

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.

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 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:

- 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 advisor think you should meet?
- 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](#).

Resources

It's important to set up regular meetings with your thesis advisor, who will be your primary source of guidance throughout the entire thesis process. Additionally, the DMSE Academic Administrator will set up meetings with thesis students in their final semester to help make sure things are on track. Examples of DMSE undergraduate theses from prior years can be found at the [MIT Library's DSpace page](#). Support with all aspects of thesis writing can be found at [MIT's Writing and Communication Center](#).

Submission of the Thesis

Refer to the Academic Year 2026-2027 timeline below 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. The DMSE Academic Office coordinates approval of the thesis by the Chair of the Undergraduate Committee. The thesis is then submitted by the DMSE Academic Office to the MIT Libraries.

Extensions

Deadlines for thesis submission are already quite close to graduation, so there is very little wiggle room when it comes to extensions. If you anticipate that you will have difficulty meeting the final deadlines, please consult with the DMSE Academic Administrator as to your options.

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.

Course 3 Thesis Program Timeline

Academic Year 2026-2027



Date	Day of Week	Deadline / Event
October 8, 2026	Thursday	Thesis Proposal Due (for students beginning Thesis in Fall 2026)
November 12, 2026	Thursday	Thesis Proposal Due (for students beginning Thesis over IAP 2027 or in Spring 2027)
December 16, 2026	Wednesday	Thesis due to Thesis Advisor (February 2027 Degree Candidates)
January 6, 2027	Wednesday	Final Thesis due to DMSE Academic Office (February 2027 Degree Candidates)
January 8, 2027	Friday	Thesis Symposium (February 2027 Degree Candidates)
January 15, 2027	Friday	Last day to go off the February 2027 degree list
April 23, 2027	Friday	Thesis due to Thesis Advisor (Spring 2027 Degree Candidates)
May 7, 2027	Friday	Final Thesis due to DMSE Academic Office (Spring 2027 Degree Candidates)
May 7, 2027	Friday	Thesis Symposium (Spring 2027 degree candidates)
May 14, 2027	Friday	Last day to go off the Spring 2027 degree list

Course 3 Thesis Proposal

Academic Year 2026-2027



Student Information

Name	
Email	
Planned Graduation Date	

Proposed Thesis Title

Please provide a proposed title or topic for your thesis project

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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.

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Thesis Supervision

Thesis Advisor	
Thesis Advisor's Department	DMSE Other (Please Specify)
Thesis Reader (if applicable)	

Student Signature

Thesis Advisor Signature

Thesis Reader Signature (if applicable)

Undergraduate Officer Signature

Decision

Approved

Not-Approved

Reason for Non-Approval