

Course 3 Thesis Program

Academic Year 2021-2022



Overview

Students majoring in Course 3 Materials Science and Engineering are required to complete either the internship program (3.930 and 3.931) or the thesis program (3.ThU). The thesis is a 9-12 unit individual research project conducted under the supervision of a DMSE faculty member. If the thesis advisor is not appointed in DMSE, students identify a faculty thesis reader from DMSE who is familiar with the field of research. The project culminates in a public presentation of findings and a written thesis submitted to the department and deposited in the MIT Libraries.

Laboratory Access, Virtual Projects, and COVID-19

- Please review the [Updated Guidance for Laboratory and Non-laboratory-based Research at MIT \(June 14, 2021\)](#)
- We encourage students to develop a project that can more easily transition to a virtual project should the personal or Institute circumstances change
- When available, laboratory experiments may enrich the thesis, but should not be depended upon for completion of the thesis.
- All students should thoroughly discuss with their thesis advisor various pathways for thesis completion with consideration of the uncertainties associated with this academic year.

Choosing a Thesis Advisor

Students are encouraged to contact a number of potential faculty advisors to set up individual meetings. Prior to contacting a faculty member, students are encouraged to read up on the faculty's research area (e.g. their website and recent publications). When contacting a faculty member, a student should include a short curriculum vitae (about two pages), a brief description of relevant expertise, and a description of the student's research interests that is specific to the particular faculty member being contacted.

Thesis Advisors who are not DMSE Faculty

If the thesis advisor is not a regular faculty member in DMSE, a departmental thesis reader must be identified at the time the thesis proposal is submitted. The thesis reader must be a regular faculty member in DMSE. The thesis reader is charged with the responsibility to assure that satisfactory progress is being made and that the thesis is ultimately appropriate as a materials science and engineering thesis.

Questions to ask a potential Thesis Advisor

Apart from discussing possible research topics, additional questions to consider when meeting with a potential thesis advisor include:

- Will you be expected to formulate the thesis topic?
- What would you be expected to do on a daily/weekly basis (e.g. experiments, chemistry, computational analysis, animal experiments, etc.)?
- How much direction will the advisor give? How often does the thesis advisor meet with their current student(s)?

- Will you be expected to attend/participate in research group meetings? How often do they meet?
- How many students are currently in the group and what are their thesis projects? Obtain the contact information of current group students with whom you can discuss further.
- Does the thesis advisor impose deadlines or expect written progress reports?
- Will a graduate student or postdoc be supervising you?

Credit and Semesters

Students preparing a thesis should enroll in 3.THU Undergraduate Thesis in the semester(s) they are working on their thesis. This is commonly the fall, IAP, and/or spring of the senior year. 3.THU carries 9-12 credits, depending upon the arrangement with the student's advisor and expectations of the size and time commitment of the project. The thesis is usually distributed over multiple semesters, but may be completed over one semester.

UROP and Thesis

If a student has already carried out a UROP with an advisor, the thesis can be in the same area of research, but should represent a distinct individual research effort and not the rewriting of a UROP report. Students cannot simultaneously register for 3.THU and a UROP project on the same topic.

Content and Style of the Thesis

The thesis is a written report of your research project. Your thesis advisor will provide you with guidance concerning the specific style and organization appropriate for your thesis. In general, the style should follow that which is appropriate for a full journal article in your particular area of research. The thesis should be double spaced and contain 30-50 pages of main text (including figures and tables), with total pages (including appendices and bibliography) not exceeding 100 pages. It should begin with a title page, followed by a one page abstract, and a table of contents.

The thesis must conform to the [MIT Specifications for Thesis Preparation](#) and students should refer to the [MIT Thesis Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Submission of the Thesis

Refer to the Academic Year 2021-2022 timeline for specific submission deadlines for different graduation timeframes. After defined dates for submission and review by advisors, the thesis is submitted to the DMSE Academic Office. For February 2022 degree candidates, the submission will be entirely virtual. For Spring 2022 degree candidates, we will follow up with submission process details when available. The DMSE Academic Office coordinates approval of the thesis by the Chair of the Undergraduate Committee, Prof. Juejun Hu. The thesis is then submitted by the DMSE Academic Office to the MIT Libraries.

