

# Thesis, Dissertation, or Project Guide

## Updated Fall 2007

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### George Mason University



For most recent version, please see:  
<http://thesis.gmu.edu/dtformsnew.htm>

**A GUIDE FOR PREPARATION AND FORMATTING**

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## *Introduction*

The thesis, dissertation, or project should demonstrate a student's ability to carry out independent research. This research should be closely related to the student's general academic objectives and contribute creatively to knowledge. The student should select research topics as early as possible in his or her graduate career in consultation with an advisor. When choosing a topic, the student should take into consideration his or her background and interests, ability to handle the problem, accessibility of research materials, and the probable significance of the project. Early formation of the topic enables the student to acquire the necessary tools of research, such as languages, statistics, or other procedures that will ensure successful completion of the project. A well conceived plan of graduate study is very important.

Regulations contained in this guide apply to all theses, dissertations, and projects submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the master's or doctoral degree at George Mason University. This guide describes the required format of the thesis or dissertation, notes the arrangement of contents, and discusses procedures concerning duplication, binding, and microfilming. This guide is not designed to instruct the student how to write a thesis or dissertation or to prescribe exactly the form that the notes or bibliography should follow; these differ by discipline. All questions concerning the content of the thesis or dissertation and its organization should be resolved with the student's director.

Because the thesis or dissertation is considered a professional contribution, the student should follow the method of annotation that the department has designated as acceptable. The student is responsible for obtaining any necessary permissions for the use of published or unpublished material and for crediting permissions in the thesis or dissertation.

George Mason University requires the strict adherence to the formats described in this guide as all dissertations, theses, and projects must be reviewed by the University Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator prior to final submission. The student should also be familiar with the contents of the appropriate department's stylistic regulations. For more information concerning format review and final submission requirements, please contact University Dissertation and Thesis Services at 703-993-2222. University Dissertation and Thesis Services' web site can be found at:

<http://thesis.gmu.edu>

## *Committees and Proposals*

### **Thesis Committee**

After the initial consultation on the topic with the major adviser, the master's thesis committee is formally named by the candidate's department chair, who also designates the major professor as chair of the master's thesis committee. The committee consists of at least three persons, one of whom may be chosen from outside the department and may be from outside the university. The committee must be formally appointed before the thesis proposal is approved.

### **Dissertation Committee**

The graduate dean or director appoints the doctoral supervisory committee upon the recommendation of the department chair. The committee consists of a professor from the department of the student's major and at least two other members of the graduate faculty, one of whom must be outside the doctoral student's department. Additional members may be appointed who are from outside the university. A professor from the student's major department must chair the committee.

## **Procedure for Submitting the Thesis or Dissertation Proposal**

Proposals for theses, dissertations, and projects are not subject to format review by the University Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator. Students should contact their department or program office for instructions regarding the proper format and submission process for proposals. These instructions will vary by department and program.

## *Preparing the Manuscript*

### **Arrangement of Contents**

A thesis or dissertation has three major parts--preliminary pages, text, and reference material. The appendices (if included) are followed by the reference material, and vitae (biography of student). Although these divisions are not so labeled in the thesis or dissertation, the terms are used here for the sake of convenience.

### **The Preliminary Pages**

The preliminary pages come before the text (chapter material) of the dissertation, thesis, or project. They are numbered one inch from the bottom center of the page using consecutive lowercase Roman numerals, beginning with the page following the title page. The preliminary pages include the following in the order given:

1. \*approval sheet (required) not paginated
2. \*title page (required) not paginated
3. copyright page (optional): paginated
4. dedication page (optional): paginated
5. acknowledgement page: (optional): paginated
6. \*table of contents: (required): paginated
7. list of tables (if used): paginated
8. list of figures (if used): paginated
9. list of abbreviations or symbols (if used): paginated
10. \*abstract: (required): not paginated, but listed with a roman numeral in the table of contents

\*Note: Pages marked with an asterisk are required elements for **all** dissertations, theses, and projects. If certain optional pages are not used, page numbering still begins with “ii” on the page following the title page and continues in ascending order (iii, iv, v...). The abstract is not paginated but listed in the table of contents with the numeral it would be assigned as the last page of the preliminary pages.

### **Approval or Signature Page**

The function of the signature sheet is to enable the student's thesis or dissertation director, committee, and graduate dean or director to indicate that the manuscript satisfies the thesis or dissertation degree requirement. It includes the title of the thesis or dissertation, the student's name, and places for the prescribed signatures (see Sample A for sample signature page). The signatures on all copies should be original and in black ink. Please note that this page is not counted or numbered.

