DISSETERATION FORMATTING GUIDE
Instructions for the Preparation and Submission of Dissertations
Revised Fall 2018*

*If you print out a hard copy of this handbook, please be aware that it is subject to change. The most current handbook will always be available online. Therefore, as you progress through your doctoral program, please check the Graduate School web page http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/default.aspx for the most current version of this handbook.
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INTRODUCTION

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 Graduate School/Thesis & Dissertation Services (TDS) 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 Graduate School/TDS offers this guide as a supplement to the style manual you are using (APA, MLA, etc.). Whenever there are differences in format and layout between the specifications of the Dissertation Guide and the manual, the style guide overrules the manual.

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, MLA 7th Edition, or a style guide approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. TDS currently owns copies of the following style guides and manuals: APA, MLA, ACS, AIP, CSE, Chicago, Turabian, JAS, JAAE, JWM, APSA, PRL, and RMP. If you use a style guide other than one of those listed, you must provide a copy of it to the TDS when you submit the proposal or final dissertation (providing a URL will suffice if the guide is freely available). It is preferred that you use the most current edition of the manual.

Departments have the right and may exercise the right to have program requirements higher than those set by the Graduate School. However in no case can a department set criteria lower than the Graduate School minimums. Please consult your advisor, departmental student handbook, or written guidelines for your specific department requirements.

Because Texas A&M University-Commerce is a public institution, the research conducted here is ultimately for the benefit of the public and copies are available at our library and online. Because the dissertation is a record of the knowledge and skills you acquired while in the program, it is a priority of the Graduate School to ensure it is of the best possible quality before the dissertation is made available to the public.

Everyone in the Graduate School and in TDS will work with you to ensure your success. Ask questions or let us know of any concerns you might have; we are here to help you. If you have questions or concerns that are not answered in this handbook, please feel free to contact our office at (903)886-5968 or through email TDS@tamuc.edu. Students are also welcome to make an appointment for an office visit, if needed.

EXPECTATIONS FROM TDS

You will submit your dissertation documents to the Graduate School/TDS at two different stages of your program:

1) after your proposal defense, and
2) after your final defense.

Please consult the Doctoral Program Checklist for the steps and timing for each of these stages in the process.

Before your defenses (proposal or final), you must submit to your dissertation committee by the deadlines set by your department a document that meets the high standards of quality expected by your dissertation committee. After you defend your proposal or final dissertation and prior to submitting it to TDS, 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 your advisor and committee. The primary role of TDS is to ensure the document is well written and conforms to the standards outlined in this document prior to publishing on ProQuest. We will review your paper according to the style manual you indicate in your submission paperwork. The staff does not serve as editors or proofreaders. The responsibility lies with you as the student to perform line-by-line proofreading and editing prior to submitting the proposal or dissertation document for TDS.

TDS limits their review comments to approximately 50 comments. When significant problems are identified at the beginning of the dissertation review, it is assumed that similar problems will likely exist throughout the paper. TDS will not edit the entire document; once recurring problems are identified, a note will be made to continue checking your document for similar errors. TDS will return the dissertation to the student, copying the advisor, and it is upon the student, with the advisor’s help, to correct the entire document and resubmit it only when the document has been thoroughly reviewed and revised. Among the indicators of quality that staff look for include the following:

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

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. TDS keeps a running list of editors students have used in the past. For a copy of this list, please email TDS@tamuc.edu

FORMS

All forms related to the dissertation process can be found at the following links: http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/graduateForms.aspx or http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/Thesis%20and%20Dissertation%20Services/dissertations.aspx

Please review the forms and take note of what signatures are required for each form. Forms submitted to TDS without complete or proper signatures will not be accepted.
DEADLINES

You must receive proposal approval at least one semester prior to graduation. To graduate in a given semester, you must meet the scheduled deadline for defending your final dissertation and the deadline for initial submission of your final dissertation; deadlines are in the University Academic Calendar and on the Graduate School and TDS websites. If you submit after the deadline you will not graduate until the following semester. Allow 15-20 working days for TDS proposal or final dissertation review.

**REMINDER: You may not schedule your final defense without having received proposal approval from the Graduate School/TDS**

RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

All students must follow the institutional and federal guidelines for conducting ethical research. To remain in compliance, you must complete research ethics trainings and, in some cases, seek approval from institutional safety committees prior to beginning data collection. Please read all of the information provided below to understand your legal and ethical obligations related to your research.

