

Office of Graduate Studies

Master's Thesis
Guidelines

West Chester University of PA
2008

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This manual is adaptation of previous WCU Thesis Manuals and the Thesis Guidelines of the College of Graduate Studies at Kutztown University.

INTRODUCTION

This manual has been designed as a guide for West Chester University master's degree students to follow as they write their theses. It is recommended that students read this manual as soon as they schedule for thesis credits.

The manual focuses on the structural elements of the thesis and does **not** replace a style manual. Different disciplines of study use different standards of style in their scholarly work. The thesis committee will stipulate the expected style to be used. The use of grammar handbooks and computer manuals will also complement information included here. In addition, a previously written and submitted thesis should not be used as a guide for the thesis writer because of the possibility of overlooked errors. Instead, students should consult this manual in conjunction with a style manual, and direct their questions to their thesis advisor or to the Office of Graduate Studies and Extended Education.

Master's Thesis Guidelines

I. Purpose of the Thesis

Writing a thesis offers the student an excellent research opportunity and experience. Identifying and defining a problem, locating and evaluating relevant information and executing ways of getting clear answers to good questions, and mastering the conventions of research writing are the essence of scholarship.

II. The Thesis Committee and the Student

When a student begins to write thesis, he/she will work closely with an assigned thesis advisor. The thesis advisor chooses additional (usually 2) faculty members to constitute the thesis committee.

Although different departments may differ in the manner a thesis committee works with students, generally the advisor will expect that the student will:

- a. Obtain the advisor's approval of the topic selected for research.
- b. Submit an outline of the proposed thesis indicating the topic to be studied, the purpose to be fulfilled, the procedure to be used, and information that the advisor deems to be pertinent.
- c. Confer with the advisor frequently to as the work progresses in order to obtain approval of each phase of the project. Failure to do this may result in the need to re-write certain sections, or even the entire document.
- d. Obtain the committee's final approval of the finished product.

While the student should look to the committee for guidance and objective critique as the work progresses, the student should not submit rough drafts which have not been neatly printed and proofed for spelling and grammatical errors. The advisor's role is to help shape the content and explain some of the intricacies scholarly style, not to serve as a proofreader.

III. Format for the Thesis

Theses adhere to standard scholarly styles and the style format is designated by the student's academic department. Style manuals provide detail on formats and should be **consistently used** throughout the document including the reference pages and appendices. The WCU library provides online information about standard styles in the area of the homepage labeled research help.

Consistent and accurate documentation of all sources cited is expected. Plagiarism is intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own. The most blatant form of plagiarism is reproducing someone else's sentences or phrases, more or less verbatim, and representing them as your own wording. The consequences of plagiarism are clearly outlined in the Academic Dishonesty section of the *Graduate Catalog*.

A master's thesis typically consists of preliminary pages, chapters forming the body of the thesis and supplementary materials.

Margin Settings and Justification

Thesis margins are dictated by the requirements of the F.H. Green Library bindery, not the style manual. The left margin and top margins must be no less than 1.5 inches and the right and bottom margins no less than 1 inch. All pages should be left-justified with ragged right margins.

Pagination

Beginning with the first page of the text (page 2), all pages should be numbered consecutively throughout the manuscript, including the reference list and the appendices. Pagination using letter suffixes (ie. 10a and 10b) is not acceptable. Ensure that pages do not end with a single line of a paragraph or word. Secondly make sure that the page does not begin with a single word/phrase or a single line from a paragraph on the previous page.

Divisions

The manuscript should follow a logical scheme consistently throughout the work. Chapters are the most common division with sub-headings within as dictated by the style manual used. Each chapter begins on a new page, sub-headings do not. The general text should be doubled-spaced.

Font

A font of New Times Roman is recommended and size 12 should be used. The font and size should be consistent throughout the thesis. Script or other unusual font styles are not acceptable. While bolding is a commonly used word processing feature, it is not appropriate in a thesis manuscript.

Preliminary Pages

The preliminary pages of a master's thesis include signature/approvals pages, a title page, an abstract restricted to 350 words, acknowledgements, a table of contents, and if applicable, a list of tables and figures. These pages are not numbered and should appear in the following sequence:

Blank Page

Abstract

The abstract should contain a statement of the topic, an explanation of the methods and procedures employed, and a summary of the findings and conclusions. The abstract is usually limited to 500 words. References are generally limited, although a few citations from the thesis may be included (see Example 1).

