



# **GRADUATE SCHOOL THESIS AND DISSERTATION FORMATTING GUIDE**

## **Instructions for the Preparation and Submission of Theses and Dissertations\***

*\*If you print out a hard copy of this guide, please be aware that it is subject to change. The most current guide will always be available online. Therefore, as you progress through your master's or doctoral program, please check the Graduate School/Thesis and Dissertation Services, [Resources for Writing](#) (hyperlink provided) web page for the most current version of this guide.*

## PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

The Graduate School with Thesis and Dissertation Services (TDS) provides this guide to assist students and faculty in the successful completion of a thesis or dissertation. This guide provides general information about the thesis and dissertation processes, as well as Graduate School formatting requirements and general expectations of students and faculty alike. All students will be held to the standards described in this guide, so it is important that students and faculty read and understand the standards, as well as the potential consequences for failing to meet them (e.g., deferred graduation).

In addition to this guide, students will need to read and understand their department's requirements and expectations for completing a thesis or dissertation and read Texas A&M University-Commerce's rules and procedures related to the thesis and doctoral process. Students and faculty are responsible for knowing, understanding, and following all university and A&M System rules and procedures. If a student or faculty member has any questions or concerns regarding one of these procedures, contact the Graduate School for assistance.

It is important to note that the standards described in this guide are considered minimum requirements; departments retain and may exercise the right to create additional requirements for their students. A department may determine which style guide or guides (APA, MLA, ACS, etc.) are to be used to complete the thesis or dissertation, but the style guide should be the most recent edition available, if possible. Students are responsible for learning the style guide requirements and writing their paper accordingly. It is the responsibility of the student and his or her advisor to ensure the thesis or dissertation complies with all requirements of the selected style guide. The Graduate School/TDS's role in the thesis and dissertation process is to review proposals, final theses, and final dissertations for conformity to the Graduate School's formatting requirements. TDS does not provide editing services; however, a list of student-recommended editors is available by contacting TDS ([TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu)). As always, the final responsibility for revising and editing the document lies with the student.

For questions, concerns, or further clarification, please contact:

Thesis and Dissertation Services  
The Graduate School  
(903)886-5968  
[TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu)

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome! The Graduate School with TDS offers this guide as a resource to help students and their advisor/committee members prepare a thesis or dissertation (at the proposal and final stages). This guide provides information regarding the thesis and dissertation process, the steps leading to submission, and the uniform standards of format students are expected to maintain in writing their document. The purpose of the TDS review is to produce theses and dissertations that maintain a consistency in appearance. We want to produce documents that both the student and the university can be proud of.

When you submit your proposal document or final document to TDS, it is reviewed for adherence to the formatting requirements as set forth in this guide and in the templates provided. This means that TDS does not review for spelling, grammar, or adherence to style. It is up to students to work closely with their advisor and/or committee members to ensure their document meets all style requirements, follows the rules of English grammar, and does not violate any copyright laws.

**Whenever there are differences in format and layout between the Thesis and Dissertation Guide and your chosen style guide, the Graduate School formatting guidelines overrule.**

Everyone in the Graduate School is working to ensure the success of our graduate students. We encourage students to ask questions or let us know of any concerns; we are here to help. If there are any questions or concerns not answered in this guide, please feel free to contact the TDS office at (903)886-5968 or through email, [TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu). Students are also welcome to make an appointment for an office visit, if needed.

## FORMATTING OF PROPOSAL AND FINAL DOCUMENT

Thesis and Dissertation Services (TDS), is entrusted by the Graduate School with the task of reviewing all proposal documents, theses, and dissertations to ensure that each document meets the formatting standards set by the Graduate School. On its web pages, for thesis students, [www.tamuc.edu/thesis](http://www.tamuc.edu/thesis), and for doctoral students, [www.tamuc.edu/dissertation](http://www.tamuc.edu/dissertation), TDS provides a step-by-step guide to the process you will follow and provides links to forms you will need when submitting your documents. Other important information related to the thesis and dissertation process can also be found on the left sidebar. Below is a brief description of what resources TDS provides:

- [iThenticate](#): The University has contracted with this service in order to determine the degree of similarity between the document you have drafted and other copyrighted material. The system produces a similarity percentage indicating the degree to which your document “borrows” from other published material. The Graduate School sets a cap on this similarity at 12%, with a 3% cap on individual similarity scores. The program requires licensing and most faculty should already have access to this program; however, if access is needed, contact Anne Phifer in the Office of Academic Technology, [anne.phifer@tamuc.edu](mailto:anne.phifer@tamuc.edu), and she can provide you with access. All submissions should either include a copy of this similarity report or advise TDS that the report has been shared on the iThenticate site. Instructions on how to use and read the report and how to share an iThenticate report with TDS, can be found on the iThenticate web page.
- [Resources for Writing](#): The Graduate School has approved templates for students to use when drafting their document (to be followed at both the proposal and final stages). When you begin drafting your document, it is recommended you use the template provided because it has some of the required formatting built into the document. The template also provides commentary to guide you through setting up and formatting the document. In addition, the Thesis and Dissertation Formatting Guide can be found here. This guide provides more detailed information and instructions for setting up the document, and for formatting it. Finally, you can also find a Student’s Formatting Checklist here; this can be used before submitted your document to ensure you have followed some of the basic formatting requirements.
- [Research Tools](#): This page provides information regarding tools used in research such as propensity score matching in education research and a discussion of what the difference is between qualitative vs. quantitative research traditions.
- [Deadlines for Thesis and Dissertation Submissions](#): All the important dates and deadlines associated with the thesis and dissertation process can be found here. Be sure to add these dates to your calendar.
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#): If you have a question about the process or what to submit, take a moment to review the FAQs.

Now you are ready to begin drafting your document!

**Page Setup:**

The text of the document must be in a standard font (Arial or Times New Roman) with a font size of 10-12 pt. The body of the text is double-spaced unless indicated otherwise. All text should be aligned to the left margin with the exception of headings and subheadings, which are aligned according to the Graduate School guidelines (major headings) and the student's chosen style guide (subheadings).

The margins for each page are 1 inch for the top, bottom, left, and right margins, except the Abstract page, which has a top margin of 2.5 inches from the top of the page. All writing (text, tables, figures, appendices, etc.) must be placed within the margins, with the exception of the page numbers.

**Page Numbering:**

Every page in the document except the Title Page and the Signature Page (the first two preliminary pages) must be numbered. The Title and Signature Pages are considered pages i and ii, but no page number is shown on these two pages.

***Page numbers***

Page numbers are placed in the header in 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.