### **The Title Page**

The title page is counted as page i, but the number is not printed on the page. The first line of the title should begin two inches from the top of the page. The dates should include the semester and the year in which the student's committee approves the thesis or dissertation. Words are underlined (to indicate italics) in the title only when they themselves are titles or when they are scientific terms that are customarily underlined (see Sample B for sample title page).

**Copyright Page (optional)**

If the candidate chooses to place a copyright page in the dissertation, thesis, or project; the copyright page is counted and numbered as ii (see Sample C for sample copyright page). Information regarding copyright protection and application for copyright may be obtained from the U.S. Copyright Office, 202-707-3000.

**The Dedication Page (optional)**

This page provides the student with an opportunity to give a special tribute to persons, organizations, or others that provided encouragement during the student's academic career. If such a page is used, the word "Dedication" should be centered without punctuation two inches from the top of the page (See Sample D for sample Dedication Page). The single spaced text of the dedication should begin on the fourth line below. This is an optional page and is numbered.

**The Acknowledgements Page (optional)**

An acknowledgements page in which the student expresses recognition of and appreciation for any special assistance is optional but is customarily included. The acknowledgements page is obligatory if special permission has been granted to use published or unpublished material. If such a page is used, the word "Acknowledgements" should be centered without punctuation two inches from the top of the page (See Sample E for sample Acknowledgements Page). The single spaced text of the acknowledgements should begin on the fourth line below. This is an optional page and is numbered.

**Table of Contents**

This page should be headed "Table of Contents," with the heading centered without punctuation two inches from the top of the page. The listings begin at the left margin four spaces below the heading. The table of contents lists all material following the contents page. The titles of chapters or parts or sections, except the vitae, must be listed and worded exactly as they appear in the body of the manuscript. The page number for each part is listed flush against the right margin and below the heading "Page." Any space between the last word of a section title and the page number should be filled with spaced periods (see Sample F for sample table of contents).

The format for the "list of tables" and the "list of figures" is the same as that for the table of contents. The "list of abbreviations" or symbols should follow the form normally used in the student's discipline (see Sample G for sample lists). If tables and figures appear in the thesis, dissertation, or project then the student should create two separate lists.

**The Abstract**

The abstract consists of an essay-style summary of the thesis or dissertation, a statement of the experiment or problem, the procedure followed, the results, and the conclusion. The abstract of doctoral dissertation or projects should follow scrupulously the instructions given here since it will be published in Dissertation Abstracts without revision or editing. This is required, and a fee is charged to the student. The length for a dissertation abstract should be kept as close to 350 words as possible. It should be a succinct account allowing readers to decide whether the full contents will aid their study. Diagrams or other illustrated materials and formulas or equations in the abstracts should be avoided if possible (see Sample H for sample abstract). The abstract should begin with the word "Abstract" centered two inches below the top of the page. The abstract is not numbered, but listed in the table of contents with a roman numeral. The following items are left-aligned: the title (all in capital letters); candidate's name and degree to be awarded; the name of the institution and year-date; and the name of the thesis or dissertation director. The text of the abstract is double-spaced throughout.

## *Format and Appearance*

### **Format Review**

All dissertations, theses, and projects will be subject to format review by the Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator 1 to 2 months before final submission. During format review, the Coordinator examines the component parts of the dissertation (the preliminary pages, figures and tables, if any, and the text) for compliance with GMU regulations for appearance and layout. Please contact the Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator at 703-993-2222 or [udts@gmu.edu](mailto:udts@gmu.edu) for more information or to schedule a format review of your dissertation, thesis, or project.

\*It is highly recommended that you submit your work for format review (even if it is not your final version) as early as possible in order to avoid end-of-semester delays.

### **The Text**

The text, the body of the thesis or dissertation, is double-spaced using one side of each page. As indicated in the table of contents, each chapter of the manuscript begins a new page. The heading for the chapter is centered without punctuation two inches below the top of the page, the text beginning four spaces below the heading. The pages of the text are numbered consecutively in Arabic numerals from the first page of the text through the bibliography and the curriculum vitae.

### **Margins**

The following margins must be observed: top and bottom margins = 1.25 inches; left margin = 1.5 inches, and the right margin 1 inch. The first page of each chapter or section should have a top margin of 2 inches. All tables and figures should conform to this margin requirement. Photographic reduction, where necessary, is acceptable and must be made on the same quality paper as the rest of the manuscript.

