

**BROCK UNIVERSITY**  
**Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies**  
**GUIDELINES FOR HONOURS THESIS PROJECTS**  
**RECL 4F27**

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Note:

This document is based on a template originally created by Atsuko Hashimoto (2005) and has been updated by Martha Barnes (2018), and the Student Engagement Committee (2019), Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies. Current version updated by the Student Engagement Committee on March 7, 2022.

## **ADMISSION PROCEDURE**

- Faculty prepare and circulate a brief description of their supervisory interests and availability (Winter term)
- Faculty representative visits Year 3 course and explains the Honours /Group Thesis options. Encourage students to reach out to potential supervisors to discuss opportunities (March-April).
- Honours Thesis students submit an application form to the Department by April 30 (same day as application to Year 4 Studies is due). The form is available on the Departmental website. On the form, students indicate topic interests, preferred supervisors, preference of 4F07/4F27/no thesis.
- Academic Advisor audits applications to ensure credits earned and minimum averages met.
- Department reviews applications and faculty members select students (before May 31).
- Academic Advisor informs students of the outcome (yes/no) by June 1. If yes, student has until June 15 to accept. Academic Advisor processes overrides for these students.
- If a student does not accept, the faculty member may choose an alternative student from a waiting list (if there is one).
- If a student applies past the deadline, the application will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Late applications will be circulated as they are submitted.

### Note:

- Restriction for RECL 4F07: minimum of 13.5 overall credits, approval to year 4 (honours), a minimum of 70 percent major average, and permission of the Department.
- Restriction for RECL 4F27: minimum of 13.5 overall credits, approval to year 4 (honours), a minimum 80 percent major average, and permission of the Department.

## **Guidelines for Thesis**

The following guidelines are developed to help navigate the process of completing an individual honours thesis in RECL 4F27. These should be considered as guidelines only. Students are expected to discuss specific expectations with their supervisor.

### **Introduction**

As a student, you are required to undertake a major individual piece of work called a thesis or dissertation (the terms are used interchangeably) as an integral part of the degree. It contributes significantly to the profile of the degree and will be of value in terms of future employment and or pursuing graduate studies.

The instructor for the thesis course will give you general support and guidance, but he or she will not tell you what your topic should be or how to do the analysis. The instructor may assist you in fine-tuning your approach, concentrating on the essential questions, etc., but not in writing your thesis.

### **Rationale**

The purpose of the Thesis is to give students the opportunity to carry out an in-depth study on a particular topic, synthesizing various course elements, yet pursuing one area of interest in depth. The Thesis ensures that students identify, call upon, and combine knowledge and skills from the academic parts of the BRLS programme to produce a work of practical relevance, yet with academic depth.

The Thesis allows students great scope for expression of skills, knowledge and abilities, and offers the chance to develop, in an original and creative way, areas of particular interest. The Thesis also performs the important integrative function of bringing together different elements from the RECL programme, testing the ability and discipline of the student in producing a long and detailed study.

### **Definition and Overview of Thesis**

A Thesis is a study of a problem, issue, opportunity, technique or procedure - or some combination of these aspects - in some cases based upon and resulting from experience community recreation organizations.

The Thesis comprises five (5) written assignments and a Final Thesis of approximately 30 to 40 pages (+ or - 10%) excluding List of References and Appendices. The five written assignments are designed to help you build towards your final Thesis.

### **Scope of Thesis**

As the thesis can be a study of any problem or issue within the subject discipline of RECL, the scope is very wide. This can make the choosing of a topic difficult for some students.

The Thesis is more than just a descriptive piece of work - it will normally include investigation, description, analysis and explanation, and in most cases, some form of evaluation. Additionally, a

problem or an issue must be located within a **body of theory** and research. Without such grounding, a thesis is bound to lapse into journalistic descriptiveness.

Once the general topic is identified, students need to find a focus within the general topic and must formulate a clearly stated **research question or hypothesis**. This gives direction to what follows - e.g., setting research objectives, data collection, the writing up of the Thesis. The Thesis must be tightly defined and contained to allow for depth of discussion. A widely or loosely defined topic is liable to become superficial.