- You must complete the training for Responsible Conduct in Research and Scholarship before data collection can begin. This training is required of all dissertation students and is good for three (3) years. You may take the training online through CITI or in-person. See the Research Compliance website for more information: http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/training/Responsible-Conduct-in-Research.aspx

- If your research involves collecting data about or from living humans, your research may qualify as involving human participants and, therefore, require review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). As part of the review process, you will need to complete additional training through CITI (human subjects training plus additional training as assigned by IRB and/or your advisor).
  - If your research involves human subjects, you must complete all required trainings and receive approval from IRB prior to collecting data. If you violate this requirement, you will not be permitted to use the collected data in your final dissertation.
  - IRB reviews applications on a set schedule. When creating your dissertation timeline, please take the IRB meeting schedule into account. All IRB application materials must be submitted as described on the IRB webpage. Final approval for the inclusion of human participants in your study rests with the IRB. IRB has the right to request changes prior to approving the study. If you are conducting research using human subjects, you may begin data collection after the IRB has provided you (or your advisor) with a letter approving the project.
• If your research involves collecting data about or from living vertebrate animals, your research may qualify as involving animal participant and, therefore, require review by the Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee (IACUC). As part of the review process, you will need to complete additional training through CITI (animal subjects plus additional training as assigned by IACUC and/or your advisor).

  o If you are conducting research involving animal subjects, you must complete all required trainings and receive approval from IACUC prior to collecting data. If you violate this requirement, you will not be permitted to use the collected data in your final dissertation.

  o IACUC reviews applications on a set schedule. When creating your dissertation timeline, please take the IACUC meeting schedule into account. All IACUC application materials must be submitted as described on the IACUC website. Final approval for the inclusion of animal participants in your study rests with the IACUC. IACUC has the right to request changes prior to approving the study. If you are conducting research using animal subjects, you may begin data collection after the IACUC has provided you (or your advisor) with a letter approving the project.

  o Visit the IACUC website for additional information: http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/IACUC-Animal-Research/default.aspx

• If your research involves use of biological agents, your research may require review and approval from the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC). Use of any of the following will require you to seek IBC approval:
  1. Pathogens and potential pathogens of humans, animals or plants;
  2. Materials potentially containing human pathogens (including human and non-human primate blood, tissue, and cell lines);
  3. Recombinant DNA and RNA including creation or use of transgenic plants and animals;
  4. Select agents and toxins listed by the CDC; and
  5. Any material requiring a CDC license to import or a USDA permit.

  o If you are conducting research involving use of biological agents (as defined above), you must complete all required trainings and receive approval from IBC prior to collecting data. If you violate these requirements, you will not be permitted to use the collected data in your final dissertation.

  o IBC reviews applications on a set schedule. When creating your dissertation timeline, please take the IBC meeting schedule into account. All IBC application materials must be submitted as described on the IBC website. Final approval for the use of biological agents in your study rests with the IBC. IBC has the right to request changes prior to approving the study. Students conducting research using biological agents may begin data collection after the IBC has provided you (or your advisor) with a letter approving the project.
TDS will not review a paper if you cannot provide proof of compliance. Please contact TDS with questions about the type of proof accepted or you may contact TDS at TDS@tamuc.edu or (903)886-5968. Questions concerning the training or protocols should be directed to the Office of Sponsored Programs (ResearchCompliance@tamuc.edu).

PUBLICATION OF THE RESEARCH: COPYRIGHT ISSUES

You must be careful not to violate the copyright laws of the United States. The inclusion of an entire work (e.g., a survey instrument, a text, a model, or a figure) by another author requires that written permission from the copyright holder be 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 that includes:

The term of copyright for a particular work depends on several factors, including whether it has been published, and, if so, the date of first publication. As a 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:
A&M-Commerce’s 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 your and A&M-Commerce's rights to provide research results to the public.

If you are using your already published material in the dissertation:
You should be aware of the publishing agreement you sign when a journal accepts an article for publication. At that time, you, the student, and/or lead author typically assign 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 you retain the right to include the material in the dissertation. 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:
If you plan to publish dissertation material in future articles you need to investigate whether
the journal of choice will publish material already made available to the public; consider this
when choosing an option for making the dissertation available after graduation.

To summarize, if using published material:
1. Obtain permission (either in 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. Doctoral students must inform the copyright holder that the dissertation will be sent to
   ProQuest.

Dissertation Advisory Committee

In order to begin work on your dissertation, you must have an approved dissertation advisory
committee on file with the Graduate School. The dissertation advisory committee consists of
the dissertation advisor (sometimes referred to as the dissertation chair) and at least one other
graduate faculty member from the department. The committee must also have one member
from a different department. The out-of-department member should have knowledge and/or
skills that allow him or her to make meaningful contributions to the dissertation. The
dissertation advisor must have graduate faculty membership to receive approval to serve. The
committee members must have either graduate faculty membership or temporary graduate
faculty membership. If a faculty member has temporary graduate faculty membership, approval
must be obtained for him or her to serve on the committee. Once the dissertation advisory
committee is formed, students must complete the Dissertation Committee Selection form,
acquire signatures from the committee members, and submit the form to TDS@tamuc.edu for
review and approval by the Graduate Dean. Students may not submit their dissertation
proposal packet until they receive confirmation the dissertation committee has been approved.

