More Information on Thesis Writing

The A.M. thesis often begins as a seminar paper. Since theses are substantially longer than most seminar papers, seminar papers generally need to be significantly developed if they are to meet the RSEA Committee's requirements for a thesis. Students are encouraged to think about their thesis topic as early as possible and to discuss their choice of topic with their RSEA faculty academic adviser and their thesis adviser when the thesis adviser is not the faculty academic adviser. Students should certainly have a clear idea about their thesis topics at the beginning of their second year or, in the rare case of completing the degree in one year, at the end of their first semester.

All students are required to attend the RSEA thesis workshops and are expected to observe the Committee's specified deadline for completion of the thesis. Note that this deadline is different than the FAS dissertation submission date. Students are required to submit to the Program Office one hard copy and one PDF of the completed thesis accompanied by the Thesis Adviser Grade Report form signed by the student’s Thesis Adviser. A thesis submitted without the Thesis Adviser’s approval and Grade Report will not be accepted. Students are required to submit one hard copy and one PDF of the completed thesis. *Late submission of a thesis will result in a delay in graduation*

All A.M. theses are evaluated by at least two faculty readers. Typically the first reader is the thesis adviser. The Committee designates the second reader, normally another faculty member with academic interests close to those of the thesis topic; students may also make suggestions to the Committee on the designation of their second reader. Eligibility for the degree depends on the final acceptance of the thesis by the two faculty readers.

A formal grade for the A.M. thesis is not awarded; the thesis is simply deemed “acceptable” or “unacceptable” for degree purposes. However, the RSEA Committee maintains its own internal grading system. Outstanding theses may be nominated by their readers for the Joseph Fletcher Memorial Award, an annual prize given by the Committee for the best A.M. thesis.

The RSEA A.M. thesis is a part of the academic record and as such is deposited in the Harvard archive.