



Graduate Thesis Guide

Instructions for Preparation and Submission of the Master's Thesis

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the *Graduate Thesis Guide* is to provide specific format requirements for the preparation and submission of the Master's thesis. These guidelines are the final authority on the uniform style that graduate theses must follow. For more detailed editorial requirements, follow your discipline's style manual as well as the recommendations of the Thesis Chair and Thesis Committee.

The *Graduate Thesis Guide* is updated as needed; therefore, it is incumbent on the student to ensure that his or her document follows the acceptable format and guidelines stipulated in the most current *Graduate Thesis Guide*. The rules set forth in this guide take precedence over any previous guides issued by the School of Graduate Studies. All Master's Degree candidates for a degree requiring a thesis must comply with the instructions in the Thesis Guide.

Note: Any questions regarding the format of the thesis not answered in this guide should be directed to your Thesis Chair and Thesis Committee.

SELECTING THESIS CHAIR & COMMITTEE MEMBERS

During the term prior to compiling and revising the thesis, the student will consult with his or her Graduate Program Director/Coordinator about choosing a chair for the thesis committee. Each thesis committee will have minimum of two members (i.e., one chair and one additional members).

Note: *the Thesis Chair must be a Clayton State Graduate Faculty member.*

The student in consultation with his or her Thesis Chair, once secured, will secure the agreement of the other committee member(s). The student then will submit a completed *Thesis Chair and Thesis Committee Selection Form* to his or her Graduate Program Director/Coordinator. Students are advised to plan ahead. Depending on how many committees a faculty member is already serving on, he or she may not be available to serve on another committee.

CHANGES TO THE THESIS COMMITTEE

If there is a change in a committee member, a revised *Thesis Chair and Thesis Committee Selection Form* must be submitted to his or her Graduate Program Director/Coordinator indicating the change. The student should give details of the revision (who was added, deleted, or replaced) on an attached page. The revised form must be signed by all current Thesis Committee members.

THESIS CHAIR/COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Advising the Student in Terms of:

Drafting and filing the *Thesis Prospectus Approval Form* by **no later than the last drop/add date** in the term preceding enrollment for the Thesis Course or after the completion all course work specified by program.

Suggesting and discussing the focus and format of the thesis.

Suggesting and discussing the focus, shape, and content of the prefatory essay.

Suggesting a reading list or other avenues of research.

Arranging and/or approving a schedule and timeline for completing research or other documents.

Reviewing and amending the schedule of tasks and timelines as well as monitoring the schedule and timeline, while taking into account the official deadlines in the Graduate Catalog.

Facilitating the Completion of the Project by:

Reading drafts of documents, annotating the drafts, and suggesting revisions in writing.

Conferencing with the student in terms of specific tasks for completing the thesis.

Conferencing with the student regarding theoretical issues and/or readings attendant to the thesis.

Signing all attendant documents, verifying completion of the thesis.

THESIS PROSPECTUS

Before beginning the data collection or analysis of the thesis, the student must prepare a thesis prospectus indicating their thesis title and topic. The student must complete the *Thesis Prospectus Approval Form* and have their Thesis Committee sign for approval.

After approval by the thesis committee, a copy of the *Thesis Prospectus Approval Form* will be submitted electronically to the School of Graduate Studies by **no later than the last drop/add date** in the term preceding enrollment for the Thesis Course or after the completion all course work specified by program. Or, if not enrolled in to a Thesis Course, the *Thesis Prospectus Approval Form* is due by **no later than the last drop/add date of the semester before graduation**.

Note: See the Academic Calendar for all submission deadlines.

THESIS PROSPECTUS FORMAT REQUIREMENTS

Summary and statement of the research problem, argument, or inquiry a concise description of:

- a. the question or topic to be examined in the research;
- b. the topic's relevance, including its relevance/importance to the field of study in the student's graduate degree program, related disciplinary field, and any other logical audiences;
- c. the topic's new, original or innovative approach/ inquiry to be used in the research.

Review of the established literature, background information, argument, or inquiry a substantial discussion of:

- a. relevant scholarly literature on the question, including ancillary and adjacent issues;
- b. relevant theoretical claims and perspectives; a. social and/or scholarly significance of question posed.

