DISSERTATION GUIDE
Instructions for the Preparation and Submission of Dissertations*

*If you print out a hard copy of this guide, please be aware that it is subject to change. The most current guide will always be available online. Therefore, as you progress through your doctoral program, please check the Graduate Studies web page http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/default.aspx for the most current version of this guide.
Congratulations on making your way to the dissertation stage of your doctoral program. This manual was written to help graduate students and their committee members prepare dissertations (at the proposal and final stages) and will help you to navigate through the steps needed to submit your dissertation to the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services for approval. The purpose of this manual is to define uniform standards of style and format. To ensure that doctoral dissertations completed at Texas A&M University-Commerce are quality publications, the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services offers this guide as an addition to APA 6th Edition or MLA 7th Edition.

Texas A&M University-Commerce requires a dissertation from all doctoral students. Because we are a public institution, the research conducted here is ultimately for the benefit of the public and copies are available at our library and online.

**EXPECTATIONS**

You will submit your dissertation documents to the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services at two different stages of your program: 1) after your proposal defense, and 2) after your final defense.

You must submit a document that meets high standards of quality to your dissertation committee by the deadlines set by your department before your defenses. After you defend your proposal or dissertation and prior to submitting it to the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services, you must carefully revise and edit the document. This procedure includes, but is not limited to, editing for mechanics and formatting and making all revisions required by the advisor and committee. After completing all revisions and editing, you must provide a copy of the revised document to your advisor for review.

EACH time you submit your proposal or final dissertation, your advisor must sign the Advisor’s Approval to Submit form ([http://web.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/documents/documentsubmissionapproval.pdf](http://web.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/documents/documentsubmissionapproval.pdf)) to signify review of the revised and edited document for submission to Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services for review. This form must be submitted with the proposal or dissertation and the committee defense approval form to the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services. All forms, documents, and the dissertation must be submitted at one time.

The copy of your proposal that you submit to the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services must be complete (including title page, table of contents, list of tables, acknowledgements, pagination, reference list, appendices, vita, and other support materials). Your final dissertation must be in final form (as it will appear when bound). Please submit the copy on regular paper. After the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services has completed the review process, you will be contacted by email with details of the final processing of the final dissertation.

The primary role of the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services is to sample your proposal and dissertation in random locations to evaluate quality factors. The staff does not serve as editors or proof-readers. Line by line proofreading and editing should be performed prior to submitting the proposal or dissertation, and this responsibility lies with you, the student. Please seek assistance from
your advisor and committee. Additional assistance is available through the Writing Center on campus. In addition, you may hire an outside editor.

If you are in the College of Education and Human Services, you must follow APA 6th Edition. If you are in the College of Humanities, Social Science & Arts, you must follow APA 6th Edition or MLA 7th Edition. Whenever there are differences in format and layout between the specifications of the Dissertation Style Guide and the manual, the style guide overrules the manual.

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL:

After you defend your proposal, please submit the following items along with your proposal to the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services, located in BA 315 C &D:

1. A copy of your proposal, which must include a title page, signature page, copyright page, abstract, and the start of a table of contents. These must be formatted to the requirements of the dissertation template.
2. Advisor’s Approval Form
3. Proposal Approval Form
4. The required training certificates (RCR, for example)
5. If required, your IRB, IACUC or IBC approval email from the university

Your proposal must be submitted at least one semester prior to the semester you submit your final dissertation. For example, if you want to graduate in the Spring, you must submit your proposal by the preceding Fall term.

SUBMISSION OF FINAL DISSERTATION:

Your dissertation must be submitted to the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services by the deadline indicated in the university academic calendar and on the Graduate Studies webpage (approximately six weeks prior to commencement).

http://web.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/academicCalendars/default.aspx

After your final defense, you must submit the following to the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services along with your final dissertation:

1. Final Examination/Dissertation Defense Report
2. Advisor’s approval to submit form
3. Dissertation information sheet
4. Survey of Earned Doctorates completion certificate (only required for PhD students)
5. You will pay the Graduate School dissertation processing fee and the Proquest binding/publishing/copyrighting fees during the online Proquest process after your final dissertation has been given final approval. We will provide you a link for Proquest after all your final edits have been made with Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services approval. At that point, you will upload your final dissertation electronically, fill out their information and pay the required fees. The standing required minimum order is for 3 bound dissertations; one for
the library, your department, and your advisor. You will have the opportunity to order extra bound dissertations for your own use at an additional cost.

