Completing a thesis is one of the two GMA capstone experiences for your degree. Students have the option of completing an empirical thesis or completing a literature review with the three comprehensive exams. This FAQ will answer frequent questions students have regarding the thesis experience in the GMA program.

1. **What are my thesis options?**

   Students with minimum 3.7 GPA have the choice of completing an empirical thesis, or a literature review thesis. Students who complete the empirical thesis do not take the GMA Comprehensive Examination, however, students who complete the literature review thesis must complete the GMA Comprehensive Exam.

2. **Does the thesis count for credit?**

   The GMA program is a 36-credit program. Students who complete either an empirical thesis or a literature review thesis are able to complete the GMA program with 30 course credits.

   Students may register for Psych 7913 (3-credit thesis research course) with their thesis mentor. Although the credits for Psych 7913 do not count towards the required 30 credits, the grade from the course will be included in GPA calculations.

3. **Who do I ask to sign up for the empirical thesis or literature review?**

   Students must find a faculty advisor who is willing to supervise their empirical or literature review thesis. Students must also contact either the GMA program advisor or program director to make them aware of their desire to complete an empirical thesis or literature review. This ensures the program is aware a new thesis project has begun. Please let them know as soon as you begin the thesis process for guidance.

4. **When should I start the thesis?**

   Students should start their thesis at least one year in advance before they graduate. An empirical thesis or literature review takes a substantial amount of time to complete. Please plan accordingly.

5. **What’s the difference between the empirical thesis and the literature review?**

   **Empirical Thesis:**

   The empirical thesis involves completing a research project with a faculty advisor. The thesis culminates in the writing of an APA-style manuscript of the research project.

   The empirical thesis should focus on a topic that is chosen by the student in consultation with their faculty advisor. This can be a new topic exploring a new hypothesis, a replication of a previous study, or a topic mutually decided upon by the student and their faculty advisor.

   The paper is written in accordance with APA-format guidelines and include an abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, tables and graphs, and references. An empirical thesis also contains a literature review; please see the literature review section for more details.
Literature Review:

The literature review is a focused review paper on a specific psychological topic. The topic should have at least a moderate amount of existing literature and addresses a particular issue in the field of psychology.

The literature review should focus on empirical studies and seeks to summarize past research by drawing overall conclusions from many separate investigations that address related or identical hypotheses.

Both cumulative and historical approaches, ones that organize literature by highlighting current unfolding developments in the field, can be used.

The literature review will provide the authors assessment of:

- The state of knowledge concerning the topic of interest.
- Critical assessment of the strengths and weaknesses in past research of the topic.
- Important issues that previous research has left unresolved, and how that can inform and direct future research on the topic.

6. How do I sign up for research course credits for the empirical thesis?

If you and your faculty advisor decide to use the Psych 7913 research credit course (optional), please reach out to either the program advisor or program director who will arrange for the course to appear on CUNYFIRST. Typically, this course option is taken once you have a faculty mentor, a thesis topic, and have begun work on the thesis.

7. How do I find a faculty mentor and lab?

Students will need to find a faculty mentor in the Psychology Department in Queens College or at another CUNY college to support their research interests before beginning their thesis. Students will need to email and find out if their desired faculty member has space in their lab and are able to take on a master’s student’s thesis.

8. Do I have to stay in the same lab to complete my thesis and can my topic change?

If your research interests change or you no longer wish to continue working in your lab, you may move to another lab with a new advisor. You should discuss these changes with your advisors soon in the process as possible.

9. When do I form my faculty thesis committee?

The thesis committee is typically formed towards the end of your thesis.

10. How do I form a faculty committee to review my thesis?

The student and their faculty advisor must agree on a thesis committee of three people: their faculty advisor, and two additional faculty “readers” from the Queens College Psychology Department. The committee should have readers who are knowledgeable on the subject matter pertaining to the thesis.

Students should email their desired faculty members and ask for their availability to be on the committee towards the middle of the semester in which the student plans to defend their thesis.
11. When should I let my committee know about my completed empirical thesis or literature review?

Once your empirical thesis or literature review is complete, students should make sure to give their committee at least two weeks to review the empirical thesis or literature review.

12. Do I need to give an oral presentation?

Students will need to give an oral presentation if they are completing an empirical thesis. They do not have to give an oral presentation if they are completing a literature review.

13. What happens when I submit my finalized thesis to my committee?

**Empirical Thesis:** The committee will read and review the thesis. After they have reviewed it, the student must arrange a one-hour meeting with the committee at which the student will orally present their thesis to the committee. The committee will have the opportunity to ask questions about the student’s thesis.

**Literature Review:** The committee will read and review the thesis. Since there is no oral presentation, students will not need to present any additional materials. However, students should anticipate suggestions and critiques from their committee about their literature review.

14. What happens after my committee has reviewed my finalized thesis?

The committee will decide whether the empirical thesis or literature review meets the criteria for approval.

**Approved Thesis:** If the thesis is approved, the next step will be for the committee to sign the committee approval form. This form is available on our website. This form and the final version of the thesis should be submitted to the director of the GMA program no later than one week after the last day of finals in the semester the student plans to graduate.

The director will then submit the thesis approval form to the Office of Graduate Studies for approval. The Office of Graduate Studies will forward the approval to the Registrar’s office, and a notation will be made on the student’s transcript that the thesis was approved.

**Not Approved Thesis:** If a thesis is not approved, the student and their committee must discuss ways in which to improve the thesis and the timeline at which the improvements must be completed in.

**Please Note:** Students completing the literature review still need to take the three comprehensive exams for their degree.

15. What happens if I don’t complete my thesis?

If you are not complete with your thesis within the 36-credit limit of the program, you will need to maintain your matriculation status for the following semester to complete your thesis. You will need to discuss the situation with your faculty advisor, and either the program director or program advisor. Students must be matriculated during the semester in which they graduate. There is a maintenance of matriculation form you must complete and submit. There is also a maintenance of matriculation fee that must be paid.

Maintenance of Matriculation Form and additional information can be found below on the Queens College Registrars page on Graduation policies [here](#).
Forms should be scanned and emailed to the QC Hub and the fee will be paid on CUNYFirst once the form is processed. You do not have to mail or go in person to pay the fee. You are only responsible for the maintenance of matriculation fee; you will not be charged anything else beyond this.

There is no deadline to do this, however, please do this as soon as possible as there are deadlines to apply for graduation.

16. What happens after I submit the maintenance of matriculation documentation?

After submitting the form, you will be a registered student for that semester. You must submit a new maintenance of matriculation form for each semester that you wish to maintain matriculation. You do not need to take additional courses as you have finished your coursework; you will only need to complete your thesis requirements.

You will also now be able to apply for graduation for that semester on CUNYFirst. Please apply for graduation before the graduation deadline. You can find the graduation deadline when you check your graduation status on CUNYFirst.

17. Do I get authorship with my thesis?

If the thesis culminates in publication in a peer-reviewed journal, the student should be the primary author or co-author depending on the agreement set with your faculty mentor. Please also see the APA Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct, section 8 for information regarding authorship.