***Preliminary Pages***

Pages are numbered with small Roman numerals. Below is a list of the preliminary pages in order:

- Title page (no page number)
- Signature Sheet (no page number)
- Copyright Page (if 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 a page number—Roman numeral iii in top right corner, otherwise it will be page iv)
- Acknowledgments
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables
- List of Figures

***Body of the Manuscript***

The body of the document is numbered with Arabic numbers. The body includes the following:

- Body (all chapters)
- References
- Appendices

- Vita

### **Arrangement**

Pages of the manuscript are arranged in the following order:

- 1) Title Page
- 2) Signature Page
- 3) Copyright Page (if not copyrighting, do not include this page)
- 4) Abstract
- 5) Acknowledgments (optional)
- 6) Table of Contents
- 7) List of Tables (if applicable)
- 8) List of Figures (if applicable)
- 9) Body
- 10) References
- 11) Appendices (if applicable)
- 12) Vita

The first entry in the Table of Contents should be the first item following the Table of Contents (i.e., the List of Tables and/or the List of Figures, if applicable). You may choose to include the Abstract and Acknowledgements in the Table of Contents, but this is not a requirement.

### **Footnotes:**

Footnotes must be single-spaced with a single space between footnotes.

### **Major Headings:**

The rules for major headings are

- Major headings are centered at the top of a new page and in ALL CAPITAL letters. These headings should be flush with the top margin making them no more than one inch from the top of the page. The only exception to this is the Abstract page.
- If major headings are more than one line, use the spacing of the text (double-space) between the lines. Each line of the heading 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 or bold.
- There is no punctuation after a major heading.
- All major headings must be formatted consistently.

The following are considered “major headings” in the document:

- TITLE of the thesis or dissertation on the Title Page

- TITLE of the thesis or 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
- REFERENCES (or LITERATURE CITED, etc.)
- APPENDICES cover page and each APPENDIX title page
- VITA

### **Subheadings:**

Subheadings are used throughout the document to organize chapters into different sections. Some style guides, such as APA, provide specific rules for subheadings. Become familiar with your style guide rules regarding formatting of subheadings.

If your style guide does not provide specific instructions on formatting subheadings, please follow these guidelines:

- Use the same font size for all subheadings.
- Use consistent capitalization for each level of subheading, but do not use all capital letters, as this defines major headings.
- The style used for subheadings must clearly show the various levels and must be consistent throughout the document from chapter to chapter.
- Maintain consistency in vertical spacing around major headings and subheadings.
- Do not begin subheadings and subsections on a new page; only new chapters are begun on new pages.
- A subheading near the bottom of a page must have at least two lines of text under it or the subheading should be moved to the next page to remain with the text.

### **Figures and Tables:**

#### ***Color, Size, and Legibility***

Color is acceptable in figures, but black and white is preferred. Color is not acceptable in tables. The minimum size for the content of a table (letters and numbers) is 7-point font. The body of a table must be double-spaced. All lettering must be of publishable quality; this requirement includes scanned images. Images must be clear and without blurred or dark areas.

#### ***Text Mention***

Each table and figure must be mentioned **within 1½ pages** of its appearance in the text and in order by number. 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, if your style guide requires, 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 at least 3 single spaces** above and below the figure or table.

### ***Long and Continued***

When tables or figures are longer than one page, include the table or figure number on subsequent pages and the word “(continued).” Do not include the table or figure title. Also, include the necessary column headings from the table for ease of reading. Include the end line of the completed table 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. The page number stays in the regular (portrait) position. To create the page number for landscape-oriented pages, use a text box and rotate it 90 degrees. Do not put text on the same page as a landscaped figure or table.

### ***In the Appendix***

Appendix figures and tables must be mentioned in text. Figures and/or tables in appendices may be numbered consecutively following the numbering of the figures and/or tables found in the text, they may be numbered with an Appendix designation (A-1, A-2, for example), or they may be unnumbered. If numbered consecutively with text figures and/or tables, they must be included in the List of Tables and/or List of Figures.

### ***Table Titles and Numbering***

Each table must have a unique title (no two titles can be the same). The table title must appear above the table and be consecutively numbered throughout the text. The style guide you are following may dictate the style of the table numbering, but no matter the style followed, numbering should be consecutive (1, 2, 3) or by chapter and section (1.1, 1.2, 2.1).

### ***Figure Captions/Titles and Numbering***

Each figure must have a unique caption/title (no two captions/titles can be the same). The figure caption/title may appear above or below the figure, depending on your style guide. The figures are consecutively numbered throughout the text. No matter the style guide followed, figures should be numbered consecutively (1, 2, 3) or by chapter and section (1.1, 1.2, 2.1).

### ***Large Figure Title/Long Caption on a Separate Page***

This format is used only for figures when there is not enough space for the caption/title on the page with the figure, even if the type size is reduced. If the caption/title must go on a separate page, place it on the page preceding the figure. In the List of Figures, the number of the page on which the figure itself appears is the page number listed. ***This format is never used with tables.***

**Lists of Figures and Tables:**

Lists of Figures and Tables must agree word-for-word with figure captions/titles and table titles in the text. For figure captions, include the entire caption up to the first period (parenthetical information may be excluded from the List). Be sure the figures and tables are 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 style of the equation and its number must match the text.

**References:**

Each document must contain a formal reference section. References must follow the format required by the chosen style manual. Citations should be crosschecked with the reference list to verify that every citation has a source listed and that every source has a citation. In other words, each citation must have a corresponding reference entry, and each reference entry must have a corresponding citation. When using electronic sources, before submission of the document, please check that all URLs provided are still active and correct. URLs that are broken or inactive should be replaced with working URLs. If a working URL cannot be found for the source, an alternative source must be found or the source should be removed from the paper.

**In-Text Mention of References (Citations):**

All references must be cited in the text, and all text citations must be referenced. All text citations must be from sources 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 document and, in some cases, can lead to misinformation.

**Appendices:**

Appendices are **optional** and used for supplementary material. An Appendices cover page is required if there are two or more appendices. Each appendix must have a title page. Place the appendices after the reference section and before the vita. All appendix pages are numbered continuing from the last page of the references. All appendix material must be within prescribed margins and be readable in size and legibility.

***Appendices Cover Page***

A cover page should precede the appendices. The title, APPENDICES, appears in all capital letters in the middle of the page, centered vertically and horizontally. If you have only one appendix, the Appendices Cover Page is replaced with the Appendix Title Page (see below) with no letter designation needed.

