GUIDE TO THESES AND DISSERTATIONS: PROCESS AND FORMATTING
UPDATED FALL 2024

Introduction:

Welcome masters and doctoral candidates. This guide is meant to assist you in completing the thesis and dissertation process. You should read this information closely before beginning to write and research about your topic. The information contained in this guide covers Graduate School procedures and general ProQuest requirements; it does not include any processes or requirements specific to individual departments or writing style guides. Check with your advisor or graduate program director regularly to confirm that you are completing all the necessary steps toward thesis/dissertation completion. While several individuals are involved in the thesis/dissertation process from prewriting to evaluation, it is ultimately your responsibility to ensure that all aspects of preparation, writing, formatting, and submission have been completed.

Included in this guide are two distinct sections:

o *Section One* covers the preparation procedures required by The Graduate School before you begin writing the thesis/dissertation. Here you will find checklists, links to forms, and all the steps you must complete in order to begin and end the thesis/dissertation process.

o *Section Two* covers ProQuest Formatting guidelines for your front matter and document pagination. This will include details regarding the expectations for layout of your document, as well as tips for achieving the proper formatting. There are also video tutorials and workshops included in this section.

SECTION 1: GRADUATE SCHOOL PREPARATION GUIDELINES AND CHECKLISTS

Steps For Completing a Thesis or Dissertation

Form a Committee

1. Consult with your faculty advisor and/or department Chair to form a committee of graduate faculty to serve on your committee.
    a. Doctoral dissertation writers should form a committee of 3-5 members
    b. Master's thesis writers should form a committee of 3 members
2. Secure the agreement of a member of the graduate faculty to serve as the dissertation or thesis advisor.
    a. If the dissertation or thesis advisor leaves A-State prior to completion of the dissertation/thesis, it is the responsibility of the Department Chair, in consultation with the remaining committee members and the student, to appoint another advisor or to assume that position.
    b. The committee members must complete the request to serve on a thesis/dissertation committee: HERE
3. Each form should be approved by your Department Chair, the Graduate Program Director, and the College Dean.
    a. Consult the current Graduate Bulletin to determine the committee structure for the degree sought.
    b. The thesis/dissertation advisor will chair the committee.
    c. One member of the committee may be from outside the department.
4. Complete a dissertation or thesis committee form: HERE
    a. This form must be approved by your Graduate Program Director, Department Chair, and College Dean.

Before You Write

1. Consult with your dissertation or thesis committee members to select a research problem or topic and
    a. Complete a dissertation or thesis proposal approval form: HERE
        i. This form must be approved by the dissertation or thesis committee, Graduate Program Director, Department Chair, and College Dean.
2. Once the proposal is approved, consult with your thesis/dissertation committee to agree on the writing style manual (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.) that will be followed throughout your writing process
    a. Note that this style manual applies to the general organization, subdivision of text and method of source documentation to be used in the body of the thesis/dissertation.
3. Study the Preparation and Electronic Submissions section of this guide. a. This guide refers to the general organization, formatting, and pagination standards required for submission to ProQuest.
4. While this guide tries to cover all the steps and requirements, these can sometimes change. So, direct any questions about formatting, style manuals, or text submission to your committee chair.
5. Confirm the submission deadlines. These change each semester but can be found on the campus academic calendar. It is recommended that you submit your document to the Thesis/Dissertation Review Coordinator 3-4 weeks in advance of this deadline.

Writing the Thesis or Dissertation

1. Complete the research and study outlined in the proposal.
2. Then, prepare the research document in accordance with the Preparation and Electronic Submissions section of this guide.
3. Submit the document to the committee;
4. Upon approval of the research document by the committee, the advisor completes the thesis/dissertation defense form, HERE.
    a. This form must be signed by the committee, the program director, and the college dean and then submitted to the Office of the Registrar.
5. During your writing process, you may consult with the Writing Center for support. Assistance is available through one-on-one sessions and scheduled workshops throughout the academic year.

Submitting the Thesis or Dissertation

A Formatting Checklist for each section of your document is included in Part Two of this guide and links to example documents from various areas of study are provided at the end. To expedite the submission process, review this guide carefully and make sure your work conforms to these guidelines before you visit the submission site. You will be contacted by the Thesis/Dissertation Review Coordinator once your thesis/dissertation has been reviewed.