Method or treatment of the problem, argument, or inquiry a substantial, detailed, and discipline-related discussion of:

- a. evidence to be considered (social, archival, textual, media, questionnaire survey);
- b. methods to be utilized;
- c. theoretical perspectives to be engaged, interrogated, examined, or tested;
- d. exploration of possible outcomes includes a concise discussion of possible findings, including the significance, implications, and possible impacts of various findings;
- e. works cited;
- f. timetable of work to be submitted.

CHANGES TO THE THESIS TOPIC

If there is a substantial change in the thesis topic description, a revised *Thesis Prospectus Approval Form* must be submitted with the new title and/or description. The student, Thesis Chair, and Thesis Committee member(s) must sign the form. It is not necessary to submit a revised form for additions, deletions, or substitution of minor words, such as articles that do not alter the meaning. If in doubt, submit a revised form.

THESIS ORAL DEFENSE

Once the written thesis is approved, by at least one thesis committee member and indicated on the *Approval Form for Master's Thesis*, the student will prepare for their Oral Defense. In collaboration with the student's Thesis Chair and their Thesis Committee, the student will schedule a final discussion and presentation of the approved thesis. Following the student's presentation, the student's committee will ask questions related to the student's research project. The discussion may vary in content and format. The deadline for completion of the Thesis Oral Defense is **no later than midpoint of the term in which the student plans to graduate. Note: See the Academic Calendar for all submission deadlines.**

After the student successfully completes the defense presentation, he or she is required to make all corrections to the thesis as requested by the committee in a timely manner.

Thereafter, upon final approval, The Thesis Chair and the Graduate Director/Coordinator will sign the *Approval Form for Master Thesis*.

THESIS FORMAT REVIEW

Upon final approval and **by no later than the withdrawal deadline of the graduating semester**, students will email a pdf copy of the completed thesis, the approved *Thesis Prospectus Approval Form*, and *Approval Form for Master Thesis* to the School of Graduate Studies (schoolofgradstudies@clayton.edu) for format review.

Note: See the Academic Calendar for all submission deadlines.

Once a student's thesis is reviewed and meets all formatting requirements, the School of Graduate Studies will award a *Certificate of Thesis Approval* for binding. If a student's thesis is denied, the School of Graduate Studies will notify the student by email, listing all necessary changes in the *Thesis Feedback Form for Approval*. Students must make the proper corrections, **by no later than the last day of classes of the graduating semester**.

Note: See the Academic Calendar for all submission deadlines.

Approved theses will receive a *Certificate of Thesis Approval* to be submitted to the Library for binding. Students cannot submit their thesis for binding without a *Certificate of Thesis Approval*.

Note: DO NOT use another thesis as a model for a thesis; always check the most current thesis manual. DO NOT assume that because another thesis was accepted with the same format that yours will be accepted. A number of situations could arise: requirements or interpretations may have changed or an inexperienced checker may have let faulty formatting slip by, etc. When in doubt, check with your Thesis Chair or Committee. Theses which differ significantly from the requirements outlined in Graduate Thesis Guidelines will not be accepted, and the student's final graduation clearance may be delayed.

THESIS FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS

GENERAL FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS

Note: REGARDLESS OF THE STYLE USED, THE FINAL DRAFT OF THE THESIS MUST COMPLY WITH ALL THE REQUIREMENTS DESCRIBED IN THIS FORMATTING GUIDE.

Each student is responsible for proofreading and editing the final version of the thesis document; thus it is the student's responsibility to present for approval a document of professional quality, properly cited, and free of errors. The School of Graduate Studies does not prescribe a particular style of writing or documentation, but departments and committee members do. Consult with the Thesis Chair to determine how the thesis should be organized and what type of documentation style is required in your discipline.

The following sections specify the required general organization and format to be used in the final copy of each student's thesis.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS MANUSCRIPT

Note: All necessary thesis forms are on the School of Graduate Studies website at:
<https://www.clayton.edu/graduate/current-students/academic-policies>

The thesis will include:

The Title Page (noted as page “i”).

The Signature Page, with the original signatures of the student’s committee members, will be submitted with all three Library copies of the theses. The Signature Page is page “ii” of the thesis. If the student wishes to have additional bound copies of the thesis, the student will need an additional signature pages for each additional bound copy.

