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Music Therapy Program

Master’s Thesis Guidelines

Music Therapy Program

2024-2025

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**Introduction**

Congratulations on reaching this milestone in your degree program. The master’s thesis is the culminating project for your degree. It involves a written paper and an oral defense. You may choose one of the following for your thesis project:

* **Objectivist Research**: Design types include single case study designs (ABA), survey, pilot-study quasi-experimental designs. Students doing objectivist research must currently have access to participants and pre-permission from any agency with which they are working.
* **Interpretivist Research**: Design types include phenomenological interviews, heuristic/first-person research; autoethnography, and modified grounded theory. If conducting phenomenological interviews, it is recommended to limit to four participants.
* **Content Analysis**: Using text of some kind, researchers quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of words and concepts, then make inferences about the messages.
* **Arts**-**based Research:** In an artistic inquiry, you utilize chosen art forms for data collection, analysis, interpretation, and representation. This will include a performance (or recording/scores or other artistic mediums) as well as written portion.
* **Rapid Review**: This is a detailed review of music therapy literature through the lens of an investigative question, and will require training in database searches.
* **Case Study:** This case study should be detailed and through the lens of a theoretical orientation related to the case, a music therapy method, and a discussion of how the case study fits within the related music therapy literature.
* **Guidelines for Clinical Practice:** This project is developed to inform clinicians about the best options for managing treatment, with the explicit intent to influence behavior of a specific clinical population.
* **Position Paper:** A position paper is an essay that presents and supports and arguable opinion on a specific issue. It includes a clearly stated purpose, a summary of relevant research to support your position, and consideration of opposing views.
* This handbook will provide with all the information you need to complete, defend, and submit your thesis. Theses that do not follow the guidelines in this handbook or are not deposited in the library by the deadline may result in failure of Thesis, and a delay in graduation.

You should refer to the course syllabus, posted in Brightspace, for submission dates for drafts of your thesis and for the date your final draft is due.

**The Elements of Your Thesis**

# Title Page

## The Title of the Thesis

The title page must follow the [formatting guidelines](https://library.newpaltz.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Committee_Approval.pdf) set forth by the Sojourner Truth Library. Do not place the title in all capital letters

## Your Name

You should use your name of record on the title page. Check with records and registration to make sure they have the correct name of record on file.

## Date

The date on the title page is the month/year you submitted your thesis to the library

# Signature Page

The signature page follows the title page. Please type the names of your committee members on the page traditionally known as the “signature page” but which we will refer to as the committee approval page as it will not contain any actual signatures (committee signatures will be reserved for the SOAR release form). Please see these sample [**title and committee approval pages**](https://library.newpaltz.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Committee_Approval.pdf).

# Abstract

The abstract is a summary of your thesis project. It presents all the major elements of your thesis in a condensed form. You should consider the title and abstract as a stand-alone document. The abstract will appear in various databases should you choose to publish your thesis. It is usually the first description of your work that will be read by others. Therefore care should be taken when writing your abstract.

## Format

* Length: Between 250 and 300 words
* Typeface: Times New Roman, Calibri, or Arial; double-spaced, with a 12-point font
* Justification: Left justified
* Keywords: List 2 to 4 keywords on a new line cantered at the end of your abstract

## Content

It should reflect the structure of your thesis; and include a concise summary of

* The problem
* Research method
* Participants
* Results
* Summary of conclusions

# Optional Preliminary Pages

You may include a dedication, an epigraph, a list of illustrations, a list of tables, a list of abbreviations a foreword, a preface, or acknowledgements in the front matter of your thesis.

# Sections of the Thesis for Objectivist and Interpretivist Studies

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter One provides the reader with an introduction to and background information for your thesis. It should be about 2 to 3 pages long and include the following information:

**Introduction: You need to introduce the reader to your topic. You can include statistical information, description of the population, general effects of the disorder/disability etc. You may also cite one or two studies that support the need for the study. You start broad and lead the reader on a path the ends with the problem statement. This section should be between one and two pages long and end with the purpose for the study.**

**Problem Statement:** Here you make the case for your study; why is your study needed? What problem or difficulty will be addressed? This can be 1 to 2 paragraphs. You will expand on this at the end of Chapter 2. Common formats for the problem statement include:

* This study will compare, contrast, investigate, describe, examine, or evaluate the efficacy of the independent variable on the chosen dependent variables
* This study is designed to learn more about population’s views, skills, abilities, knowledge about a (given topic)
* This study hopes to learn more about the experience of the phenomenon of interest
* This study seeks explore the experience of the phenomenon of interest

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**: The research questions should logically follow from the problem statement and contain the specific variables (objectivist) or phenomenon (interpretivist) you are researching. If you are collecting quantitative data, include a hypothesis. Your research questions (and hypothesis) determine the research method.

