The CSD Master’s Thesis
FAQs
for First Year Students

Q: What is the CSD Master’s Thesis?

The CSD master’s thesis is designed to give students who are interested in research a significant research experience that can be completed within the two-year period of the master’s program.

Q: What are the eligibility requirements?

Eligibility requirements for completing a thesis include a GPA of at least 3.5 and successful completion of the research design and statistics course.

Q: What does doing a thesis involve?

Completing the master’s thesis involves:

- collaborating with a thesis advisor to develop a research question
- writing a brief literature review of that question
- conducting an experiment and/or analyzing previously collected data
- completing a written thesis in the form of a “publishable” journal article, containing introduction, methods, results, and discussion sections according to thesis guidelines
- preparing and giving an oral presentation (thesis defense)

Q: What are the advantages of doing a thesis?

Some students know they are interested in research from past experience, or would like to pursue research in their future careers. Completing a master’s thesis here at Institute is a good initial step in a research career. Even if students don’t pursue a research career post-graduation, research experience is likely to enhance their skills as clinicians, particularly given the importance of evidence-based practice. Also, students who complete a thesis do not have to take the comprehensive examination in their second year; however they will still have to study for the national (ASHA) exam.

Q: What are some examples of the possible types of thesis projects?

1. Conducting a short study of the student’s own interest and design
2. Conducting a short study originally conceived of by a faculty member but never fully fleshed out in terms of research design
3. Conducting a short study fully designed previously by a faculty member
4. Completing analysis of data previously collected by a faculty member
5. Completing analysis of data from a database to answer specific question(s)
6. Doing a study previously conducted by a faculty member on a new population of interest
7. A case study of an individual designed to answer specific research question(s)
8. Observational study of individuals in the clinic to answer specific research question(s)
9. Conducting a meta-analysis of previously published research studies.

Q: What kinds of projects should I stay away from?

Students are discouraged from conducting research that: (1) would be difficult to complete within the two-year period, such as lengthy treatment studies involving months-long involvement of participants, studies involving testing of large groups of participants (unless they could be tested in a classroom type setting all at once); (2) studies involving difficult-to-find populations (e.g., bilingual aphasics); or (3) topics in which none of the Institute faculty have expertise.

Q: What if I don’t have a particular idea in mind, but I know I want to do a thesis?

Some students may know exactly what question they would like to address in their project. Others may know they want to do a research project but are unsure of how to go about developing a project. The CSD faculty is committed to working with both of these types of students, and will work with you to develop a project.

Q: What courses do I have to take?

Enrolling in the courses you need for the thesis will use up 4 credits of your electives: Research proposal (1 credit, fall year 2), Thesis I (1 credit, spring year 2) and Thesis II (2 credits, summer year 2). Also, the sequence of one course is different: students who are considering writing a thesis will take research design and statistics in the spring of Year 1 rather than in year 2.

Q: How do I get started?

Students interested in writing a thesis should register for Research Design and Statistics in the spring of Year 1 and then contact their academic advisor, who will then steer them to appropriate faculty contact(s) to begin discussing the thesis project. The student should initiate this discussion process prior to the end of the spring semester in the first year.

Q: Who can serve as thesis advisors?

Nine faculty members currently can serve as thesis advisors (first readers). Each student’s thesis committee has at least three members, with two additional
readers who are chosen from remaining faculty and other off-site persons. Faculty members’ research interests are listed in the next section. More details about writing a thesis are available in the thesis manual that you were given at orientation in your white binders.

**PRIMARY READERS/THESIS ADVISORS’ RESEARCH INTERESTS**

1. **Charles Haynes**  
   Written Language Disorders  
   Relationship between written and spoken language disorders  
   Literacy in the schools  
   The HILL Project (Hanson Initiative for Language and Literacy)  
   Issues around Spanish-English biliteracy  
   Issues around literacy diagnosis and intervention in Arabic, or in Arabic-English bilinguals  
   Diversity issues in the profession

2. **James Heaton** (MGH Center for Laryngeal Surgery and Voice Rehabilitation)  
   Neurolaryngology and neural prostheses  
   Peripheral nerve regeneration  
   Vocal fold physiology

3. **Robert Hillman** (MGH Center for Laryngeal Surgery and Voice Rehabilitation)  
   Voice Disorders  
   Laryngectomy  
   Physiologic and Acoustic Assessment of Voice and Speech Production

4. **Pam Hook**  
   Written Language Disorders  
   Relationship between written and spoken language disorders  
   Literacy in the schools  
   The FIPSE project  
   Efficacy of software programs for assessing/teaching reading

5. **Gregory Lof**  
   Child phonological disorders  
   Issues pertaining to the profession of speech-language pathology

6. **Marjorie Nicholas**  
   Aphasia- Treatment and Assessment  
   Nonverbal AAC for Aphasia  
   Nonverbal Cognition and Aphasia  
   Dementia syndromes  
   “Normal” aging

