The Graduate School Mission

The Graduate School at Texas A&M University-Central Texas is a diverse mixture of educators, scholars, and learners committed to accessibility and excellence in graduate education, service, and research to enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities. All graduate programs and research strive for continuous improvement through benchmark assessments, including internal and external peer review.

This manual is written and produced by the Graduate School Office in cooperation with the Thesis Office. It serves as a guide to help graduate students and their committee members through the process of preparing and filing their completed thesis or record of study in partial fulfillment of their program’s requirements for graduation. Please be aware that this manual is subject to change. The most current manual will always be available online on the Thesis Office web page: https://tamuct.libguides.com/Thesis
How to Get Help:

The first contact for all issues concerning thesis research is the student’s Committee Chair. Students should address any administrative concerns with the thesis or graduation to the Graduate School Office. Any questions regarding the Thesis Manual may be directed to the Thesis Office.

Contact Us:

Graduate School Office
Room 424, Founder’s Hall
1001 Leadership Place
Killeen, TX 76549
(254) 519-5447
graduateschool@tamuct.edu

Thesis Office
University Library, Warrior Hall
1001 Leadership Place
Killeen, TX 76549
(254) 519-5798
thesis.office@tamuct.edu

Forms and Templates:

All forms and templates mentioned in this manual (including those appearing as Appendices in the supplementary pages) are available for download through the Thesis Office via the University Library homepage.

Additional Resources:

University Writing Center
Bruce Bowles, Director
Room 416, Warrior Hall
1001 Leadership Place
Killeen, TX 76549
(254) 519-5441
bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu

University Library
Warrior Hall
1001 Leadership Place
Killeen, TX 76549
(254) 519-5798
library@tamuct.edu

Access and Inclusion
Room 212, Warrior Hall
1001 Leadership Place
Killeen, TX 76549
(254) 501-5836

Academic Support
Room 212, Warrior Hall
1001 Leadership Place
Killeen, TX 76549
(254) 501-5836
# Table of Contents

The Graduate School Mission ...................................................................................................... 2

How to Get Help: ...................................................................................................................... 3

Contact Us: ................................................................................................................................ 3

Forms and Templates: .............................................................................................................. 3

Additional Resources: ............................................................................................................... 3

Introduction ................................................................................................................................... 7

Writing the Thesis or Record of Study ....................................................................................... 7

Purpose, Standards, and Requirements ................................................................................. 7

Selecting and Using a Style Guide ........................................................................................... 7

Use of Human Participants in Research ..................................................................................... 8

Copyright Issues ............................................................................................................................ 9

Publication ..................................................................................................................................... 9

   Publishing Material from the Thesis or Record of Study Prior to Final Submission ....... 9

   Publishing the Thesis or Record of Study after Final Submission ................................. 9

   Including Other’s Copyrighted Information ........................................................................ 10

Thesis Process – Proposal, Submittal, and Review .................................................................. 10

   The Thesis Proposal Form .................................................................................................. 10

   The Defense .......................................................................................................................... 11

Submission to the Graduate School Office ........................................................................... 12

   Thesis Office Review .......................................................................................................... 12

   Thesis Quality Control ....................................................................................................... 13

   Academic Integrity ................................................................................................................. 13
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Submittal and Review Process</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization and Formatting of the Thesis</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Formatting</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Components</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component I. Preliminary Pages</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component II. Text of the Thesis</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component III. Supplementary Pages</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Items Used in Thesis</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphics (Tables, Figures, and Illustrations)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Text Citation of References</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Errors and Additional Guidelines</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Formatting Errors</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotations</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tables and Figures</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page Formatting</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Guidelines</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wording</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to help guide students and their advisory committee through the process of preparing and filing a thesis or record of study in partial fulfillment of their program’s requirements for graduation. It is intended to make the process of producing and delivering a professional, scholarly work easier. Though it is impossible to cover every type of research project, every style of writing, and meet the specific needs of each academic field, this manual provides basic guidelines for students taking on the challenge of completing a thesis project.

Writing the Thesis or Record of Study

Purpose, Standards, and Requirements

Texas A&M University-Central Texas (A&M-Central Texas) requires a thesis or record of study from all thesis option master’s candidates. The thesis is a formal report of research conducted by the student under the supervision and guidance of his or her advisory committee. The thesis is expected to be a scholarly written, well-documented, and original work prepared according to a chosen style and format as determined by the student’s individual discipline.

As a public institution, the goal of A&M-Central Texas is to promote and conduct research in pursuit of the public good. To support this goal, all publications are made available for open access through ProQuest’s Dissertations and Theses Database (ProQuest) and through the university’s Digital Archives. Exceptions may be made to temporarily delay publication of the document for the purpose of publication or proprietary/patent. However, these exceptions must be discussed with the Director of the Graduate School before final submission.