***Appendix Title Pages***

Each appendix requires a title page. Appendix designations (APPENDIX A, for example) are centered both vertically and horizontally on the page with the appendix title appearing one double space below the appendix designation. The appendix title is in all capital letters

and is centered vertically and horizontally on the page. Titles with more than one line in length must be double-spaced with each line being shorter than the line above it.

**Vita:**

The vita is required. For the purposes of the vita, your information **should be in paragraph form** instead of the traditional resume format. Sample vitas are available for student use. To request a sample vita, contact [TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu).

## FORMAT INSTRUCTIONS AND SAMPLES

### **Title Page:**

#### ***General Format***

- Font size and style should be consistent and must match the text of the document.
- Do not bold text on this page.
- Do not number this page.
- Use proper spacing and capitalization as shown on the sample page.

#### ***Title of Document***

- 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 the line(s) above it.
- Do not include a period at the end of the title.

#### ***Author Statement***

- Double space and center vertically and horizontally on page.
- Capitalize the A and the T in Thesis or the D in Dissertation, i.e. “A Dissertation by.”
- Student's name is in all capital letters; name must be the same as in the official records of the university.

#### ***Submittal Statement***

- Single space text.
- “of Texas A&M University-Commerce” is on a line by itself with no space before or after the hyphen.
- Your degree is in all capital letters; use the full name of the degree without major (e.g., MASTER OF SCIENCE, MASTER OF ARTS, DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, DOCTOR OF EDUCATION). Check the Graduate Catalog for correct wording of degree.

#### ***Date***

- Use the month and year you expect to graduate. Graduation months 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 is on the following page**

SAMPLE TITLE PAGE

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

← 1 inch margins on all sides

author statement is  
centered both  
horizontally and  
vertically  
and double spaced

→

A Dissertation  
by  
IMA HARDWORKER

←

author name is in  
all uppercase  
letters

Submittal statement is  
centered and single-  
spaced with the  
bottom line flush with  
bottom margin of the  
page

→

Submitted to the Graduate School  
of 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 the  
year you expect to  
graduate

←

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

- Font style and size should remain consistent with that used for the Title Page.
- Do not bold text on this page.
- Do not include a page number on this page.
- Use proper spacing and capitalization as shown on the sample page.

***Title of Document***

- Use the same wording for your title as on the Title Page.
- Use all capital letters and center.
- Double space if more than one line; no period at the end of the title.
- Succeeding lines of title must be shorter than the preceding lines.

***Author Statement***

- Capitalize the A and the T in Thesis or D in Dissertation, i.e. “A Dissertation by.”
- Double space text.
- Student's name is in all capital letters, using the same name used on the Title Page.

***Committee Member Names and Positions***

- Do not include degree designations when listing names (e.g., Dr., PhD, etc.).
- If a committee member, chair, or co-chair is also a department head or dean, include his or her name for both positions.
- Use the correct spacing shown on the sample page.
- Verify correct spelling and presentation of all names.

**Sample is on the next page**

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**

← **1 inch margins on all sides**

**author statement is  
centered horizontally  
and vertically  
and double spaced**

→

A Dissertation  
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 School: G. S. Leader

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

←

**Copyright Page:**

Although copyrighting is optional, you are highly encouraged to copyright your thesis or dissertation, and it is recommended you consult with your advisor before choosing not to copyright. Also, please be sure to review the section in this guide entitled Publication of the Research: Copyright Issues. If copyrighting your thesis or dissertation, please follow the formatting guidelines detailed below and shown on the following sample page. If you choose not to copyright, please do not include the copyright page in your final document. If you are not copyrighting, the Abstract will be page iii of your document.

***Page number***

- The page number iii is placed in the top right corner within the header.
- 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 the copyright statement and your name.
- The year used in the copyright statement should be the year you expect to graduate.
- Your name should appear as it does on the title page and signature page, only the name should be in uppercase and lowercase letters.

**Sample is on the following page**

## SAMPLE COPYRIGHT PAGE

The page number iii is in the top right corner of the page, placed 1 inch from the right of the page and ½ inch from the top of the page ↑

Text is centered vertically and horizontally on the page and is double-spaced ↓

Copyright © 2021

← use the year you expect to graduate

Your name is in upper and lowercase letters →

Ima Hardworker

**Abstract:**

The abstract page should be included in the proposal document; however, it does not need to be a complete abstract at the proposal stage. At the proposal stage, please include a brief summary (2-3 sentences) of your study and 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 no more than 350 words. **NOTE: This is the only page with a different margin setting.**

***Preliminary Lines***

- The heading ABSTRACT appears 2 ½ inches from the top of the page; this is the only page that will not have a 1 inch top margin. Instead of changing the margin setting on this page, you may also use the left ruler bar, aligning the heading with 1.5 on the left ruler bar.
- The page number in the top right corner should be iv unless you are not copyrighting your document; if you are not copyrighting, the page number should be iii.
- The thesis or dissertation title is centered and single-spaced on this page with the title in all uppercase letters.
- Your name is centered and in the same form as it appears on previous pages, but in upper and lower case letters.
- Insert a comma after your name, and include the abbreviation of the degree you are earning, e.g., MS, MA, EdD, PhD (no periods).
- In the university name, do not put spaces between A&M or before or after the hyphen between University and Commerce.
- After the university name, insert a comma and include the year in which you expect to graduate (the same year given on the previous pages).
- Include your advisor's degree abbreviation after his or her name (e.g., PhD, EdD).

***Text***

- Text begins two double spaces below the advisor's name.
- The abstract may not be more than 350 words; any term with a space on each side is counted as a word
- Text is double-spaced.
- Text is aligned to the left margin; do not use full justification.

**Sample is on the following page**

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

top margin is 2.5 inches

Title is single-  
spaced and in  
all uppercase  
letters

ABSTRACT

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONS  
FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Insert a double space →

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

← Your name is in upper  
and lower case letters and  
is the same name used on  
previous pages

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

↑ There are two double spaces between the  
advisor line 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. Do not use full justification of text.

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. However, text of the abstract should not exceed 350 words. 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:**

Table of Contents (TOC) should follow the formatting of the sample shown on the next page. Generally, your document should be a 5-chapter model, unless you are a student in the Department of Educational Leadership. Students in this department may, upon approval by his or her advisor, use a 3-chapter model. With this said, you are not obligated to use the heading titles shown in the sample, nor are you required to organize your sections as shown in the sample. 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 sample on the following page. That is okay as long as the formatting of headings is maintained as shown in the sample. At the proposal stage, because the page numbers will likely change between the proposal and final dissertation, you are not required to report page numbers for each section. However, you do need to include the dot leader lines. To create the dot leader lines, go to the Home tab on the Word document tool bar. Open the dialog box for Paragraph. At the bottom is a box for Tabs. Click this box to open up the Tabs dialog box. In the Tab stop position, insert 6.5; in the Alignment section, select Right; in the Leader section, select 2....; click Set; and then click Okay.