**Significance of the Study Why is this study significant? What value will the findings have? This section explains who will benefit from the results of the study. It should explain how the results of the study will add to the music therapy knowledge base.**

**Operational Definitions** Provide definitions for terms that are unique to your study, or definitions you will use for common terms (i.e. anxiety)

**Summary and Transition** (No more than a page)

## Chapter 2: The Literature Review

A literature review is required for survey research, experimental research, and interpretivist studies. Rapid reviews do not include a literature review. See the format for a rapid review at the end of this handbook.

The literature review contains synthesis of the literature related to your topic that has been published over the past 10 years. It is a comprehensive summary of what is known about your topic. It situates your study within what is already known about your topic. You will read peer reviewed articles, and books related to your topic. Background information may also be taken from governmental, professional, or association websites. Check with your thesis advisor if you have questions as to whether a particular source is relevant or appropriate. Primary sources are required for the literature review. Secondary sources are not allowed unless a publication related to your topic is out of print or unavailable

The purpose of the literature review is to provide a comprehensive summary of previous research related to your topic. It will help you identify the theories supporting your topic, the methodologies used to research your topic, and current debates related to your research question.

There isn’t one way to organize your literature review. You are encouraged to group sources together thematically. Then you will be able to compare, contrast, and analyze research findings relevant to your topic. You may want to create a literature review matrix to organize relevant information from each study into groups or themes. There are several examples posted in the Resources Module in Brightspace.

It is recommended that you create an outline for your literature review, after you have reviewed your sources and gathered the necessary information. Use the themes and concepts you recorded in your literature review matrix to create your outline, moving from general to more specific information related to your topic. Remember, your literature review should not be a list of research summaries, but a synthesis of what is known. Your review should describe, summarize, objectively evaluate, clarify, and make connections between previous research related to your thesis topic. You should note discrepancies in research findings as well as similarities,

Your literature ends with a description of the purpose of your study, research questions (and sub questions if applicable) and hypothesis (if applicable).

**Citations**

Your literature review summarizes the work of previous research. To avoid plagiarism you must always cite your sources. Review Chapter 1 and Chapter 8 of the APA manual 7th edition for guidance on proper citation of sources and avoiding plagiarism.

## Chapter 3: Method

The method section of your thesis gives the reader a comprehensive, yet concise description of the participants, procedures, and data analysis methods used. It should provide enough detail so that someone else could follow the same procedural steps should they want to replicate the study. Examples of surveys or measurement instruments should be included in an Appendix. The following is a list of sections to include in your method section (as appropriate). The method section for a rapid review is included at the end of this document

**Participants:** Describe recruiting procedures and participant characteristics that are relevant for your study. All studies should include participants’ age, sex/gender, and race/ethnicity. Other characteristics you may want to include are education level, licensure/certification status, region of the US where participant lives/works/went to school, years working as a music therapist, work setting, clinical populations, etc. Your thesis advisor will help you determine what demographic information you should collect. You should include inclusion/exclusion criteria as well.

**Measurement Tools:** This section is included in survey studies and experimental studies. You will give a brief description of each tool. Describe in detail how researcher developed measurement tools or surveys were developed and how you determined if the tool was reliable and valid. Your thesis chair will help you with this section. Copies of all measurement tools should be included in an Appendix.

**Ethics:** Include a statement acknowledging your study was approved by the Human Research and Ethics Board(HREB) at SUNY New Paltz. A copy of the HREB’s decision letter should be included in an Appendix.

