



College of Arts and Sciences
Office of the Dean
1223 Oldfather Hall
P.O. Box 880312
Lincoln, NE 68588-0312

Degrees with Distinction in the College of Arts and Sciences

Spring, 2020

Students should read carefully the general guidelines and procedures for degrees with distinction. If the student plans to submit a thesis, the section headed 'Quality of Thesis' should be discussed with the thesis co-advisors. Recommendations for degrees with distinction are made by the Committee on Student Academic Distinction, Awards, and Appeals. The following additional information outlines the guidelines considered by the committee.

In recognition of outstanding academic excellence, the college recommends the bachelors degree With Distinction, With High Distinction and With Highest Distinction. Distinction and High Distinction may be recommended on the basis of a student's academic record alone although they may be awarded on the basis of the combination of GPA and a thesis. Highest Distinction requires a thesis.

The Committee on Student Academic Distinction, Awards, and Appeals recommends distinction after it carefully weighs and considers all aspects of a student's record, which includes: the general quality and breadth of the program, the quality of any transfer credit hours, the number of 300/400 level courses, the number of courses taken P/N, the number of courses retaken to remove "C-", "D" or "F" grades and (when submitted) the quality of the thesis and comprehensive examination as defined by evaluations provided by the co-advisors. Ordinarily only students who have taken their last 48 hours of graded course work while registered in the College of Arts and Sciences are considered. Consequently, it is possible for a student to have a GPA above the cutoff point and still not receive a recommendation for distinction. NOTE: To determine the level of distinction, the committee uses the cumulative grade point average based on all credit hours taken at UNL prior to the beginning of the term in which the student receives his or her degree.

Levels of Distinction Offered Without a Thesis

Degrees with High Distinction and degrees with Distinction may be recommended on the basis of a student's transcript alone. To receive High Distinction without a thesis, a student must have a cumulative GPA 3.920 and a minimum of 60 hours at UNL; to receive Distinction a student must have cumulative GPA 3.850. Transcripts of students whose GPA meets these cutoffs as of the end of the term prior to graduation will be forwarded to the committee for review. There is no application process for students who do not complete a thesis.

The Role of the Thesis in Awarding Degrees with Distinction

To be eligible for Highest Distinction, a student must submit a thesis and have a cumulative GPA of 3.920 or above and a minimum of 60 hours at UNL. In addition, the student should receive an Excellent or Very Good recommendation from the co-advisors based upon both the thesis (or comparable creative effort) and the comprehensive thesis examination.

To be eligible for High Distinction, a student must submit a thesis and have a cumulative GPA between 3.850 - 3.920 and a minimum of 60 hours at UNL. In addition, the student should receive at least a Good recommendation from the co-advisors based upon both the thesis (or comparable creative effort) and the comprehensive thesis examination.

Submission of a thesis allows a student to be considered for a degree with Distinction when his/her GPA is between 3.500 - 3.850 (cumulative GPA as of the end of the term prior to graduation). In such cases, a student needs to receive at least a Good recommendation from the co-advisors based upon both the thesis (or comparable creative effort) and the comprehensive thesis examination. No student will be considered for distinction with a cumulative GPA below 3.500.

Procedure for Submitting a Thesis for a Degree with Distinction

Students must file a thesis prospectus with the department in which the student is writing the thesis. This thesis prospectus must be approved by two faculty co-advisors who have agreed to guide the student's work. Students should ask major advisors for any department specific guidelines for theses. See table below for due dates.

Students typically register for an independent study course in their major area of study (usually 399 or 399H) in the term prior to the term in which they plan to graduate.

Who Can Advise a Thesis

Advisors must be tenure track or professor of practice faculty. Multi-year lecturers and instructional staff (excluding graduate students), with approval from the major department, may serve as one of the co-advisors. One advisor must be from the College of Arts and Sciences.

Deadline Dates Based on Tentative Graduation Dates

The deadline for the co-advisors to submit a student's materials to the Dean's office for consideration for distinction is eight weeks prior to the Monday following commencement, except for the August commencement in which case the deadline is four weeks prior to the Friday before commencement. These materials must include:

- Copy of the student's thesis
- Thesis evaluation form completed by the co-advisors

Students are responsible for contacting the department in which they are writing a thesis for department deadlines.

The following are the dates on which materials are due in the Dean's Office for the next several graduation periods. These dates are based on the formula mentioned above and will be updated as actual graduation dates are posted by the Registrar's office.

| Expected Graduation Date: | Thesis Prospectus Due Date: | Thesis Due Date: |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| May 2020 | March 23, 2019 | March 23, 2020 |
| August 2020 | July 17, 2019 | July 17, 2020 |
| December 2020 | October 26, 2019 | October 26, 2020 |
| May 2021 | March 15, 2020 | March 15, 2021 |
| August 2021 | July 16, 2020 | July 16, 2021 |
| December 2021 | October 25, 2020 | October 25, 2021 |
| May 2022 | March 21, 2021 | March 21, 2022 |
| August 2022 | July 15, 2021 | July 15, 2022 |
| December 2022 | October 24, 2021 | October 24, 2022 |

Quality of Thesis or Comparable Creative Effort

The thesis should represent a significant amount and quality of scholarly work beyond what is required for a term paper. Final projects for ACE 10 courses do not in themselves constitute a thesis; they may serve as a foundation for further work pursued under the direction of thesis advisors. The thesis must be the result of independent, sustained thought and intellectual curiosity. A literature review about a particular topic is not sufficient. Ideally, there should be a clear formulation of a problem or question, scholarly study which illuminates or addresses it, and a conclusion supported by evidence. A bibliography and reference to existing research in the field should be included where appropriate.