Extensions

Requests for extensions must be submitted in writing to the Academic Office via email (dmse-ugoffice@mit.edu). The Academic Office will review your request and will consult with the Chair of the Undergraduate Committee as necessary.

Symposium and Awards

A Senior Thesis Symposium will be held in the winter (February degree candidates) and in late spring (May degree candidates). Students will present a 10 minute summary of their work, with 5 minutes for audience questions. An Outstanding Senior Thesis award is presented to a senior during the departmental commencement reception, as nominated by the thesis advisor and awarded by the Undergraduate Committee.

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Date	Day of Week	Event
September 7, 2021	Monday	Registration Day, Fall Term (register for Fall 2020 3.THU units if applicable)
September 8, 2021	Tuesday	First day of classes
Friday September 24, 2021	Friday	Thesis Proposal Due (for students registering for Fall 2021 3.THU units)
October 8, 2021	Friday	Add Date
November 17, 2020	Thursday	Thesis Proposal Due (for students registering for IAP 2022 or Spring 2022 3.THU units)
November 17, 2021	Thursday	Drop Date
December 9, 2021	Thursday	Last day of Classes
December 13 2021	Monday	Final Exam Period Begins
December 17, 2021	Friday	Final Exam Period Ends
December 17, 2021	Friday	Thesis due to Thesis Advisor (February 2022 Degree Candidates)
January 3, 2022	Monday	Final Thesis due to DMSE Academic Office (February 2022 Degree Candidates)
January 3, 2022	Monday	First Day of IAP (register for IAP 2022 3.THU units if applicable)
January 7, 2022	Friday	Thesis Symposium (February 2022 Degree Candidates)
January 14, 2022	Friday	Last day to go off the February 2022 degree list
January 24 - 28, 2021	Monday - Friday	Registration Week , Spring Term (register for Spring 2022 3.THU units if applicable)
April 29, 2022	Friday	Thesis due to Thesis Advisor (Spring 2022 Degree Candidates)
May 6, 2022	Friday	Final Thesis due to DMSE Academic Office (Spring 2022 Degree Candidates)
May 9-11, 2022	TBD	Thesis Symposium - Date/Time TBD
May 13, 2022	Friday	Last day to go off Spring 2022 degree list

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Proposal Deadlines - Further Explanation

If the student is beginning thesis research in Fall 2021, the thesis proposal is due **September 24, 2021**.

If the student is beginning thesis research in IAP 2022 or Spring 2022, the thesis proposal is due **November 17, 2021**.

A student who begins thesis research in Fall 2021 and continues thesis research through IAP 2022 and/or Spring 2022 submits the thesis proposal in September. Only one thesis proposal is submitted, therefore the student in this scenario does not submit a thesis proposal in November.

If, after submission and approval of a thesis proposal, changes to unit distribution need to be made, then a new thesis proposal is submitted.

Course 3 Thesis Proposal

Academic Year 2020-2021



Student Information

Name	
Email	
Planned Graduation Date	

Tentative Thesis Title

Please provide a tentative description of your thesis project

Description of Thesis

Attach a 2-3 page description of the problem you will be addressing, the approach you will take (include experimental or computational methods) and the analysis methods you will take.

Distribution of Work

Please indicate below the distribution of your thesis work over the following terms. Please note that this is an estimated unit breakdown. You/your advisor may change this over the academic year. In the event of change, a new proposal must be submitted. A sum of 9 units minimum is required; students may register for a sum of 12 units maximum.

Thesis Supervision

Thesis Advisor		
Thesis Advisor's Department	DMSE	Other (Please Specify)

Thesis Reader (if applicable)	
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Student Signature

Thesis Advisor Signature

Thesis Reader Signature (if applicable)

Undergraduate Officer Signature

Decision

Approved

Not-Approved

Reason for Non-Approval: _____
