

Office of Graduate Studies

Master's Thesis  
Guidelines

West Chester University of  
Pennsylvania  
2017

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This manual is adaptation of previous WCU Thesis Manuals and the Thesis Guidelines of the College of Graduate Studies at Kutztown University

## INTRODUCTION

This manual has been designed as a guide for West Chester University master's degree students to follow as they write their theses. **It is recommended that students read this manual as soon as they schedule for thesis credits.**

The manual focuses on the structural elements of the thesis and does not replace a style manual. Different disciplines of study use different standards of style in their scholarly work. The thesis committee will stipulate the expected style to be used. The use of grammar handbooks and computer manuals will also complement information included here. In addition, a previously written and submitted thesis should not be used as a guide for the thesis writer because of the possibility of overlooked errors. Instead, students should consult this manual in conjunction with a style manual, and direct their questions to their thesis advisor or to the Office of Graduate Studies.

# Master's Thesis Guidelines

## I. Purpose of the Thesis

Writing a thesis offers the student an excellent research opportunity and experience. Identifying and defining a problem, locating and evaluating relevant information and executing ways of getting clear answers to good questions, and mastering the conventions of research writing are the essence of scholarship.

## II. The Thesis Committee and the Student

When a student begins to write thesis, he/she will work closely with an assigned thesis advisor. The thesis advisor chooses additional (usually 2) faculty members to constitute the thesis committee.

Although different departments may differ in the manner a thesis committee works with students, generally the advisor will expect that the student will:

- a. Obtain the advisor's approval of the topic selected for research.
- b. Submit an outline of the proposed thesis indicating the topic to be studied, the purpose to be fulfilled, the procedure to be used, and information that the advisor deems to be pertinent.
- c. Confer with the advisor frequently to as the work progresses in order to obtain approval of each phase of the project. Failure to do this may result in the need to re-write certain sections, or even the entire document.
- d. Obtain the committee's final approval of the finished product.

While the student should look to the committee for guidance and objective critique as the work progresses, the student should not submit rough drafts which have not been neatly printed and proofed for spelling and grammatical errors. The advisor's role is to help shape the content and explain some of the intricacies scholarly style, not to serve as a proofreader.

## III. Format for the Thesis

Theses adhere to standard scholarly styles and the style format is designated by the student's academic department. Style manuals provide detail on formats and should be **consistently used** throughout the document including the reference pages and appendices. The WCU library provides online information about standard styles in the area of the homepage labeled research help.

Consistent and accurate documentation of all sources cited is expected. Plagiarism is intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own. The most blatant form of plagiarism is reproducing someone else's sentences or phrases, more or less verbatim, and representing them as your own wording. The consequences of plagiarism are clearly outlined in the Academic Dishonesty section of the *Graduate Catalog*.

A master's thesis typically consists of preliminary pages, chapters forming the body of the thesis and supplementary materials.

### ***Margin Settings and Justification***

**Thesis margins are dictated by the requirements of the F.H. Green Library bindery, not the style manual.** Thesis margins are dictated by the requirements of the F.H. Green Library bindery, not the style manual. All margins (left, top, right, and bottom) should be no less than 1.25 inches. All pages should be left-justified with ragged right margins.

### ***Pagination***

Beginning with the first page of the text **after the Preliminary pages**, all pages should be numbered consecutively throughout the manuscript, including the reference list and the appendices. Pagination using letter suffixes (i.e. 10a and 10b) is not acceptable. Ensure that pages do not end with a single line of a paragraph or word. Secondly make sure that the page does not begin with a single word/phrase or a single line from a paragraph on the previous page.

### ***Divisions***

The manuscript should follow a logical scheme consistently throughout the work. Chapters are the most common division with sub-headings within as dictated by the style manual used. Each chapter begins on a new page, sub-headings do not. The general text should be doubled-spaced.

### ***Font***

**A font of New Times Roman size 12 is recommended and should be used.** The font and size should be consistent throughout the thesis. Script or other unusual font styles are not acceptable. **While bolding is a commonly used word processing feature, it is not appropriate in a thesis manuscript.**

## *Preliminary Pages*

The preliminary pages of a master's thesis include signature/approvals pages, a title page, an abstract restricted to 350 words, acknowledgements, a table of contents, and if applicable, a list of tables and figures. **The pages are not numbered and should appear in the following sequence:**

### *Blank Page Abstract*

The abstract should contain a statement of the topic, an explanation of the methods and procedures employed, and a summary of the findings and conclusions. The abstract is limited to 350 words. References are generally limited, although a few citations from the thesis may be included (see *Example 1*).

### *Title Page*

See *Example 2* for a sample title page. Follow it carefully! The date should be month and year in which degree will be granted.