Submission of the Dissertation Proposal

Dissertation students are required to schedule their proposal defense through the Graduate
School. When you and your advisor feel you are ready to schedule the defense, you will need to
work with your committee members to determine a date, time, and location convenient for
everyone. You must then complete and submit the Schedule Form for the Dissertation Proposal
Defense to the Doctoral Program Coordinator (check the Graduate School website for the name
and contact information for the current Doctoral Program Coordinator) by the 20th of the
month prior to your defense date. To receive clearance to hold the defense, you must:
1. Be a Doctoral Candidate.
2. Have a Dissertation Committee Selection Form that has been submitted to TDS and approved/signed by the Graduate Dean. TDS will email you when your committee is approved.
3. Have a completed Dissertation Proposal.

A copy of the proposal document should be provided to the Doctoral Program Coordinator at the time the proposal defense form is submitted. Once you are cleared to hold the defense, the Graduate School will assign a representative to attend the defense. A copy of the proposal will be provided to the representative when he or she is assigned. The representative will attend the defense, ask questions, and report to the Graduate School whether or not the defense was conducted professionally. At the defense, the committee will make one of the following recommendations: (1) approve as-is, (2) approve with minor corrections, or (3) major corrections needed before approval. If the committee approves the proposal, they will need to sign the Dissertation Proposal Approval form. Afterward, you will need to make all requested revisions and then provide copies of the revised proposal to your department head and college dean for review and approval. If they approve the proposal, they will then sign the Dissertation Proposal Approval form. If the department head and/or college dean request changes to the manuscript, make those changes. After making all necessary changes, provide a copy of the revised proposal to your advisor for review. If your advisor agrees that all of the needed changes have been made and that the proposal is ready for submission, he or she will sign the Advisor’s Approval to Submit Dissertation Proposal form. At this point in the process, you may submit the dissertation proposal along with all other required documents to the Graduate School/TDS (electronically via TDS@tamuc.edu) for review and approval.

Ultimately, you, the student, are responsible for submitting all of the required materials to the Graduate School/TDS (via TDS@tamuc.edu) by the relevant deadline. All of the following items must be included as attachments to your submission email for your submission packet to be considered complete:

1. An electronic copy of your proposal (as approved by your committee, department head, and advisory), in Microsoft Word format.
2. Proposal Approval Form with all signatures except that of the Graduate Dean.
3. Advisor’s Approval to Submit Dissertation Proposal form with your signature and your advisor’s.
4. A copy of required research training certificates (RCR plus additional, if applicable).
5. If required, a copy of university IRB, IACUC, and/or IBC approval letter/email.
6. A copy of the iThenticate Similarity Report (this may be shared by your advisor via iThenticate or submitted as a PDF).

Please include in your email what type of computer you used (Mac or PC) and what version of Word you used to prepare your document. This will help us process your document more efficiently. The Graduate School/TDS retains the right to refuse incomplete submissions. Submissions received after the relevant deadline will be processed for the following semester.
SUBMISSION OF THE FINAL DISSERTATION

You are required to schedule your final defense through the Graduate School. When you and your advisor feel you are ready to schedule the defense, you will need to work with your committee members to determine a date, time, and location convenient for everyone. When a date is set, complete the Schedule Form for the Final Dissertation Defense and submit a fully signed copy to the Doctoral Program Coordinator by the 20th of the month prior to the defense date. To be cleared to hold the defense, you must have an approved proposal on file with the Graduate School and the approval must have been granted during the previous semester or earlier.

The Graduate School does not assign representatives to attend final defenses. Otherwise, the process for the final defense is similar to the process for the proposal. At the final defense, the committee will make one of the following recommendations: (1) approve as-is, (2) approve with minor corrections, or (3) major corrections needed before approval. If the committee approves the dissertation, they will need to sign the Final Defense Report form. This form is personalized and sent to you by the Doctoral Program Coordinator. Afterward, you will need to make all requested revisions and then provide copies of the revised dissertation to your department head and college dean for review and approval. If they approve of the dissertation, they will then sign the Final Defense Report form. If the department head and/or college dean request changes to the manuscript, make those changes. After making all necessary changes, provide a copy of the revised dissertation to your advisor for review. If your advisor agrees that all of the needed changes have been made and that the document is ready for submission, he or she will sign the Advisor’s Approval to Submit Dissertation form. At this point in the process, you may submit the dissertation to the Graduate School/TDS (electronically via TDS@tamuc.edu) for review and approval.