The deadline posted on the Academic Affairs Calendar reflects the date by which fully approved documents are due. You are encouraged to submit your document as early as possible (we highly suggest 3-4 weeks) to provide ample time for necessary revisions. The time between initial submission and final approval may also vary due to factors such as proximity to deadlines, projected graduation date, etc. Check your email account often for notifications until the document is approved. Delayed revisions on your end, will result in a prolonged approval process.

The website address for submission is http://www.etdadmin.com/astate and technical assistance can be reached at 1-877-408-5027.

SUBMISSION STEPS CHECKLIST:
- o Create an account on the UMI submission site http://www.etdadmin.com/astate
- o Convert your document to a PDF file.
    - o While you can use the UMI submission site converter up to five times, we recommend converting your document to PDF before submitting.
- o Agree to the ProQuest/UMI publishing agreement.
- o Upload the PDF file and any supplemental files.
    - o Acceptable file formats for supplemental files can be found on the UMI requirements page.
    - o Although the UMI submission site discusses mailing in documents with very large supplementary files on a CD-ROM, ASU will not accept submissions in this manner.
    - o Choose whether or not you would like UMI to file a copyright on your behalf. Keep in mind that there is a charge to copyright.
    - o Check with your Thesis/Dissertation advisor to confirm the required number of document copies to be ordered. The pricing information listed on page 6 of this document are subject to change.
- o After submitting your file to the UMI submission site, email a Word version of your document the Thesis/Dissertation Review Coordinator. Both documents will be used to check your formatting before approval.
- o You will be notified via email if revisions are needed, and you must complete all required revisions in a timely manner (usually within 48 hours).

Choosing between Open Access and Traditional Publishing:

What is Open Access?
The term "open access" means freely available for viewing or downloading by anyone with access to the internet. Sometimes a distinction is made for "limited open access" meaning that material is available free of charge to a limited group of authorized users. Our usage of "open access" means the former; that is, dissertations and theses published for Open Access with ProQuest/UMI will be available at no charge for viewing or downloading by anyone with access to the internet, indefinitely.

What is Traditional Publishing?
Traditional publishing at UMI® corresponds with the model that generated the publishing industry as soon as mass-reproduction of printed material was possible. That is, the owner of intellectual property and author of the work contracts with the publisher to reproduce, distribute, and sell copies of the work. The publisher pays the author a certain portion of the revenue thus generated. That is why we also refer to our Traditional Publishing model as the "copy sales and royalty payments" model. It's been our business model since 1938, and we've paid out hundreds of thousands of dollars in royalties to the authors of dissertations and theses over the decades.

Publishing and Printing Fees

- o The student is required to pay for two bound copies of the document
  - o One double sided copy for the student
  - o One single sided copy for the Dean B. Ellis Library
- o Fees listed below are estimates at the time of this guide's completion and are subject to change at ProQuest's Discretion.
- o Student Copy prices are starting points as there are multiple binding options.

Publishing Services Doctoral Dissertations and Master's Theses
Traditional Publishing $0
Open Access Publishing $95
Copyright Service $75
Student Copies $38 - $62
Two Required Copies $56 each $112 total

A List of Forms

- Request to Serve on Thesis or Dissertation Committee
- Request to Form Thesis or Dissertation Committee
- Thesis or Dissertation Defense
- Submission of Thesis or Dissertation Proposal
- Request to Change Thesis or Dissertation Advisory Committee Member
- All forms can be found: https://www.astate.edu/college/graduate-school/resources/

Process Completion Checklist

- [ ] Form a committee and appoint a thesis or dissertation advisor
    - [ ] 3-5 members for doctoral dissertations
    - [ ] 3 members for graduate theses
- [ ] Completed Member Request form for each faculty member serving
- [ ] Completed Dissertation or Thesis Committee form
- [ ] Completed Dissertation or Thesis Proposal form
- [ ] Selected Style Manual _____
- [ ] Completed the research and writing process
- [ ] Obtained committee approval
- [ ] Completed the Thesis/Dissertation Defense form
- [ ] Followed all ProQuest guidelines (detailed in Section Two)
- [ ] Submitted document to the Thesis/Dissertation Review Coordinator
- [ ] Purchase three bound copies
- [ ] Doctoral students should complete the National Science Foundation's Survey of Earned Doctorates: https://sed-ncses.org/login.aspx

