

## Fulfilling the senior writing requirement

### General remarks

- If you are interested in writing your senior thesis with me, please see me at the beginning of the semester, **no later than 4 weeks after semester start**, to discuss the topic. I accept topics from the broad areas of Developmental Biology and Genetics. You should choose a subject matter that you find particularly exciting, and I will let you know if your choice is acceptable. If it is, we may have to narrow or broaden the focus for the selected topic, and I can help you with this. **I will not accept senior theses that are submitted without prior discussion and approval of the topic. There are no exceptions to this rule.**
- **Deadline** for submission of the final version of your thesis is **Dead Day. This does not mean that you cannot submit your thesis earlier**, and you are encouraged to do this. **I will not accept submissions made after Dead Day. No exceptions.**
- Your thesis must cover articles from the **primary literature**. You will usually also refer to review articles and book chapters but your thesis cannot be entirely based on these types of publications. Your final product should be comprised of about 8 to 20 text pages, figures, tables, and references excluded. **Pay close attention to proper referencing** the information sources used when writing your thesis. If you fail to give precise citations in the text and to include a complete bibliography at the end, your thesis will not be acceptable! If you cite articles or book chapters that are not freely accessible online, you are asked to provide me with copies of these articles, so that I can judge the accuracy of your citations. This applies in particular to scientific papers that fall into the category of historical publications.
- You are not permitted to use a “copy and paste” technique to “write” your thesis, that is, taking sentences or paragraphs from publications and combining those into a “new” article. Such a conduct falls under the term plagiarism, which is explained in more detail below and entirely unacceptable. I can assure you that I will notice plagiarism. **Use your own words.** This will force you to intellectually digest what you have read and to **present the topic** you are covering **in a coherent manner. Discuss critically** what you have read, which includes pointing out gaps in our current knowledge, indicating the types of experiments that will be required to fill these gaps, and evaluating conclusions drawn by the authors. You may, for instance, find that the data are not entirely consistent with a model proposed in a certain publication and explain why you think a different model would be a better fit.

### Format

- The text (not including the title page, reference pages, and figures/tables) of the senior thesis should be 8 to 20 pages, typed with 1.5 lines spacing. The font must not be larger than 12 pt or smaller than 11 pt (I recommend Arial, 11 pt). Margins (top, bottom, left and right) should all be 1 inch. All pages except the title page should be numbered. References must be cited and listed at the end of the text, using the format shown below.
- Your thesis should begin with a short **abstract** (no more than 200 words) summarizing the major questions that you will address. Use **subheadings** for the different sections of your thesis, which will help you structuring the text. It usually improves the readability considerably if **figures** are included, for instance giving the outline of a regulatory pathway or illustrating a model. Add a short paragraph at the end that contains the major **conclusions**. Don't forget the list of **references** at the very end.

- **Reference style**

Example text: Programmed cell death is a conserved pathway required for normal development and tissue homeostasis in metazoans [1-4].

References:

1. Adams, J. M. 2003. Ways of dying: multiple pathways to apoptosis. *Genes Dev.* **17**:2481-2495.
2. Baehrecke, E. H. 2002. How death shapes life during development. *Nat. Rev. Mol. Cell. Biol.* **3**:779-787.
3. Danial, N. N., and S. J. Korsmeyer 2004. Cell death: critical control points. *Cell* **116**:205-219.
4. Hengartner, M. O. 2000. The biochemistry of apoptosis. *Nature* **407**:770-776.

As noted above, **failure to properly reference the used literature will lead to rejection of your thesis.**

### **Plagiarism**

- As defined in the *University of Arkansas Graduate School Catalog*: "Plagiarizing, that is, the offering as one's own work, the words, ideas, or arguments of another person or using the work of another without appropriate attribution by quotation, reference, or footnote. Plagiarism occurs both when the words of another are reproduced without acknowledgement and when the ideas or arguments of another are paraphrased in such a way as to lead the reader to believe that they originated with the writer. It is not sufficient to provide a citation if the words of another have been reproduced - this also requires quotation marks. It is the responsibility of all University students to understand the methods of proper attribution and to apply those principles in all materials submitted."
- Students who violate these standards are subject to disciplinary sanctions, including failure in the course and suspension from the University. To make sure that you are aware of these regulations, you are required to fill out and sign a form that that you can find at the end of these instructions.

### **Final and Important Advice:**

- **Start working early on your thesis**, immediately after the semester started or even before. You will not be able to write an acceptable senior thesis in the last week before the deadline.
- Make an outline and submit it to me for evaluation. This will help you to structure your thesis and to avoid misunderstandings right at the beginning.
- You are welcome and encouraged to **submit a first draft** of your thesis for evaluation before final submission. This gives you the chance to correct mistakes and to further improve your thesis and, importantly, your final grade. It may also spare you the disappointment of having to accept an incomplete or even an "F" because your work does not fulfill basic requirements.
- **Have fun**, although the task ahead appears daunting. The best way to guarantee fun is to follow the advice given above. I look forward to working with you on what will be the first scientific paper for most of you.

## Senior Thesis Submission Form

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis title: \_\_\_\_\_

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***I hereby certify that I have read the University's definition of plagiarism and I fully understand its meaning. I further state that the submitted senior thesis was researched and written solely by me. I also understand the punishment for plagiarism and I abide by those terms.***

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***Please complete this form with your signature and date. Submit this form along with your senior thesis.***