Ultimately, you, the student, are responsible for submitting all of the required materials to the Graduate School/TDS (via TDS@tamuc.edu) by the relevant deadline. All of the items must be included as attachments to your submission email for your submission packet to be considered complete:

1. An electronic copy of your dissertation, saved as a Microsoft Word document
2. Final Defense Report with all signatures except that of the Graduate Dean
3. Advisor’s Approval to Submit Dissertation form with your signature and that of your advisor
4. Dissertation Information Sheet (sent to you by the Doctoral Program Coordinator)
5. Copy of the iThenticate Similarity Report (may be shared via iThenticate or submitted as a PDF)

Please include in your email what type of computer you used (Mac or PC) and what version of Word you used to prepare your document. This will help us process your document more efficiently. The Graduate School/TDS retains the right to refuse late or incomplete submissions. The following is a link to the Academic Calendar, which includes all deadlines: http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/academicCalendars/default.aspx
Once your dissertation is approved by the Graduate School/TDS, you will receive an email from TDS notifying you of the approval and providing you with directions on the next steps for publication. You will pay the Graduate School’s dissertation processing fee ($83 charged to your myLeo account) after you receive approval from OTDS. You will pay the binding, publishing, and copyrighting fees (copyrighting is optional) during the online ProQuest process. TDS will provide you a link for Proquest after all your final edits have been made. At that point, you will convert your final dissertation to a PDF and upload it to ProQuest, provide ProQuest with information required, and pay the required ProQuest fees (approximately $150-$180). The standing required minimum order is for three bound dissertations: one for the library, one for your department, and one for your advisor. You will have the opportunity to order extra bound copies for your own use at an additional cost.

**ITHENTICATE**

All papers must be processed through iThenticate prior to submission to the Graduate School/TDS. **Students are not permitted to use iThenticate;** your advisor should have an iThenticate account and is responsible for running the report for you. It is your responsibility, however, to prepare the document for processing. To prepare the document, please remove the following:

- Preliminary pages (all pages that precede the first page of Chapter 1)
- References
- Appendices
- Vita

When your paper is uploaded to the iThenticate website, iThenticate will compare your paper to published material and generate a similarity score along with a color-coded report that identifies which part(s) of your paper contributed to the score. Your advisor will review the report and let you know what revisions, if any, will be needed to avoid unoriginal writing. Students are asked to strive for a similarity score at or below 12%. Please note that some disciplines may naturally yield a higher similarity score because of common language and formatting. If your paper generates a score above 12%, the Graduate School/TDS may ask your advisor for a justification for the score being above 12%. For more information on the use of iThenticate, please see the TDS website: [http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/Thesis%20and%20Dissertation%20Services/avoiding-plagiarism.aspx](http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/Thesis%20and%20Dissertation%20Services/avoiding-plagiarism.aspx)
FORMATTING OF DISSERTATION & DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

All proposals and final dissertations must follow the guidelines detailed in your chosen style manual (e.g., APA, MLA, etc.) as well as the formatting guidelines below. If a contradiction exists between the style guide you are using and the guidelines in this document, follow the guidelines in this document.

Page Setup:

The text of your dissertation must be in a standard font (Arial or Times New Roman) and size (10-12). The body of the text is to be double-spaced unless indicated otherwise. All text, with the exception of headings and subheadings, should be aligned to the left margin only.

The margins for each page shall be 1 inch for the top, bottom, left, and right margins. All writing (text, tables, figures, appendices, etc.) must be placed within the margins, with the exception of the page numbers. The only page that will have a different margin is the Abstract page (2.5 inches from the top margin).

Page numbers are placed in the header on the upper right corner of the page, ½ inch from the top edge of the page and 1 inch from the right edge of the paper.

Page Numbering:

Every page in the dissertations except the 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 (if you plan to pay for copyrighting, this will be the first page with a page number—roman numeral iii in the top right corner)
- Abstract (if not copyrighting, this will be the first page with page number—roman numeral iii in top right corner)
- Acknowledgments
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables
- List of Figures
The **body of the manuscript** is numbered with Arabic numbers. The body includes the following:

- Body (all chapters)
- References
- Appendix
- Vita

**Arrangement** of materials in the manuscript will be as follows:

1) Title Page  
2) Signature Page  
3) Copyright Page (if copyrighting)  
4) Abstract  
5) Acknowledgments (if applicable)  
6) Table of Contents  
7) List of Tables (if applicable)  
8) List of Figures (if applicable)  
9) Body  
10) References  
11) Appendix (if applicable)  
12) Vita

The first entry in your table of contents should be the first item following your table of contents (i.e., the List of Tables and the List of Figures, if applicable). Pages before your table of contents are not included in your table.