When the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services identifies significant problems at the beginning of the dissertation review, it is assumed that similar problems likely exist throughout the paper. We will not edit the entire document once problems start to appear. We will return the dissertation to the student, and it is upon the student with the advisor’s help to correct the entire document and resubmit only when it has been thoroughly reviewed and edited. Among the indicators of quality that staff look for include the following:

- grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- correct citations in the text with corresponding references
- appropriate formatting based on this guide and the writing guide adopted by your department (e.g. APA, MLA)

When your dissertation is approved by the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services, you will be contacted with any changes/corrections that need to be made to your dissertation and along with final submission instructions. Once given approval of your final dissertation, the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services will provide you a link to electronically upload your final dissertation to Proquest for final processing.

**DEADLINES**

Students must receive proposal approval at least one semester prior to graduation. To graduate in a given semester, students must meet the scheduled deadline for defending their final dissertation and the deadline for initial submission of final dissertation which is found in the University Academic Calendar and on the Graduate Studies website. Students submitting after the deadline cannot graduate until the following semester.

The following are approximate turn-around times after the dissertation has been submitted to the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services. Dissertations are reviewed in the order received.

- Early in semester - 15 working days
- Week before Deadline Day - 20 working days
- After Deadline Day - 15 working days

**PUBLICATION OF THE RESEARCH: COPYRIGHT ISSUES**

Students must be careful not to violate United States copyright laws. The inclusion of an entire work (e.g., a survey instrument, a text, a model, or a figure) by another author requires written permission from the author/publisher included in the appendix. Information regarding source and copyright holder must be on the item with the statement “Reprinted with permission.”
You may want to review information at this link http://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-duration.html which includes: “The term of copyright for a particular work depends on several factors: whether it has been published, and, if so, the date of first publication. As a general rule, for works created after January 1, 1978, copyright protection lasts for the life of the author plus an additional 70 years. For an anonymous work, a pseudonymous work, or a work made for hire, the copyright endures for a term of 95 years from the year of its first publication or a term of 120 years from the year of its creation, whichever expires first. For works first published prior to 1978, the term will vary depending on several factors. To determine the length of copyright protection for a particular work, consult chapter 3 of the Copyright Act (title 17 of the United States Code). More information on the term of copyright can be found in Circular 15a, Duration of Copyright, and Circular 1, Copyright Basics.”

If you publish material that will be part of your dissertation before you submit the dissertation:
The A&M-Commerce policy is that graduate students may publish material that will later be used as part of the dissertation. However, you must be aware of the agreement you sign when a journal accepts an article for publication. A&M-Commerce Libraries make all manuscripts available to the public on the Web. Do not sign any agreement that limits you and A&M-Commerce's rights to provide research results to the public.

If you are using your already published material in the dissertation:
Students should be aware of the publishing agreement you sign when a journal accepts an article for publication. At that time, the student/lead author typically assigns rights to the journal as publisher, and you may no longer possess the right to use this material without permission. However, the publishing agreement form can be modified before it is signed so that the student retains the right to include the material in the thesis. The publisher would still have the right to print, distribute, and sell the work. When negotiating with the publisher, remember to inform them that the dissertation will be available worldwide through the Internet (dissertations will be sent to ProQuest CSA and can be purchased through them). If you have not retained the right to use the material in the dissertation, you must obtain written permission from the copyright holder to include it. A written statement of permission (email is accepted) should be placed within the dissertation as an appendix.

If you are planning to use your dissertation material in a future publication:
Students who plan to publish dissertation material in future articles need to investigate whether the journal of choice will publish material already made available to the public and consider this when choosing an option for making the dissertation available after graduation.

To summarize, if using published material:
1. Obtain permission (in either the publisher agreement or in a letter or email from the copyright holder).
2. Give proper acknowledgment of previously published work in the dissertation.
3. Students must inform the copyright holder that the dissertation will be sent to ProQuest.
FORMATTING OF PROPOSAL & DISSERTATION:

The Dissertation Style Guide should be used when preparing your dissertation in conjunction with the APA 6th Edition, MLA 7th Edition or other approved guide, including the following Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services requirements:

The text of your thesis must be in a standard font (Arial, Times New Roman) and size (10-12). The body of the text is to be double spaced unless indicated otherwise.

The margins for each page shall be 1” top, bottom, left, and right. All writing (text, tables, figures, appendices, etc.) must be placed within the margins, with the exception of the page numbers.

Page numbers are placed in the header on the upper right corner of the page, ½” from the top edge of the page and 1” from the right edge of the paper. Measure this margin with a ruler to verify your formatting is set correctly.

Page Numbering: Every page in the dissertation except Title Page and the Signature Page must be numbered. The Title and Signature Pages are considered pages i and ii but no page number is shown on these two pages. This format applies to the following pages:

Preliminary pages are numbered with small roman numerals. Below is a list of the preliminary pages:

- Title page (no number)
- Signature Sheet (no number)
- Copyright Page (first page with page number—roman numeral iii in top right corner)
- Acknowledgments (if using one, roman numeral)
- Table of Contents (roman numeral)
- List of Tables (if applicable, roman numeral)
- List of Figures (if applicable, roman numeral)

The body of the manuscript is numbered with Arabic numbers.