Section Two Introduction

This section of the Thesis and Dissertation Guide covers ProQuest Formatting guidelines, including detailed layout expectations for your document and tips for achieving the proper formatting in Microsoft Word. At this stage, a clear distinction must be made between the publication formatting required by ProQuest and the style manual conventions selected by you and your committee. Section One of this guide directs students to speak with their thesis/dissertation committee to determine the appropriate style manual to use while writing their text. The formatting described here, in Section Two, refers specifically to the ProQuest formatting requirements for the overall document.

The ProQuest publication formatting dictates the margins, pagination, cover page, and introductory portions of your document. Your selected style manual will help determine the general organization, specific subdivision of the text, and the method of source documentation to be used. In other words, your style manual covers everything from the title of your first chapter to the last entry in your references/bibliography page, while the ProQuest formatting applies to everything else. In scenarios where your selected style manual and the ProQuest guidelines conflict, follow the ProQuest guidelines.

Writers may be advised to review other theses or dissertations in their field during their writing process. While this is an excellent tool for modeling the discourse that other scholars in your field value, The Graduate School does not recommend using another thesis or dissertation as a model for ProQuest formatting or source documentation because a previously published text may not be up-to-date in these specific areas. We've included supplementary materials throughout this guide where we link out to theses and dissertations from various disciplines written by previous A-State students: these are up-to-date at the time of this guide's completion in Spring 2023.

If your research involves human subjects, you will likely need to complete the IRB training through CITI. Confirm this step with your advisor as needed.

GETTING STARTED

Apart from Mathematics majors, it is strongly recommended that you do not complete your work in any software other than Microsoft, as the downloading process often shifts your formatting. This guide will only refer to Microsoft Word when describing how to achieve specific formatting. Before you write, you should check that the font, line spacing, margins, and pagination settings are correct in your Microsoft Word settings. This is where most writers encounter formatting mistakes. Never trust the default settings. Below, we have listed the settings that remain the same throughout the document.

Consistent Formatting:

In your Microsoft Word Paragraph Settings:
- ☐ Set Left and Right Margins to 1.25"
- ☐ Set Bottom Margin to 1"
- ☐ Set Line Spacing to 0" in before and after

Top margins are different for some sections of the document. Pay close attention to those guidelines in the guide below.

Other consistencies:
All pagination is centered in a footer (the title page number is suppressed)
All section and chapter titles are centered, not bolded, and start a new page of text
All section and chapter titles are typed using all capital letters

Some sections of your document will require 2" top margins and the pagination will change from lower case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii…) to Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3…). To achieve the changing pagination and top margins, you will need to create section breaks in different places in your document. You can find details regarding pagination and top margin changes in each respective document section of this guide. The Supplemental Materials section links out to some helpful instructions for those who have never used these settings before.

Checklist of Sections:

- o Title Page
- o Copyright page (optional)
- o Abstract
- o Dedication and/or Acknowledgements (optional)
- o Table of Contents
- o Lists (Tables, Figures, Illustrations/Symbols)
- o Dissertation Content: Chapters with introductions & main body
- o Appendices
- o Bibliography/References

Title Page

The title page contains all the identifying information for your text, including your title, name, institution, names of your committee members and date of publication. Please note that there is a difference between "space" and "inches". "Space" refers to starting a new line of text using the *return* or *enter* buttons on your keyboard ("double space" means an empty line between lines of text). "Inches" refers to the true measurement of the empty areas between information. For more information on how to add inches between lines of text, please view the "Section Breaks" entry in the supplemental materials section at the end of this guide. **Pressing "enter" and hoping you are close will not get the spacing you need.** For more detailed tutorials on ProQuest formatting, see the A-State Writing Center.

