

THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY
Office of Graduate Studies

Ewing, New Jersey 08628

THESIS GUIDELINES
FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Thesis Guidelines
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INTRODUCTION

A master's thesis is evidence that a student is capable of conducting in-depth, independent research. As such, it may serve as an introduction to further research, including the doctoral dissertation. The thesis may also, after appropriate revision, be published at a scholarly conference or in a journal. In some programs, the successful completion of the thesis and its oral defense may serve as an approved culminating experience.

These guidelines set forth the requirements established by the Graduate Programs Council of The College of New Jersey for a master's degree thesis. Individual programs may have various additional requirements or may specify requirements in greater detail. It is the responsibility of the graduate student to learn from his/her Thesis Committee what, if any, special programmatic requirements apply, and the thesis should be prepared in accordance with these special requirements. In the absence of special programmatic requirements, the final product should conform to these basic guidelines.

GENERAL INFORMATION

A student may choose to write a thesis that belongs to any of the following classifications or any other original scholarly investigation determined by the program to be appropriate to the discipline.

- I. Clinical and Case Studies
- II. Evidence-Based Studies
- III. Descriptive Survey Studies
- IV. Developmental and Growth Studies
- V. Experimental Studies
- VI. Historical and Historiographic Studies

VII. Philosophical Studies

VIII. Professional Studies

As scholars engaged in studies at an advanced academic level, graduate students must realize that quality writing is expected of them when they undertake the writing of a thesis. Standard Written English, free from spelling errors and typographical errors, is an absolute necessity.

The form and style, including bibliography, documentation, tables, and graphs, must be consistent throughout and should follow prevailing professional standards as specified by leading journals and publications in the student's field of study. It is the student's responsibility to learn which style manual is required by his/her program, to use the most recent edition, and to follow it scrupulously. Commonly used manuals are the *Chicago Manual of Style* (Chicago) and the guidelines of the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the American Psychological Association (APA).

PROCEDURAL STEPS FOR WRITING A THESIS

- I. A thesis topic may be considered by the student upon consultation with and approval by the Coordinator of the Graduate Program or another faculty member appointed by the Graduate Coordinator. The student may then register for the appropriate thesis course included in his/her program. A grade of "In Progress" will be assigned for each semester that the thesis is not completed. No student may receive thesis advisement who is not registered. The student must register for the semester during which he/she defends the thesis. The thesis must be completed within two years of the initial registration date. Unless otherwise specified by the program, no more than six hours of thesis credit will be applied toward the degree.

Although a thesis is usually an individual undertaking, in some cases a cooperative venture may be approved. The nature of any cooperative project must be such that the contribution of each participant can be clearly defined and evaluated. A statement of the rationale for more than one participant and a clear delineation of the responsibility of each participant must be attached to the Thesis Proposal Application if a cooperative project is being proposed.

- II. A Thesis Committee may be selected by the student with the guidance and approval of the Graduate Program Coordinator in accordance with the following guidelines:
 - A. The committee shall be composed of a minimum of two and a maximum of four faculty members.
 - B. At least one faculty member must be from the student's program. Members should be chosen whose areas of specialization will enable them to make maximum contributions.
 - C. All members of the committee must have an appropriate terminal degree. (Exceptions must be approved by the student's Graduate Program Coordinator.)
 - D. The chair of the committee may be chosen by the student with the approval of the Graduate Program Coordinator. Barring unusual circumstances, the chair must be a faculty member from the student's program.
- III. The following forms must be completed by the student, then approved by the Graduate Program Coordinator, the members of the Thesis Committee, and the Department Chairperson (if applicable). They should then be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies as part of the student's permanent academic record.
 - A. Program Approval of Proposed Thesis Topic

B. Thesis Proposal Application

C. Outline of Proposed Thesis

PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

I. The student will develop a thesis proposal in consultation with his/her Thesis Committee. In general, a thesis proposal should include the following sections:

A. Title Page

B. Table of Contents, including chapter titles

C. Statement of the Problem (when appropriate)

D. Statement of the Purpose of the Study

E. Statement of the Hypothesis (when appropriate)

F. Survey of Related Literature

G. Outline of Procedures to be Followed and Statement of Resources
Necessary

H. Working Bibliography

(For specific requirements in the student's discipline the student should consult his/her Program Coordinator.)

II. The thesis proposal will be reviewed and must be approved by the student's Thesis Committee. It is the responsibility of the Thesis Committee members to insure that both the quantity and quality of the work outlined meet the standards for a proposal or for a thesis. Committee approval will be conveyed by each member's signature on the Thesis Proposal Title Page.

III. After approval by the student's Thesis Committee, the thesis proposal is submitted to the Graduate Program Coordinator and the Department Chairperson (if applicable) for their approval. The approval of the thesis proposal is then

conveyed to the appropriate Dean. Two copies of the proposal must accompany this form.

