



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY  

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**COMMERCE**

**THESIS GUIDE**  
**Instructions for the Preparation and Submission of Theses**  
Revised January 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 master's program, please check the Graduate Studies 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 thesis stage of your master's program. This manual was written to help graduate students and their committee members prepare theses (at the proposal and final stages) and will help you to navigate through the steps needed to submit your thesis to the Office of Thesis & Dissertation Services (OTDS) for approval. The purpose of this manual is to define uniform standards of style and format. To ensure that master's theses completed at Texas A&M University-Commerce are quality publications, OTDS offers this guide as an **addition** to the style manual you are using (APA, MLA, etc.).

If you are in the College of Education and Human Services, you must follow APA 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. If you are in the College of Humanities, Social Science, & Arts, or the College of Science, Engineering, & Agriculture, you must follow APA 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, MLA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, or a style guide approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies. OTDS 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 the ones listed, you must provide a copy of it to the OTDS when you submit the proposal or final thesis (providing a URL will suffice if the guide is freely available). It is preferred that you use the most current edition of the manual. Whenever there are differences in format and layout between the specifications of the Thesis Style Guide and the manual, the style guide overrules 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.

Everyone in the Graduate School and in OTDS 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 [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu). Students are also welcome to make an appointment for an office visit, if needed.

## EXPECTATIONS FROM OTDS

You will submit your thesis documents to OTDS at two different stages of your program:

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

Please consult the Master's Program Checklist in the appendix of this document for an overview of when this occurs within your time here.

You must submit a document that meets high standards of quality to your thesis committee by the deadlines set by your department before your defenses. After you defend your proposal or thesis and prior to submitting it to OTDS, 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. The primary role of OTDS 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 proof-readers. **Line by line proofreading and editing should be performed prior to submitting the proposal or thesis, and this responsibility lies with you, the student.**

When OTDS identifies significant problems at the beginning of the thesis 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 thesis 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:

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. OTDS keeps a running list of editors students have used in the past. For a copy of this list, please email [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu)

## FORMS

All forms related to the thesis process can be found at the following link:  
<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/graduateForms.aspx>

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

## 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 thesis and the deadline for initial submission of their final thesis, which is found in the University Academic Calendar and on the Graduate Studies and OTDS websites. Students submitting after the deadline cannot graduate until the following semester. The following are approximate turn-around times after the thesis has been submitted to OTDS. Papers 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

**\*\*You may not schedule your final defense without having proposal approval from OTDS\*\***

## RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

All students must follow the institutional and federal guidelines for conducting ethical research. To remain in compliance, students 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.

- All students must complete the training for Responsible Conduct in Research and Scholarship before data collection can begin. **This training is required of all thesis students and is good for three (3) years.** Students 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 requires 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 as assigned by IRB and/or your advisor).
  - Students conducting research involving human subjects **must** complete all required trainings and receive approval from IRB prior to collecting data. Students in violation will not be permitted to use the collected data in their final thesis.
  - IRB reviews applications on a set schedule. When creating your thesis 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. Students conducting research using human subjects may begin data collection after the IRB has provided the student (or advisor) with a letter approving the project.
  - Visit the IRB website for additional information: [http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/IRB-Protection\\_of\\_Human\\_Subjects/default.aspx](http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/IRB-Protection_of_Human_Subjects/default.aspx)
- **If your research involves collecting data about or from living vertebrate animals,** your research may qualify as involving animal participants and therefore requires 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 as assigned by IACUC and/or your advisor).
  - Students conducting research involving animal subjects **must** complete all required trainings and receive approval from IACUC prior to collecting data. Students in violation will not be permitted to use the collected data in their final thesis.
  - IACUC reviews applications on a set schedule. When creating your thesis 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. Students conducting research using animal subjects may begin data collection after the IACUC has provided the student (or advisor) with a letter approving the project.