Formatting Checklist

- [ ] 2" top margin
- [ ] Maintain Left and Right Margins at 1.25"
- [ ] Maintain Bottom Margin at 1"
- [ ] Center all text on this page
- [ ] The title
    - [ ] Centered and formatted with all capital letters.
    - [ ] If the title is more than one line of text, it should be double-spaced.
- [ ] Insert 1 inch of blank space
- [ ] Type your name
- [ ] Insert 1 inch of blank space
- [ ] Type the university statement
    - [ ] "A Dissertation (or Thesis) presented to the faculty of Arkansas State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of'
        - [ ] Make sure this text is single-spaced
    - [ ] Insert 1 blank line of space
    - [ ] In all capital letters enter the title of your degree, see the example below

- [ ] Insert 1.5 – 2 inches of blank space to align the next line of text (the university affiliation) with the middle of your page
    - [ ] ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
    - [ ] Month Year of graduation
        - [ ] these two lines should have no blank lines between them
- [ ] Suppress the pagination on this page
- [ ] Single space "Approved by" followed by the committee member's names at the bottom of this page

Copyright Page

The copyright page is optional. If you have selected to purchase a copyright on your thesis or dissertation, a page indicating that ownership will follow the title page.

Formatting Checklist

☐ Start a new page
☐ Maintain Left and Right Margins at 1.25"
☐ Maintain Bottom Margin at 1"
☐ All text here is centered
☐ All text begins at the bottom of the page
    ☐ Line one: Insert a copyright symbol, followed by the year of publication
    ☐ Line two: Your full name (exactly as it appears on your title page)
    ☐ Line three: ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
☐ Pagination should be Roman Numerals (i, ii, iii…)
    ☐ Since the pagination on the title page is suppressed, not skipped, the Roman numeral here should begin at ii.

© 2009
John Quincy Doe
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ii

Abstracts

Abstracts serve as an introduction to your work and will usually appear to other researchers in academic search engines before they access your full text. They typically contain a list of key terms, the main ideas of your text, and a brief description of research methods and outcomes. Abstracts can be no more than 150 words for a thesis or 350 words for a dissertation. For more information on how abstracts can help you build conference proposals, please see the A-State Writing Center.

Formatting Checklist

- ☐ Start a new page with a 2" top margin
- ☐ Maintain Left and Right Margins at 1.25"
- ☐ Maintain Bottom Margin at 1"
- ☐ Center the word ABSTRACT; using all capital letters
- ☐ Insert an empty line of space and type your name on the next line
  - ☐ Make sure that your name here is exactly the same as your name on previous pages
- ☐ Insert an empty line of space and type your thesis or dissertation title using all capital letters
- ☐ Insert an empty line of space and type your abstract
- ☐ Double-space the text of the abstract
- ☐ Pagination: continues the Roman numerals from the previous page
  (iii if you have a copyright page, ii if you do not)
- ☐ If you include a list of key terms, they do not count in your final word count

ABSTRACT

John Quincy Doe

TITLE OF YOUR WORK

The abstract of your work.

Dedication/Acknowledgments

These are optional inclusions for both theses and dissertations wherein many writers may choose to show gratitude to persons or groups who have supported them in their educational journey. The dedication is an honorific statement from you to a person or group to whom you commend the effort and product of the dissertation. An acknowledgment is a statement of recognition of the people and institutions that helped your research and writing.

Formatting

- ☐ Start a new page with a 2" top margin
- ☐ Maintain Left and Right Margins at 1.25"
- ☐ Maintain Bottom Margin at 1"
- ☐ Double-space all text on this page
- ☐ Center the words DEDICATION or ACKNOWLEDGMENT
- ☐ If your text exceeds one page, the second page should have a 1" top margin
- ☐ Pagination: continues the Roman numerals from the previous page

Table of Contents

The Table of Contents (ToC) will show the location of every element of your document that appears after it.

- Lists of Tables/Figures/Images/Abbreviations
- Section Headings
  - Chapters, Appendices, References pages
- Subheadings up to at least level 3
  - You may include more levels, but you must be consistent in this choice.

The ToC should not contain listings for the pages that precede it. All the headings listed in the ToC must exactly match the capitalization, punctuation, and wording of headings as they appear in the body of your work. This is a common mistake so, check these closely.