- IV. After the proposal has been approved, the student develops the thesis in consultation with his/her Thesis Committee and submits rough drafts of the thesis to each committee member for critical analysis. It is the responsibility of the Thesis Committee chairperson to schedule meetings with the student and the other members of the committee as necessary.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE THESIS

I. General Considerations

As the magnitude of the project can be overwhelming, it may be helpful to think of the thesis as a series of shorter papers. A thesis can also be overwhelming to read if the organization is unclear. It is advisable to state main points in prominent places in the text.

II. Thesis Format

The completed thesis should include the developed sections of the proposal format. Each section must be identified by an appropriate title and/or chapter designation. It is recommended that the arrangement of the contents include the following, unless otherwise approved by the Thesis Committee.

A. The Preliminaries

1. Title Page
2. Abstract
3. Acknowledgements
4. Table of Contents
5. List of Tables

6. List of Figures

B. The Abstract

1. Purpose

The major purpose of the abstract is to provide information that will enable a potential reader to decide whether he/she wishes to read the complete thesis. It also provides the Program with a brief narrative of the study that the student can submit for publication in professional journals.

2. Format

The following information should be generally included in the abstract:

- a. A brief statement of the problem or purpose of the study.
- b. A description of the methods, techniques, and data used.
- c. The major finding of the study.

The nature of the abstract can vary with one type of thesis and in some cases might take a different form. However, in most cases, useful abstracts will contain the three categories of information that have been noted.

3. Length and location in final product

a. Length

The abstract should not exceed 350 words. All copies must be double-spaced and if footnote references are necessary, they should be listed at the end of the abstract, not at the bottom of each page.

b. Location and Format

The abstract should precede the title page of the thesis. The word “ABSTRACT” should be typed in capital letters in the center at the top of the first page of the abstract. The title of the thesis should be typed in capital letters at the top of the first page under the heading “ABSTRACT”. The word “BY” should be typed in the center of the page two spaces below the title of the thesis. The name of the student should be two spaces below the word “BY” and the text of the abstract should begin on the same page, four spaces below the name. The second and third pages of the abstract should bear only the student’s name in the top right-hand corner.

C. The Text

When appropriate, the following sections should be included in the text:

1. Introduction
 - a. Statement of the Problem
 - b. Statement of the Purpose of the Study
 - c. Statement of the Hypothesis
 - d. Limitations and Delimitations
 - e. Definition of Terms
2. Review of Related Literature
 - a. Subdivisions may be included as necessary
 - b. Summary
3. Procedure for the Study
 - a. The sample

- b. Instruments used
- c. Techniques for collecting data
- d. Methods of treating data
- e. Methods of presenting data
- 4. Findings
 - a. Analysis of the data
 - b. Acceptance or rejection of the stated hypothesis
- 5. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations
- D. Reference Materials
 - 1. Footnotes (or Endnotes)
 - 2. Bibliography
 - 3. Appendices

FORMAT OF THE PROPOSAL AND THESIS

I. General Considerations

The proposal, the thesis, and all other material that is submitted must be double-spaced, in a standard font, and neat and free of errors. All pages should be single-sided and must be submitted on paper of standard size and color. Left hand margins must be 1 ½”, and other margins 1”. All pages are to be numbered except the title page, including bibliography, table of contents, and all plates and graphs. Small Roman numerals are to be used before the main body of the document begins. Arabic numbers are to be used for the consecutive numbering of all remaining pages.

II. Assistance in Preparation

It is the student's responsibility to present to his/her Thesis Committee material that is free of errors and conforms to these guidelines, along with any special programmatic requirements. If assistance in editing or producing the material is necessary, this should be obtained before the final drafts of the proposal and thesis are submitted to the committee.

CULMINATING PROCEDURE AND TIME SCHEDULE

- I. When the thesis has been successfully completed and is in conformity with the standards presented above, it is the student's responsibility to distribute a copy of the completed draft to each Thesis Committee member. This should be done no later than four (4) weeks prior to the last day of classes during the semester of completion. Submission at this time will allow for the student's Thesis Committee to make a final review of the thesis and to hear the student's oral defense.
- II. The chair of the thesis committee will schedule the student's oral defense of his/her thesis to take place no later than two (2) weeks after the student submits a copy to each Thesis Committee member. The major purpose of the oral defense is to ensure the student's knowledge of the subject matter addressed in the thesis, but the defense can also be considered good practice for presenting the student's research at a scholarly conference.
- III. The Thesis Committee will provide its final approval if both the quality and quantity of the thesis meet the standards of the Program and The College, if the final draft substantially meets the style requirements appropriate to the Program, and if the student is able to defend the thesis orally to the satisfaction of the Thesis Committee.

IV. After the thesis has been approved by all committee members, the Coordinator of the Graduate Program, and the Department Chairperson (if applicable), the student is to submit three (3) copies no later than the last day of classes during the fall and spring semesters and August 1st for August graduation. The copies may be professionally bound or in spring back binders. (Additional copies may be required if any member of the student's Thesis Committee desires a personal copy.)