

# WHY DO MBA STUDENTS DELAY COMPLETING THEIR THESIS?

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**Abstract:** *This academic paper investigates one problem universities offering MBA programs encounter with students who choose Plan B (thesis option) as they often delay completing their thesis. Its purpose is to identify the nature of the problem and its impacts on the several parties involved and propose an educational management solution. The delay in students completing their MBA theses has been found to cause difficulties for the students, their advisers and for the Graduate Schools of Business. Managerial approaches for each party to minimize if not mitigate the problem caused by late completion of the thesis are proposed, including a proposed eight-step solutions. A subsequent paper will investigate this problem more deeply from a research perspective.*

**Keywords:** *Delay in completing thesis, Plan B (thesis option), advising faculty members, educational management solution.*

## 1. Introduction

As a faculty member of the Tourism Management MBA Program at a well-known university in Bangkok, Thailand, it is noticeable to both this writer and colleagues that students who choose Plan B (thesis option) often delay completing their thesis. A discussion over lunch with friends at another large and prestigious government university in Bangkok recently indicated that they too face this same difficulty within both their General and Tourism MBA programs. So it seems appropriate to investigate this problem in greater detail.

This paper is of an academic rather than research paper. Its purpose is to identify the nature of the problem and the impacts of the several parties involved and to propose an educational management solution. A subsequent paper will investigate this problem more deeply from a research perspective.

The delay in students completing their MBA theses often causes difficulties for the students, their advisers, and for the Graduate Schools of Business. To better understand the scope and nature of student's late completion of the thesis, it will be useful if this writer firstly explains those difficulties and then explores the causes and implications of the delay and to finally suggest managerial approaches for each party to minimize if not mitigate the problem caused by late completion of the thesis.

The causes of delay are likely to be both External (Extrinsic) and Internal (Intrinsic) to the student, so let us review the various causes on those bases first.

## 2. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Causes of Delay of a Student Completing a Thesis

According to a brief survey of some of the literature on this issue, the most common causes of not completing the thesis or completing it late are: distractions from thesis research; difficult data-related processes; lack of understanding of the thesis writing process; students and supervisors' personal qualities (Ho, Wong and Wong, 2010); changing the direction of the studies; and financial difficulties (Anon, 2013).

The relevant literature further goes on to identify two other causes of delay: unfamiliarity with the thesis process; and difficulty in rescheduling activities to include the thesis process (Burton & Steane, 2004; and Morton & Worthley, 1995).

In terms of familiarizing the student with the thesis process, this is not currently included in the Research methods or other coursework of most MBA programs. For the most part, there is no formal introduction to the academic writing process until the student begins working with his/her thesis adviser other than reading the occasional journal article as part of assignment work for other classes. We might agree that one's first encounter with academic English is a daunting one, even for a native English language speaker, let alone a student whose first language is not English.

All TRM MBA students are provided with a copy of the Graduate Student's Handbook on the first day of attending their orientation at the university. They are also urged to read it thoroughly and ask questions to faculty members, where they do not understand it.

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