You can either manually type a ToC or use the "Insert Table of Contents" tool in Word. To use this tool, you must also use the heading style tools in your Word software. Setting up your heading styles and altering your ToC format settings before applying them to your document will generate the appropriate titles, page numbers, and leaders into your ToC. If you have not already formatted your titles, subheadings, and page numbers for the entire document, do that before completing these steps. Please see the "Headings" help in the Supplemental Materials section of this guide.

Formatting Checklist

☐ Start a new page with a 2" top margin
☐ Maintain Left and Right Margins at 1.25"
☐ Maintain Bottom Margin at 1"
☐ Center the title TABLE OF CONTENTS
☐ Insert a blank line
☐ Headings that are longer than one line of text should be single-spaced
☐ Each entry on this list should have a blank line between it and the next entry
☐ Page numbers for each entry should be aligned to the right margin
☐ Pagination: continues the Roman numerals from the previous page
☐ Make sure that all headings and subheadings are spelled, capitalized, and punctuated exactly as they are in the body of your document

If you are using the Word-generated ToC:
- Consult the supplemental materials for instructions
- You will need to alter all the table settings to match your font style and size to the rest of the document
- You will need to alter all the table's paragraph settings to adhere to the line spacing requirements listed above.

If you are manually typing your ToC

☐ Type your headings exactly as they appear in the body text and the page number they appear on
☐ Remove any bold or italicized font (except medical or biological terms that are always italicized)
☐ Align headings based on level (level 1 headings are flush with the left margin, tab over once for level two, twice for level three, and so on.
  ☐ To insert the leaders Watch this Video

List of Tables and Figures/Illustrations

Think of these sections as a guide to the tables and figures that will appear throughout the body of your text. You are telling your readers what they will see and where the readers will see them. The images/tables/figures themselves do not appear here, you are simply listing their full number and titles. For submission to ProQuest, you may choose consecutive or chapter-specific numeration. You may also choose to include descriptions of each table here. You have a couple of options, but you should consult with your thesis/dissertation committee for numeration expectations.

Formatting Checklist

☐ Each list must start a new page and have its own numeration system.
☐ Assign each table/figure/image in your document an Arabic numeral.

These numerals can be consecutive throughout your document: Table 1, Table 2,

OR each table can be assigned a two-part numeral that denotes their order within each chapter:

Table 3.1, Table 3.2, etc. (The number 3.2 would be assigned to the second table appearing in chapter three.)

☐ Start a new page with a 1" top margin

☐ To achieve changing top margins, you will need to insert a section break at the end of the previous page.

☐ Maintain Left and Right Margins at 1.25"
☐ Maintain Bottom Margin at 1"
☐ Pagination: Continue the Roman numerals from the previous page.
☐ Center the title "LIST OF TABLES" (or FIGURES, or ILLUSTRATIONS as appropriate)
☐ Insert a blank line
☐ Like the ToC, you have the option of manually creating this list or using the Word tool for inserting a List of tables.

To manually create your lists

☐ Type each entry's title exactly as it is typed in the document's body text
☐ If the title exceeds one line of text, single space additional lines
☐ Each entry should have a double space between it and the next entry
☐ The page number on which the tables/figures/illustrations appear should be aligned to the right margin
☐ Use the same instructions for inserting leaders to the ToC to separate the titles from the page numbers.

To use the Insert List tool in Word consult the supplemental materials section.

Chapters

Theses and Dissertations should be divided into chapters. Those chapters may include an introduction before the main body. The main body of your text will be divided, when needed, by consistent subheadings. Your chapters should all maintain a consistent style (font, typeset, size, etc.) throughout the entire document, including the headings and subheadings.