Copyright Page (noted as page “iii”).

Dedication (optional). If a Dedication is used, it should following the Copyright Page and be numbered as “iv”.

Abstract, no longer than 500 words. The Abstract provides concise information about what the reader can expect. (If there is a Dedication page, the Abstract is numbered as “v”. Without a Dedication page, the Abstract is page “iv”.)

Table of Contents (no page number)

Preface (optional), provides background information on the thesis explaining how and why the thesis topic was chosen. For example, the student may react to explored theories, process, and/or practical skills or the student may explain his/her reasons for exploring this specific topic. (The Preface should be listed on the Table of Contents and continue with the Roman numeral page numbering.)

Acknowledgement Page (optional), a brief statement of gratitude for special assistance. Acknowledgements may go on the same page as the Preface or on a separate page. (The Acknowledgements should be listed on the Table of Contents and continue with the Roman numeral page numbering.)

JUSTIFICATION

The preferred justification is the default “ragged-right,” with your type aligned on the left and unjustified on the right. Fully-justified type (creating extra spacing between words so that the text is perfectly aligned along the left and right margins) is allowed if the resulting spacing is pleasing and not excessive.

PAGE NUMBERING

Beginning with the Title Page, every page is assigned a number except the Table of Contents. All preliminary pages are numbered in lower-case Roman numerals, placed without punctuation in the

center of the page at least 3/4" (five lines) from the bottom of the page. Example: The Title Page and the Signature Page are considered to be pages "i" and "ii".

Text and reference pages are numbered consecutively in Arabic numerals, beginning with 1 on the first page of the text and so on. (Numerical numbering should start on the Introduction Page.) The numbers are placed without punctuation in the upper right-hand corner, 1" from the right and at least 3/4" (five lines) from the top of the page. All pages of the text and reference materials; including cover sheets, references/bibliographies, and appendices are numbered.

LANDSCAPE-ORIENTED PAGES

Page numbering for landscape-oriented pages must be set for the best on-screen readability; thus, page numbers should appear in the correct position (consistent with the position of the other page numbers) when the page is viewed on a screen. This is usually what word processing software does by default when pages are changed to landscape layout within a document.

Note: *Landscape pages are turned so that they are portrait-oriented in bound copies; thus, if your department requires you to obtain a bound copy, you may want to change the location of the page number in your printed version only.*

PAGE SIZE AND PAPER TYPE

Theses must utilize 8.5" x 11" paper. Theses may be printed on 25% white rag or standard copy paper.

MARGINS

Margins must be consistent throughout the document: the margins will be exactly the same on each page of the same type. Each page must have a margin of 1.5" on the left and at least 1" on the other three sides. On the first page of every major division (e.g. chapter, table of contents, references, etc.), a 2" margin is required at the top.

All table and figures must conform to the margin requirements (photographic reproduction— with enlargement or reduction—may be necessary). A subheading at the bottom of the page must have at least two full lines of text below it, or it should begin on the next page.

LINE SPACING

The body of the thesis, the abstract, and the acknowledgments must be double-spaced. Single spacing is allowed only in the following texts:

The abstract index words

Footnotes

Block quotations

Tables and figures and their captions

Reference/Bibliography page (if single spaced, double-space between entries)

Long quotations and reference entries should be spaced following the style used throughout the thesis (e.g. APA, Chicago, MLA). Photographs can be printed from the negatives on 8.5" x 11" photographic paper. If illustrations are mounted, dry mounting or permanent paper cement (dried underweight) may be used. Do not mount with rubber cement, glue, photo-mounting corners, tape, or staples. Use of oversized material should be avoided. If a folded page must be used, the folded edge should be at least ¼" from the right edge of the manuscript to avoid cutting at the bindery. The page number should appear in the upper right-hand corner of the folded page in alignment with pagination in the text. Large materials may be folded and inserted in a pocket in the appendices.

FONT SIZE

The body of the thesis, the abstract, and the acknowledgments must be in either 11 or 12-point font. No font size larger than 12 point is acceptable throughout the body of the thesis. A smaller font size is permitted only in the following cases: footnotes, subscripts, tables, figures, documents reproduced illustratively and portions of the main text where the content absolutely requires a different font (e.g., computer code, different voices in a dialogue, etc.)