- Body (Arabic numerals)
- References (Arabic numerals)
- Appendix (if applicable, Arabic numerals)
- Vita (Arabic numeral)

Arrangement of materials in the manuscript will be as follows:

1) Blank Sheet
2) Title Page
3) Signature Sheet
4) Copyright Page
5) Abstract
6) Acknowledgments (if applicable)
7) Table of Contents
8) List of Tables (if applicable)
9) List of Figures (if applicable)
10) Body
11) References
12) Appendix (if applicable)
13) Vita
14) Blank Sheet
First entry in your table of contents should be the first item following your table of contents. Pages before your table of contents are not included in your table.

Footnotes must be single-spaced (single spacing of text between footnotes).

**Major Headings:**

“Major headings” in a thesis include the following:

- TITLE of the thesis on the Title Page
- TITLE of the thesis on the Signature Page
- Headings ABSTRACT, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, TABLE OF CONTENTS, LIST OF FIGURES, LIST OF TABLES on the preliminary pages
- CHAPTER designations and titles
- The word REFERENCES (or LITERATURE CITED, etc.) on the first page of references
- APPENDIX designations and titles
- The word VITA on the Vita page.

The rules for major headings are:

- All must be centered at the top of a new page and in ALL CAPITAL letters. One inch from the top of the page.
- Each line of the title must be shorter than the one above it.
- They must be the same size as text.
- Major headings may not be in italic type.
- No punctuation after a major heading.
- All major headings must be handled consistently.
- If major headings are more than one line, use the spacing of the text (double-space) between the lines.

**Subheadings:**

Subheadings are used throughout the thesis to organize chapters into different sections. APA 6th Edition provides specific rules for subheadings, while MLA 7th Edition does not. For MLA and other formats that lack specific instruction, use the following guidelines:

- Use the same font size for all subheadings.
- Use consistent capitalization for each level of subheading.
- The style used for subheadings must clearly show their various levels and must be consistent throughout the thesis from chapter to chapter.
- Maintain consistency in vertical spacing around major headings and subheadings.
- Subheadings/subsections do not need to begin on a new page; text continues within a chapter or section.
- A subheading near the bottom of a page must have at least two lines of text under it.
- Subheadings cannot be centered and all capital letters (as this defines major headings)
**Figures/Tables: Color, Size, and Legibility**
Color is acceptable in figures, but black and white is preferred. The minimum size for letters and numbers is 7 point type. All lettering must be of publishable quality; this requirement includes scanned images. Images must be clear, no blurred or dark areas. Color is not acceptable in tables.

**Figures/Tables: Text Mention**
Each figure and table must be mentioned in text in order by its number. First text mention of each table or figure must be **within 1 ½ pages of text** before it appears in the text. Appendix figures and tables do not need to be mentioned in text, and they do not need to be listed in Lists unless they are numbered consecutively after text figures and tables.

**Figures/Tables: Placement in Text**
Tables and figures may be included on a page with text or on separate pages. If a table or figure is placed on a page with other material, the table or figure should be separated from the text (or other material) by a minimum of a triple-space (3 single spaces) above and below.

**Figures/Tables: Long and Continued**
Tables or figures longer than one page have the complete title and the number on the first page only. Subsequent pages have the table or figure number (but not the title) and the word “Continued” plus (for tables) the necessary column headings for ease of reading. The end line of the completed table appears only on the last page of the table.

**Figures/Tables: Landscape**
If the table or figure is placed lengthwise (landscape position), the top of the table or figure must be at the left-hand, “binding” side of the page and facing in the same direction as the figure or table. The page number stays in regular (portrait) position. Use a text box and rotate it 90 degrees. Do not put text on the same page as a landscaped figure.

**Figures/Tables: In Appendix**
These may be numbered consecutively following the text, or they may be numbered with an Appendix designation (A-1, for example). They must be included in the Table of Contents. Appendix figures/tables must be mentioned in text. Tables and figures may be placed in an Appendix. If so, the numbering may follow the last text table/figure, may be numbered by Appendix (e.g., A-1, A-2) or may be unnumbered.

