Chairing UW Epi Masters Thesis Committees
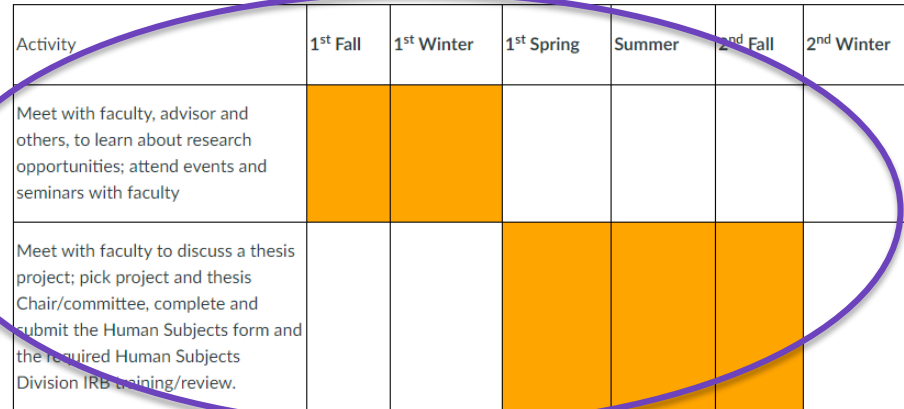
SUGGESTED TIMELINE FOR A MASTERS THESIS

Suggested timeline provided [here](#) is provided to Masters students:

Students encouraged to meet with faculty to learn about their research & identify possible topics throughout the first 1.3+ years of their program.

Activity	1st Fall	1st Winter	1st Spring	Summer	2nd Fall	2nd Winter	2nd Spring
Meet with faculty, advisor and others, to learn about research opportunities; attend events and seminars with faculty	■	■					
Meet with faculty to discuss a thesis project; pick project and thesis Chair/committee, complete and submit the Human Subjects form and the required Human Subjects Division IRB training/review.			■	■	■		
Write and submit a thesis proposal, that has been approved by your committee, via the Epi Students Canvas site				■			
Bulk of the data analysis; regularly meet with Chair and, if necessary, other members of your committee					■	■	■
Write thesis						■	■
Electronically submit your thesis							■

BE PREPARED TO …

> Be approached by lots of interesting, eager Masters students *who are probably stressed out by the need to identify a thesis topic.*

> Share you ongoing research with Masters students that approach you *and be mindful of / open about where your research might include opportunities for thesis projects.*

> Work with Masters students whose longer-term interests might not be aligned with yours, *knowing that you can still support them in achieving their shorter-term career goals.*

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THE PURPOSE OF A THESIS CHAIR*

To guide & support a Masters student in their journey through the thesis process. This includes:

- Ensuring the student completes the necessary degree requirements & steps in the thesis process

- Providing guidance & support in the development, design, analysis, & writing of the thesis project

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THE PURPOSE OF A THESIS CHAIR*

This **should also** include:

- Supporting the student in considering different career options

- Supporting the student's professional skills development (e.g., manuscript writing, data analysis)

- Meeting with the student at regular (reliable) intervals

- Providing timely feedback on proposals, manuscripts, abstracts, applications, etc.

- Helping the student navigate interpersonal matters with committee members

- Ensuring the student sticks to a timeline consistent with their graduation goals

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CONTRASTS TO CHAIRING PhD COMMITTEES

- Shorter duration time commitment, but can still require intensive support (primary during Spring Quarter of their 2nd year)

- Masters students often require more guidance in terms of setting up analyses and scientific writing

- Smaller committees (i.e., 2-3 vs. 4-6 committee members)

- Project should be more discrete / smaller (i.e., 1 manuscript)

- No primary data collection requirement

- Fewer steps in the process!