#### ***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 lines between TOC headings and the page numbers.
- Insert a uniform number of spaces before and after the dot leader line. In the sample on the next page, two spaces are placed before and after the dot leader line.
- Double-space between headings.
- When major headings span more than one line, double-space the lines.
- When subheadings span more than one line, you may single-space the lines.
- If your TOC is more than one page, include the word CHAPTER as a column heading at the top of each page **that introduces a new chapter** (see sample page).

#### ***Content***

- The TOC must contain the major headings and the first level subheadings; subordination of subheadings should be indicated by a .5-inch indentation.
- Inclusion of lower levels of subheadings are optional, but if included, do so consistently.
- Place major headings in all capital letters.
- Place all subheadings in upper and lower case.
- Preliminary pages do not have to be included in the TOC; however, if included, begin with the Abstract page and include all the following preliminary pages.
- Chapters should be numbered using Arabic numbers and formatted according to the Graduate School guidelines.

***Consistency***

- Check the TOC against the body of the paper for agreement of page numbers.
- Levels of subordination of headings and subheadings in the TOC should match the level of subordination in the document, and the wording of major headings and subheadings. In the TOC, levels of subheadings are shown by indentation.
- Check for consistency of capitalization.
- Headings in the TOC should match word-for-word with the headings in the text.
- Check that the titles of the listed appendices match exactly the headings used for the appendices in the document.

**Sample is on the following 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 1 ..... #

                                Subheading 2 ..... #

                Treatment of the Data ..... #

        Definitions of Terms ..... #

        Limitations ..... #

        Delimitations ..... #

        Assumptions ..... #

        Organization of Dissertation Chapters ..... #

CHAPTER     ← column heading since TOC is multiple pages and chapters  
are introduced on the page

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. As Needed ..... #

        B. As Needed ..... #

VITA ..... #

**List of Tables and List of Figures:*****General Format***

- A List of Tables and/or a List of Figures should be included if you have two or more tables and/or figures in the main body of text.
- If used, a separate list for tables and a separate list for figures are needed and either list may come first.
- Include the heading “FIGURE” or “TABLE” above the appropriate column (see example on the next page).
- 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 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 title/caption or table title must be unique; no two may be exactly the same.
- Include only the first sentence of the title or caption (up to the first period) in the List of Tables or List of Figures. Parenthetical information may be excluded from the headings in the List.

***Consistency***

- Check page numbers in List against page numbers in text for agreement.
- Figure titles/captions in the List of Figures and table titles in the List of Tables must agree word-for-word with the titles in the text—up to the first period.
- Use the same capitalization in your List as used in the titles in the document. Capitalization should be consistent. If your style manual does not provide standards for capitalization, use title capitalization (capitalize the major words in the title). If you are following APA 6<sup>th</sup> edition, figure captions should use sentence capitalization (capitalize first word and proper nouns).

**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 single-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 and figure titles ..... #
7. If your style guide uses figure captions, use sentence capitalization ..... #

**Vita:**

- Vita is the last page of the document and is limited to one page.
- The vita should be in paragraph style (see example below) instead of a résumé format.
- Continue using the same font and font size as used in the text of your document. Text should be double-spaced.
- Your vita must include your name, a permanent address, and your educational background. **Because the thesis or dissertation will be available on the Internet and there are increasing privacy concerns, the Graduate School recommends that you *do 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 preliminary pages of your thesis or dissertation.
- Include a permanent address that will be good for two years. Because your thesis or 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 beyond; include the degree, major subject, university, and your date of graduation.
- Inclusion of the following information is optional but encouraged: professional experience, publications, business, or academic information.

## VITA

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

Ms. Smiley may be reached at Smiley ERS Educational Research Systems, Inc., 1000 Plaintree Rd., Sugar Land, TX 77177. Her email is [sasmiley@mail.com](mailto:sasmiley@mail.com).

## THE THESIS/DISSERTATION PROCESS AND WHAT AND HOW TO SUBMIT

### Advisory Committee

In order to begin work on your proposal document, there must be an approved thesis or dissertation advisory committee on file with the Graduate School. The form for thesis committee selection is the [Declaration of Thesis Option and Committee Selection Form](#), and can be found at the TDS/Thesis web page ([www.tamuc.edu/thesis](http://www.tamuc.edu/thesis)) under step 1 of the processes. The form for the dissertation committee, [Dissertation Committee Selection Form](#), and can be found at the TDS/Dissertation web page ([www.tamuc.edu/dissertation](http://www.tamuc.edu/dissertation)) under step 1 of the processes.

- The thesis advisory committee will consist of the thesis advisor (sometimes referred to as the thesis chair) and at least two other graduate faculty members from the major department or, in some cases one member outside of the department may serve. The out-of-department member should have knowledge and/or skills that allow him or her to make meaningful contributions to the thesis. A total of at least three committee members must be named, including the advisor.
- 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 and a committee 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.
- Members who are non-university faculty require temporary Graduate Faculty membership and require prior approval by the Graduate School. Please allow extra time for this additional approval.

The 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, the Graduate School will work with the department head to obtain approval for him or her to serve on the committee.

Once the advisory committee is selected, please complete the appropriate committee selection form, acquire the needed signatures from the committee members and department head (electronic signatures are allowed), and submit the form to the Graduate School/TDS ([TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu)) for review and approval by the Graduate Dean. You will receive from TDS confirmation of receipt of your committee form and, once approved, TDS will return to you and your advisor a signed/approved copy of the committee form. Please keep a copy of the approved committee form in your files. Proposal defense and submissions will not be accepted until there is an approved committee form on file.

## **Enrollment in 518/718 Course Requirement**

### **518 Course Requirement:**

Each master's degree program has a 518 course in which all thesis students are expected to enroll. You must complete at least 6 semester credit hours of 518; you will not receive credit for more than 6 semester credit hours of 518.

If a medical or personal emergency prevents you from making satisfactory progress on your thesis, your advisor and/or the Graduate School must be notified and the proper steps completed for a leave of absence to avoid earning a grade of U for the 518 course.