**Study Design/Procedure:** Describe the type of study (survey, thematic analysis, heuristic, etc.) and procedure you followed. This should be comprehensive yet concise. There are several examples of former student thesis in the Resource Folder in Brightspace. This section also includes randomization procedures and a participant allocation flow chart if applicable. You are encouraged to review studies that are similar to yours for suggestions on what to include in this section. Review the quality assessment standards described in Chapter 65 (Objectivist Research) or Chapter 66 (Interpretivist Research) in *Music Therapy Research* (3rd ed) to ensure that your method meets accepted quality and reporting standards.

**Data Analysis:** Describe in detail how you analyzed your data. This would include statistical tests and (surveys and experimental designs) or coding strategies (qualitative designs). Describe any software used to analyze your data (e.g. SPSS, Atlas, R). Provide a rationale for any data that was removed.

## Chapter 4: Results

This section reports the results of your data analysis. The results should be clearly described without interpretation—that occurs in the discussion section. Follow APA guidelines (See Chapter 3 of the 7th ed APA Manual) for reporting statistical results, Include tables and graphs when applicable. See Chapter 7 of the APA manual 7th edition for proper formatting of Table and Figures. Your thesis advisor will assist you in reporting results from interpretivist research studies.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

The discussion pulls together your thesis by presenting novel insights and contributions to the current understandings of your topic. It opens with a brief summary of the study’s purpose and method followed by a description of how your findings relate to what was already known about a topic. You should interpret the findings based on theories and evidence already known from the literature. This section should describe how your findings are similar to or different from previous research on your topic. Discuss contradictory results, if any, along with your rationale for the findings. The discussion also includes the following sub sections:

***Limitations:*** Describe the limitations of your study. These might include small number of participants, low response rate to survey, limited time, limited access to resources, etc.

***Implications:*** Describe the implications of your study on the discipline or profession of music therapy. You might describe changes to music therapy practice, guidance for music therapy educators, or recommendations for clinicians.

***Future Research:*** Describe areas for future research based on your study results.

## Conclusion

The conclusion is placed at the end of the discussion section. It is short, 1 to 2 paragraphs long. It highlights the main points you want to make. It should emphasize the strengths of the study and its overall importance to music therapy.

## References

The reference page should start on a new page. Watch [this video](https://newpaltz.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=b8a4aaf0-357f-4203-8319-affb00dc6664) for guidance on how to format your reference page(s). All the sources cited in your thesis are to be listed in the references in APA 7th ed. format. Review Chapter 9 of the APA manual (7th) edition for guidance on formatting your reference list, and Chapter 10 for reference examples.

## Appendices

Appendices include supplemental information that will give the reader additional information, but may be too lengthy or distracting to include in the main body of your paper. See pages 41-42 of the APA Manual (7th ed.) for guidance on proper format for your appendices.

# Rapid/Scoping Review: Sections of Final Paper

This chart outlines the sections of a rapid/scoping review. Additionally information can be found in the Rapid Review Guidebook posted in Brightspace.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter One provides the reader with an introduction to and background information for your thesis. It should be about 2 to 3 pages long. See description on page 3

## Chapter 2: Method

* + **Theoretical Framework**: Read : Matney, B. (2019). A Knowledge Framework for the Philosophical Underpinnings of Research: Implications for Music Therapy. *Journal of Music Therapy*, *56*(1), 1–29.
  + **Search Strategy** identify data bases searched, key words, inclusive years
  + **Screening Process:** Inclusion and Exclusion criteria
  + **Data Extraction & Synthesis** Once the research work to include in the rapid review is selected, the key points of information from these works need to be extracted and charted accordingly. Information collected can be presented in a multitude of ways in a rapid review. Result charting and presentation vary from review to review and is reflective of the research question. Generally, information collected can be presented in tables, charts, graphs and diagrams. They are often presented in a logical manner such that the reader can understand the key information. At large, the first table normally presents the following fundamental information regarding the research works included in the rapid review; year of publication, the demographic information, author, country of research, type of research, etc. The charts and/or tables to follow are completely dependent on the investigators’ preferences on how they would like to express the findings of the rapid review.

## Chapter 4: Results

This section reports the results of your data analysis. The results should be clearly described without interpretation—that occurs in the discussion section. Review the reporting guidelines found in Appendix for guidance on what to include in the results section. Follow APA guidelines (See Chapter 3 of the 7th ed APA Manual) for reporting statistical results, Include tables and graphs when applicable. See Chapter 7 of the APA manual 7th edition for proper formatting of Table and Figures.