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REQUIRED STEPS IN THE MASTERS THESIS PROCESS

> Form / establish thesis committee
> Submit human subjects form
> Thesis proposal
> Submit completed thesis
> Complete minimum 9 thesis credits (EPI 700 or EPI700B)

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PREPARING THE MASTERS THESIS

Plan, Conduct, & Write Thesis

Process is intended to give students experience in:

> Testing a hypothesis

> Designing an analysis

> Analyzing data

> Interpreting findings

> Preparing a written report of their investigation

*Valuable guide is provided here.

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PREPARING THE MASTERS THESIS

Plan, Conduct, & Write Thesis

In UW Epi, the thesis should NOT be:

> A literature review (*formal meta-analysis is acceptable*)

> Limited to qualitative research

> A group project

PREPARING THE MASTERS THESIS

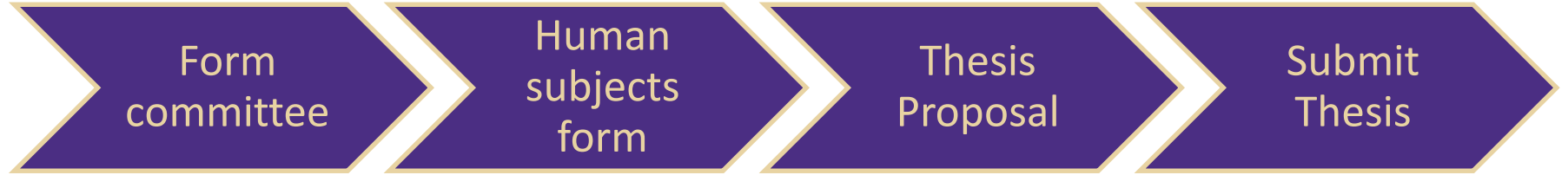## Plan, Conduct, & Write Thesis

Throughout the <u>thesis process</u>, it is helpful for the Chair to:
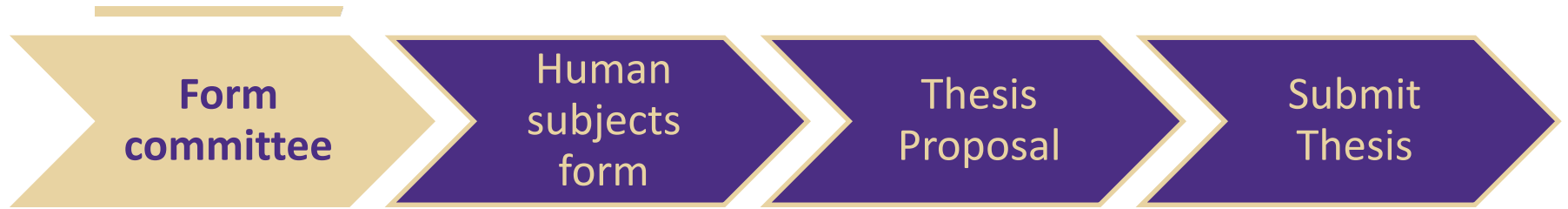
- Meet with the student regularly (& reliably) to check in on progress, troubleshoot challenges, & ensure the student is getting the support they need.

- Review preliminary data / data tables.

- Encourage the student to think about submitting their work to a conference.

- Check in with the student regarding their funding, and provide support in locating funding as needed.

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MASTERS THESIS PROCESS
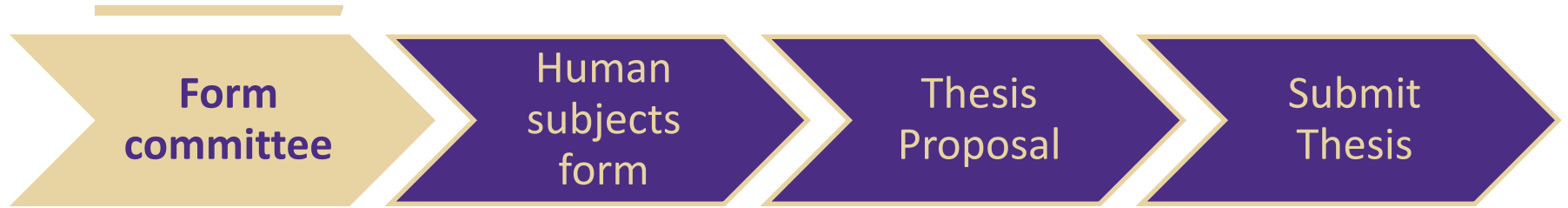
Form committee → Human subjects form → Thesis Proposal → Submit Thesis

Forming a committee:

- Requirements around committee composition found <u>here</u>.