- 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
  5. Any material requiring a CDC license to import or a USDA permit
- Students conducting research involving use of biological agents (as defined above) **must** complete all required trainings and receive approval from IBC prior to collecting data. Students in violation will not be permitted to use the collected data in their final thesis.
- IBC reviews applications on a set schedule. When creating your thesis 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 the student (or advisor) with a letter approving the project.
- Visit the IBC website for additional information:  
<http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/IBC-Biosafety/default.aspx>

OTDS **will not** review a paper if the student cannot provide proof of compliance. If you have questions about the type of proof OTDS will accept, please contact our office at [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu) or (903)886-5968. If you have any questions concerning the training or protocols, please contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

## **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 copyright holder 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 thesis before you submit the thesis:**

The A&M-Commerce policy is that graduate students may publish material that will later be used as part of the thesis. 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 thesis:**

Students should be aware of the publishing agreement you sign when a journal accepts an article for publication. At that time, the student and/or 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 thesis will be available worldwide through the Internet (theses 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 thesis, 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 thesis as an appendix.

**If you are planning to use your thesis material in a future publication:**

Students who plan to publish thesis 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 thesis 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 thesis.
3. Master's students must inform the copyright holder that the thesis will be sent to ProQuest.

## THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

All students must have an approved thesis advisory committee on file with the Graduate School to work on their thesis. Your thesis advisory committee will consist of your thesis advisor (sometimes referred to as your thesis chair) and at least two other graduate faculty members from your department. Your thesis advisor must have graduate faculty membership to receive approval to serve. Your committee members must have either graduate faculty membership or temporary graduate faculty membership. You may include a graduate faculty member from a department other than your own if you desire as long as he or she has the appropriate knowledge or experience to make meaningful contributions to your thesis. Once the thesis advisory committee is formed, students must complete the Thesis Committee Selection form, acquire signatures from the committee members, and submit the form to [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu) for review and approval by the Graduate Dean. Students may not submit their thesis proposal packet until they receive confirmation the thesis committee was approved.

## SUBMISSION OF THE THESIS PROPOSAL

Thesis students are not 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 that are convenient for everyone. At the defense, the committee will make a decision regarding approval: approve as-is, approve with minor corrections, or major corrections needed before approval. If the committee approves the proposal, they will need to sign the Thesis 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 of the proposal, then they will sign the Thesis Proposal Approval form as well. If the Department Head and/or College Dean request changes to the manuscript, make the changes before submitting to OTDS. After making the changes, provide a copy of the revised proposal to your advisor for review. If your advisor agrees that all of the needed changes were made and that the proposal is ready for submission, he or she will need to sign the Advisor's Approval to Submit Thesis Proposal form. At this point in the process, you may submit the thesis proposal to OTDS for review and approval.

Ultimately, **you, the student, are responsible for submitting all of the required materials to [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu) by the relevant deadline.** All of the items must be included as attachments in your submission email for your submission packet to be considered complete:

1. An electronic copy of your thesis, saved as a Microsoft Word document (Students using LaTeX are permitted to submit the thesis as a PDF)
2. Proposal Approval Form with all signatures except that of the Graduate Dean
3. Advisor's Approval to Submit Thesis Proposal form with your signature and that of your advisor
4. Required research training certificates (RCR plus additional, if applicable)
5. If required, IRB, IACUC, and/or IBC approval email from university
6. 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. OTDS retains the right to not accept late or incomplete submissions.

## **SUBMISSION OF THE FINAL THESIS**

Thesis students are not required to schedule their 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 that are convenient for everyone. When a date is set, students must complete the Notification Form for the Thesis Defense and submit it to [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu) at least 1 week prior to the defense date. Submitting the form lets us know of your intention to graduate and to follow up with you if a final submission is not received by the relevant deadline.

The process for the final defense is similar to the process used for the proposal. At the defense, the committee will make a decision regarding approval: approve as-is, approve with minor corrections, or major corrections needed before approval. If the committee approves the thesis, they will need to sign the Thesis Final Defense Report form. Afterward, you will need to make all requested revisions and then provide copies of the revised thesis to your Department Head and College Dean for review and approval. If they approve of the thesis, then they will sign the Thesis Final Defense Report form as well. If the Department Head and/or College Dean request changes to the manuscript, make the changes before submitting to OTDS. After making the changes, provide a copy of the revised thesis to your advisor for review. If your advisor agrees that all of the needed changes were made and that the thesis is ready for submission, he or she will need to sign the Advisor's Approval to Submit Thesis form. At this point in the process, you may submit the thesis to OTDS for review and approval.

