methods you are using

*For example, if a student were doing a project on using GIS to develop a ride-share program for a metropolitan planning agency, the author would have a section that discusses theories about and work done on the use of GIS technology generally for development or urban planning work, how GIS has been used in other ride-share (or similar) projects. You would also include a section on GIS (what it is, why it is useful, and how it is related to the specific*

*project), discussion of the GIS software and how it is capable of performing the proposed task, and (if applicable), discussion of hardware involved in the project.*

3. Project Structure/Deliverables [somewhat akin to Methods section of the thesis]
  - a. Describes in detail the complete nature of the project and how it will be carried out
    - i What will be done (deliverables)?
    - ii What information is needed to produce the deliverables (data)?
    - iii How will the deliverable be achieved? What tools or techniques will be used?
    - iv What are the timelines/deadlines (particularly important if actively working with a professional partner)?
    - v Who are the relevant actors?

*Following on the GIS example, this section would describe the specific steps the student will take in using GIS to develop a new application, what data they need (i.e. population centers, traffic patterns, etc.), who this project is designed to benefit (i.e. people underserved by public transportation) and who the relevant partners are for implementation and why this is beneficial to their work.*

4. Project Implementation [akin to Results section of a thesis]
  - a. Discussion of what happened during course of project
  - b. Discussion of project deliverable including information utilized, steps in the process, output, and difficulties/potential issues to address

*Did the creation of the application work as anticipated? Why or why not? If working with an actual group, did it meet their needs/what feedback was received? If implemented, did it work as anticipated? If not yet implemented, what feedback was received?*

5. Conclusion and Recommendations
  - a. Includes critical analysis of the project (successes/failures etc. and recommendations for the future
6. Bibliography
7. Appendices as needed

Generally, the MAIS applied project should be 50-70 pages long.

## ADVISER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

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Students write the thesis or applied project under the guidance of a faculty adviser. In the spring semester, students identify an adviser most suited to their research needs. It is not mandatory to select an adviser from among MAIS Program faculty, but advisers must be employed by the University of San Francisco.

After a relationship is established, students and advisers sign a *Thesis or Applied Project Agreement* and submit this document to the MAIS Office (KA 213) for approval by the MAIS Directors or Departmental Chair. The form is due by **March 30, 2018**.

Each adviser-student relationship is unique, but regular communication must be established to ensure timely completion of the thesis or applied project. The MAIS Program does not require a particular structure for the adviser-student relationship, but the program strongly recommends that students meet with their advisers at least every other week during the writing period. This is typically during the final fall semester of the program.

Advisers need to be clear about their expectations and students must understand the standards they are to meet. **Ultimately, however, responsibilities for completion of the thesis or applied project rests with the student.** Students must organize their time and plan their research and writing in such a way as to ensure sufficient time for advisers to read, comment on, and approve changes. Students are also to plan their draft submission accordingly, in order to ensure sufficient time for advisers to read, comment on, and approve changes. Students should plan to talk to their advisers regularly about the progress they are making, especially with regards to areas in which they are struggling or are unsure of the strength of their arguments. The student should also work with the advisor to set up a working timeline and submit a **Timeline to Completion Form** by **September 1, 2018**.

If students or advisers feel they are having a problem with any aspect of the adviser-student relationship, it should be discussed as soon as possible. If concerns remain, contact the MAIS Program for help in mediating the issue.

## GENERAL TIMELINE

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### SEPTEMBER-MARCH

- Begin thinking about your thesis or applied project as early as possible.
- Reflect on current questions and issues in international studies, using experiences from your classes and internship as your guide, and choose a relevant topic for your thesis or applied project.
- Read literature related to your chosen topic.

### NOVEMBER

- Register for MAIS 613 Research and Thesis Writing in the spring.

### MARCH

- Select an adviser, preferably someone who works on the subject and/or in the region you are interested in. Biographies of all USF faculty can be found on the university's website. Please note that no single faculty member may advise more than 4 thesis students at any one time, therefore, have several options for an adviser.
- Complete and submit the Thesis or Applied Project Agreement to the program office (KA 213) by **March 30, 2018**. You will find this form at the end of this document and on the MAIS MyUSF page.