**Figures/Tables: Titles and Numbering**
Each table and figure in the text must have a separate number and unique title. Figures and tables are numbered consecutively throughout the text, and each table or figure must be mentioned in order and by number in the text. In text, figure/table numbering style may be consecutive (1, 2, 3) or by chapter/section (1.1, 1.2, 2.1). The chosen numbering style must be used for both figures and tables. Appendix figures and tables may be numbered consecutively after text (if not numbered by chapter in text), numbered A-1, A-2. Titles for tables are above the table and titles for figures are below the figure.
Figure/Table Titles: Large Figure Title/Long Caption on a Separate Page
This format may be used only when there is not enough space for the caption on the page with the figure, even if the type size is reduced. The format is never used with tables. If the title (or caption) must go on a separate page, place it on the page preceding the figure, facing in the same direction as the figure. The pages are consecutively numbered, with the page numbers in the standard position. In the List of Figures, the number of the page on which the figure itself appears is the page number listed.

Lists of Figures and Tables
Lists of Figures and Tables must agree word for word with figure and table titles in the text. The entire title up to the first period must be included in the List (exception: parenthetical information may be excluded from the List). Figures and tables must be found on the page given in the list.

Equations
Equation numbering is optional and may be consecutive (1, 2, 3) or by chapter/section (1.1, 1.2, 2.1). No two equations may have the same number unless identical, term for term. The point size and type style of the equation and its number must match text.

References
Each thesis must contain a formal reference section. The reference list will be spot checked for consistency, accuracy, and completeness. References must follow APA/MLA required format. Please verify your citations in your text with your reference list. Each citation must have a corresponding reference entry, and each reference entry must have a corresponding citation.

Text Mention of References
All references must be cited in the text, and all text citations must be referenced. All text citations must be from sources the student has actually used.

Appendices
Appendices are optional and used for supplementary material. Each appendix must have a title page. Place the appendices after the reference section. All appendix pages, except title page of appendix, need to be numbered. Page numbers are continued from the last page of the references and before vita. All material must be within prescribed margins and be readable in size and legibility (1.5 mm or larger). Appendix headings/titles must be on a separate title/cover page before the Appendix material.

Appendix Headings
Appendix headings (Appendix designations and titles) should be all capital letters. Titles more than one line in length must be double spaced, as chapter titles. Appendix designations (APPENDIX A, for example) are centered. Appendix titles are centered with all capital letters and at least one double space below designation.

Appendix Title Pages
If appendices are used, each one requires a title page. Center the title under the appendix identification (e.g., APPENDIX B) in the middle of the page, and continue the page numbering sequentially.
FORMAT INSTRUCTIONS AND SAMPLES:

Title Page (See sample on next page)

General Format
- Font must match text of dissertation
- Point size of title is the same as text of dissertation
- No bold on this page
- No page number on this page

Title of Dissertation
- One inch from top of page to top of letters of first line of title
- All capital letters and centered
- Double space if more than one line
- No period at the end of the title
- If more than one line, subsequent lines must be shorter than previous line

Dissertation Author Statement
- Double space and center of page
- Capitalize A and the D in Dissertation, i.e. “A Dissertation”
- Student’s name in all capital letters; name must be the same as in official records of the university

Submittal Statement
- Single space
- “Texas A&M University-Commerce” is on a line by itself
- Degree is in all capital letters; full name of the degree is used (check Graduate Catalog for correct wording of degree)

Date
- Put the month and year of graduation. (Graduation dates at Texas A&M-Commerce are May, August or December—do not use the final defense or submittal month)
- No comma between month and year
THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

A Dissertation

by

IMA HARDWORKER

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies
Texas A&M University-Commerce
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
May 2014
Signature Page (see sample on next page)

**General Format**
- Match font and point size to Title Page
- No bold on this page
- No page number on this page

**Title of Dissertation**
- Same wording as on Title Page. All capital letters and centered
- Double space if more than one line; no period at the end of the title

**Dissertation Author Statement**
- Capitalize A and D in A Dissertation
- Double space
- Student's name in all capital letters, same wording as Title Page

**Committee Member Names and Positions**
- Names do not include Dr. or Prof. or Ph.D. title
- If the department head serves as a member, chair or co-chair, his/her name must be included for both positions
THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

A Dissertation

by

IMA HARDWORKER

Approved by:
Advisor: Dudley Doright
(enter appropriate names for each line)
Committee: Clark Kent
A. B. Normal
Thurston Howell

Head of Department: Head Honcho
Dean of the College: Brent Mangus or Salvatore Attardo
Dean of Graduate Studies: Arlene Horne
Copyright Page

Page number
• First page with a number: iii in top right corner
• Double space between copyright and name (use same as title page)
Abstract (see sample on next page)

Preliminary Lines
- The word ABSTRACT is 2 ½ inches from top of page to the top of the letters
- Single space title
- Title of dissertation appears in upper case letters. Wording must match title on Title and Approval pages
- Student's name must be the same as on first two pages, but in upper and lower case letters
- Comma after student's name, then EdD or PhD
- Do not put spaces between A&M
- Advisor's name then, PhD or EdD

Text
- Begins two double spaces below advisor's name
- Text may be no more than 350 words; any term with a space on each side is counted as a word
- Spacing is double space
ABSTRACT

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Ima Hardworker, EdD or PhD
Texas A&M University-Commerce, year of graduation

Advisor: Name of your Advisor and her or his degree EdD or PhD

The text of the Abstract starts two double spaces below the advisor’s name. The text of the Abstract is double-spaced. Follow the same margin settings as your narrative text, as well as the same right alignment (ragged edge or right justified).