Students should look upon the Thesis as an opportunity. The thesis allows students scope for the expression of skills, knowledge and abilities, and offers the chance to develop, in an original and creative way, an area of particular interest. Students will be spending a lot of time and effort on the thesis, and need to choose a topic that is sustainable in terms of their own motivation. The quality of the final product is likely to reflect closely students' own involvement in it.

Where the collection of primary data is not possible or not the best method, a study drawing on secondary data will be employed and then applied to a particular aspect of RECL. Although some research topics require the collection of primary data, it is valid to base a thesis upon a literature investigation which has a particular issue or set of issues in mind, providing the research objectives are original. If this methodology is chosen, students should be clear that this would fulfil the criteria for the Thesis (i.e., that it is based on substantial analysis and not just a review of existing literature).

### **Thesis Instructor's Role**

The main goal of the Thesis instructor's role is to ensure opportunities for students' maximum performance. The four major tasks of the co-ordinator are:

- (a) to make sure students understand the thesis procedures, thesis format and specifications.
- (b) to keep students within required time frames.
- (c) to record final marks for the written assignments and the Thesis and calculate final marks.
- (d) to resolve any conflicts, including Academic Misconduct.

Students **must** go to see the instructor, under the following circumstances:

- When the student has any questions about thesis format, specifications or procedure of the thesis writing.
- When a student has questions regarding an assigned mark, he/she must make an appointment with the Thesis Instructor. The student must submit the questions in written form prior to the appointment with the Instructor.
- When a student has had an accident, a prolonged illness, or a personal or family situation that would negatively affect the student's maximum performance.

- When the student is going away for any extenuating reasons during the term time and unable to keep in regular contact with the Instructor. The student and Instructor must come to an agreement on alternative arrangement(s).

The Instructor has appointment times to accommodate thesis students during the thesis process. The student must contact the Instructor in person at least four times during their final academic year.

***The onus is on the student to keep in contact with the Instructor.*** Past experience has shown that none or minimal contact correlates with failed work. The key period is in the choosing of the topic and in formulating the research question/hypothesis and deciding upon the feasibility of the thesis. It is not the Instructor's job, however, to chase students and set up meetings.

Regardless of the frequency of contact, the student and supervisor will discuss progress and attempt to resolve any issues which would detract from the student's ability to work towards appropriate accomplishment of various stages of the process.

**Students cannot change their topic once the winter semester begins.** It is the students' responsibility to identify topic-related problems at the earliest stage.

**Supervision during non-teaching time** (Christmas Break, Reading Week): If extra supervision is required during non-teaching periods, it will be necessary for the student and the Instructor to come to an agreement on alternative arrangement(s) as early as possible.

**Supervision during teaching time:** When the Instructor is going away for research, conference, or any other administration-related reasons or for health reasons during the term time and is unable to keep regular contact with the thesis students, the student and Instructor must come to an agreement on alternative arrangement(s).

## **FAQ about Supervisors**

**Q.** What will the supervisor do?

**A.** *Your supervisor will guide or advise you on how to carry out the research and complete the project. Each supervisor is an experienced researcher and will guide you to conduct the research satisfactorily. Your supervisor will tell you if you are on the right track, or if anything is wrong. However, it is not the supervisor's role to give you the thesis topic, the detailed methodology, to teach you how to interpret the results, or to keep in contact with you.*

**Q.** Can I just go and see the supervisor at any time?

**A.** *No. You should coordinate appointments with your supervisor. Regular meetings with the supervisors are mutually determined. Students are expected to honour these agreements. Students may also have the option of dropping by during their faculty supervisor's office hours.*

**Q.** How often do I have to see my supervisor?

**A.** *It is up to you and your supervisor. But past experience has shown that none or minimal contact correlates with failed work. If there is any problem making an appointment with your supervisor (e.g., the office hours clash with the lecture), your supervisor and you must arrange an alternative form of communication.*

**Q.** My supervisor is not an expert in the subject area I'm investigating (e.g., a particular research method). What can I do?