### APRIL

- If you plan to complete a thesis or applied project that requires research on human subjects, you must obtain Exempt Status through our internal expeditor or be ushered to the USF Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) **before** conducting your study. For information regarding the policies and procedures for approval, visit their website: <http://www.usfca.edu/catalog/policies/irb/>
- IRB Applications are due to the Department's IRB Reviewers by **April 1, 2018**. All proposals will be reviewed to determine whether they fall under the Department's Blanket IRB Approval (minimal risk) or require full review by the Institutional Review Board. The IRB process will be discussed in the Research Methods course prior to the application submission deadline.
- Register for MAIS 614 International Studies Master's Thesis or Applied project for the Fall 2018 semester.

### MAY-DECEMBER

- Complete your thesis or applied project as soon as possible during the semester. MAIS 614 does not meet regularly like other classes; it requires individual meetings with advisers.
- In conjunction with your thesis adviser, complete and submit your thesis **Timeline to Completion** form by **September 1, 2018**.
- Extensions are granted only in exceptional circumstances. Do not plan on receiving an extension for your thesis work.

## DEADLINES AND SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

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### DATES TO REMEMBER

- **March 30, 2018:** Adviser Agreement Form Due
- **September 1, 2018:** Submit Timeline to Completion Form
- **November 20, 2018:** Thesis Due Date
- **December 7, 2018:** Comments Received
- **December 17, 2018:** Revisions Due

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- By the deadline specified above (November 20), submit an electronic version of your final draft to the MAIS office at [mais@usfca.edu](mailto:mais@usfca.edu).
- Your primary adviser, along with a second reader assigned by the MAIS program, will read and review your thesis or applied project. Following review, you will receive communication from your adviser notifying you of your thesis grade and whether or not revisions are required. If revisions are required, they must be submitted by the specified deadline.
- After your thesis or applied project is approved and graded, your signature page is circulated and signed by your adviser and the Academic Director. It is imperative that you include a blank signature when you submit your final project.
- Submit your final draft to the USF Scholarship Repository:  
<http://repository.usfca.edu/thes/>.
- After a grade is assigned, a substantial set of materials is sent to the Dean's office and the USF Graduation Center, where your transcripts are evaluated and degree information is reviewed. When this detailed process is complete, your degree is posted and your diploma is issued. This can take several weeks.



**Title Page:** Contains title, author, place, month, year, and the name of the graduate degree. Do not include pictures or other extraneous information.

**Signature Page:** An example is provided at the end of this guide. It is imperative that your model yours after this example. Be sure to match the font with the rest of your document.

**Abstract:** An abstract is a summary of the thesis or applied project, consisting of no more than 350 words. It includes a statement of the problem, general analysis conducted, and conclusions and recommendations. Examples of abstracts are available in journals and doctoral dissertations, which can be obtained from the library.

**Table of Contents:** List all the contents of the thesis or applied project including appendices.

**List of Figures:** If needed

**List of Tables:** If needed

**Acknowledgments:** This section gives the student the opportunity to thank their adviser, family, friends, and others instrumental in the preparation of the project. It is recommended that this not exceed one page.

**Specific Style Guides:** With the agreement of the adviser, students are permitted to adopt any style guide for citations provided the format is consistent throughout the thesis or applied project.

### Common Style Guides

- American Sociological Association Style (ASA)
- American Psychological Association Style (APA)
- Chicago Manual of Style (Chicago)
- Modern Language Association Style (MLA)

### Internet Resources on Style Guides

- <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>
- <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/instruct/guides/cilations.html>
- <http://www.apastyle.org/> <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org>

**Checklist Paper:** 8½ in. x 11 in.

**Font:** Times, Times Roman/Times New Roman, 12-point (Bigger font for the title of the thesis or applied project in the title and signature/approval pages)

**Spacing:** Double-spacing throughout manuscript, except when single spacing would improve readability (i.e. for table titles and headings, figure captions, references or bibliography, block quotations or quotations with 40 or more words)

**Margins:** 1.5" at the left margin and 1" at the top, bottom, and right margins, exclusive of page numbers

**Indentation:** first line of every paragraph and every line of block quotations indented 7 spaces or 1/2"

**Page Numbers:** Title page number not indicated

- Table of Contents and other preliminary pages (e.g. Signature Page, Acknowledgment, Abstract, List of Tables, and List of figures) numbered with lower-case Roman numerals (ii, iii, iv, v, etc.) that appear at the bottom of the page.
- Body of the manuscript including the appendices numbered with Arabic numerals in the upper right hand corner (In an applied project, where the appendix may contain a separate document such as a handbook or a curriculum, the appendix cover page is the last numbered page in the manuscript and the first page of the applied project starts with a new numbering system. In a thesis, the numbering continues consecutively through the Appendices.)