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

**Major Headings:**

“Major headings” in a dissertation include the following:

- TITLE of the dissertation on the Title Page
- TITLE of the dissertation 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 the 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. The headings must be placed one inch from the top of the page unless instructed to do otherwise.
- Each line of the title must be shorter than the one above it.
- The font must be the same size as the body 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 dissertation 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 dissertation from chapter to chapter.
- Maintain consistency in vertical spacing around major headings and subheadings.
- Subheadings and 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 have all capital letters (as this defines major headings)
Figures and 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 and without blurred or dark areas. Color is not acceptable in tables.

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

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.

Landscape Orientation
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.

In the 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 and 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 or figure, may be numbered by Appendix (e.g., A-1, A-2), or may be unnumbered.

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, the figure and table numbering style may be consecutive (1, 2, 3) or by chapter and 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), or numbered by the appendix.
(e.g., A-1, A-2, etc.). Titles for tables are above the table and titles for figures are below the figure.

**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 or 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 the text.

**References:**

Each dissertation must contain a formal reference section. The reference list will be spot-checked for consistency, accuracy, and completeness. References must follow format required by your chosen style manual. 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. If using electronic sources, please make sure an active URL is provided for each electronic source. URLs that are broken or inactive should be replaced with a working URL. If a working URL cannot be found for the source, the source should be removed from the paper.

**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 you have actually used and must be from appropriate sources. In most cases, Wikipedia, About.com, lifestyle magazines (e.g., People, Us Weekly, OK!, etc.), and other non-peer-reviewed sources are not appropriate. Using inappropriate sources diminishes the rigor of your dissertation and, in some cases, can lead to misinformation.
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 need to be numbered. Page numbers are continued from the last page of the references and before the vita. All material must be within prescribed margins and be readable in size and legibility (1.5 mm or larger). Appendix headings and titles must be on a separate title page before the Appendix material.

Appendix Headings
Appendix headings (Appendix designations and titles) should be in 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 both vertically and horizontally on the page. Appendix titles are also centered vertically and horizontally on the page using all capital letters and allowing at least one double space below the designation.

Appendix Title Pages
If appendixes 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.

Vita:

The vita is required. For the purposes of the vita, your information should be included in paragraph format instead of the traditional resume format. Sample vitas are available for student use. To request a sample vita, contact TDS@tamuc.edu.
FORMAT INSTRUCTIONS AND SAMPLES

Title Page:

General Format
• Font must match the text of the dissertation
• Point size of title is the same as the text of the dissertation
• Do not bold text on this page
• Do not number this page

Title of Dissertation
• The first line of the title is placed one inch from the top of the page
• Use all capital letters and center the text horizontally
• Double space the lines of the title if it is more than one line
• If the title is more than one line, subsequent lines must be shorter than previous line
• Do not include a period at the end of the title

Dissertation Author Statement
• Double space and center vertically and horizontally on page
• Capitalize A and also the D in Dissertation, i.e. “A Dissertation by”
• Student's name in all capital letters; name must be the same as in the official records of the university

Submittal Statement
• Single space
• “Texas A&M University-Commerce” is on a line by itself with no space before or after the hyphen
• Double space between submittal statement and degree
• Degree is in all capital letters; full name of the degree (e.g., DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, DOCTOR OF EDUCATION) 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)
• Do not use a comma between the month and year

Sample page
THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONS

FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

A Dissertation

by

IMA HARDWORKER

Submittal statement is centered and single-spaced with the bottom line placed 1 inch from the bottom of the page

Submitted to the Graduate School
Texas A&M University-Commerce
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
Graduation month 20XX

Month (May, August, or December) and year of graduation
Signature Page:

General Format
• Match font and point size to that used for the Title Page
• Do not bold text on this page
• Do not include a page number on this page

Title of Dissertation
• Use the exact 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, using the same wording as used on the Title Page

Committee Member Names and Positions
• Do not include Dr. or Prof. or Ph.D. title when listing names
• If the department head serves as a member, chair, or co-chair, his or her name must be included for both positions

Sample is on the next page
THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONS
FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

A Dissertation
by
IMA HARDWORKER

Approved by:
Advisor: Dudley Doright

Committee: Clark Kent
A. B. Normal
Thurston Howell

Head of Department: Head Honcho

Dean of the College: T. O. P. Ladder

Dean of Graduate School: Matthew A. Wood

titles such as Dr., Prof., and Ph.D. are not used

Effective Fall 2018
Copyright Page:

Copyrighting the dissertation is optional. If you choose not to copyright your dissertation, please do not include the copyright page in the version you upload to ProQuest. If you are not copyrighting, the abstract should be p. iii of your document. If you choose to copyright your dissertation, please follow the formatting guidelines detailed below and shown on the following sample page. Also, please be sure to check the section on copyrights located in this document.