Ultimately, **you, the student, are responsible for submitting all of the required materials to [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu) by the relevant deadline.** All of the items must be included as attachments in your submission email for your submission packet to be considered complete:

1. An electronic copy of your thesis, saved as a Microsoft Word document (Students using LaTeX are permitted to submit the thesis as a PDF)
2. Thesis Final Defense Report with all signatures except that of the Graduate Dean
3. Advisor's Approval to Submit Thesis form with your signature and that of your advisor
4. 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. OTDS retains the right to not accept 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 thesis is approved by OTDS, you will receive email notification with directions on the next steps for publication. You will pay the Graduate School's thesis processing fee (\$73 charged to your myLeo) after you receive approval from OTDS. You will pay the binding,

publishing, and copyrighting fees (copyrighting is optional) during the online ProQuest process. We will provide you a link for Proquest after all your final edits have been made with OTDS approval. At that point, you will upload your final thesis electronically, fill out their information, and pay the required fees. The standing required minimum order is for 3 bound theses: one for the library, your department, and your advisor. You will have the opportunity to order extra bound theses for your own use at an additional cost.

## ITHENTICATE

All papers must be processed through iThenticate prior to submission to OTDS. **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 as a result of common language and formatting. If your paper generates a score above 12%, OTDS may ask your advisor for a justification for the score being above 12%. For more information on the use of iThenticate, please see the OTDS website:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/Thesis%20and%20Dissertation%20Services/avoiding-plagiarism.aspx>

## FORMATTING OF THESIS & THESIS PROPOSAL

All proposals and final theses must follow the guidelines detailed in your chosen style manual (e.g., APA, MLA, ACS, 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 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. 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 inch 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 thesis 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 (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 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.
- 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 thesis to organize chapters into different sections. APA 6<sup>th</sup> Edition provides specific rules for subheadings, while MLA 7<sup>th</sup> 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 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 text. 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 thesis 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 the student has 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 thesis 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, except title page of appendix, 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. Appendix titles are centered with all capital letters and at least one double space below 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 [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu).

## FORMAT INSTRUCTIONS AND SAMPLES

### Title Page:

#### **General Format**

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

#### **Title of Thesis**

- 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

#### **Thesis Author Statement**

- Double space and center of page
- Capitalize A and also the T in Thesis, i.e. “A Thesis by”
- 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
- Double space between submittal statement and degree
- 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

**Sample is on the next page**

← 1 inch margins on all sides

no page number →

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONS  
FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

↑  
Title is double spaced; each line is longer  
than the one below it; text is in all  
uppercase letters

thesis author statement  
is centered  
and double spaced

→

A Thesis  
by  
IMA HARDWORKER

←

author name is in  
all uppercase  
letters

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

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies  
Texas A&M University-Commerce  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE  
Graduation month 20XX

Month (May,  
August, or  
December) and  
year of graduation  
←

**Signature Page:*****General Format***

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

***Title of Thesis***

- 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

***Thesis Author Statement***

- Capitalize A and T in A Thesis
- 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

**Sample is on the next page**

← 1 inch margins on all sides

no page number →

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONS  
FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

↑  
Title is double spaced; each line is longer  
than the one below it; text is in all  
uppercase letters

thesis author statement  
is centered  
and double spaced →

A Thesis  
by  
IMA HARDWORKER

← author name is in  
all uppercase  
letters

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 Studies: Matthew A. Wood

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

**Copyright Page:**

Copyrighting the thesis is optional. If you choose not to copyright your thesis, 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 the thesis, please follow the formatting guidelines detailed below and shown on the following 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 thesis 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



**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, 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 the findings. Abstracts should be written in 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 thesis; if you are copyrighting, the page number should be iv
- The thesis title is single spaced
- The thesis title is in all uppercase letters
- 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 MS, MA, MFA, etc.
- Do not put spaces between A&M or before or after the hyphen between University and Commerce
- Chair's name then, PhD or EdD

***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
- Spacing is double space
- Text is aligned to the left margin only

**Sample is on the next page**

page number is in top right corner → iv  
page number should be iii if you are not copyrighting

↑  
top margin is 2.5 inches

## ABSTRACT

### THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Ima Hardworker, MS or MA  
Texas A&M University-Commerce, year of graduation

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

↑ There are two double spaces between the  
advisor's name and the text ↓

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.