**A.** *Your supervisor does not have to be an expert in your topic area but (s)he is an experienced "researcher" who can guide you to conducting the research. If your supervisor recognizes the need for you to see a specialist on the topic, (s)he will refer you to someone. However, your supervisor, the expert(s) and you must co-ordinate and co-operate with each other and everyone should know what has been suggested and what has been done, so that there will be no disagreement on the research contents at a later stage.*

**Q.** Do I receive higher mark if I carry out a Primary data rather than a Secondary data?

**A.** *No. Primary and Secondary data, and also the combination of both, are valued equally. The most important thing is that you execute the data correctly and demonstrate excellent work on the analysis and the discussion/conclusion. Your supervisor will discuss with you the best research method for your Thesis.*

**Q.** Will my supervisor tell me what to do if I have a problem with my research?

**A.** *Your supervisor will help you solve the problem but do not expect your supervisor to give you the answer or detailed instructions of what to do. Problem solving is part of your work. Your supervisor may suggest reading materials, refer you to someone else, or give some hints on how to approach the problem.*

**Q.** Can I bring in my work to the supervisor to check on the day of the appointment or should I hand in the work prior to the meeting?

**A.** *Usually you are allocated between 30 minutes for a meeting. Do not expect your supervisor to read your work on the spot and give you good feedback. It is advisable to submit the work prior to your meeting if you would like detailed feedback from your supervisor. Unless you can hand-in your work to your supervisor in person, please make the best arrangement for you and your supervisor.*

**Q.** “High communication skills” is in the marking criteria of the Thesis. Can my supervisor proof read for English (spelling and grammar) in my draft?

**A.** *No. Your supervisor is not required to proof read your English. Make good use of a Spell Check and Grammar Check in your word-processor. It may be a good idea to have someone who knows nothing about your topic area read the draft to identify “hard-to-understand” sections and sentences. If you are having difficulties, you may need to find someone who is a specialist in English to proof-read your draft. You may also wish to connect with A-Z Learning Services at Brock who offer free skills workshops and resources, including drop-in academic support, and tutoring.*

**Q.** If I become ill and cannot submit my assignments/Thesis on the due date will my supervisor penalize me for late submission?

**A.** *Please read the Departmental Policy on late assignments. If you have a legitimate reason that prevented you from maximum performance, you must go and talk to your supervisor with appropriate documentation (e.g., doctor’s note). If your supervisor has approved your mitigating circumstance and set a new submission date, you will not be penalized.*

## Schedule, Deadlines, and Evaluation

The thesis should normally be completed in sections which will be submitted throughout the academic year. Due dates and evaluation frameworks for each section should be established between the student and supervisor well in advance. Sections, evaluation procedures, and due dates will vary. Below is a template for what these sections might look like. Specifications may vary, but should be established and confirmed with the thesis supervisor.

### Template for Section, Timeframe, & Evaluation

#### In the Fall Semester

##### Thesis proposal approval

The final proposal will receive firm approval by the end of September by the Thesis Instructor.

##### 1) Introduction & Literature Review (10%)

**Due date: October 31**

Students are expected to accomplish the following in this assignment:

- Write an introduction to the research project including background information/context
- Discuss the rationale for the study and its significance
- Clearly state research questions or hypotheses
- Critically analyze and summarize the literature

##### 2) Research Methods (15%)

**Due date: December 1**

Students are expected to accomplish the following in this assignment:

- Clearly re-state research questions or hypotheses
- Discuss chosen research framework (qualitative or quantitative)
- Justification of sampling (WHO)
- Data collection methods (HOW)
- Data analysis methods (WHAT)

##### 2) Ethics Application (5%)

**Due Date: December 10**

It is the student's responsibility to apply for and obtain Research Ethics Approval before actual data collection is conducted. The Instructor will not apply for Ethics Approval on the students' behalf. Going through Ethics Approval is a time consuming process. After the application submission, it will take at least 3 weeks before you hear anything back from the Research Ethics Board. Most of the applications do not pass at this point. You may be asked to re-submit further

clarifications, explanations, and/or corrections. Please note that it can take 5-8 weeks for obtaining ethics approval so apply as soon as possible.