You may wish to place a notice of copyright on your title page. This ensures your right to reprint, sell, and copy the text as well as to extract portions for use in other works. For more information go to [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov)

### *Approval Page*

The approval page should be followed carefully as well (see *Example 3*.) You will substitute the correct degree and program name, and the actual names of the committee chair, members, and **the current Dean of Graduate Studies**.

Approval pages must be printed on 22-24 pound weight of cotton paper (100%) (A watermark on each page will clearly reveal the cotton content when held up to the light.) and be in the same font as the remainder of the thesis. Black ink is recommended for the signatures.

### *Acknowledgements Page*

The acknowledgment section is used to recognize those who helped with the thesis project. The advisor, thesis committee, family members, people who assisted in data collection and anyone that the student wishes to recognize should be mentioned here (see *Example 4*).

### *Table of Contents*

The table of contents includes chapter headings and subheadings together with the page numbers on which these can be found. Uppercase headings are usually used for chapters (see *Example 5*).

#### *List of Tables/List of Figures/List of Plates*

The list of tables/figures should give the name and number of each table or figure and the page number where it can be found (see *Example 6*).

#### ***Body of the Thesis***

Most theses will include an introduction, a body and a conclusion, and major divisions will comprise chapters. The format for the body of the thesis will vary depending on the type of research that is conducted. The student should confer with his/her advisor about the best format for the specific topic and research methods that are employed. Some general guidelines follow:

**Historical research** is often presented in as an explanatory narrative with the literature review integrated into the body of the thesis. Chapters indicate the topics that are relevant to the story being told and way it unfolds.

**Philosophical research** is reported in the form of an argument. Chapters contain exposition and/or analyses of factors and /or premises necessary to establish acceptance of the conclusion(s). The literature review may be a separate chapter, or may be integrated into the body of the thesis.

**Qualitative research** often is presented in a narrative, with attention to voices and examples of the people who have provided the information central to the study. Chapters indicate the topics explored. *Analytical* qualitative reports use an objective writing style where the researcher's voice is subdued or silent (third person). *Reflective* qualitative reports are characterized by the presence of the researcher's voice (first person) and more literary freedom of expression is allowed.

**Quantitative research** requires a more formal structure than other types. Following the introductory chapter which introduces the problem and defines terms, there is usually a literature review chapter, a chapter on procedures, a results chapter, and a chapter containing discussion and conclusions. It is very important that the result/findings chapter contain *only* data collected by the researcher, with all interpretation and implications left to the discussion chapter.

Regardless of format used, each chapter begins on a new page, two lines down from the top margin, with the chapter numbers and title centered (see example on page).

This description of the body of the thesis does not attempt to be full and comprehensive. The advisor will help the student to develop each chapter of the thesis

appropriately in view of the topic being studied and the procedures and methods employed.

### ***Supplementary Material***

The final section of the thesis contains the reference list of works cited within the document and appendices. Reference list formats are dictated by the style manual used. Example 7 is a reference list in APA format. Copies of instruments used, cover letters, survey forms, interview schedules, computer programs are appropriately placed in the appendices.

### **Word-processing and Printing**

Most word-processing software should have all of the features necessary for even the most complex thesis. Whatever software is selected, the student is cautioned to back up work on an alternate media format.

Laser printers are capable of producing a finished copy of adequate quality.

## **IV. PERMISSIONS**

### ***Institutional Review Board***

The Institutional Review Board ensures that all research by and for West Chester University is reviewed and approved to comply with ethical principles and legal requirements pertaining to the rights of human subjects, animal welfare, and the use of hazardous substances. If you intend to use human subjects, animals, or chemicals in any way in your thesis research, you must attain approval from the IRB. Include a copy of the IRB approval in the appendix of your completed thesis.

Information about the IRB and guidelines are available at the WCU Office of Sponsored Research and Faculty Development website ([www.wcupa.edu/\\_fac/staff/facdev/humans.htm](http://www.wcupa.edu/_fac/staff/facdev/humans.htm)).

### ***Human Subjects Committee***

This committee reviews all research projects involving human subjects conducted by individuals affiliated with the University to confirm that subjects' rights, privacy, welfare, and civil liberties are protected.

### ***Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee***

This committee oversees activities involving animals used in training, instruction, or research. It provides information on the human practice of animal care and use, and research or testing methods that minimize the number of animals required to obtain

valid results and minimize animal distress as established by the Public Health Services Act.

#### *Academic Hazardous Materials Committee*

This committee oversees all activities involving management of regulatory compliance issues for both health and safety as it applies to teaching and research mandated by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Department of HHS Guidelines, OSHA, EPA and the Pennsylvania Act 159-1984.

### **V. Oral Presentation**

After the student has completed the thesis, an oral presentation (defense) of the thesis is usually required by the academic department. The thesis advisor will assist the student with scheduling the presentation.