## Chapter 4: Discussion

The discussion pulls together your thesis by presenting novel insights and contributions to the current understandings of your topic. It opens with a brief summary of the study’s purpose and method followed by a description of how your findings relate to what was already known about a topic. This section should describe how your findings are similar to or different from previous research on your topic. Discuss contradictory results, if any, along with your rationale for the findings. The discussion also includes the following sub sections:

***Limitations:*** Describe the limitations of your study. These might include small number of participants, low response rate to survey, limited time, limited access to resources, etc.

***Implications:*** Describe the implications of your study on the discipline or profession of music therapy. You might describe changes to music therapy practice, guidance for music therapy educators, or recommendations for clinicians.

***Future Research:*** Describe areas for future research based on your study results.

## Conclusion

The conclusion is placed at the end of the discussion section. It is short, 1 to 2 paragraphs long. It highlights the main points you want to make. It should emphasize the strengths of the study and its overall importance to music therapy.

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**Preparing Your Thesis for Submission**

# Thesis Submission Guidelines

**Documents:**  The thesis should be submitted as a single PDF, including the title and thesis approval pages. The [SOAR Thesis Release Form](https://library.newpaltz.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SOAR_Release_2020_fillable.pdf) is to be signed, scanned, and submitted as a separate document

**Typeface:** Times New Roman, Calibri, or Arial double-spaced, with a 12-point font

**Justification:**  Left justified

**Orientation:** Portrait

**Margins:** Standard1” inch margins on all sides

**Line Spacing:** Double-space the entire paper including title page, abstract, text, headings, block quotes, reference lists, table and figure notes and appendices. See page 45 of the APA Manual 7th ed. for exceptions.

**Page Header:** The page number should be placed flush right in the header of every page. Use the automatic numbering function within the header to insert page numbers. Do not type page numbers manually. The Title page is page 1.

**Arrangement:** Pagination must be correct (each page numbered). The main text is preceded by the title page. thesis approval page, and abstract. **Thesis must be approved and the**[**SOAR Thesis Release Form**](https://library.newpaltz.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SOAR_Release_2020_fillable.pdf)**signed by committee members before the library will accept them.**

**Tables and Figures:** Tables and figures should be formatted following guidelines published in Chapter 7 of the APA Manual 7th ed,

**Headings:** Guidance on heading levels and format can be found on pages 47-49.

**Preparing For Your Thesis Defense**

# Thesis Defense

All students are required to participate in a thesis defense. A thesis defense is an oral presentation and discussion of your thesis. The purpose is to share the results of your project, and to demonstrate to your committee and peers, that your work is of sufficient quality to receive a master’s degree. The defense has 2 parts:

* Part I: A 20-minute oral presentation of your thesis project
* Part II: A 20 minute questions and answer session. Members of your committee, and any other faculty in attendance will have the opportunity to ask you questions related to your thesis.

The thesis defense is schedule the first two days of finals week of the spring semester.

**Procedure for Depositing Thesis With the Library**

# Submitting Your Thesis to the Library

* Your thesis and [**SOAR Thesis Release Form**](https://library.newpaltz.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SOAR_Release_2020_fillable.pdf) should be emailed to the following address: [thesis@library.newpaltz.edu](mailto:thesis@library.newpaltz.edu)
* The Library Collection Management Team must notify the Records and Registration Office that the approved thesis and signed SOAR Release Form have been received before the degree will be granted.
* Students have the right to opt-out from submitting their work to SOAR.
* If you would like to opt-out from submitting your thesis to [**SOAR,**](https://soar.suny.edu/handle/20.500.12648/19) please complete and submit this [**SOAR Opt Out Form**](https://library.newpaltz.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SOAR_OptOut_Form.pdf)when you email your thesis submission.
* For more information, or for other assistance with thesis submission, please contact Research & Metadata Librarian [**Madeline Veitch**](https://www3.newpaltz.edu/directory/profile/madelineveitch?origin=search%3Fentity_id%3D%26first_name%3D%26last_name%3DVeitch%26phone%3D).