**Page number**
- The number iii is placed in the top right corner
- The page number is ½ inch from the top of the page and 1 inch from the right side of the page

**Copyright Statement**
- Double space between copyright and name
- Name should be as it appears on the title page and signature page, only the name should appear in uppercase and lowercase letters
- The year used in the copyright statement should be the year the dissertation was sent to ProQuest

Sample is on the next page
The number iii is in the top right of the page, placed 1 inch from the right of the page and ½ inch from the top of the page.

text is placed in the vertical and horizontal center of the page and is double-spaced; the author’s name is in uppercase and lowercase letters.

Copyright © 2018

Ima Hardworker

← use the year you submit your dissertation to ProQuest lowercase letters
Abstract:

While the abstract page should be included in the proposal document, a complete abstract does not have to be written at the proposal stage. At the proposal stage, please include a brief (2-3 sentences) summary of the process you intend to use. At the final stage, the completed abstract should be a summary of the processes and statistical procedures used in the findings. Abstracts should be fewer than 350 words.

Preliminary Lines

- The word ABSTRACT starts 2 ½ inches from top of page; this is the only page that will not have a 1 inch top margin.
- The page number in the top right should be iii if you are not copyrighting your dissertation; if you are copyrighting, the page number should be iv.
- The dissertation title is single spaced on this page.
- The dissertation title is in all uppercase letters.
- Your name must be the same as on first two pages, but in upper and lower case letters.
- Insert a comma after your name, and then include the abbreviation of your degree, e.g., EDD, PHD, etc.
- Do not put spaces between A&M or before or after the hyphen between University and Commerce
- Include PhD or EdD with Chair’s name

Text

- Begins two double spaces below preliminary lines
- Text may be no more than 350 words; any term with a space on each side is counted as a word
- Text is double space
- Text is aligned to the left margin only

**Sample is on the next page**
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 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. The first paragraph briefly describes the focus of your study and the methods you used to examine or test your hypothesis. 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.

Keywords: Keywords are optional, but if you decide to include them, please start the keywords on a new line and italicize the word “Keywords”
Table of Contents:

TDS reviewers will check that the Table of Contents (TOC) follows the formatting of the example shown on the next page. You are not obligated to use the heading titles shown in the example, nor are you required to organize your sections as shown in the example. For instance, some disciplines prefer to keep all information about the methodology in Chapter 3 and therefore do not include such information in Chapter 1 as shown in the example on the following page. That is okay as long as the headings you do use are formatted as shown. At the proposal stage, you are not required to report page numbers for each section as the page numbers will likely change between the proposal and final dissertation. You do, however, need to include the dot leaders.

**General Format**
- Do not bold text on this page
- Do not use italics on this page (except for Latin terms, titles of works, etc.)
- Insert dot leader between TOC listings and the page numbers
- Insert a uniform number of spaces before and after the dot leader line. In the example on the next page, two spaces are placed before and after the dot leader line.
- Double space all major headings
- Single space all subheadings
- If your TOC is more than one page, include the appropriate headings at the top of each page, as appropriate

**Content**
- The TOC must contain the major headings and the first level subheadings; subordination of subheadings should be indicated by a .5 inch indention
- Inclusion of lower levels of subheadings are optional
- Place major headings in all capital letters
- Place subheadings in upper and lower case. You may number them or not.
- Preliminary pages do not have to be included in the TOC; however, if included, begin with ABSTRACT and include all the following preliminary pages
- Chapters should be numbered using Arabic numbers

**Consistency**
- Check the TOC against the body of the paper 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 the APPENDIX list matches the text exactly
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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

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

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................. #
   Statement of the Problem .................................................................................................... #
   Purpose of the Study .......................................................................................................... #
   Research Questions .......................................................................................................... #
   Hypotheses ......................................................................................................................... #
   Significance of the Study .................................................................................................... #
   Method of Procedure .......................................................................................................... #
   Selection of Sample ........................................................................................................... #
   Collection of Data ............................................................................................................. #
   Step 1 ................................................................................................................................... #
   Step 2 ................................................................................................................................... #
   Subheading 1 ...................................................................................................................... #
   Subheading 2 ...................................................................................................................... #
   Treatment of the Data ......................................................................................................... #
   Definitions of Terms .......................................................................................................... #
   Limitations .......................................................................................................................... #
   Delimitations ....................................................................................................................... #
   Assumptions ........................................................................................................................ #
   Organization of Dissertation Chapters ................................................................................ #
CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ................................................................. #