FONT TYPE

The entire thesis type, including figure and table captions and all page numbers, must be typed in the same font style. The selection of the font type is very important. The font type should be a typical style, associated with a standard word processing program. Non-typical or non-standard fonts may not survive the conversion into PDF format or may cause the document to be excessively large.

HEADINGS AND SUBHEADINGS

The School of Graduate Studies does not set specific style standards for the format of chapter headings and subheadings, except for font size. Students should refer to the standards set by their department's choice of style manual. Regardless of the chosen formatting style, the School of Graduate Studies requires the style to be applied consistently to all headings and subheadings throughout the document. 4.11 Widows and Orphans

No heading or subheading can appear at the bottom of a page with less than two lines of text underneath. If this occurs, the heading must be pushed to the top of the next page. In addition, the first or last line of a paragraph cannot be isolated by a page break.

TABLES AND FIGURES

All figures and tables must fit within the margins described earlier in this manual. Large tables and figures must be reduced in size in order to meet the margin requirements; however, captions and page numbers will still appear at a normal size. Tables and figures may be rotated 90 degrees so that the bottom of the table or figure runs along the right edge of the page.

Numbering: Figures and tables must be uniquely numbered in one of the following two manners:

Consecutive numbering throughout the thesis, associated chapter and figure/table number designation, e.g., Figure 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, etc.

Placement: A table or figure embedded in the text (should not have excessive blank space above or below the figure/table) will be placed on a separate page immediately following the text where the table or figure is first cited (no extra space should be left at the bottom of the previous page; the text should run continuously).

Table Captions: The number and caption of a table will be placed above the table. The table and the associated caption must appear in the same page as the table. Captions will be formatted in a consistent style throughout the document.

Figure Captions: The number and caption of a figure will be placed below the figure or on a separate page preceding the figure. Captions will be formatted in a consistent style throughout the document.

REFERENCES /BIBLIOGRAPHY

Treat the title of the reference/bibliography section the same as all other sections/chapters. Format the entries according to your department or discipline's style manual. If single spacing is used for each reference, incorporate double-spacing between entries.

APPENDICES

Appendices will be placed after the references. The appendices must fit within the required margins, even if they contain reproduced content or tables and figures. Appendices will be listed on the Table of Contents. If only one appendix is used, it should be titled "Appendix," not "Appendix A." Multiple appendices should be listed as "Appendix A", "Appendix B" and so on as needed.

JOURNAL ARTICLES USED AS CHAPTERS

In some departments, theses may include as chapters and/or articles that have been or will be submitted to scholarly journals. This is an acceptable style; however, the student must be listed either as the sole author or the first co-author of each article used as a chapter. In addition, the general formatting requirements listed above apply to articles used as chapters. You **MUST** apply a consistent

style in your font, headings, subheadings, tables and figures throughout each article used as a chapter, as well as your general introduction and conclusion.

PRINTING

Printing should be done with computer technology using a laser printer, not dot-matrix. Certain symbols, characters, or special markings, and other fonts not available to certain printers must be drawn neatly and uniformly by hand with black, permanent, drawing ink.

The thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, for proofing, should be emailed as a pdf to schoolofgradstudies@clayton.edu. The proofing pdf should follow the same thesis formatting rules as a final printed copy.

The final copy (submitted to the Library) should be a clean, correctly printed copy with no detectable corrections. No erasures, cross outs, strikeouts, insertions, correction fluid or tape is permitted, and printed on 8.5" x 11" paper.

COPYRIGHTING PERMISSION

The student is required to obtain written permission from the author or publishers to quote extensively from copyrighted material. Such permission is usually granted on condition that acknowledgment is made. If payment is required, the thesis author is responsible for the payment. Permission for the use of all such materials must be granted before the thesis is submitted to the School of Graduate Studies.

Note: *You must have prior permission from the publisher to reprint large sections of published, work even if you are the author.*

EXAMPLES OF COMMON FORMATTING MISTAKES TO AVOID

Incorrect Margins and Orientation

Margin specifications must be met throughout the entire thesis; including the preliminary pages, the text, and reference material as well as all tables and figures.