*Keywords:* Keywords are optional, but if you decide to include them, please start the keywords

on a new line and italicize the word "Keywords"

Title is single spaced and in all uppercase letters. There is a blank line between the title and the student name, and between the university name and the advisor name.

## **Table of Contents:**

OTDS reviewers will check that the Table of Contents 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 OK 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 thesis. You do, however, need to include the leader dots.

### **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
- A uniform number of spaces should come before and after the leader line. In the example on the next page, 2 spaces are placed before and after the leader lines.
- Double space or use same spacing as in text above and below all major headings
- Single space all subheadings
- If more than one page, need appropriate headings at the top of 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. They may be numbered or not.
- 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

**Sample is on the next page**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	LIST OF TABLES .....	#
	LIST OF FIGURES .....	#
	CHAPTER ← column heading for chapter numbers	
Level of heading denoted by indent	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 .....	#
	Subheading 2 .....	#
	Treatment of the Data .....	#
	Definitions of Terms .....	#
	Limitations .....	#
	Delimitations .....	#
Assumptions .....	#	
Organization of Thesis Chapters .....	#	

CHAPTER	← column heading since TOC is multiple pages	
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 MSWORD 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 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 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

**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 proposal, even if you have no tables at that 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 ..... #



## 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)
- The vita should be in paragraph style (see example below) instead of a résumé format

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### 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 THESIS GUIDE: A SUMMARY OF COMMON ERRORS AND ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES**

The completed, bound thesis 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, thesis, and theses from their students. Theses are formal, scholarly works that require attention to detail, consistency, and flawless writing.

To ensure that master's theses completed at Texas A&M University-Commerce are quality publications, OTDS offers this supplementary guide as an **addition** to APA 6<sup>th</sup> Edition and MLA 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. The list below includes some commonly disregarded APA, MLA, and Graduate School requirements, plus supplemental guidelines found in published theses and thesis guides and on university web sites.

### **Common Graduate School Formatting Errors:**

For the title page of a thesis, the specific degree should be one of the following (with no major listed): MASTER OF FINE ARTS, MASTER OF SCIENCE, or MASTER OF ARTS

Also, 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 thesis 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.

Leader dots in the Table of Contents should be created using Tab stops rather than by inserting a series of periods. The latter method creates awkward lines and makes it difficult to line the page numbers up down the right side of the page. If you struggle with creating leader lines with Tab stops, you may contact [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@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 6<sup>th</sup> 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. For sources that do not use pagination, include a paragraph number or a section name to assist the reader in locating the information.

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 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.

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

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.)

### **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.

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. Relative pronouns must agree with nouns they replace. “Use *who* for human beings; use *that* or *which* for animals and for things.”

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).

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.

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.

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.

### **Common APA 6<sup>th</sup> Edition & MLA 8<sup>th</sup> 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.

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. Use block quotation format for long quotations (APA: quotes exceeding 40 words in length; MLA: quotes longer than 4 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 thesis or thesis 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*

	Column Spanner 1		Column Spanner 2	
Subhead 1	Column head 1	Column head 2	Column head 1	Column head 2
	Table Spanner 1			
#	##.#	###.#	###.#	####.#
#	###.#	####.#	##.#	###.#
#	####.#	##.#	####.#	####.#
Total	####.#	####.#	####.#	####.#
	Table Spanner 2			
#	###.#	##.#	####.#	###.#
#	###.#	###.#	##.#	###.#
#	####.#	###.#	###.#	####.#
Total	####.#	###.#	####.#	####.#

*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 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.

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. The Widow and Orphan Control setting in Word will help you avoid widows and orphans. 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 theses and thesis guides from other institutions. However, adherence to these preferences will not weaken a thesis. 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 master’s theses 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 theses 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 thesis/theses (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, thesis/thesis guides from other institutions are adamant about avoiding these pronouns—“The second person has no place in a formal thesis [or thesis]” and “The first person has no place in a formal thesis [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 thesis) can be a very useful chapter for those people who prefer not to read the entire thesis. 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 theses 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.

## GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS WHO WILL BE COMPLETING A THESIS FOR THEIR MASTER'S OR SPECIALIST DEGREE

Check with your department to see if additional requirements set by your department and/or program apply to you. This checklist contains requirements set by the Graduate School. All forms mentioned in the checklist can be found at the following link (unless otherwise noted):

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/graduateForms.aspx>

- COMPLETE GRADUATE STUDENT ORIENTATION** – You may complete the on-line orientation at <http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/graduateAdmissions/default.aspx> before an admission decision has been received.
- CONTACT MAJOR DEPARTMENT** – Request any information needed regarding coursework requirements, prerequisites, etc. Confirm the name and location of the advisor assigned to you as well as his or her office hours. If possible, introduce yourself to your advisor and ask if there are regularly scheduled times to meet, if meetings are by appointment only, whether the advisor plans to assist you with developing a degree plan, and any other pertinent questions. It is your responsibility to maintain regular contact with your advisor throughout the thesis process.
- ENROLL IN COURSES AND PURCHASE MATERIALS** – Register online using the myLeo portal. The schedule of classes is online and current with updates occurring several times each day. If you need additional information about courses for the semester, please contact your major department.
- PAY TUITION AND FEES** – Pay your tuition and fees online through myLeo or by mail or phone. If you need financial aid assistance, please contact their office at (903)886-5096.
- OBTAIN A TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-COMMERCE ID CARD** – You will need an ID card for use at libraries, computer labs, and university activities. Please see <http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/maneCard/default.aspx> for more information.
- OBTAIN A PARKING PERMIT** – If you wish to park your automobile on the Texas A&M University-Commerce campus, you will need a parking permit. Please visit the Cashier's office located in the McDowell Administration Building to receive your permit. You may pre-order your permit through the myLeo portal.
- FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE GRADUATE SCHOOL WEBSITE AND THE GRADUATE CATALOG** – Since students are held individually responsible for the information contained in the [University Catalog](#), failure to read and understand many of the policies and procedures included in the catalog may result in unintended consequences. If you require assistance interpreting any policy or procedure, you should contact your advisor or the Office of Graduate Studies. Many of the forms associated with procedures are also available at the Graduate School website under Forms and Guidelines (link included at the top of the page)

- ATTEND CLASSES AND HAVE CONTACT WITH YOUR ADVISOR AT LEAST ONCE PER SEMESTER** – It is recommended you have contact with your advisor at least one time per semester or as needed. However, it is highly recommended that you have contact with your advisor at least one semester before your intended graduation to review your academic progress and ensure you are “on track” to meet your academic goals.
- MEET WITH YOUR ADVISOR** at least two semesters prior to the semester during which you plan to graduate to confirm remaining requirements for graduation based on your degree plan; admission to candidacy requirements (if your department requires candidacy), your ideas regarding thesis topics and committee member selection.
- SELECT MASTER’S ADVISORY/THESIS COMMITTEE:** See the Thesis Advisory Committee section of the Thesis Guide for information regarding thesis advisory committees. Students must have an approved committee on file with the Graduate School before work on the thesis (including the proposal defense) can occur.
- COMPLETE REQUIRED TRAINING MODULES:** See the Research Compliance section of the Thesis Guide for information regarding CITI training modules required for your type of research. All students must complete RCR training, but additional training may be necessary based on the type of research you conduct (e.g., human or animal subjects research, use of biological agents) or based on the requirements set by your department. Completion of the required training module(s) is a requirement to begin data collection.
- DEVELOP THESIS PROPOSAL:** Complete the Thesis Committee Selection Form (requires signatures) and submit it to [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu) for review and approval by the Graduate Dean. A copy of the form will be returned to you after it is signed by the Graduate Dean. After your committee is approved, develop your thesis proposal in collaboration with your thesis advisory committee.
- ENROLL IN 518:** You are **required to enroll in at least six hours (2 semesters) of 518 while working on your proposal/thesis.** You must be enrolled in 518 to receive guidance from a member of the faculty or while utilizing university facilities. You must be enrolled in 518 the semester you submit your proposal and the semester you submit your final thesis to be approved by OTDS. Submissions made by students not enrolled in 518 will not be accepted.
- DEFEND PROPOSAL, SUBMIT PROPOSAL TO GRADUATE SCHOOL, AND OBTAIN PROPOSAL APPROVAL:** Keep in mind, you must propose and be given proposal approval from OTDS at least one semester before graduation. You will be notified via email when your proposal has been approved. Consider keeping a copy of the approval email for your records.
- COMPLETE THESIS:** You are expected to make progress toward the completion of your thesis each semester.
- COMPLETE ALL PROGRAM AND COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS** – The semester before you plan to graduate, meet with your advisor to review all program requirements (e.g., coursework, required semester hours, GPA, comprehensive exams, research requirement [595] or thesis [518]) and confirm that you will indeed be eligible to meet those requirements by the completion of the following semester.