- Must have **"Graduate Faculty" status with "endorsement to Chair"** before you can Chair a committee (request approval from Steve Schwartz, then ask Laurel Belton to put your request up for a faculty vote).

- Most thesis committees have just 2 members, but they can be larger.

- The thesis topic idea is typically developed with the identified Chair. This development may happen (at least partially) before inviting other member(s) of the committee.
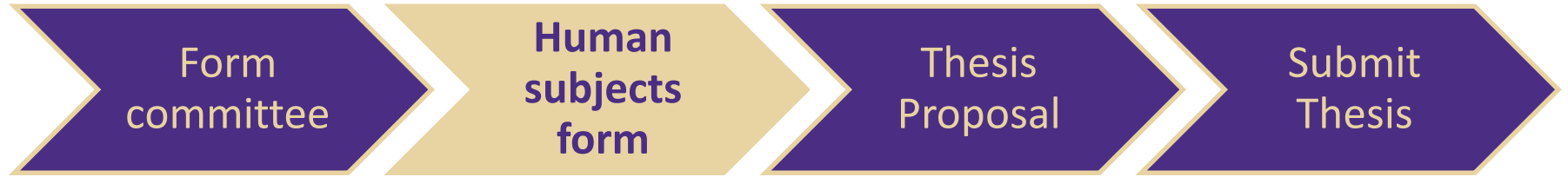
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MASTERS THESIS PROCESS

Form committee → Human subjects form → Thesis Proposal → Submit Thesis

Forming a committee:

- Identifying committee members is generally the responsibility of the student; however, as Chair, it is helpful when you can provide suggestions.

- Topic ideas may be developed into a draft thesis proposal or aims page, which can be circulated to potential committee members.

- Student must inform the Epi Department when they have identified a Chair (and when there are any changes to their committee membership) using this form.

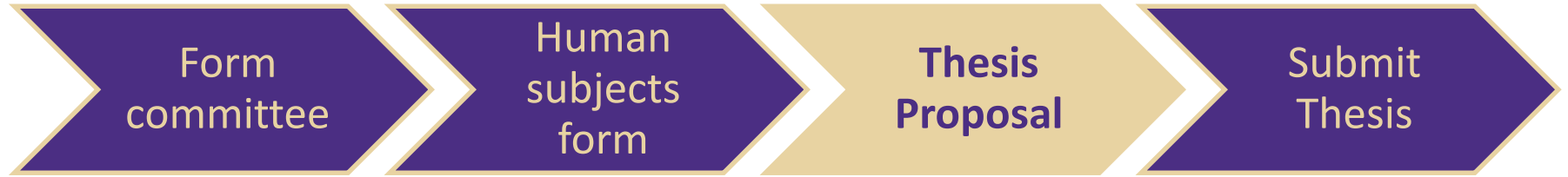**W** EPIDEMIOLOGY
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MASTERS THESIS PROCESS

| Form committee | Human subjects form | Thesis Proposal | Submit Thesis |

Human Subjects Form:

- This <u>form</u> must be submitted by students before they register for any thesis credits.

- The Chair must sign this form, and should work with the student to determine whether or not the thesis projects requires IRB approval.