### **718 Course Requirement:**

Each doctoral degree program has a 718 course in which all doctoral students are expected to enroll. After you have doctoral candidacy and completed your comprehensive examinations, you must be continuously enrolled in 718 each fall and spring semester until your dissertation is completed. The Graduate School/TDS requires enrollment in a 718 course for the semester in which you defend and submit your proposal packet to TDS and again the semester in which you defend and submit your final dissertation to TDS. If a proposal or final dissertation is submitted during the summer, you must be enrolled in one summer semester of 718. You must complete at least 9 semester credit hours of 718 and will receive credit for no more than 12 semester credit hours. **Please note that grades of U now impact academic standing, including U's earned in 718.**

If a medical or personal emergency prevents you from making satisfactory progress on your dissertation, your advisor and/or the Graduate School must be notified and the proper steps completed for a leave of absence to avoid earning a grade of U for the 718 course.

### **The Student's Responsibilities:**

For both the proposal and the final document, students are expected to follow the instructions provided in the Graduate School/TDS templates and to read and follow the more specific guidelines provided in this Thesis and Dissertation Formatting Guide. Both can be found on the TDS [Resources for Writing](#) web page under Templates and Guidelines.

In addition, the Graduate School and TDS ask that you study and become familiar with your chosen style guide and, if possible, purchase a copy of the style manual being followed. You are responsible for completing the editing of the thesis or dissertation and/or for securing a professional editor, if needed. TDS maintains a list of student-recommended editors and will provide you a copy of this list at your request. Maintain regular contact with your advisor and committee members. Follow the guidance of your advisor to ensure all university and A&M System rules and procedures are followed.

### **The Advisor's and Committee's Responsibilities:**

Ultimately, students are responsible for ensuring all required materials are submitted to the appropriate person(s) or office(s) by the relevant deadlines. The advisor and the committee members are responsible for ensuring their students' studies meet the department's and discipline's requirements for good scholarship. Additionally, they are responsible for guiding their students through the thesis or dissertation process and ensuring students follow the style

guide chosen. Advisors and committee members should also be familiar with the Graduate School/TDS template and formatting guidelines. Advisors should ensure that their students are familiar with all university and A&M System rules and requirements for conducting research. Each department may have additional requirements and expectations for students, advisors, and committee members. Students and faculty are responsible for knowing and fulfilling requirements set by the department.

### **Forms**

Become familiar with and review the forms required at each step of the process, and take note of what signatures are required for each form. Forms submitted to the Graduate School/TDS without the proper signatures will not be accepted. All signatures must be obtained by the appropriate deadline (see the section on Deadlines). While the advisor, committee, or department administrative assistant may assist with obtaining signatures, ultimately it is the student's responsibility to ensure all paperwork is complete and submitted by the appropriate deadline. When a complete submission is received, TDS sends a confirmation email to the student and his/her advisor. If you or your advisor do not receive confirmation of receipt of a submission to TDS, please follow up with TDS ([TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu).)

All forms related to the thesis or dissertation process can be found at one of the following links:

[Thesis Process](#) or use the shortcut: [www.tamuc.edu/thesis](http://www.tamuc.edu/thesis)

[Dissertation Process](#) or use the shortcut: [www.tamuc.edu/dissertation](http://www.tamuc.edu/dissertation)

or

[Graduate School Forms & Guidelines](#)

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**

Proposal approval must be received *at least one semester prior to graduation*. To graduate in a given semester, a student must meet the scheduled deadline for defending his or her final thesis or dissertation and the deadline for initial submission of the final thesis or dissertation; deadlines are in the [university Academic Calendar](#), on the [Graduate School](#) webpage (right side bar), and [TDS webpage](#). A summary of the deadlines for submissions to TDS are listed below; please keep in mind that all submission materials with all required signatures must be received by TDS on or before the provided date for the submission to be considered turned in on-time.

### Proposal Documents:

**Spring deadline to submit the proposal to TDS:** 4th Friday in April; this deadline is for students who wish to defend the final thesis or dissertation and/or graduate during the following summer semester.

**Summer deadline to submit the proposal to TDS:** 4th Friday in July; this deadline is for students who wish to defend the final thesis or dissertation and/or graduate during the following fall semester.

**Fall deadline to submit the proposal to TDS:** 4th Friday in November; this deadline is for students who wish to defend the final thesis or dissertation and/or graduate during the following spring semester.

Final Documents:

**Spring deadline to defend final dissertation:** 4<sup>th</sup> Friday in March

**Spring deadline to submit the final thesis or dissertation to TDS:** 1<sup>st</sup> Friday in April

**Summer deadline to defend final dissertation:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday in June

**Summer deadline to submit the final thesis or dissertation to TDS:** 4th Friday in June

**Fall deadline to defend final dissertation:** 4<sup>th</sup> Friday in October

**Fall deadline to submit the final thesis or dissertation to TDS:** 1<sup>st</sup> Friday in November

**Note:** Thesis students must submit to TDS a [Notification Form for the Final Defense](#) no less than seven (7) days prior to the date of the defense.

If a submission is received after the deadline, the submission will be reviewed for approval for the following semester. Papers are reviewed after the submission file is considered complete.

**\*\*REMINDER:** Students may not schedule their final defense without having received proposal approval from the Graduate School/TDS. **\*\***

## RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

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 the legal and ethical obligations related to research.

**\*\*Approval received from one of the research compliance committees is not the same as Graduate School approval of a proposal document.\*\***

### **Responsible Conduct in Research (RCR) Training:**

Training for Responsible Conduct in Research and Scholarship must be completed before data collection can begin. This training is required of all thesis and dissertation students and is good for three (3) years. Training may be taken 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>

### **Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval:**

If a student's research involves collecting data about or from living humans (e.g., surveys, online questionnaires, emails, etc.), the research may qualify as involving human participants and, therefore, require review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). As part of the review process, students will need to complete additional training through CITI (human subjects training, plus additional training as assigned by IRB and/or your advisor).

- If research involves human subjects, all required trainings **must** be completed and approval from IRB received prior to collecting data. If this requirement is violated, the student will not be permitted to use the collected data in his or final thesis or dissertation.
- The IRB reviews applications on a set schedule. When creating a thesis or dissertation timeline, students should consider the IRB meeting schedule. All IRB application materials must be submitted by the student's advisor as explained on the IRB webpage. Final approval for the inclusion of human participants in a study rests with the IRB. IRB has the right to request changes prior to approving the study. If a student is conducting research using human subjects, he or she may begin data collection only after the IRB has provided the student's advisor with a letter approving the project.
- Visit the [IRB website](#) (hyperlink provided) for additional information.