Your Abstract must be a complete snapshot of your manuscript. Paragraph one personifies your specific problem and the methods used. The remaining paragraphs present the research and results in detail. Text of the abstract should not exceed two pages. Any term (or numeral) with a space on either side is counted as a one word.
Table of Contents (see sample on the next page)

General Format
• No bold on this page
• No italics on this page (except for Latin terms, titles of works, etc.)
• Need leader dots between listings and page numbers
• Double space or use same spacing as in text above and below all major headings
• Single space all subheadings if 2 or more lines.
• If more than one page, need appropriate headings at the top of page (add “CHAPTER” if new chapter title is listed on the page)

Content
• Must contain the major headings and the first level subheadings; subordination of subheadings should be indicated by indentation
• Lower levels of subheadings are optional in table of contents
• Major headings are in all capital letters
• Subheadings are in upper and lower case.
• Preliminary pages do not have to be included on this page; however, if included, begin with ABSTRACT and include all preliminary pages
• If using chapter method, chapter numbers must be Arabic
• First major chapter/section title in text contains the word INTRODUCTION
• Last major chapter/section title in text contains the word SUMMARY or CONCLUSION
• Must show a reference section, APPENDIX (if applicable) and VITA

Consistency
• Check against text for agreement of page numbers, levels and styles of major headings and subheadings and the wording of major headings and subheadings (levels of subheadings are shown by indentation)
• Check for consistency of capitalization
• Check that wording of APPENDIX listing matches exactly what is in text
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES ....................................................................................................................... #

LIST OF FIGURES ..................................................................................................................... #

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem (Level 1 heading in APA 6th) ............................................... #

Purpose of the Study ................................................................................................................ #

Research Questions (generally for Qualitative Research) ........................................ #

Hypotheses (generally for Quantitative Research) ................................................ #

Significance of the Study ....................................................................................................... #

Method of Procedure ............................................................................................................ #

    Selection of Sample (Level 2 heading in APA 6th)....................................................... #

    Collection of Data ......................................................................................................... #

        Step 1 (Level 3 heading in APA 6th)................................................................. #

        Step 2 ......................................................................................................................... #

        Subheading 1 (Level 4 heading in APA 6th)................................. #

        Subheading 2 ......................................................................................................... #

    Treatment of the Data ............................................................................................... #

Definitions of Terms .......................................................................................................... #

Limitations ..................................................................................................................... #

Delimitations ................................................................................................................ #

Assumptions ................................................................................................................ #

Organization of Thesis Chapters .................................................................................... #
CHAPTER

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ................................................................. #

3. METHOD OF PROCEDURE ......................................................................... #

   Design of the Study ....................................................................................... #
   Instrumentation .............................................................................................. #
   Sample Selection ............................................................................................. #
   Data Gathering ............................................................................................... #
   Treatment of Data ........................................................................................... #

4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS (or DATA) ...................................................... #

5. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY AND THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS,
   IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH .... #

REFERENCES ........................................................................................................... #

APPENDICES .............................................................................................................. #

Appendix

   A. Hints: Typing the TOC in MSWORD 2007 Or 2010 ......................................... #
   B. Hints: Placement and Labeling of Tables and Figures ....................................... #
   C. As Needed ........................................................................................................ #

VITA ............................................................................................................................. #
List of Figures and List of Tables (See sample on next page)

**General Format**
- Include list if two or more figures (or tables) are in main body of text
- Need separate list for tables and separate list for figures; either list may come first
- Need “FIGURE” (or “TABLE”) above appropriate column or include the word Figure (or Table) with each title
- Need leader dots from last word of title to page number
- Double space or use same spacing as in text between figure (table) titles, single space title if two or more lines
- If list of tables or figures is more than one page, need appropriate column headings on each page

**Content**
- Each figure (or table) must have a unique title; no two titles may be exactly the same
- Need to include only the first sentence of title (up to the first period) in List
- Parenthetical information may be excluded from the List

**Consistency**
- Check against text for agreement of page numbers
- Figure/table titles in the LIST OF TABLES (or FIGURES) must agree word for word with the title in the text—up to the first period
- Check consistency of capitalization
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE

1. If a table title is 2 or more lines, the entry in the List of Tables should always be
   double spaced like this ........................................................................................................... #

2. Include this page in proposal, even if you have no tables at that time ............................. #

3. But, remove words in red ................................................................................................. #

4. ........................................................................................................................................... #

5. ........................................................................................................................................... #
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Standard margins on this page, and on all text pages, are 1.00” left, 1.00” right, 1.00” top and bottom. The page number (Arabic) 1 is in the header in the upper right corner, ½ inch from top of page and 1 inch from right of page. Number every page of the dissertation in sequence through to the Vita.