   Topic Heading 1 ........................................................................................................... #

   Topic Heading 2 ........................................................................................................... #

       Topic Subheading 1 .................................................................................................... #

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

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 MS WORD 2007 Or 2010 .............................................. #

   B. Hints: Placement and Labeling of Tables and Figures ........................................... #

   C. As Needed .................................................................................................................. #

VITA .................................................................................................................................... #
List of Tables and List of Figures:

General Format

- Include a List of Figures and/or a List of Tables if you have two or more figures and/or tables in the main body of text
- A separate list for tables and a separate list for figures is needed and either list may come first
- Include the heading “FIGURE” or “TABLE” above the appropriate column or include the word Figure or Table with each title (see example on the next page)
- Place two spaces before and after the dot leaders
- Double space the text between figure or table titles; single space the title if it is two or more lines
- If a list is more than one page, insert the appropriate column headings on each page

Content

- Each figure or table must have a unique title; no two titles may be exactly the same
- Include only the first sentence of the title (up to the first period) in the List of Tables or List of Figures
- 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 titles in the text—up to the first period
- Check consistency of capitalization – table headings use title capitalization (capitalize the major words in the title); figure headings use sentence capitalization.

Sample is on the next page
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 your proposal, even if you have no tables at the time .............................. 

3. Table number should be on the left ............................................................................................... 

4. And the table title should be written here .................................................................................. 

5. The table title should match what is in the text .......................................................................... 

6. Use title capitalization for table titles ...................................................................................... 

7. Use sentence capitalization for figure captions .........................................................................
Vita:

- Vita is the last page of the dissertation and is limited to one page.
- The font and point size need to be the same as the text and the text should be double-spaced.
- Your vita must include your name, a permanent address, and your educational background. Because the dissertation will be available on the Internet and there are increasing privacy concerns, it is recommended that you not include personal information such as your date of birth, parents’ or family member names, or your personal address in the Vita.
- The wording of your name should be the same as listed on the first three pages of your dissertation.
- Include a permanent address that will be good for two years. Because your dissertation will be available worldwide via the Internet, we recommend you use a professional address or the A&M-Commerce department address.
- Include your educational background for all previous degrees, bachelor’s level and above. Include the degree, major subject, university, and your date of graduation.
- Other information is optional but encouraged: professional experience, publications, business or academic information (again, because the dissertation will be available on the Internet, the student should avoid including personal information).
- The vita should be in paragraph style (see example below) instead of a résumé format.

![VITA]

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

The completed, bound dissertation is a permanent record that reflects upon you, the student, the faculty, the department, and the university. As such, faculty advisors and committee members expect top quality proposals and dissertations from their students. Dissertations are formal, scholarly works that require attention to detail, consistency, and flawless writing.

To ensure that doctoral dissertations completed at Texas A&M University-Commerce are quality publications, the Graduate School offers the services of its Thesis and Dissertation Specialist. This supplementary guide is in addition to your selected style guide (e.g., APA 6th Edition and MLA 8th Edition). The list below includes some commonly disregarded APA, MLA, and Graduate School requirements, plus supplemental guidelines found in published dissertations and dissertation guides, as well as on university web sites.

Common Graduate School Formatting Errors:

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.

The month and year of graduation are not separated by a comma.

The wording for the headings used in the Table of Contents must match the wording of the headings used in the text. For example, some students list REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE in the Table of Contents for the Chapter 2 major heading, but then use LITERATURE REVIEW as the Chapter 2 major heading in the text. Either heading is fine, but whatever is listed in the Table of Contents must match what is used in the paper.

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).

Students must stay up-to-date regarding the names of their department head and college dean.

Dot leaders in the Table of Contents should be created using Tab stops rather than by inserting a series of periods. Inserting the periods manually creates awkward lines and makes it difficult to align the page numbers along the right side of the page. If you struggle with creating dot leader lines with Tab stops, you may contact TDS@tamuc.edu for assistance or watch a tutorial on YouTube.

The month and year reported on the title page should reflect the month and year in which you graduate; therefore, the provided month should be May, August, or December—the months in which A&M-Commerce holds graduation ceremonies.