### **Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee (IACUC) Approval:**

If a student's research involves collecting data about or from living vertebrate animals, the student's research may qualify as involving animal participants and, therefore, require review by the Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee (IACUC). As part of the review process, a student will need to complete additional training through CITI (animal subjects plus additional training as assigned by IACUC and the student's advisor).

- If student's research involves animal subjects, all required trainings **must** be completed and approval received from IACUC prior to collecting data. If this requirement is violated, the student will not be permitted to use the collected data in his or her final thesis or dissertation.
- IACUC reviews applications on a set schedule. When creating a thesis or dissertation timeline, students should consider the IACUC meeting schedule. All IACUC application materials must be submitted as described on the IACUC website. Final approval for the inclusion of animal participants in a study rests with the IACUC. IACUC has the right to request changes prior to approving the study. Students may begin data collection only after the IACUC has provided the student (or the student's advisor) with a letter approving the project.
- Visit the [IACUC website](#) for additional information.

### **Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) Approval:**

If a student's research involves use of biological agents, the research may require review and approval from the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC). Use of any of the following will require 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.
- If you are conducting research involving use of biological agents (as defined above), all required trainings **must** be completed and approval received from IBC prior to collecting data. If these requirements are violated, the student will not be permitted to use the collected data in his or her final thesis or dissertation.
  - IBC reviews applications on a set schedule. When creating a thesis or dissertation timeline, students should consider the IBC meeting schedule. All IBC application materials must be submitted as described on the IBC website. Final approval for the use of biological agents in a study rests with the IBC. IBC has the right to request changes prior to approving the study. Students may begin data collection only after the IBC has provided the student (or the student's advisor) with a letter approving the project.
  - Visit the [IBC website](#) for additional information.

TDS **will not** review a paper if you cannot provide proof of compliance with the applicable research requirements. Questions concerning the training or protocols should be directed to the Office of Sponsored Programs ([ResearchCompliance@tamuc.edu](mailto:ResearchCompliance@tamuc.edu)). Please contact TDS at [TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu) or (903)886-5968 with questions about the type of proof accepted.

### **PUBLICATION OF THE RESEARCH: COPYRIGHT ISSUES**

Students 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."

Please 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*.

### **Self-Plagiarism.**

When a student includes material previously presented at a conference or symposium, a disclosure statement must be provided in the thesis or dissertation stating where and when the material was presented.

### **Pending Publication (i.e., academic paper or journal).**

According to A&M-Commerce's policy, you may publish material that will later be used as part of your thesis or dissertation. However, students should be aware of the publishing agreement signed when his or her work is accepted for publication. At that time, the student and/or the lead author typically assign rights to the publisher, and the student 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 or dissertation. The publisher would still have the right to print, distribute, and sell the work. When negotiating with the publisher, students need to remember to inform them that the thesis or dissertation will be available worldwide through the Internet (theses and dissertations will be sent to ProQuest CSA and can be purchased through them). If students do not retain the right to use the material in the thesis or dissertation, he or she 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 or dissertation as an appendix.

A&M-Commerce Libraries make all manuscripts available to the public on the Web. *Students should not sign any agreement that limits his or her rights and the rights of A&M-Commerce to provide research results to the public.*

### **Future Publication (i.e., academic paper or journal).**

If there are plans to publish all or part of a student's thesis or dissertation in the future, students should investigate whether the publisher will publish material already made available to the public; students should consider this when choosing an option for making the thesis or dissertation available after graduation.

### **Summary:**

1. Students must obtain permission to use previously published material (either in the publisher agreement or in a letter or email from the copyright holder).
2. Proper acknowledgment must be given of previously published or publicly presented work in the thesis or dissertation.
3. The copyright holder must be informed that the thesis or dissertation will be sent to ProQuest.

## SUBMISSION OF THE PROPOSAL DOCUMENT

### Submission of the Thesis Proposal:

As a thesis student, a proposal defense is not required to be scheduled through the Graduate School. However, to receive clearance to hold the defense, a student must have received Graduate School approval of his or her [Declaration of Thesis Option and Thesis Committee Selection Form](#) (see the section on Advisory Committee). Once the Graduate School approves a thesis committee, Graduate School/TDS will email the student and his or her advisor a copy of the signed/approved form. The student and his or her advisor will determine when to schedule the defense of the proposal and work with his or her committee members to determine a date, time, and location that is convenient for everyone.

At the defense, the committee makes one of the following recommendations: (1) approve the proposal as-is, (2) approve the proposal with minor corrections, or (3) request major corrections before approval. If the committee approves the proposal, they will sign the Thesis Proposal Approval form (found in the [Thesis Proposal Packet](#)). If the committee requests changes, the student will make all requested revisions and then provide copies of the revised proposal to the department head and college dean for review and approval. Once approved by the committee, department head, and college dean, the Thesis Proposal Approval form (found in the [Thesis Proposal Packet](#)) is signed by all parties where indicated. If the department head and/or college dean request changes to the manuscript, the student will make the changes and then provide a copy of the revised proposal to his or her advisor for review. When the student and his or her advisor agree that all of the needed changes have been made and that the proposal is ready for submission to the Graduate School/TDS, the student and his or her advisor will sign the Advisor's Approval to Submit Thesis Proposal form (found in the [Thesis Proposal Packet](#)). At this point in the process, the student will submit the thesis proposal **electronically** (via email), along with the [Thesis Proposal Packet](#) and all other required documents to the Graduate School/TDS ([TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu)) for review and approval.

**Ultimately, the student is responsible for submitting all of the required materials to the Graduate School/TDS ([TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu)) by the relevant deadline.** All of the following items must be included with the submission email(s) for the submission packet to be considered complete. Items to include in the submission are as follows:

1. An electronic copy of the approved thesis proposal in Microsoft Word format (unless using LaTeX, then submit the thesis as a PDF).
2. Thesis Proposal Approval Form completed and with all signatures except that of the Graduate Dean. Once the proposal is approved, the Graduate Dean will sign the form and a copy will be returned to the student and his or her advisor with a copy of the proposal document, reviewed by TDS.
3. Advisor's Approval to Submit Thesis Proposal for Graduate School Review form completed and signed by the student and his or her advisor.
4. Required research training certificates (RCR plus additional training modules, if applicable). Please see the section on Research Compliance for more information.
5. As required, proof of IRB, IACUC, or IBC approval. Please see the section on Research Compliance for more information.

6. Copy of the iThenticate Similarity Report. Advisors may share the results with the Graduate School/TDS via the iThenticate website or the student or advisor may provide a PDF copy of the results to TDS. See the section on iThenticate for more information.