- APPLY FOR GRADUATION** – File for graduation in the Registrar’s Office or via myLeo by the deadline noted in the Academic Calendar. You may file for graduation beginning with the first class day of the semester you will graduate. Order graduation regalia.
- DISTRIBUTE COPIES OF YOUR THESIS FOR DEFENSE:** Ensure your committee members have received all final chapters of your thesis a minimum of two weeks prior to your defense. Work with your advisor and committee to make corrections prior to defense. Check with your department for additional distribution requirements and deadlines.
- DEFEND THE THESIS:** Schedule your thesis defense with your department, paying attention to the thesis submissions deadline for that semester. Complete and submit the Notification of Thesis Final Defense form to [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu). Defend the thesis at the scheduled time. Obtain signatures of your advisor, committee members, and your department head on the Thesis Final Defense Report.
- REVISION OF THESIS:** After the defense of the thesis and prior to submitting it to the OTDS, **carefully revise and edit your thesis**. This includes, but is not limited to, making corrections from the committee and thoroughly reviewing the thesis to ensure it aligns with Graduate School formatting and APA, MLA, Turabian, or adopted manual/journal requirements. The thesis copy submitted to the Graduate School should be **line edited and error free** and include all thesis components that will be in the bound copy. Your department may have recommendations regarding editors.
- SUBMIT THESIS TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES FOR REVIEW:** Submit a copy of your thesis and all forms (which include the Advisor’s Approval to Submit form and the Thesis Final Defense form) to [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu) by the deadline stated in the Academic Calendar (approximately six weeks before commencement). OTDS will add a \$73 charge (the thesis processing fee) to your account that should be paid prior to commencement.

After submission, an OTDS reviewer will be assigned to review your thesis. You and your advisor will be contacted by the Graduate School regarding any additional revisions to the thesis and final submission process. If significant issues are present, you may be asked to make the needed revisions and submit the thesis for a second review. Please note that this will add time to the approval process and may negatively impact your eligibility to graduate by your intended deadline.
- MAKE GRADUATE SCHOOL REVISIONS:** Upon your receipt of the feedback provided by your OTDS reviewer, make all required corrections. Keep in mind that the reviewer will not mark an error each time it occurs in the document, so you will need to read the comments to see what issues were noticed and then check the rest of the document for similar errors and revise. Revising the issues that were highlighted or commented on will not be sufficient. Review your corrections with your advisor and gain his or her signature on the Advisor’s Approval to Resubmit form. Return both the signed form and the corrected thesis to the Graduate School by the deadline in your corrections email (the deadline is typically 2 weeks from the date the feedback was provided to the advisor).

**FINAL PROCESSING OF THESIS:** After OTDS has approved your thesis revisions, you will receive a final approval email. After you receive this email, you will email the final version of your thesis in pdf format as one document to [OTDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:OTDS@tamuc.edu). Once that is received, we will send you an email called “Proquest upload” that has a link to Proquest and a deadline for completion. You will upload the pdf of your thesis to Proquest by using the link provided in the “Proquest upload” email. You must have your thesis in one document, not multiple sections, so that you can make it a pdf and upload it into Proquest. They have free pdf software available on their site which you can use once we send you the Proquest link. You will fill out all of their documents online and pay the fees for 3 copies to be bound and distributed as follows: One copy to the library, one for the department, and one copy to your advisor. At this time, you will also order any additional copies you may wish for yourself.

**Submission to Proquest is a requirement of the master’s/specialist degree with thesis and final graduation approval; it is not optional. Failure to upload your thesis by the deadline stated in the Proquest upload email can result in a delay of graduation.**

**COMMENCEMENT:** The degree is conferred at the commencement following the fulfillment of all requirements. Graduation clearance and issuance of the diploma will occur 3-4 weeks after the graduation ceremony.