**References or Bibliography:** References lists only references cited in the text. Bibliography lists references cited in the text and other relevant sources that are used or recommended.

## ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

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After your thesis or applied project is approved and graded, you will need to submit your final draft to the USF Scholarship Repository (<http://repository.usfca.edu/thes/>). Follow the instructions below, and send the MAIS Program both the *Electronic Thesis Submission Agreement Form* included in this guide and a copy of the email confirmation indicating that your thesis or applied project has been submitted to Gleeson library.

Students are able to request that once submitted, the thesis or applied project have an embargo set for a number of years, making the document unavailable until that point. Scholars do this when they wish to publish in the interim. In the case of sensitive subjects, students can create a pseudonym and include in the comments section that the researcher's name has been withheld but this does jeopardize the integrity of the thesis or applied project. In extremely rare cases, students can request that the requirement contribute to the USF Scholarship Repository be waived.

1. Fill out the *Electronic Thesis/Dissertation Submission Agreement Form*. You will find this form at the end of this document.
2. Visit USF Scholarship Repository at: <http://repository.usfca.edu/thes/>
3. Select "Submit Research" under "Author Corner" on the left side navigation.
4. On "Submit your Research" page, select "Master Theses" under "Theses and Dissertations."
5. Log in using your myUSF login or create a new account using your preferred email address.
6. Fill out the submission form as instructed, upload your final draft, and click "submit."
7. You will receive an email confirmation that your thesis or applied project has been submitted.

## ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION FORM

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Please type or print all information.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

USF Student ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Adviser Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address (long term): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address:

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I hereby certify that, if appropriate, I have obtained and attached hereto a written permission statement from the owner (s) of each third party copyrighted matter to be included in my thesis, allowing distribution as specified below.

I certify that the version of my thesis/ dissertation I have submitted is the same as the approved by my advisory committee. I agree that the above-mentioned document be placed in the University of San Francisco's digital collection repository. I hereby grant to University of San Francisco and its agents the irrevocable, non-exclusive, royalty-free right to reproduce, distribute, and display this thesis in whole or in part in any form including electronic formats now or hereafter developed for educational, research and non-profit uses during the full term of the copyright. I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright including the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis. I warrant that I have the right to make this grant unencumbered and complete.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**[YOUR FINAL THESIS TITLE]**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS  
in  
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

by **[STUDENT NAME]**  
November 20, 2018

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Capstone Adviser

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
MAIS Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



# UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

## Master of Arts in International Studies

### CAPSTONE PROJECT ADVISER AGREEMENT

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Preliminary Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle One:                      Thesis                      Applied Project

Adviser: \_\_\_\_\_

Adviser's Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please note that the thesis due date is **November 20, 2018**.

*Note: Any requests for an extension must be approved, in writing, by the Graduate Director or Department Chair by **November 1, 2018**. Such requests are only granted in exceptional circumstances.*

I agree to complete the thesis or applied project proposed above according to the specifications required by my thesis adviser and in conformance with guidelines outlined in the *MAIS Guide to the Thesis or Applied Project* by the date specified above. I understand the timely completion of my thesis or applied project is necessary to fulfill the requirements of the course, MAIS 614, listed in the University Catalog and the MAIS Student Handbook.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to supervise, and evaluate the proposed thesis or applied project of the above student in the manner set forth in the *MAIS Guide to the Thesis or Applied Project* to help achieve the requirements of the course, MAIS 614, listed in the University Catalog and the MAIS Student Handbook. I also agree to meet with this student regularly during the writing period, and be present during the review and evaluation. I understand I will receive a stipend for serving as a primary adviser. The receipt of this stipend is contingent upon submitting a grade for the student and a completed signature page, as well as serving as a second reader on another thesis.

Adviser Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Director Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_