Common APA 6th Edition Errors:
Paragraphs must be “longer than a single sentence but not longer than one manuscript page.” (See APA 3.08, Unit length)

The completed dissertation should refer to the study itself in the past tense. (See APA 3.18, Select tense carefully)

**Citations**
A direct quotation requires a page number in the citation. A paraphrased reference does not need a page number in the citation. For sources that do not use pagination, include a paragraph number or a section name to assist the reader in locating the information. (See APA 6.03 through 6.05)

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. (See APA 6.16) Except for block quotations, final punctuation marks are always placed after a citation at the end of a sentence. (See APA 6.03) Citations within a sentence require past tense, and the date in parentheses should follow the author(s) immediately. (See APA 3.18, Select tense carefully)

**Numbers**
All numbers over nine should be expressed in numerals (e.g., say 10 instead of ten), 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. (See APA 4.31a)

Use numerals when expressing time or a measurement (e.g., 2 hours, 3 cm, etc.). (See APA 4.31e)

Express exact percentages using numerals and the symbol for percent. Do not put a space between the number and the percentage symbol (e.g., 3%, 5%, 7.9%, etc.) (See APA 4.45, Symbol for percentage)

**Word Choice**
Do not treat inanimate objects as persons. Certain actions should only be attributed to human beings. Attributing human characteristics to animal or inanimate sources is referred to as anthropomorphism, which should be avoided in APA writing. Common examples of anthropomorphism include: “the chapter discussed,” “the study measured,” “the institution believed,” “the data determined,” “the figure compares,” and so forth. Instead, attribute such actions to a human source: “in his chapter, the researcher discussed,” “the researcher measured,” “the founders of the institution believed,” “the data indicated” or “the researcher determined,” and so forth. (See APA 3.09)
The use of *which* or *that* is not interchangeable. “Which” is for use with nonrestrictive clauses and “that” is for use with restrictive clauses. Likewise, *while* and *since* are often used incorrectly (see APA 3.22 and 4.03 for explanation and examples). Relative pronouns must agree with nouns they replace. “Use *who* for human beings; use *that* or *which* for animals and for things.” (See APA 3.20.)

Commonly used Latin abbreviations such as etc., e.g., and i.e., should be used in parenthetical material only. In non-parenthetical material, use the English translation instead (and so forth, for example, and that is, respectively). (See APA 4.26)

All previous research and assertions made by other researchers should be expressed in past tense (e.g., “Bandura asserted,” not “Bandura asserts”). Present tense should be used for statements of fact and present perfect should be used for ongoing research or actions. (See APA 3.18, Select tense carefully)

Discursive writing is not acceptable in APA. Likewise, always be aware of the type of tone you are portraying in your writing. Aim to be informative and professional; avoid language that is combative, biased, or argumentative. Avoid metaphor and abstractions unless necessary to illustrate a point or improve the reader’s understanding. (See APA Chapter 3)

Avoid colloquial expressions (e.g., “wearing different hats”). ProQuest theses and dissertations are accessible to people from all over the world and from a variety of cultures; therefore, colloquial expressions may not be understood or interpreted correctly by the reader. Avoid confusion or misinterpretation by using clear and precise language. (See APA Chapter 3)

**Common APA 6th Edition & MLA 8th Edition Errors:**

**Punctuation**

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

Semicolons and colons cannot be used interchangeably. Similarly, commas and semicolons cannot be used interchangeably in all contexts.

Underlining should not be used anywhere in the text. Since the dissertation 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. Use block quotation format for long quotations (APA: quotes exceeding 40 words in length; MLA: quotes longer than four full lines of text). The block quotation should begin on a new line and each line of the quote should be indented to set it apart from the main text (APA: indent ½ inch; MLA: indent 1 inch). 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 or her [not their] response…”). To avoid this problem, both APA and MLA suggest using plural forms (“Students should submit their responses…”). If you decide to keep the subject plural, avoid using a slash between the male and female singular pronouns (i.e., say “his or her” instead of “his/her”).

**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 or 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.
In APA, ruling (cell borders) is minimal. Vertical ruling is not used. Please see the example on the next page.

When reporting numeric data in a table, make sure the decimals line up down the column.

Table 1

*Example Table in APA Format*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subhead 1</th>
<th>Column head 1</th>
<th>Column head 2</th>
<th>Column head 1</th>
<th>Column head 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td># # # # # #</td>
<td># # # # # #</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Spanner 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table Spanner 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># # # #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># # # #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># # # # #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. For example tables in APA format, see Chapter 5 of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed., 2013).

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 dissertation 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.

If using abbreviations (such as NCLB, STAAR, etc.), do not switch between using the written-out and abbreviated forms. Once an abbreviation is explained to the reader, use only the abbreviation thereafter.

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 alone at the top of a page. Instead, move an additional line of text to accompany that line. The Widow and Orphan Control setting in Word will help you avoid widows and orphans. 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 dissertations and 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 doctoral 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 dissertation—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 papers (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 [or thesis]” and “The first person has no place in a formal dissertation [or thesis]” (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 copyright-holder (typically either the author or 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.