If the chapter title is longer than one line, use spacing of text between the lines of the title (double space.) Use same font size as other major headings. Be consistent with spacing between chapter title and text for all chapters.
Vita

- Vita is the last page of the thesis and is limited to one page.
- The font and point size need to be the same as the text and double spaced.
- Vita must include your name, a permanent address, and educational background. Because the thesis will be available on the Internet and there are increasing privacy concerns, it is recommended that the student not include personal information such as date of birth, parents’ names, and personal address in the Vita.
- Wording of name needs to agree with name on first three pages of thesis.
- Include a permanent address, good for two years. Professional address or A&M-Commerce department address is recommended (rather than a personal address) due to availability of thesis worldwide on the Internet.
- Include educational background for all previous degrees, bachelor’s level and above. Include degree, major subject, university, and date of graduation.
- Other information is optional but encouraged: professional experience, publications, business or academic information (again, because the thesis will be available on the Internet, the student should avoid including personal information)

VITA

Sarah Anderson Smiley received her Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from The University of Texas at Austin in 2003. She entered the Educational Administration program at Texas A&M University in September 2003 and received her Master of Science degree in May 2005. Her research interests include special education and early childhood education. She plans to publish a book on these topics, focusing on Texas public schools.

Ms. Smiley may be reached at Smiley ERS Educational Research Systems, Inc., 1000 Plaintree Rd., Sugar Land, TX 77177. Her email is sasmiley@mail.com.
SUPPLEMENTAL DISSERTATION GUIDE
A Summary of Common Errors and Additional Guidelines

Some of the specific requirements in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)—in use by the College of Education and Human Services—or the MLA Style Manual (MLA)—in use by Literature and Languages—are often not used by students working on dissertations or theses. In some cases, students may not be aware of a specific rule, because they have not reviewed the manual sufficiently during their course work. Chapter 6 of APA and Chapter 5 of MLA also distinguish dissertations and theses from journal submissions, giving institutions the flexibility to require additional guidelines.

The completed, bound dissertation is a permanent record that reflects upon the student, the faculty, the department, and the university. As such, faculty advisors and committee members expect top quality proposals, dissertations, and theses from their students. Dissertations are formal, scholarly works that require attention to detail, consistency, and flawless writing. Students are expected to adhere to all requirements of the Office of Graduate Studies (especially the Dissertation Style Guide). Deviations often cause delays and could impact graduation.

To ensure that doctoral dissertations completed at Texas A&M University-Commerce are quality publications, the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services offers this supplementary guide as an addition to APA/MLA. The list below includes some commonly disregarded APA, MLA, and Office of Graduate Studies requirements plus supplemental guidelines found in published dissertation guides and on university web sites.

**Important note**—for students who wish to use software designed to assist with the use of a specific style manual (such as APA PERRLA), please be aware that such software WILL CAUSE YOU EXTRA WORK in some cases. For example, the APA PERRLA software is not compatible with the title page requirements of the Office of Graduate Studies. We DO NOT use a running head or page numbers on title pages. Plus, you would have to create the text for the rest of the title page, so the program does not really save you much in the long run. In addition, these programs may cause problems with variations in references.
OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES REQUIREMENTS

The following guidelines are intended to clarify some of the requirements of the Office of Graduate Studies.

For the title page of a dissertation, the specific degree should be one of the following (with no major listed): DOCTOR OF EDUCATION or DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Also, the month and year of graduation are not separated by a comma.

The headings listed in the Table of Contents and the headings found in the text MUST MATCH exactly.

Students need to be clear about the purpose of each dissertation chapter (e.g., the Method chapter provides details about the design and completion of the study).

Common APA 6th Edition Errors:

Paragraphs must be “longer than a single sentence but not longer than one manuscript page”

The completed thesis should refer to the study itself in the past tense.

Citations

A direct quotation requires a page number in the citation. A paraphrased reference does not need a page number in the citation.

References with two authors require both names for every citation. References with more than two authors require specific treatment according to the number of authors (see APA Table 6.1).