### **Pagination**

Every page on which any text, figure, table, or drawing appears is counted and numbered, with the following exceptions: the approval sheet is neither counted nor numbered; the title page is counted but not numbered; the abstract is counted but not numbered; if a blank cover sheet is used to precede the appendices, it is neither counted nor numbered. All numbers are placed without punctuation in the center of the page one inch from the bottom edge.

The preliminary pages (those preceding the text of the thesis or dissertation) are numbered consecutively in lowercase roman numerals placed in the normal (bottom center) numbering position. The first page to be numbered is the first page following the title page, and it is numbered ii. The text and reference pages are numbered consecutively in Arabic numerals, beginning with 1 on the first page of the text.

### **Footnotes or Endnotes**

Annotation practices differ widely among the disciplines. The student should follow the practice most commonly used in the discipline. If notes are used, they are usually placed on the pages they annotate and should be separated from the text by a line extending two inches from the left margin. If the discipline requires notes at the end of a chapter, they are indicated by a superscript and numbered consecutively using Arabic numerals. The first line of the note is indented. The required margins must be maintained when notes are used.

### **Tables and Figures**

The word "table" designates tabulated numerical data used in the body of the thesis or dissertation and in the appendices. The word "figure" designates all other nonverbal material such as illustrations, charts, graphs, maps, photographs, drawings, and diagrams.

All tables and figures must be of reproducible quality. They should be inserted as near as possible to the portion of the text that they illustrate. Two or more small tables or figures may be grouped on a single page. The table or figure, including the captions, is placed on the page inside the prescribed margins. Text and tables or figures may be combined on the same page as long as the layout is professional and looks clear. When text is used on the same page, it should be separated from the table or figure by at least a triple space. Tables and figures are numbered in separate series. Each table and figure, including any in the appendix, must be numbered consecutively in Arabic numerals in its own series. Format and placement (centered or flush with the left margin) should conform to the conventions of the student's discipline. The captions for figures and tables must be identical with those used in the list of tables and the list of figures in the preliminary pages.

A table caption is placed at the top of the table, whereas a figure caption is placed below the figure. Full-page tables and figures are numbered in the same format as the text. Computer-generated graphs should be on the same quality paper used in the rest of the thesis or dissertation. Graphs and line drawings must be of professional appearance.

### **Photographs**

All photographs and illustrations of any kind must be digitized and inserted into the thesis, dissertation, or project. They must also be printed on the 100% cotton paper.

### **Appendices**

An appendix contains supplementary information (discussions too extensive for notes; translations) that would interrupt the main text of the thesis or dissertation. A single appendix may simply be titled "Appendix" with a subtitle, both centered. If the appended material consists of multiple categories, each category should have a separate appendix. Appendices are counted and numbered in the pagination, but if a blank page precedes the appendix, that blank page is not counted or numbered. All material must fall within standard margins. If necessary, photo reduction may be used.

### **Reference Materials**

For the bibliography, the student should follow the practice of the discipline on inclusion or exclusion of works and on the form of the entry; the student should also consult their program coordinators for departmental policies. See also the short list of style manuals included below.

The reference sections should begin with a cover sheet headed "Bibliography," or "List of References," or "Literature Cited," or another heading as determined by the discipline, centered without punctuation. This page is counted and numbered. The heading is repeated on the first page of the bibliography itself, two inches down from the top, centered, and without punctuation. The list of sources begins four spaces below the heading.

The sources themselves are usually arranged in alphabetical order by the last name of the author or the first major word of the title of anonymous publications, but some disciplines may suggest a different grouping of sources. The precise content of the entry should be determined by the discipline, but the intent is to provide all the information necessary for the reader to locate and consult the sources. Citations should be single-spaced with double spaces between entries.

### **Style Manuals**

The following list is not exhaustive; other manuals may be required or recommended by programs or departments.