For any research that involves primary data collection with human subjects (individual interviews, questionnaire, focus group discussion, etc.) students must obtain approval from the Brock University Ethics Committee. This rule also applies to research that involves secondary raw data collection (e.g., using a survey data collected by someone else). If the student researcher has access to “raw data”, even if they were collected by an outside organization(s) or researcher(s), the main form (REB 01-2001) should be completed. Until the approval is given, students cannot conduct primary data collection or secondary data analysis. Indicate in your Research Methods Assignment what stage you are in regarding Ethics Approval (e.g., forms submitted and awaiting results or forms in preparation for submission).

Details can be obtained at the website:

[http://www.brocku.ca/researchservices/Certification&Policies/Certification&Policies\\_Human\\_Ethics.html](http://www.brocku.ca/researchservices/Certification&Policies/Certification&Policies_Human_Ethics.html) and the link for the forms page is: <http://www.BrockU.CA/researchservices/forms.html>

## **In the Winter Semester**

### **4) Data Analysis/Results (15%)**

**Due date: February 28**

Students are expected to accomplish the following in this assignment:

1. Complete data collection
2. **Primary Data Analysis:** Enter all data into computer software (e.g., SPSS, QUATROPRO, EXCEL, NU\*DIST, ATLAS-ti, etc.) where applicable. Transcribe interview/focus group data
3. **Secondary Data Analysis:** Summarize data from various documents and archive materials
4. Perform data analysis
5. Document results as a chapter of the thesis in written form as well as produce suitable tables and/or graphs to support the text

*IMPORTANT NOTE: Collecting data without ethics approval is gross academic misconduct.*

### **5) Discussion (15%)**

**Due date: March 28**

Students are expected to accomplish the following in this assignment:

1. Critically discuss the data prepared in the “Data Analysis” assignment
2. Compare data with similar studies which you have reviewed in the “Literature Review” assignment
3. Write a 150 word abstract of your thesis

**6) The Final Thesis (40%)**

**Due Date: April 10**

1. Students will hand in a final copy of the Thesis which incorporates all previous feedback to the supervisor by the end of the winter term.
2. This is worth 40% of your final grade. Please hand in one bound copy.
3. All assignments and the final thesis must follow the standard APA format.

## **Policies on Grading and Academic Misconduct**

### **Grading Policy**

Each assignment and the final thesis will be marked out of 100% and will be converted into correct proportions for the final grade. In some cases with mitigating circumstances, students may be allowed to re-submit the assignment(s). In such cases, student(s) and the instructor should come to an agreement that the maximum mark may be lowered, e.g., the possible highest mark for the re-submitted assignment may be set at 80% and not 100%. (See also 10.4.5.)

### **Academic Misconduct: Plagiarism**

If a serious case of “plagiarism” is suspected, students may be asked to submit the assignment(s) electronically so that a computerized plagiarism detection system will be used; or a student will be asked to submit the cover page and first cited page of each reference source (photocopies are accepted) with the assignment(s).

If the case of plagiarism is substantiated, a formal investigation according to the University Calendar will take place. The penalties will range from disciplinary warning/failure in the course to suspension from the University.

### **Academic Misconduct: Collecting Data without Research Ethics Approval**

When you are collecting primary data or a special type of secondary data (see section 9 for definitions), you must apply for Ethics Approval. Although the process of obtaining Ethics Approval is time consuming, you must not proceed and begin data collection before Ethics Approval reaches you. If students collected data without ethics approval, there will be a formal investigation and the consequent penalties vary from obtaining consent forms retroactively (in case of interviews) to failure in the course.