Note differences between parenthetical citations and citations within a sentence. When citing multiple works in parentheses, use alphabetical order (as in reference list) and separate each with a semicolon. Except for block quotations, final punctuation marks are always placed after a citation at the end of a sentence. Citations within a sentence require past tense, and the date in parentheses should follow the author(s) immediately.

Numbers

All numbers over nine should be in figures, unless the number begins a sentence (which should be avoided in formal writing). Some numbers below 10 will need to be in figures, depending on the situation.

Percentages with a number should always be printed as figures with no space between them (examples: 50%, 6%, 1.5%).
**Word Choice**

Do not treat inanimate objects as persons. (Example: “The institution did not believe that the students could be admitted.”)

The use of *which* or *that* is not interchangeable. Likewise, *while* and *since* are often used incorrectly. Relative pronouns must agree with nouns they replace. “Use *who* for human beings; use *that* or *which* for animals and for things”.

**Common APA 6th Edition & MLA 7th Edition Errors:**

**Punctuation**

In American usage, periods and commas *never* (a rare absolute statement in English) fall outside quotation marks (double or single). Other punctuation marks are placed inside the quotation marks only when they are part of the actual quotation.

Underlining should not be used anywhere in the text. Since the thesis will not be typeset, italics, rather than underlining, should be used.

In a series of more than two items, separate all items with a comma (including the item before *and* and *or*).

The apostrophe is not used to form the plural of a number or an abbreviation. Years within a decade should be referred to as the 1980s *not* the 1980’s.

Hyphens and dashes should be entered without spaces before or after them (except when a hyphen is used as a negative sign [space before] or a minus sign [space before and after]). A dash is entered as two hyphens (although some word processors convert these hyphens to a dash), unless a special character with a dash is available.

Hyphens should not be used with most prefixes.

For additional usage of commas and other punctuation, please consult your style manual.

**Quotations**

Block quotations routinely are the site of errors. A quotation of 40 or more words (APA) and over 4 full lines (MLA) should begin on a new line. Each line should be indented five spaces (APA) from the left margin (10 spaces for MLA), and no quotation marks are used. The final punctuation mark should precede the citation (which is not part of the quotation).

Single quotation marks can only be used (another absolute) within double quotation marks.
**Agreement**

The following word is plural: *data* — watch agreement with pronouns and verbs.

Likewise, watch subject-verb agreement, especially when referring to an individual (Example: “A student should submit his/her [not *their*] response...”). To avoid this problem, both APA and MLA suggest using plural forms (“Students should submit their responses...”).

**References**

All reference citations and reference list entries MUST match. Any reference cited in the text MUST be in the reference list, and similarly, all references in the reference list must be cited in the text. (Note: APA does not require personal communications to be included in the reference list.)

A *bibliography* is comprehensive (as noted in APA) and generally includes only books (as noted in MLA). Therefore, the reference list of a dissertation should be titled, *References* (APA) or *Works Cited* (MLA).

The style manuals require a very specific format for each type of reference. Learning the reference format for your field will be critical to your career.

**Tables and Figures**

Titles (placed above the table) and rules (or border lines) are used to designate tables, and figures require captions (placed under the figure). Both should be numbered (Arabic numerals) consecutively throughout the text. There is an example on the next page. The APA manual has many examples of tables that you can review for formatting.

The body of a table must be double-spaced. In addition, tables and figures must be cited in the text (by number, not with a word like *below* or a page reference), and no table or figure can be placed in text prior to its first reference, though the placement need not be immediately after the reference. (Note: a page break SHOULD NOT follow the sentence or paragraph with the table or figure reference if it leaves excessive white space. A paragraph CAN be broken by the placement of a table or figure.) The placement of tables and figures at the top of the page will assist the reader. In any case, do not break a table that can fit on one page. If a table must be converted to landscape format to make it fit on the page, the table should face the right margin. Remember, a thesis is not a journal article.

**Abbreviations**

Except for commonly used abbreviations (check the appropriate style manual), complete words generally are preferred over abbreviations. Avoid the abbreviation *etc.* which should not be used in scholarly writing. In APA, “a term to be abbreviated must, on its first appearance, be
written out completely and followed immediately by its abbreviation in parentheses.”
Abbreviations should be avoided especially in tables, if possible. The ampersand (&) is never used in text (exception: Texas A&M University-Commerce), only in parenthetical material.

Periods and spaces are not used in abbreviations made up of capital letters, such as degree names and states (examples: PhD, EdD, MS, TX, OK, DC). However, periods and spaces are used with initials of names (example: J. R. Smith). Also, APA requires periods (with no space) to be used in the abbreviation for United States, when it is used as an adjective (example: U.S. Army).