- Humanities: Joseph Gibaldi and Walter S. Achtert. *MLA Handbook for Writer of Research papers*. 6th ed. New York: Modern Language Association, 2003.
- Biology: Council of Biology Editors Committee. *Scientific Style and Format*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Chemistry: American Chemical Society. *Handbook for Authors of Papers in the Journals of the American Chemical Society*. Washington, DC: American Chemical Society, 1985.
- Linguistics: Linguistic Society of America. *LSA Bulletin*, No.144 (1994).
- Psychology: American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 5th. Ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2001.
- General: Kate L. Turabian. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- General: *The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors and Publishers*. 15th. Ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

### **Curriculum Vitae**

The Curriculum Vitae is the final page, a brief biographical sketch of the student, giving the education (institutions attended), degrees, honors, and accomplishments, the titles of publication, teaching or professional experiences, and any other relevant data. This section should be headed with the words “Curriculum Vitae” centered two inches below the top of the page. The text, single-spaced, begins four line below the heading (see Sample I for sample curriculum vitae). This page is numbered.

### *The Final Manuscript*

#### **New Submission Options Beginning Fall 2007**

Beginning with students graduating in Fall 2007 there are now two options for final submission methods. The student may choose between the Traditional Submission (paper based) or the new etd @Mason (electronic based) submission method.

#### **Number of Copies (Traditional Submission)**

Following acceptance of the thesis or dissertation by the committee, the student should prepare two copies of the final text, on 100-percent, cotton-bond paper, that are given to the graduate dean or director for final approval. (Doctoral students provide a third xerox copy or a PDF version on CD for microfilming by University Microfilms International). Another copy should be given to the chair of the student’s department. After obtaining the graduate dean’s or director’s signature of final approval, the cotton bond copies are forwarded to the university library for binding.

#### **Number of Copies (etd @Mason)**

Following acceptance of the thesis or dissertation by the committee, the student should prepare one copy of the final text, on 100-percent, cotton-bond paper, that is given to the graduate dean or director for final approval. (Doctoral students provide a second xerox copy or a PDF version on CD for microfilming by University Microfilms International). Along with the one paper copy the student should also prepare a

PDF version on a CD to turn in to the library as well. Another copy should be given to the chair of the student's department. After obtaining the graduate dean's or director's signature of final approval, the cotton bond copy and CD containing the PDF version are forwarded to the university library. The paper copy will be kept in Special Collections and Archives as the archival copy and the PDF will be "locked" as indicated by the student and placed into MARS (Mason Archival Repository Services) as the circulating copy.

For more information about the etd @Mason program please see <http://thesis.gmu.edu> or contact the University Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator.

### **Paper and Laser Printing**

The paper for the two library copies should be white, 20- or 24-pound, 100% fiber (cotton or rag), measuring 8-1/2 by 11 inches. Correctable bond and onionskin papers are not acceptable under any circumstances. The same quality paper must be used throughout the thesis or dissertation.

Only laser printing or a high quality equivalent is acceptable. Nonstandard typefaces, such as script, are not acceptable. Italics are permitted for mathematical expressions and scientific names of genera, species, and the like. All textual material should be printed. All typeface and size (in text and figures) must be consistent. Computer graphics should be consistent in appearance with the rest of the text. If a student anticipates publication of their research, they should consider the medium of publication likely to be used when preparing the manuscript. For example, lettering of original figures should be large enough so that it can be effectively reduced for publication if necessary.

The text must be double-spaced, but long tables, long quotations (defined as 100 words or as stipulated within the student's discipline and applied consistently), footnotes and multiline captions should be single-spaced. Strikeovers, interlineations, or crossed-out letters or words are not acceptable. The use of correcting fluid, correcting tape or transparent tape on submitted copy is not acceptable.

**Important:** Students must bring a working copy of the final manuscript to the University Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator to see that manuscript format requirements are being met. The Coordinator can be reached at [udts@gmu.edu](mailto:udts@gmu.edu) or 703-993-2222.

### **Due Dates and Fees**

Final Copies of the thesis and dissertation, with all signatures, must be deposited with the University Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator in Fenwick Library on or before the date specified in the academic calendar:

Submission deadlines are as follows: 5 P.M. on the Friday before the last day of Spring Semester classes as published in the Schedule of Classes for May graduation and participation in Commencement Ceremony and 5 P.M. on the Friday before the last day of Summer Term or Fall Semester classes for August or January graduation, respectively.

Any student not in attendance at the university who is preparing a dissertation or thesis must be in continuous registration for at least one credit of dissertation or thesis research (799 or 999) for every fall and spring semester from the time of initial registration of the dissertation or thesis or advancement to candidacy until graduation. Students who fail to maintain continuous registration must register for these credits and pay tuition retroactively before they will be allowed to graduate.