The phrase "comparable creative effort" acknowledges the possibility of having a scholarly endeavor which might not be in the form which would meet the narrow definition of a "thesis." Since it is difficult to make this description more specific and yet make it applicable to the entire college, the following examples are offered. One student translated certain texts in French literature and accompanied the translation with a scholarly piece on the translation process. Another student prepared an extensive collection of exhibits to demonstrate one phase of the evolution of the process of photography and accompanied it with a lengthy historical background with references. In short, the effort must have a significant scholarly component, but it need not be in the format of a formal thesis.

The Comprehensive Thesis Examination

The comprehensive examination is mandatory for all students who submit a thesis. Students should arrange with the co-advisors to take the comprehensive examination at a mutually agreed time before the college deadline. The exact nature of the exam is determined by the major department. Normally this examination is an oral thesis defense, but it may be a written examination if the department deems it appropriate.

If any deviation from these procedures is anticipated, the student or supervising faculty member should contact the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Office at 1223 Oldfather Hall, 402-472-2891.

Summary of Procedure for Awarding Distinction with a Thesis

| Responsibilities | Year Prior to Graduation | Semester of Graduation |
|---|---|--|
| Student | 1. Obtain signatures from two faculty co-advisors on Thesis Prospectus Form prior to deadline. 2. Begin research and register for 399/399H (class optional). NOTE: Research in many areas/fields takes time to plan and conduct. START EARLY! | 1. Complete thesis project. 2. Submit thesis to co-advisors by date designated in department distinction guidelines. 3. Take comprehensive exam administered by co-advisors. |
| Co-Advisors | 1. Co-advisors agree to supervise student's work. 2. Discuss any department policies regarding the thesis with the student. 3. Sign Thesis Prospectus Form and submit to the major department by the deadline. | 1. Supervise research. 2. Administer comprehensive oral or written exam. 3. Evaluate thesis and quality of the comprehensive exam on Thesis Evaluation Form . 4. Send a copy of the student's thesis and the Thesis Evaluation Form , to the Dean's office by deadline. |
| Department | 1. Department chair/Director of major department confirm co-advisors and sign Thesis Prospectus Form . 2. Department forward original completed form to the Dean's Office. | |
| Dean's Office and College Committee on Student Academic Distinction, Awards, and Appeals | 1. Dean's office accepts thesis prospectus forms from departments. | Review student's record and thesis information. NOTE: To determine the level of distinction, the committee uses the cumulative grade point average based on all credit hours taken at UNL prior to the beginning of the term in which the student receives their degree. Incomplete coursework and classes from the current term are not included in the determination of level of distinction. |



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Thesis Prospectus Form

To be completed by the student with the co-advisors. Original form should be submitted to the major department. Completed forms will be forwarded to the Dean's Office by the departments.

Student's name _____ Student ID number _____

Local address _____ Local phone _____

Expected graduation date _____

Proposed thesis title _____

Please provide a one paragraph abstract of the proposed research:

Please list both advisors and in a sentence or two explain their relevance to your topic.

Co-advisor 1: _____

Co-advisor 2: _____



Statement of Advisors

- I have read the attached proposal, approve it for thesis research and agree to supervise the student's research.
- I have discussed the GPA requirements for distinction with this student and also believe this student has a reasonable chance of achieving the minimum cumulative GPA required for **any** level of distinction (i.e., 3.500).
- I have discussed with the student that the Committee determines the level of distinction by using the cumulative grade point average based on all credit hours taken at UNL prior to the beginning of the term in which the student receives his or her degree. Incomplete coursework and classes from the current term are not included in the determination of level of distinction.
- I have discussed with the student any additional policies or requirements set by the major department.

Co-Advisors:

| | | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|------------|------|
| Signature | Typed or printed name | Department | Date |
| Signature | Typed or printed name | Department | Date |

Department Chair/Director of major department:

- I confirm both people listed are authorized to advise a thesis for this major.

| | | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|------------|------|
| Signature | Typed or printed name | Department | Date |
|-----------|-----------------------|------------|------|

*If permission for writing a thesis outside major is granted, the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education will sign as department approver.



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Thesis Evaluation Form in Support of a Degree with Distinction

To be completed by the co-advisors or department faculty group responsible for distinction evaluation and returned to 1223 Oldfather Hall with a copy of the student's thesis.

Student's Name _____

Thesis Title _____

Department _____

1. Evaluation of thesis or creative effort. Please justify your evaluation in detail and include a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the project. (Feel free to attach an additional page.)

Overall rating of the thesis or creative effort (*choose one*):

Excellent

Very Good

Good

Fair

Poor