Formatting Checklist

☐ Start the first page of each chapter with a 2" top margin
    ☐ Subsequent pages of each chapter will have a 1" top margin
☐ Maintain Left and Right Margins at 1.25"
☐ Maintain Bottom Margin at 1"
☐ Select and maintain a consistent text size and type within the document
    ☐ Main section titles cannot be bold
    ☐ Chapter titles are centered and typed using all capital letters
    ☐ All other subheadings can adhere to the standards of your chosen style manual
☐ Double-space the main body of the document
    ☐ Exceptions include block quotes, notes, captions, legends, and long headings – all of these are single-spaced
☐ Indent all paragraphs consistently
☐ Headings and subheadings are never larger or smaller than other text
    ☐ All other headings and subheadings formatting usually adhere to the formatting requirements of your chosen writing style guide. In other words, these can be bold and/or italicized as needed.
☐ Page numbers are centered at the bottom of the page using Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3)

A note on Pagination: The first page of the body of your document is the first to use Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3,) in the document pagination. This pagination should appear as page "1". To accomplish this change in pagination, as well as the changing top margins, you will need to use section breaks within your text. Please see our "pagination" workshop in the Supplemental Materials at the end of this guide.

Appendices

The appendix/appendices will appear at the end of your finished document. This is different from the list of tables and figures as it contains material not included in the body of the text (similar to endnotes). It should be placed after the final chapter and before the bibliography. It may include items such as figures, tables, images, or other forms of data incorporated or mentioned within the body of the thesis.

Formatting Checklist

☐ Each appendix starts a new page and has a 1" top margin

☐ Maintain Left and Right Margins at 1.25"

☐ Maintain Bottom Margin at 1"

☐ Appendices are placed after the last chapter and before the bibliography

☐ Each appendix is assigned a corresponding number or letter, and a descriptive title

    ☐ Font should be all capital letters and not bolded

☐ Pagination continues the Arabic numerals from the previous page

Bibliography

The bibliography is the master list of all reference materials consulted in the composition of the finished document. You are required to and ethically responsible for documenting your sources. The formatting of your bibliographic entries will depend on the selected style manual you use for the entire document. Bibliographic citations can vary from one style to the next, so consistency is of the utmost importance. The title of this section (i.e. bibliography, works cited, references, sources consulted, etc.) should be determined by you and your advisory committee and can vary between your discipline and designated style.

Formatting Checklist

☐ The page has a 1" top margin
☐ Maintain Left and Right Margins at 1.25"
☐ Maintain Bottom Margin at 1"
☐ All entries should be single-spaced
☐ Place a blank line (double-space) between each entry
☐ Any abbreviations used in the body of the text and/or in footnotes/endnotes are consistent
☐ Font and type are consistent with the rest of the document
☐ Pagination continues the Arabic numerals from the previous page

Footnotes/Endnotes

Footnotes and/or endnotes are used to reference or cite information without breaking up the flow of the text. Endnotes are footnotes that appear either at the end of the chapter or the end of the body of the text, but before the bibliography. Footnotes will follow a consistent style determined by the manual you and your committee select for your thesis. Footnotes are acknowledged by a superscript Arabic numeral within the text. Footnotes can appear either at the end of each page, the end of the chapter, or the end of the text, depending on how you utilize them.

Formatting Checklist

- Determine whether you will include footnotes or endnotes
    - Footnotes appear at the end of the page they are inserted
    - Endnotes appear at the end of each chapter, or the end of the full body of text
        - If you use chapter endnotes, your numerical sequence can either;
        - carry throughout your document (1, 2, 3,)
          or
        - begin and end with each chapter (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3)
- Font and type should be consistent – standard word processor superscript formatting will be 2 points smaller than the rest of your font
    - Footnotes can either be superscript Arabic numerals or are Arabic numerals placed on the line and followed by a period
- Footnotes at the end of the page will adjust with the processor's formatting
- Endnotes should begin on a separate page with a 1" top margin
- Endnotes should get a separate heading (at the end of the chapter or the end of the document) labeled **"Notes"**

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

- The [A-State Writing Center](#): To make one-on-appointments, view our graduate writing workshop schedule, and access supplementary video tutorials.
    - To ensure that you reach a tutor trained to assist with the ProQuest process, please select the "ProQuest Formatting" session option.
    - Visit our [YouTube](#) page for recorded workshops.
- [Sample Theses/Dissertations by Discipline](#)
    - Please note that regulations can change over time. These samples are not meant to be used as a template but should provide a visual reference for what the document should look like and the style of writing common for your area of study.
- How To's from Microsoft Word:
    - [Section Breaks](#)
    - [Headings](#)
    - [Inserting Lists](#)
    - [Inserting the Table of Contents](#)
- [ProQuest](#)