

## Identifying a Thesis Director and Thesis Readers

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The key to every senior honors thesis is the relationship between the thesis student writer and the thesis director and readers. This is one of the most important steps in the senior thesis process! However, there probably is not any single “best practice” for identifying a senior honors thesis director. Approaching a faculty member in your general area of interest and developing a dialogue around mutual interests can prove beneficial for you.

Directing a student senior thesis is an important responsibility for any faculty member. Many faculty will only agree to direct theses for topics on which they have a real depth of expertise.

Students can NOT write a senior honors thesis on any topic they choose. They must choose a topic within the range of faculty expertise at Tufts. Tufts has an extraordinary range of expertise, and we can link students to experts in the greater Boston area with whom they can consult and who may serve as guest readers. ONLY Tufts faculty who will be at Tufts both semesters during the students' thesis year can direct senior honors theses.

You NEED to develop your research topics in dialectic with Tufts faculty if you hope to move that research into a senior thesis. Presenting a faculty member with a topic you have already decided upon invites an up and down answer without leaving room for modification. Therefore, the sooner you begin thinking about a range of topics, considering the possibilities with faculty members, shaping the topic into an area of mutual interest and expertise, the better the changes that the faculty will commit to it. We want to make this plain from the outset because we do not want students to be disappointed when they can not find a Tufts faculty member willing to commit to direct their topic as a senior thesis.

The student is required to identify and secure the participation of her/his thesis committee. In practice, the thesis director often collaborates in that process. The thesis director and all thesis readers must agree and sign off on the student's preliminary title, thesis statement, and preliminary bibliography before the student's application to the departmental Thesis Honors Program is accepted by the department/program and Dean of Colleges.

## Contacting Potential Thesis Directors and Readers

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The earlier you begin developing relationships with faculty, the better off you will be when it comes times for a recommendation, a Fulbright proposal, seeking grant opportunities, and writing a senior thesis.

If you are planning on going abroad, it is best to find a faculty member before you go because while you are abroad, and when you get back, you will need a core “mentor/advisor” to help you with your research.

If you are currently abroad, visit the IRN(<http://jupiter.tccs.tufts.edu/ir>) to learn more about faculty and how to get started with research and/or a senior honors thesis. Contact faculty you do have a relationship with and seek advice on potential mentors/advisors. (See “Emailing Faculty” below).

If you have already returned from abroad and do not yet have a “mentor/advisor,” now is the time to get to know faculty outside of classes.

Make a personal contact with a faculty member – **do not email the person without having a face-to-face meeting.**

1. Be prepared for your meetings with faculty!!
  - a. Formulate your research question(s) or 2-3 sentences on your senior thesis topic so that you can describe it to faculty quickly and clearly.
  - b. Prepare a one-page prospectus, along with a preliminary bibliography, to give to faculty that outlines the thesis you plan to undertake. (See “Writing a Senior Thesis Prospectus” below)
2. Go to office hours
  - a. Talk about your research interests.
  - b. Talk about your research and study abroad plans (or past experiences) – Are you studying abroad? Do you plan on conducting research while abroad? Did you already study abroad? What coursework have you taken to help you with the thesis?
  - c. Ask for advice – on your proposed research question, prospectus, methodology, etc.
  - d. If you feel the faculty member is a good fit for you, ask the person to be the director or reader for your senior thesis. As noted above, the readers on your committee, particularly the thesis director, should have a depth of expertise in your proposed thesis question.
3. Ask faculty you know to facilitate the first meeting.