Note: *Tables and figures in a rotated orientation must be placed on portrait-oriented pages.*

Fonts and Spacing Problems

The text must be double-spaced, except as described in Line Spacing. The Table of Contents, Lists of Figures and Tables, and References will all be double-spaced between entries and only single-spaced within entries.

Incorrect Page Number Placement

Page numbers must be in the same location and orientation on all numbered pages, including figures and tables. Check for any missing pages. The Title Page, Signature Page, Copyright Page, Dedication, Abstract, , Table of Contents, Preface and Acknowledgements do not bear numerical page numbers; however, count them in the number of pages (using Roman numerals).

Flawed Image Quality

All figures, tables, or illustrations used in the body of the text must be of high image quality. It is the student's responsibility to sharpen and/or clean up images imported from external programs.

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID WHEN TURNING IN YOUR THESIS

The School of Graduate Studies processes a large number of theses each semester. Documents are reviewed mainly for visual consistency and correct format.

Note: *Final acceptance of a thesis will be delayed when required documents are missing or incomplete.*

Below are some of the most common mistakes in submitting a thesis:

Missed Deadlines -Because of the large number of theses to be processed within a short time, all deadlines are firm.

Missing Signatures on the Signature Page. Check very carefully to ensure all required signatures have been secured.

Missing Thesis and/or *Approval Form for Master's Thesis*

THESIS BINDING AND OBTAINING PERSONAL COPIES OF THE FINAL THESIS

To complete binding of the theses, the student will submit a *Certificate of Approval* provided by the School of Graduate Studies, three (3) copies of the required theses (each with a Signature Page), and any additional copies that the student would like bound, to the Clayton State University Library. One bound copy of the thesis is for the student and the remaining two are for the university.

The student will pay for the binding of all three copies, plus the costs for any additional copies. Students will pay \$15.00 per copy to bind the thesis. Students can pick up personal copies at the Library with no additional charge or pay a mailing fee of \$10.00 for the first copy and \$5.00 for each additional copy. **Payment may be made by Laker Card only.** Payment should be delivered to the Library along with the copies to be bound.

Information regarding thesis binding can be found at <https://www.clayton.edu/library/Thesis-Binding-Procedures>. The student will be notified by the Clayton State University Library by phone or email once the binding has been completed.

SAMPLE PAGES

This section contains samples/templates of the preliminary pages that will be included in the student's thesis. Follow the spacing guidelines in the sample pages provided; although the student does not need a precise match, please match the general structure as closely as possible.

Sample Title Page

<Title>

By

<Author>

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of Masters of <Name Graduate Degree Program>
In College of <Name of College or School>

Clayton State University
Morrow, Georgia

Graduation Year

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Sample Signature Page

College of <Name of College or School>

Clayton State University
Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the Thesis of
<Student's Name Inserted Here>

Has been approved by the committee for the thesis requirement for the
Master of <Name Graduate Degree Program>
in the College of <Name of College or School>
At the <Month and Year> graduation

Thesis Committee:

Thesis Chair, insert chair's name here

Thesis Committee Member, insert member's name here

Sample Copyright Page

©2021

<Insert student's name here>
All Rights Reserved

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FORMS

Calendar of Thesis Deliverables and Due Dates

<https://www.clayton.edu/graduate/current-students/calendar-of-thesis-deliverables-and-due-dates.pdf>

Thesis Checklist

<https://www.clayton.edu/graduate/current-students/thesis-checklist.pdf>

Thesis Chair and Thesis Committee Members Selection Form

<https://www.clayton.edu/graduate/current-students/thesis-chair-and-thesis-committee-selection-form.pdf>

Thesis Prospectus Approval Form

<https://www.clayton.edu/graduate/current-students/thesis-prospectus-approval-form.pdf>

Approval Form for Master's Thesis

<https://www.clayton.edu/graduate/current-students/approval-form-for-master-thesis.pdf>

Thesis Title Page

<https://www.clayton.edu/graduate/current-students/thesis-title-page.pdf>

Thesis Signature Page

Two Signatures

<https://www.clayton.edu/graduate/current-students/thesis-two-signatures-.pdf>

Three Signatures

<https://www.clayton.edu/graduate/current-students/thesis-three-signatures.pdf>