### **Academic Misconduct: Faking and Tampering Data**

It may be tempting to “fill in the questionnaire” yourself when you cannot collect enough data for analysis or change the actual data when the analysis did not show the kind of results you wanted. However, minor as it may seem, any of these actions are considered to be gross misconduct. If any of these misconducts are substantiated, there will be a formal investigation and the penalties vary from collecting data all over again to failure in the course.

### **Academic Misconduct: Improper Collaboration**

Improper collaboration means copying from another student, or making information available to other students knowing that this is to be submitted as the borrower’s own work. When improper collaboration is found, there will be a formal investigation involving both parties (provider of information and borrower of information) and the penalties vary from re-submitting assignments to failure in the course.

### **Academic Misconduct: Obtaining medical or other certificates under false pretences**

Obtaining medical or other certificates under false pretences, as well as faking one of these certificates, is considered to be gross misconduct. If any of these misconducts are substantiated, there will be a formal investigation and the penalties vary from re-submitting assignments with a maximum 60% grade to failure in the course.

## **Thesis Submission**

This section will present some of the norms associated with a Final Thesis. While some of the details may vary based on the project and supervisor, it is strongly recommended that you follow these guidelines.

The Final Thesis should be presented in the following sequence.

1. Title Page
2. Abstract
3. Table of Contents
4. List of Tables (if applicable)
5. List of Figures (if applicable)
6. Introduction
7. Main body of the thesis suitably structured by chapter and section, for example
  - Literature Review
  - Methodology
  - Analysis
8. Findings & Discussion
9. Conclusions and Recommendations (if applicable)
10. References
11. Appendices

The document should be appropriately numbered. It is easier in final preparation if the Abstract, Table of Contents, List of Tables, List of Figures are numbered in a separate sequence (for example, in lowercase Roman numbers: i, ii, iii...) rather than as a continuation of the main body.

All appendices referred to in the text must be included in the thesis.

While the thesis follows this sequence, it may be written in a very different order, e.g., the introduction is often the last major section to be completed.

### **1. *Title Page***

See the example of the title page in Appendix I. This example is used only as a guideline. The title page for the thesis does not require a running head for publication. Follow the APA guidelines for the title page, and type the title in uppercase and lowercase letters; centre the title between the left and right margins and position it in the upper half of the page (approximately 2 inches or 5.5 cm from the top of the page). If the title goes over two lines, double-space between the lines.

### **2. *Abstract***

This is a summary of about 150 words (no more than one side of double-spaced Letter-size paper), which describes the topic under examination and outlines the research question/hypothesis, objectives and methods of the study. It should also give a brief resume of the main conclusions and recommendations.

### **3. *Acknowledgements***

Under this heading the student has the opportunity to thank various people who have helped in the development of the thesis. It might include specific individuals who have given information, offered insightful clues, or generally been especially supportive.

### **4. *Table of Contents***

The contents page gives the reader the first view of how the thesis is structured and how the author has attempted to develop the topic. It should list sequentially the chapters and the major subdivisions of chapters, each identified by a heading and located by a page number.

The precise structure will need to be tailored to the needs of each thesis. If in any doubt, discuss this with your Thesis Instructor at an early stage.

If you know how to use the “Insert > Reference> Index & Tables” function (MS Word) or other “Create Table of Contents” functions, TOC page can be easily created and updated.

### **5. *List of Tables and Figures***

Throughout the thesis students may want to present material in tabulated (tables) or diagrammatic (figures) form. Some such presentations will bear only indirectly or partially on your arguments,

and in such cases you will need to decide about their proper location. More specifically, such additional or less relevant information may be better placed in an appendix (see below).

Where you decide to locate tables or figures in the main body of the thesis, it is conventional to provide special "contents pages" so that readers can easily find the information. Tables and Figures should each be listed on a separate page (examples are presented later in this document).

## **6. *Introduction***

The Introduction is crucial, since it sets the tone and context for the rest of the thesis. In the Introduction students should outline the reasons behind the study – student's motives, and related points. A broad introduction to the topic should be provided and the type of issues it raises.