7. **Margaret Rockcastle**  
   Autism Spectrum Disorders  
   Pediatric Speech and Language Disorders  
   Psycholinguistics

8. **Howard Shane** (Childrens Hospital, Communication Enhancement Clinic)  
   AAC for children and adults  
   Motor speech disorders  
   Autism and PDD spectrum disorders  
   Autism and reading

9. **Lauryn Zipse**  
   Aphasia  
   Neuroimaging techniques (particularly MEG)  
   Production of Prosody  
   Attention and Memory  
   Lexical Retrieval  
   Cognitive Models

**SECONDARY READERS’ RESEARCH INTERESTS**

**On-site:**

**Meredith Bosley**  
Voice Disorders  
Alaryngeal Speech

**Bonnie Halvorson**  
Written language disorders  
Child language disorders
Eileen Hunsaker
Adult neurogenic communication disorders
Dysphagia
TBI/ Cognitive disorders in adults

Chuck Jeans
Autism and PDD spectrum disorders
Early language development
Functional communication for adults with developmental disabilities

Lesley Maxwell
Autism and PDD spectrum disorders
Developmental speech and language disorders
Early Intervention
Professional issues in clinical education
Supervision

Mary Riotte
Developmental speech and language disorders
Pediatric feeding and swallowing

Richard Santeusanio
Written language disorders
Relationship between written and spoken language disorders
Literacy in the schools

Ann Waters
Written language disorders
Relationship between written and spoken language disorders

Off-site:

Denise Ambrosi (Spaulding)
Dysphagia
Aphasia
Adult rehabilitation

Julie Atwood
Stuttering and related fluency disorders
Transgender Voice Disorders
Spastic Dysphonia

John Costello (Childrens Hospital)
AAC in children and adults
End of life communication issues

Robert Dodaro (VNA)
Adult neurogenic communication disorders
Home care issues

Lynnette Holmes (Spaulding Pediatric Unit at MEEI)
Pediatric feeding and swallowing
Trachs and vents

Jean Ashland (MGH)
Pediatric feeding and swallowing

Tessa Goldsmith (MGH)
Swallowing disorders
Head & Neck Cancer

Paul Macaruso (R.I. College)
Cognitive neuropsychological models of language disorders

Sarah Ward (Private Practice)
Disorders of written language
TBI
Disorders of executive functioning
# SELECTED THESES COMPLETED BY CSD STUDENTS IN THE PAST FEW YEARS

**ADD YOUR TITLE TO THIS LIST!**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thesis title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Modified Berg Balance Scale: Improving assessment communication in the aphasia population</td>
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<td>Event processing impairment and aphasia</td>
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<td>Do children with gastrointestinal issues only benefit from multidisciplinary feeding team assessment?</td>
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<td>Relationships among cognitive-linguistic skills, fluency interventions and reading comprehension in third grade inner city children</td>
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<td>Early predictors of later English reading skills of Spanish speaking English language learners (ELLs)</td>
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<td>Executive function, alternative augmentative communication (AAC) and aphasia</td>
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<td>Right hemisphere communicative functions in right hemisphere aphasia: A case study</td>
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<td>Listener perceptions of varying vowel durations</td>
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<td>Effect of rate manipulations on perceptions of speech naturalness</td>
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<td>Automated psychoacoustics-based voice-quality assessment</td>
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<td>Neck strap muscles as a control source for a hands-free electrolarynx: is a transferred laryngeal motor nerve supply better than the natural strap muscle nerve supply?</td>
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<td>Language improvement and time post onset: A Review of treatment studies examining patients with aphasia in the chronic stage</td>
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<td>Effects of Music on five year-olds’ learning of novel nonwords</td>
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<td>Auditory Recognition of Brand Name Nouns in Patients with Aphasia</td>
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<td>Computational estimation: A comparison of learning disabled students and controls</td>
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<td>A correlational study of memory span subtests on the WMS-R</td>
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<td>Selected behaviors in a six to twelve month old by later diagnosed with pervasive developmental disorder</td>
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<td>Detection of correspondences between vocal and facial affect in 4-month-old and 7-month old infants</td>
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<td>Vowel perception and its relationship to production, verbal memory and phonological processing in dyslexics</td>
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<td>Three single case studies of adults with developmental dyslexia</td>
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<td>The predictive relationship between speech language impairments and reading success</td>
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<td>Reading and spelling abilities of a non-verbal first grader: A single case study</td>
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<td>A profile of an elective mute</td>
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<td>Asking children questions: Gratuitous concurrence</td>
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<td>Volubility of potentially dyslexic children</td>
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<td>Chunking: A memory strategy for learning disabled students</td>
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<td>Dysgraphia: Two step remediation utilizing visual imagery</td>
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<td>A single case remediation study of an adult developmental phonological dyslexic</td>
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<td>Two visual associative spelling approaches with an SLI adult</td>
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