### **VI. Deadline for Submission**

After the oral presentation (defense) has been completed, the student must submit the thesis to the Office of Graduate Studies for a final review by the Dean of Graduate Studies in order to graduate in a given semester. The following must be submitted by the applicable deadline dates posted on the Graduate Studies website:

- Minimum of two or more approval pages on 22-24 pound bond paper with a minimum of 100% cotton content (A watermark on each page will clearly reveal the cotton content when held up to the light.), signed by all members of the thesis committee

and

- One electronic copy emailed to the Graduate Studies Master's Thesis Coordinator [jkrier@wcupa.edu](mailto:jkrier@wcupa.edu) or a hard copy of the thesis printed on copy paper for final review by the Graduate Dean.

**Once the Graduate Dean has read, requested revisions, and/or approved, the thesis the student will receive an approval email with information about contacting the Library before printing up the manuscripts for binding.**

### **Reproduction**

The University requires that you order at least 2 copies, one for Special Collections and one for Circulation in the library)

\*Please note that individual departments may require additional copies, and you may also want to order personal copies.

Students should submit no less than 2 FINAL copies of the thesis printed single sided on 8 ½ X 11 inch white 22-24 pound 100% cotton bond paper. (A watermark on each page will clearly reveal the cotton content when held up to the light.) These copies will be bound.

**The cost for binding is \$20.86 per copy.** This fee is to be paid at the time of submission to the library by money order. Additional bound copies for personal use may be ordered at that time.

While one of the copies may be an original, this is not required. Because sections of the manuscript may be photocopied, microfilmed or digitalized (usually in black and white) for broader distribution, **color images should be used only in the appendices.**

A number of commercial printing firms in the area will make photocopies for a modest fee, but any laser printer is capable of producing acceptable results.

## EXAMPLES

The examples on the following pages are **intended to illustrate the format elements previously discussed**. The examples are presented according to the style manual of the American Psychological Association. Students should consult the style manual designated by their department.

**Example 1- Abstract**

Abstract

An Investigation of the Relationship between a Viewers Age and Motion Picture Viewing Patterns By Mary B. Student Chairperson: David R. Faculty Ph.D.

In the 1990s various studies reported findings about the motion picture viewing patterns. More recently Clark (2013) found that age played a significant role in viewing Selection, while Moore (2012) found that people's preferences in what they want out of life are changing.

This thesis explores the relationship between age and motion picture viewing Patterns by means of a survey of 145 randomly selected subjects. Subjects were asked how many hours of movies they viewed in an average month, the title of their favorite movie, their favorite actor and actress, and their age.

Analysis of the data yielded several significant relationships. Young adults between the ages of 16-21 demonstrated a high frequency of movie viewing. As the age increased the frequency of movie viewing decreased until age 65 when it increased significantly.

The young adults identified with fantasy characters while the 22-65 year old group appeared to identify with real characters. Comedy was the most popular type of movie for all categories.

**Example 2- Title Page**

An Investigation of the Relationship between a Viewers Age and Motion Picture

Viewing Patterns

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the

Department of Communication Studies

West Chester University

West Chester, Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts

By

Mary B. Student

May 2015

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**Example 3-Approval page**

Mary B. Student  
Approval of Thesis  
for  
Master of Arts Degree  
In  
Communication Studies

COMMITTEE MEMBERS    Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Daniel Delta, PhD, Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Beta, EdD

\_\_\_\_\_  
Carol Gamma, PhD

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeffery L. Osgood, Jr., PhD, MPA  
Senior Vice Provost and Dean, Graduate  
Studies

#### **Example 4-Acknowledgements**

##### *Acknowledgements*

I wish to express my appreciation to all those who made this thesis possible. This includes the many people who participated as subjects for the study, the professors who provided guidance and encouragement, and the University staff who made it possible.

I would also like to thank my family for their patience and assistance as we lived through the thesis project.

**Example 5- Table of Contents**

Table of Contents

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**Example 6 –List of Tables and Figures**

List of Tables and Figures

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2. Movie Preferences by Percent of Age Group.....	53
3. Favorite Actress and Actor by Percent of Age Group.....	55

  

Figures	Page
1. Favorite character type by percent of age group.....	54
2. Movie preferences by viewing frequency.....	56

## Example 7-References -APA Format

### References

- Avrill, J. (2011). Keys to the puzzle: Recognizing strengths in a rural community. *Public Health Nursing, 20*, 449-455.
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- Clark, N. & Buell, A. (2012). Community assessment: An innovative approach. *Nurse Educator, 29*, 203-207.
- Eide, P.J., Hahn, L., Bayne, T., Allen, C.B., & Swain, D. (2013). The population-focused analysis project for teaching community health. *Nursing Education Perspectives, 27*, 22-27.
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- Murray, C., Salomon, J., Mathers, C. & Lopez, A. (2013). *Summary measures of Population health: Conceptual, ethical, technical, and measurement issues*. Geneva: WHO.