Finally, include a summary of how the chosen topic, including your research question/hypothesis, will be treated and run briefly through the chapters to show how the structures of the thesis allow you to explore the topic in your selected way.

Central to this part of the thesis is the setting of clear objectives, which the student intends to achieve by the end of the thesis. The statement of objectives should be concise and precise, and should be carefully considered in the light of the original ideas and what the student has been able to achieve in this study.

## **7. *The Main Body of the Thesis***

The structuring of the thesis will reflect your preferences, so there is no one best way to do it. However, there are predictable issues that need covering, and the structure should permit students to deal with them in an orderly way. For example, all theses will include an introduction (aims and objectives); a literature review; methodology; most will involve the reporting of primary research; all will need to draw conclusions.

The main body of the thesis must take the reader logically through a variety of linked arguments, relating theory and practice, concepts and concrete observations, so that by the end the reader can understand and identify with the conclusions of the author. There will also be a section on research methods including a justification of the methodology chosen and an explanation of how the information was gathered. It is expected that students show that they have read relevant research texts and that the selection of methodology is appropriate for the thesis topic. Arguments need to be drawn demonstrably from student's own observations and grounded in an authoritative set of ideas. They should not be anecdotal. Although the arguments should be presented in a tight structured form - using headings at regular intervals to achieve this - they should also have an essentially discursive character, i.e., students should fully explore the implications and ramifications of the topic by developing the arguments in a relevant way. Evidence of analysis rather than mere description will be expected.

Students should ensure that all the major issues pertinent to the topic are covered by the end of the main body of the thesis.

### **7.1. Sub-headings**

Throughout the thesis main body, sub-headings may be used to help organize the content. However, students should try to avoid over-use of sub-headings and sub-sections.

### **7.2. Tables and Figures**

Students should include a limited number of relevant statistical tables, and diagrams within the text. If you are going to discuss only a small part of the statistics, include only the relevant part, and the majority of the table should be shown in the appendices (read the Appendices section below)

## **8. *Conclusions and Recommendations***

All the issues students wish to discuss and develop in the concluding section should follow logically from what has gone before. The conclusion should include a summary of the main arguments, drawing together the various themes and issues so that they can be brought to bear on the defined objectives of the study. The original research question(s)/objective(s) and/or hypotheses would be revisited at this stage, and the dialogue should explain the extent to which they have been addressed within the context of the study.

In turn, the recommendations should place the conclusions within a concrete, practical framework. In making recommendations students are constrained by what is feasible and practical to do. Students need to consider the recommendations in the context of their possible human, financial, political, managerial, etc., implications.

## **9. *References***

References should be made to sources of material throughout the thesis. Please use APA format throughout the thesis (in the text and in the reference list). Do not use any other reference system. If you are not certain about APA format, please consult an APA Manual handbook (6<sup>th</sup> edition or later edition).

## **10. *Appendices***

All that information which gives additional, quasi-relevant support to the arguments should be located in the appendices. It is important that all the information the reader needs to attend to is in the main body of the text. Appendices should be consistently signified by letter (APPENDIX A, APPENDIX B) or by number (Roman or Arabic), and given titles that indicate their contents.

If you conducted **primary data** collection, you should attach the Ethics Approval documents in this section including:

- Letter of Approval from Research Ethics Board
- copy of survey questionnaire or the list of questions used for data collection

- consent form
- verbal script of recruitment
- verbal script of appreciation

## APPENDICES

### *Appendix I: Title Page Example*

*Note: Please keep all margins one inch (2.45 cm)*

### **GREENING THE AIRLINES (TITLE)**

A STUDY OF THE LEVEL OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS IN

CANADIAN AIRLINE COMPANIES (SUBTITLE, IF ANY)

by Student's Full Name

Student Number

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the Degree

Of BRLS (Honours) in Community Recreation

Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies

Brock University

St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada

April Year

© Student's Name, Year

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