Page Formatting

Widows and orphans are not acceptable. A new paragraph with only one line at the bottom of the page should be moved entirely to the next page. Similarly, the last line of a paragraph should not be left to stand alone at the top of a page. Instead, move an additional line of text to accompany that line. Likewise, do not end a page with a heading or a heading and one line of text. To avoid these errors, however, do not adjust the margins, which must remain at least 1 inch at the top and 1 inch at the bottom.

Supplemental Guidelines:

Please note: some of the guidelines that follow may not be found in either APA or MLA. Most of these suggestions are summarized from published dissertation guides from other institutions. However, adherence to these preferences will not weaken a dissertation. Students should check with their major advisor.

Wording

Do not use the word methodology when referring to the method of a single study. Method and methodology are not interchangeable terms. Methodology refers to all methods.

Avoid judgments, opinions, and self-assessment (until the conclusion section, where interpretation of the findings is necessary; example: “These findings are impressive, though not earthshaking”). Related problems include the use of words such as must, obviously, necessary, bad, good (and true and pure in the same context), nice, terrible, stupid, perfect, ideal, and always (except in reference to periods and commas).

Precision in dissertations is important. Hence, the following words should also be avoided: today, now, soon, the past 10 years, and current (may no longer be accurate in a 10-year-old thesis or thesis—time references should be clear and precise); this, that, these, and those (when used alone as pronouns, as opposed to adjectives, they are frequently unclear); and where (used in place of in which). In addition, care must be taken when using every, all, few, any, or most.
Contractions, colloquialisms and idiomatic expressions, slurs, figures of speech, jokes or puns, jargon, slang, and vague or flowery language are not appropriate for formal, scholarly writing. Both APA and MLA warn against such informal usage in writing. Also, sentences ending in prepositions are often considered colloquial. Examples: can’t, they’ll, doesn’t, in terms of, lots of, kind of, something like, just about, a number of, for the purpose of, quite a large part, practically all, very few, the fact that, a famous researcher, would seem to show, they know who they are going with (who is also incorrect), and the research will examine what they are studying for.

Generally, sentences should not begin with abbreviations. However, APA allows such use of abbreviations “only when necessary to avoid indirect and awkward writing” and only when a capitalized abbreviation or acronym can be used.

A common error in submitted dissertations is either a missing word(s) or an extra word(s), thus making the sentence awkward at best and incomprehensible at worst.

Split infinitives are not acceptable in formal academic writing. For example, the opening line of the television show Star Trek claims “to boldly go” where no man has gone before.” Here we see that the infinitive “to go” is split with the adverb “boldly.” Further, “the population is expected to more than double” is another example with a double or compound split infinitive. “to double” is split by “more than.”

Generally, first and second person pronouns are not acceptable in formal dissertations (check with individual departments, however). If the student believes that a self-reference is necessary, it can be worded similar to the following: “The first section describes how the data are....” Note: although APA actually permits the use of first person and MLA does not prohibit first and second person, dissertation guides from other institutions are adamant about avoiding these pronouns—“The second person has no place in a formal [dissertation]” and “The first person has no place in a formal [dissertation]” (http://www.cs.purdue.edu/homes/dec/essay.thesis.html).

Format

Do not justify right margins. Likewise, do not hyphenate words at the end of a line (allow the word processor default word wrap to determine the ends of lines).

Do not use additional parentheses within a set of parentheses. Use brackets if needed (example: “…a minus sign [space before and after]…”).

Chapter 5 (or the final chapter of the dissertation) can be a very useful chapter for those people who prefer not to read the entire dissertation. Hence, the final chapter needs to summarize both the study procedure and the findings, to provide an interpretation of the findings (which can be called conclusions), and to provide implications for practice based on these conclusions.
**Quotations/Copyrighted Work**

Direct quotations should be used sparingly and only when the author’s exact words are absolutely necessary to create the intended effect. Therefore, direct quotes with errors should be avoided because of their obvious weakness. However, care must be taken with paraphrased references. Changing a word or two in a sentence is not paraphrasing, it is plagiarism.

Because dissertations are copyrighted, the inclusion of an entire work (e.g., a survey instrument, a model, or a figure) by another author requires written permission from the author/publisher included in the appendix.

**Research Procedures**

Statistical and qualitative data gathering and analysis procedures must conform to the systematic requirements and assumptions of the selected method, as described in the research literature.

Students need to clearly understand the differences between limitations and delimitations, unless they are permitted to put both into one section, which is a workable solution that many advisors already advocate.

Students need to be accurate in referring to the sample or the population (i.e., they are not the same).

Findings are not conclusions. The findings of any study must be interpreted for the reader. These interpretations are referred to as conclusions.

A final word of caution: do not assume that a bound dissertation is flawless.