**The Graduate School/TDS retains the right not to accept late or incomplete submissions.**

Submissions received after the relevant deadline will be processed for the following semester.

The following is a link to the Academic Calendar, which includes all deadlines:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/academicCalendars/default.aspx>

**Submission of the Dissertation Proposal:**

Doctoral dissertation students are required to schedule their proposal defense through the Graduate School. To receive clearance to hold the defense, a student must have received Graduate School approval of his or her [Dissertation Committee Selection Form](#) (see the section on Advisory Committee). Graduate School/TDS will email the student and his or her advisor a copy of the signed/approved form once the committee selection is approved.

When a student and his or her advisor determine the student is ready to schedule the proposal defense, the student will need to work with the committee members to determine a date, time, and location convenient for everyone. Students must complete the [Schedule Form for the Dissertation Proposal Defense](#), obtain the required signatures, and submit the form to the Doctoral Program Coordinator **by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to the defense date**. (Check the Graduate School website for the name and contact information for the current Doctoral Program Coordinator.) A copy of the proposal document should be provided to the Doctoral Program Coordinator at the time the proposal defense form is submitted.

Once the student is cleared by the Graduate School to hold the defense, the Graduate School/TDS will assign a Graduate Faculty representative to attend the defense. A copy of the proposal is provided to the representative when he or she is assigned. The representative attends the defense, asks questions as appropriate, and provides an evaluation form to the Graduate School stating whether the defense was conducted professionally. At the defense, the committee makes one of the following recommendations: (1) approve the proposal as-is, (2) approve the proposal with minor corrections, or (3) request major corrections before approval. If the committee approves the proposal, they will sign the Dissertation Proposal Approval form (found in the [Dissertation Proposal Packet](#)). If the committee requests changes, the student will make all revisions and then provide copies of the revised proposal to the department head and college dean for review and approval. If department head and college dean approve the proposal, they will sign the Dissertation Proposal Approval form (found in the [Dissertation Proposal Packet](#)) where indicated. If the department head and/or college dean request changes to the manuscript, the student will make the changes and then provide a copy of the revised proposal to his or her advisor for review. When the student and his or her advisor agree that all of the needed changes have been made and that the proposal is ready for submission to the Graduate School/TDS, the student and his or her advisor will sign the Advisor's Approval to Submit Dissertation Proposal for Graduate School Review form (found in the [Dissertation Proposal Packet](#)). The student will then submit the dissertation proposal **electronically** via email along with the [Dissertation Proposal Packet](#) and all other required documents to the Graduate School/TDS ([TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu)) for review and approval.

**Ultimately, the student is responsible for submitting all of the required materials to the Graduate School/TDS (via [TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu)) by the relevant deadline.** All of the following items must be included with the submission email(s) for the submission packet to be considered complete. Items to include in the submission are as follows:

1. An electronic copy of the dissertation proposal in Microsoft Word format.
2. Dissertation Proposal Approval Form completed and with all signatures except that of the Graduate Dean. Once the proposal is approved, the Graduate Dean will sign the form and a copy of the form will be returned to the student and his or her advisor with the proposal document, reviewed by TDS.
3. Advisor's Approval to Submit Dissertation Proposal for Graduate School Review form completed and signed by the student and his or her advisor.
4. Required research training certificates (RCR plus additional training modules, if applicable). Please see the section on Research Compliance for more information.
5. As required, proof of IRB, IACUC, and/or IBC approval. Please see the section on Research Compliance for more information.
6. Copy of the iThenticate Similarity Report. The student's advisor may share the results with the Graduate School/TDS via the iThenticate website, or the student or his or her advisor may provide a PDF copy of the results. See the section on iThenticate for more information.

**The Graduate School/TDS retains the right not to accept incomplete submissions.**

Submissions received after the relevant deadline will be processed for the following semester.

The following is a link to the Academic Calendar, which includes all deadlines:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/academicCalendars/default.aspx>

### **Graduate School/TDS Approval of Proposal:**

Once the thesis or dissertation proposal is approved by the Graduate School/TDS, the student will receive email notification (via myLeo email account). **It is imperative that students continue editing their document.** The approval email will contain important information regarding the drafting of the final document.

## **SUBMISSION OF THE FINAL DOCUMENT**

### **Submission of Final Thesis:**

Thesis students are not required to schedule their final defense through the Graduate School. When the student and his or her advisor are ready to schedule the final defense, the student will work with his or her committee members to determine a date, time, and location that is convenient for everyone. When a date is set, the student must complete the [Notification Form for the Thesis Defense](#) and submit a copy of the signed form electronically (via email) to the Graduate School/TDS at [TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu) **at least 1 week prior to the defense date.** Submitting the form lets the Graduate School know of a student intends to graduate so if a final submission is not received by the relevant deadline, the Graduate School/TDS can follow up with the student.

The process for the final defense is similar to the process for the proposal. At the defense, the committee makes one of the following recommendations: (1) approve the thesis as-is, (2)

approve the thesis with minor corrections, or (3) request major corrections before approval. If the committee approves the thesis, they will sign the Thesis Final Defense Report form (found in the [Final Thesis Submission Packet](#)). After all requested revisions are complete, the student provides copies of the revised thesis to the 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 (found in the [Final Thesis Submission Packet](#)) where indicated. If the department head and/or college dean request changes to the manuscript, the student will make the changes and then provide a copy of the revised thesis to his or her advisor for review. When the student and his or her advisor determine that all changes have been made and that the thesis is ready for submission to the Graduate School/TDS, the student and his or her advisor will sign the Advisor's Approval to Submit Thesis for Graduate School Review form (found in the [Final Thesis Submission Packet](#)). The final thesis along with the [Final Thesis Submission Packet](#) and other required documents are forwarded electronically (via email) to the Graduate School/TDS ([TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu)) for review and approval.

**Ultimately, the student is responsible for submitting all of the required materials to [TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu) by the relevant deadline.** All of the following items must be included with the submission email(s) for the submission packet to be considered complete. Items to include in the submission are as follows:

1. An electronic copy of the final thesis in Microsoft Word format (unless using LaTeX).
2. Thesis Final Defense Report (found in the [Final Thesis Submission Packet](#)) completed and with all signatures except that of the Graduate Dean. Once the final thesis is reviewed and approved, the Graduate Dean will sign the form and a copy of the form will be returned to the student and his or her advisor with the final, approved document.
3. Advisor's Approval to Submit Thesis for Graduate School Review form (found in the [Final Thesis Submission Packet](#)) completed and signed by the student and his or her advisor.
4. Copy of the iThenticate Similarity Report. The student's advisor may share the results via the iThenticate website, or the student or his or her advisor may provide a PDF copy of the results. See the TDS webpage for iThenticate for more information and instructions for sharing results with TDS.