Title Page

See Example 3 for a sample title page in the recommended form. Follow it carefully! The date should be the year and month in which the degree will be granted.

You may wish to place a notice of copyright on your title page. This ensures your right to reprint, sell, and copy the text as well as to extract portions for use in other works. For more information go to www.copyright.gov.

Approval Page

The approval page should conform as closely as possible to Example 2. You will substitute the correct degree and program name, and the actual names of the committee chair, members, and graduate dean. Approval sheets and title page must be on the same brand and weight (22-24 pound) of cotton paper (100%) and be in the same font as the remainder of the thesis. Black ink is recommended for the signatures.

Acknowledgement Page

The acknowledgment section is used to recognize those who helped with the thesis project. The advisor, thesis committee, family members, people who assisted in data collection, and anyone that the student wishes to recognize should be mentioned here. See Example 4.

Table of Contents

The table of contents includes chapter headings and subheadings together with the page numbers on which these can be found. Uppercase headings are usually used for chapters. (Example 5).

List of Tables/List of Figures/List of Plates

The list of tables/figures should give the name and number of each table or figure and the page number where it can be found (Example 6).

Body of the Thesis

Most theses will include an introduction, a body and a conclusion, and major divisions will comprise chapters. The format for the body of the thesis will vary depending on the type of research that is conducted. The student should confer with his/her advisor about the best format for the specific topic and research methods that are employed. Some general guidelines follow:

Historical research is often presented in as an explanatory narrative with the literature review integrated into the body of the thesis. Chapters indicate the topics that are relevant to the story being told and way it unfolds.

Philosophical research is reported in the form of an argument. Chapters contain exposition and/or analyses of factors and /or premises necessary to establish acceptance of the conclusion(s). The literature review may be a separate chapter, or may be integrated into the body of the thesis.

Qualitative research often is presented in a narrative, with attention to voices and examples of the people who have provided the information central to the study. Chapters indicate the topics explored. *Analytical* qualitative reports uses an objective writing style where the researcher's voice is subdued or silent (third person). *Reflective* qualitative reports are characterized by the presence of the researcher's voice (first person) and more literary freedom of expression is allowed.

Quantitative research requires a more formal structure than other types. Following the introductory chapter which introduces the problem and defines terms, there is usually a literature review chapter, a chapter on procedures, a results chapter, and a chapter containing discussion and conclusions. It is very important that the result/findings chapter contain *only* data collected by the researcher, with all interpretation and implications left to the discussion chapter.

Regardless of format used, each chapter begins on a new page, two lines down from the top margin, with the chapter numbers and title centered (see example on page_____).

This description of the body of the thesis does not attempt to be full and comprehensive. The advisor will help the student to develop each chapter of the thesis appropriately in view of the topic being studied and the procedures and methods employed.

Supplementary Material

The final section of the thesis contains the reference list of works cited within the document and appendices. Reference list formats are dictated by the style manual used. Example 7 is a reference list in APA format. Copies of instruments used, cover letters, survey forms, interview schedules, computer programs are appropriately placed in the appendices.

Word-processing and Printing

Most word-processing software should have all of the features necessary for even the most complex thesis. Whatever software is selected, the student is cautioned to back up work on an alternate media format.

Laser printers are capable of producing a finished copy of adequate quality.

IV. PERMISSIONS

Institutional Review Board

The Institutional Review Board ensures that all research by and for West Chester University is reviewed and approved to comply with ethical principles and legal requirements pertaining to the rights of human subjects, animal welfare, and the use of hazardous substances. If you intend to use human subjects, animals, or chemicals in any way in your thesis research, you must attain approval from the IRB. Include a copy of the IRB approval in the appendix of your completed thesis.

Information about the IRB and guidelines are available at the WCU Office of Sponsored Research and Faculty Development website (www.wcupa.edu/_fac/staff/facdev/humans.htm).

Human Subjects Committee

This committee reviews all research projects involving human subjects conducted by individuals affiliated with the University to confirm that subjects' rights, privacy, welfare, and civil liberties are protected.