### **Binding of Final Submissions**

Students need not have final copies of their dissertation, thesis, or project bound. One copy (depending on submission method) is later bound by University Libraries and placed in the library for reference and scholarly research or placed in MARS as part of the etd @Mason community. The second cotton-bond copy is archived. Please note that the Library will not bind additional copies for a student or department.

Students are advised to use a local bindery for additional bound copies or to order bound copies through UMI (University Microfilms International).

**Microfilming** (*for dissertations only*)

Information concerning the microfilming of dissertation abstracts and dissertations is available through University Dissertation & Thesis Services. All GMU dissertations must be microfilmed. The fees for this service (performed by University Microfilms International) are the responsibility of the student. University Microfilms International will also copyright dissertations for an additional fee. Please see the University Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator for more information.

This is an example of one of many different signature sheets. Each student should check <http://thesis.gmu.edu> for accurate signature sheets based on which College/Institute/School they are enrolled in.

[Sample A: Approval/Signature Sheet]

SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT IN PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY

by

Mary C. Smith  
A Thesis  
Submitted to the  
Graduate Faculty  
of  
George Mason University  
in Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree  
of  
Master of Arts  
English

Committee:

\_\_\_\_\_ Director

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Department Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_ Program Director (for Ph.D. students only)

\_\_\_\_\_ Dean/Director of College, School, or Institute

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Fall Semester 1994  
George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA

**[Sample B: Title Page]**

School-Based Management in Prince William County

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at George Mason University

By

Mary C. Smith  
Bachelor of Arts  
George Mason University, 1987

Director: Ralph C. Baxter, Professor  
Department of English

Fall Semester 1994  
George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA

**[Sample C: Copyright Page (optional)]**

Copyright 1994 Mary C. Smith  
All Rights Reserved

page number (lowercase roman) goes here 1" from bottom (in footer)

**[Sample D: Dedication (optional)]**

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my loving husband Paul, my two wonderful children Anne and Lauren, and my dog Wolfie.

page number (lowercase roman) goes here 1" from bottom (in footer)

**[Sample E: Acknowledgements (optional)]**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to the many friends, relatives, and supporters who have made this happen. My loving husband, Paul, assisted me in my research. My daughters helped me with word processing and notes. Drs. Spock, McCoy, and the other members of my committee were of invaluable help. Finally, thanks go out to the Fenwick Library for providing a clean, quiet, and well-equipped repository in which to work.

page number (lowercase roman) goes here 1" from bottom (in footer)

[Sample F: Table of Contents]

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Council Results.....	57
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page number (lowercase roman) goes here 1” from bottom (in footer)

[Sample G: List of Tables (Figures)]

LIST OF TABLES (FIGURES)

Table (Figure)	Page
1. Name of Table.....	1
2. Name.....	5
3. Name.....	10
4. Name.....	15
5. Name.....	20
6. Name.....	25
7. Name.....	30
8. Name.....	40
9. Name.....	50
10. Name.....	75
11. Name.....	100
12. Name.....	125
13. Name.....	150
14. Name.....	200
15. Name.....	250
16. Name.....	300
17. Name.....	.000
18. Name.....	.000
19. Name.....	.000
20. Name.....	.000
21. Name.....	.000

page number (lowercase roman) goes here 1” from bottom (in footer)

**[Sample H: Abstract]**

ABSTRACT

SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT IN PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY

Mary C. Smith, M.A.

George Mason University, 1994

Thesis Director: Dr. Ralph C. Baxter

This thesis describes the nationwide development of school-based management and chronicles its implementation in Prince William County (Virginia) Public Schools. School-based management - and its implementation in Prince William County - is discussed as a microcosmic example of one potential solution to the crisis in our nation's schools. Following a two-year pilot program in five schools, Prince William County Public Schools implemented school-based management divisionwide in the 1990-1991 school year. In the process of researching and writing this thesis, the author conducted a literature search and reviews internal documents and memoranda of Prince William County Public Schools. This thesis is slated to be a reference and resource for a graduate course on school-based management designed for building administrators and classroom teachers.

**[Sample I: Curriculum Vitae – CV is actually the last page of the dissertation or thesis]**

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Mary C. Smith graduated from Fairfax High School, Fairfax, Virginia, in 1983. She received her Bachelor of Arts from George Mason University in 1987. She was employed as a teacher in Fairfax County for two years and received her Master of Arts in English from George Mason University in 1987.

page number (arabic numeral) goes here 1” from bottom (in footer)