**The Graduate School/TDS retains the right not to accept late or incomplete submissions.**

Submissions received after the relevant deadline will be processed for the following semester.

The following is a link to the Academic Calendar, which includes all deadlines:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/academicCalendars/default.aspx>

#### **Submission of Final Dissertation:**

Doctoral dissertation students are required to schedule their final defense through the Graduate School. When the student and his or her advisor determine the student is ready to schedule the defense, the student will work with his or her committee members to determine a date, time, and location convenient for everyone. When a date is set, the student will complete the Schedule for the Presentation of the [Final Examination/Dissertation Defense](#) and submit a completed and fully signed copy to the Doctoral Program Coordinator electronically (via email) **by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to the defense date.** To be cleared to hold the defense, the student must have an

approved proposal on file with the Graduate School with approval 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 makes one of the following recommendations: (1) approve dissertation as-is, (2) approve dissertation with minor corrections, or (3) major corrections needed before approval. If the committee approves the dissertation, they will sign the Final Defense Report form.

Once all requested revisions are made, the student will provide copies of the revised dissertation to the department head and college dean for review and approval. If they approve of the dissertation, they will sign the Final Defense Report form where indicated. If the department head and/or college dean request changes to the manuscript, the student will make those changes and provide a copy of the revised dissertation to his or her advisor for review. When the student and his or her advisor determine that all changes have been made and that the document is ready for submission to the Graduate School/TDS, the student and his or her advisor will sign the Advisor's Approval to Submit Dissertation for [Graduate School Review](#) form. The student will submit the final dissertation along with all other required documents electronically (via email) to the Graduate School/TDS ([TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu)) for review and approval.

**Ultimately, the student is responsible for submitting all of the required materials to [TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu) by the relevant deadline.** All of the required items must be included with the submission email(s) for the final dissertation submission packet to be considered complete.

Items to include are as follows:

1. An electronic copy of the final dissertation in Microsoft Word format.
2. Final Defense Report with all signatures except that of the Graduate Dean. Once the final dissertation is approved, the Graduate Dean will sign the form and a copy of the form will be returned to the student and his or her advisor with the final, approved document.
3. Advisor's Approval to Submit Dissertation for Graduate School Review form signed by the student and his or her advisor.
4. Dissertation Information Sheet (sent to the student by the Doctoral Program Coordinator).
5. Copy of the iThenticate Similarity Report. The student's advisor may share the results with the Graduate School/TDS via iThenticate, or the student or his or her advisor may provide a PDF copy of the results. See the TDS webpage for iThenticate for more information and instructions for sharing results with TDS.

**The Graduate School/TDS retains the right not to accept late or incomplete submissions.**

Submissions received after the relevant deadline will be processed for the following semester.

The following is a link to the Academic Calendar, which includes all deadlines:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/academicCalendars/default.aspx>

#### **Graduate School/TDS Approval of Final Document:**

Once a student's thesis or dissertation is approved by the Graduate School/TDS, the student will receive email notification (via the student's myLeo account). The approval email will contain important information regarding final steps to take in order to be cleared for graduation, such as instructions on how to convert the final document in preparation for publication and a reminder

to pay all student fees. After TDS approves the PDF of the final document, the student will be provided a link for ProQuest with instructions for uploading the final document to the site. ProQuest will provide additional instructions as needed as the student provides the required information. The Graduate School requires students to purchase one (1) copy of the thesis or dissertation for the University (for your Advisor) at a cost of \$30. An additional fee of \$75 will be charged for copyrighting. The student may order extra bound copies for his or her own use at an additional cost.

### ITHENTICATE

The university contracts with iThenticate to help detect plagiarism in academic writing (theses and dissertations), whether accidental or on purpose. All theses and dissertations, both at the proposal stage and at the final stage, must be processed through iThenticate prior to submission to the Graduate School/TDS. Because a license is required to use iThenticate, **students are not permitted to use iThenticate**; the student's advisor should have an iThenticate account and is responsible for running the report for the student. However, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that either the student's advisor provides a copy of the results to the Graduate School/TDS (they are able to share the results via iThenticate), or a PDF version of the results is provided to the Graduate School/TDS with the submission packet.

To prepare a document for submission to iThenticate, the following pages are removed from the document:

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

When the paper is uploaded to the iThenticate website, iThenticate compares the paper to published material and generates a similarity score with a color-coded report that identifies which part(s) of the paper contributed to the score. The student's advisor will review the report and let the student know what revisions, if any, will be needed to avoid unoriginal writing (plagiarism). 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 a student's paper generates a score above 12%, the Graduate School/TDS may ask the student's advisor to provide written 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>

### THE GRADUATE SCHOOL/TDS's REVIEW PROCESS

Students will submit their thesis or dissertation documents to the Graduate School/TDS at two different stages of their program:

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

Please consult the [Thesis Program Checklist](#) or the [Doctoral Program Checklist](#) for the steps and timing for each stage in the process.

Before a defense (proposal or final) and by the deadlines set by your department, students must submit a document that meets the high standards of quality expected by their thesis or dissertation committee. After defending the proposal or final document, and prior to submitting it to TDS, students must carefully revise and edit the document. This includes, but is not limited to, editing for grammar, mechanics, and formatting and making all revisions required by the advisor and committee members. The primary purpose of TDS is to assist students in meeting the Graduate School formatting requirements. The TDS staff does not serve as editors or proofreaders; that responsibility lies with the student. **All students are expected to perform line-by-line proofreading and editing prior to submitting the proposal or final document for review by TDS.**

Documents that do not follow the basic formatting requirements of the Graduate School's thesis/dissertation template will be returned for proper formatting and the student's place in the review order will be forfeited. When the revised document is returned to the Graduate School/TDS and it is deemed to be in basic Graduate School template format, the paper will be placed next in line for review, based on when it was received by TDS.

Please see the section on Formatting of Proposal and Final Document in this guide for more detail on format requirements.

During the format review of the final document, TDS will return the student's document, copying his or advisor, requesting that the student, with the help of the student's advisor and/or committee members, as needed, incorporate the recommended changes throughout the entire document. The document should be resubmitted only when it has been thoroughly revised and reviewed. TDS keeps a running list of editors students have used in the past. For a copy of this list, please email [TDS@tamuc.edu](mailto:TDS@tamuc.edu).