- If the thesis project requires IRB approvals, the Chair should work with the student to put together the IRB application (or IRB amendment / modification) and navigate the approvals process.
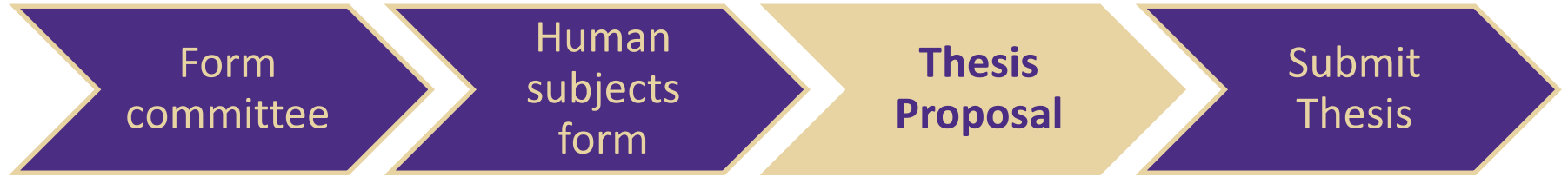
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MASTERS THESIS PROCESS

Form committee → Human subjects form → **Thesis Proposal** → Submit Thesis

Thesis Proposal:

- Format / requirements are listed <u>here</u>. (*Make sure your student uses these!*)

- 3-5 pages to include: title page, specific aims, background / significance, methods, limitations, timeline, & references

- Must be reviewed & approved (with signatures) by all members of the thesis committee.

- Must be submitted via Canvas **at least one quarter before the student plans to graduate** (i.e., in Winter Quarter for Spring graduation).

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MASTERS THESIS PROCESS

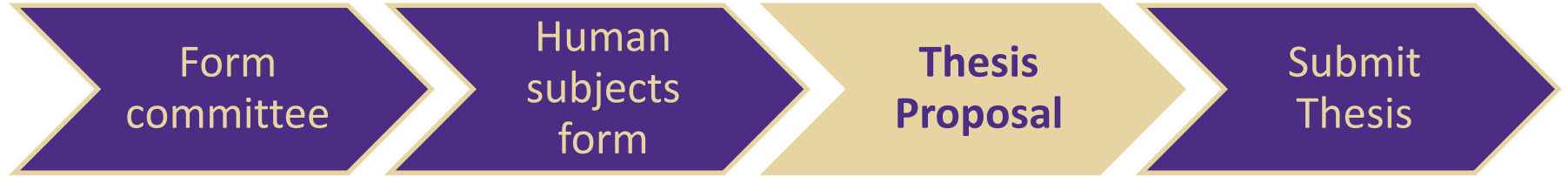**Form committee** → **Human subjects form** → **Thesis Proposal** → **Submit Thesis**

For the Thesis Proposal, it is helpful for the Chair to:

- Provide the student with guidance in how to structure specific aim(s).

- Ensure the student has access to the necessary data to carry out their aims.

- Ensure that necessary details are included in the proposal.

- Serve as the primary point of contact for the student in reviewing iterative versions of the document.

- Review the feedback received from other committee members (and the Department) to guide the student in responding.
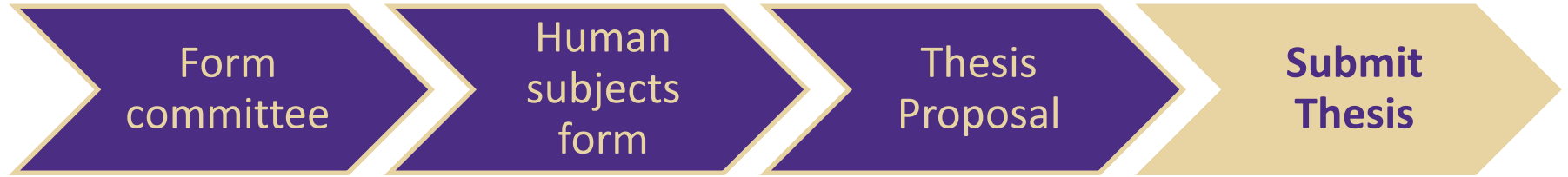
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MASTERS THESIS PROCESS

| Form committee | Human subjects form | Thesis Proposal | Submit Thesis |

MPH ONLY - For the <u>Thesis Proposal</u>, it is helpful for the Chair to:

- Help the student identify the CEPH competencies being met by their thesis project. More information can be found <u>here</u>.
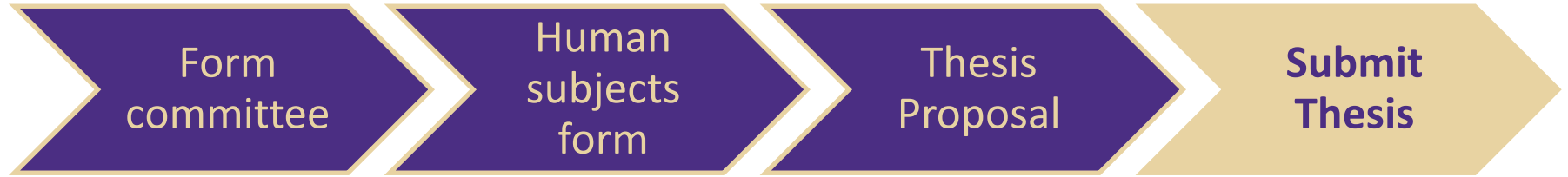
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MASTERS THESIS PROCESS

Form committee → Human subjects form → Thesis Proposal → **Submit Thesis**

Thesis format & submission:

- Often formatted as a scholarly journal article (although this is not required).

- UW Graduate School guidelines for formatting pertain only to the title page, copyright page, & abstract, and can be found here.

- Thesis should be submitted directly to the UW Graduate School ETD site, along with a copy of the Thesis Approval Form (which must be signed by all committee members).

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MASTERS THESIS PROCESS

Form committee → Human subjects form → Thesis Proposal → **Submit Thesis**

In <u>finalizing & submitting the thesis</u>, it is helpful for the Chair to:

- Review the feedback received from other committee member(s) to guide the student in responding.

- Encourage the student to format the thesis in the form of a publishable paper - & to submit their thesis for publication.

- Review the thesis to check for formatting & completion.

- Ensure the student gets the signatures they need for their approval form, & gets the thesis submitted by the appropriate deadline.

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Expectations of Thesis Committee Members (NOT Chair)

> Provide timely feedback to the student on the thesis proposal.

> Offer expertise & guidance relevant to the design, conduct, & interpretation of the thesis project.

> Provide timely feedback to the student on iterative drafts of the thesis.

> Meet with the student occasionally (if needed) to support the student in the thesis process and in their career development.

> **NOTE:** It is not expected that Masters students will have meetings with their full thesis committee, although this can be helpful depending on a student's needs.

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Epi 700B Course – Epi Thesis Seminar

> Designed to support MPH and MS Students in identifying a thesis project, a project chair and committee, writing the proposal, and carrying out the thesis.

> Also has goals to support professional development (career choices, networking, CV/Resume, applying for jobs)

> 1 credit each quarter (counts towards 9 credits needed for thesis)

> Designed for 1st year MS/MPH students Spring quarter, and 2nd year MS/MPH students during fall and winter quarters (not during the final spring quarter of 2nd year when most have launched into the thesis project)

> Elective - about 20-35 students take the course each quarter

> Covers all of the content covered in this slide deck

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OTHER VALUABLE INFORMATION

> Degree checklists for <u>MPH</u> and for <u>MS</u> students (vary slightly by year of entry into program & are different for MPH vs. MS)

> <u>UW guide on graduate student mentoring</u>

> <u>Epi Students Canvas page</u>

> More information regarding <u>MPH Capstone projects</u>

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COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS

> Mentoring is a critical piece of our mandate & mission as an academic institution. ***And it can be hugely rewarding for both parties involved!***

> It is important that all faculty engage in mentoring. BUT, don't feel compelled to mentor every student that approaches you. ***The mentor-mentee partnership needs to be a good fit.***

– If you don't believe you are the right fit for the student's needs, help connect them with other faculty who might be better suited.

– Remember that you don't have to be a content-area expert to be a good mentor!

> Set expectations with your mentees up-front to let them know what you are able to provide, what kind of turnaround they should expect on things, & what you need from them. ***Keep the lines of communication open.***

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