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

This committee oversees activities involving animals used in training, instruction, or research. It provides information on the human practice of animal care and use, and research or testing methods that minimize the number of animals required to obtain valid results and minimize animal distress as established by the Public Health Services Act.

Academic Hazardous Materials Committee

This committee oversees all activities involving management of regulatory compliance issues for both health and safety as it applies to teaching and research mandated by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Department of HHS Guidelines, OSHA, EPA and the Pennsylvania Act 159-1984.

V. Oral Presentation

After the student has completed the thesis and has received the committee's approval of it, an oral presentation (defense) of the thesis is usually required by the academic department. The thesis advisor will assist the student with scheduling the presentation.

VI. Deadline for Submission

In order for a student to graduate in a given semester the following must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies:

- Four approval pages on 22-24 pound bond paper with a minimum of 100% cotton content, signed by all members of the thesis committee;
- One copy of the thesis on copy paper for final review by the Graduate Dean
- Once the Graduate Dean has read and approved, or read and asked for revision, the final 4 copies are photocopied.

Reproduction

Students should submit **4 FINAL** copies of the thesis printed on 8 1/2 X 11 inch white 22-24 pound bond paper containing 100% cotton (a watermark on each page will clearly reveal the cotton content when held up to light). These four copies will be bound. Two will be placed in the Francis Harvey Green Library, one given to the thesis advisor and one will be returned to the student. The cost for binding is approximately \$20. This fee is to be paid at the time of submission to the library by money order. Additional bound copies for personal use may be ordered at that time.

While one of the four copies may be an original, this is not required. Because sections of theses may be photocopied, microfilmed or digitalized (usually in black and white) for broader distribution, color images should be used **only in the appendices**.

A number of commercial printing firms in the area will make photocopies for a modest fee, but any laser printer is capable of producing acceptable results.

VII. Electronic Publication

PASSHE is working to establish an electronic retrievable archive for master's theses written by PASSHE graduate students. If you wish your thesis to be made available in this manner, submit one copy on a CD. GSEE will provide you with the necessary release forms to sign, and when the system is operational, your research will be posted. This process will make your work widely available to scholars within the PASSHE.

EXAMPLES

The examples on the following pages are intended to illustrate the format elements previously discussed. The examples are presented according to the style manual of the American Psychological Association. Students should consult the style manual designated by their department.

Abstract

An Investigation of the Relationship between a Viewers Age and Motion Picture
Viewing Patterns

By Mary B. Student

Chairperson: David R. Faculty Ph.D.

In the 1990s various studies reported findings about the motion picture viewing patterns. More recently Clark (2005) found that age played a significant role in viewing Selection, while Moore (2006) found that people's preferences in what they want out of life are changing.

This thesis explores the relationship between age and motion picture viewing Patterns by means of a survey of 145 randomly selected subjects. Subjects were asked how many hours of movies they viewed in an average month, the title of their favorite movie, their favorite actor and actress, and their age.

Analysis of the data yielded several significant relationships. Young adults between the ages of 16-21 demonstrated a high frequency of movie viewing. As the age increased the frequency of movie viewing decreased until age 65 when it increased significantly.

The young adults identified with fantasy characters while the 22-65 year old group appeared to identify with real characters. Comedy was the most popular type of movie for all categories.

Example 2

Mary B. Student

Approval of Thesis

for

Master of Arts Degree

In

Communication Studies

COMMITTEE MEMBERS Date

Daniel Delta, PhD, Chairperson

Maria Alpha, PhD

Robert Beta, EdD

Carol Gamma, PhD

Janet S. Hickman, EdD
Interim Dean, Graduate Studies &
Extended Education

An Investigation of the Relationship between a Viewers Age and Motion Picture
Viewing Patterns

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the
Department of Communication Studies
West Chester University
West Chester, Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts

By
Mary B. Student

2008

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Example 4

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my appreciation to all those who made this thesis possible. This includes the many people who participated as subjects for the study, the professors who provided guidance and encouragement, and the University staff who made it possible.

I would also like to thank my family for their patience and assistance as we lived through the thesis project.

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Example 7 (APA Format)

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