Finally, the university requires that all theses and records of study be submitted electronically as a PDF file. Submission of any other file format will not be accepted.

Selecting and Using a Style Guide

Each department at A&M-Central Texas offering a thesis option has specified either a style guide or a professional journal format which should be followed by students in that field of study. Students should consult with their department and/or committee to select the appropriate style guide. The table below provides some guidelines regarding appropriate styles chosen by each department.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Preferred Manual of Style Guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration:</td>
<td>American Psychological Association (APA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting, Finance, and Economics; Management and Marketing; Computer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If conflicts arise between the chosen style guide and directions provided in this manual, then **those in this manual take precedence** (for example, APA style requires a header for each page while the Thesis Manual does not).

Though meant as a guide, this manual is unable to address all questions pertaining to the different styles and formats available. It is highly recommended that students consult the **most current editions** of their chosen style guides as changes and amendments often occur from one edition to the next. The following list of commonly used style guides may prove helpful:

- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*
- *The MLA Style Manual*
- *Turabian’s A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*
- *Scientific Style and Format: The CBE Manual for Authors*
- *The Chicago Manual of Style*

As a reminder, the University Library keeps current editions of each style guide available for student use at the Reference Desk and for check out in the main stacks. Please see a Library associate for details.

When students submit their Thesis Proposal Form (see Appendix A), they must indicate their chosen style guide. If any changes of style, thesis topic, committee membership, or other information provided in the proposal form occur, **the student must re-submit the proposal form prior to defense and submission of the thesis**. Failure to do so may result in the rejection of the thesis by the Graduate School Office.

**Use of Human Participants in Research**

Any research involving human participants **must** adhere to the guidelines and procedures indicated in the *Texas A&M University-Central Texas Institutional Review Board (IRB)*
Copyright Issues

The Copyright Act of 1976 (title 17 of the United States Code) came into effect on January 1, 1978. This general revision of the copyright laws of the United States made important changes in the American copyright system. Publication and formal notice of copyright are no longer requirements for securing copyright. Today, copyright is secured automatically when a work is created. It is assumed to be created once it becomes a fixed media (for example, a handwritten draft, a pencil sketch, a typed manuscript).

Formally copyrighting a thesis is optional, but the student must still allow for the fair use of his or her work through open access on the university’s selected platforms. The copyright notice appears as the bottom line of the title page in the following format:

Copyright [Year of Graduation] [Student Name]

The copyright may be registered formally with the U.S. Copyright Office, but students wishing to do so must consult with the Graduate School Office before filing any paperwork. Registration procedures require the submission of an application form, a filing fee, and a non-returnable deposit of the work being registered. Students are encouraged to visit www.copyright.gov for further information.

Publication

Publishing Material from the Thesis or Record of Study Prior to Final Submission

University policy permits graduate students to publish work that may be used in their final thesis or record of study. However, the student is responsible when submitting to journals or other publishers to ensure that any rights agreements do not affect the ability of A&M-Central Texas to provide open access to all documents and research produced by its members and students in accordance to its policy.

Publishing the Thesis or Record of Study after Final Submission

It is common practice for journals and publishers to obtain copyright ownership from authors who submit manuscripts to their publications. However, these agreements can be altered to allow the student the right to use and publish his or her work as part of a thesis, dissertation, or record of study. The student must make the publisher aware that the thesis or record of study is available through open access.

If the student fails to retain copyright over his or her published materials, the student must provide the Graduate School Office with written permission from the copyright owner stating that the materials may be used and shared publicly.
Including Other’s Copyrighted Information

If the thesis contains any material (for example, figures, tables, or text) taken from copyrighted sources, the student is responsible for determining whether written permission from the copyright holder is necessary. The student should consider a number of factors including, but not limited to, whether the material is in the public domain or if the use of it falls under the provisions of fair use. Regardless of whether permission is required, appropriate credit must be given for work that is not the student’s own.

If material requires formal permission, the student is responsible for seeking and gaining said permission from the copyright holder and must include an acknowledgement within the text. The following notice must be provided for each copyrighted item: “Copyright [insert year of copyright] by [insert name of copyright owner]. Used by permission.” A copy of the permission (in most cases a publisher agreement or a correspondence from the copyright holder) must be included as an Appendix in the supplemental pages.

Thesis Process – Proposal, Submittal, and Review

The submission of the thesis or record of study is a multi-step process, which is best accomplished through clear communication between the student, his or her committee, and the Graduate School Office, as well as the use of this manual.

Selection of a Thesis Committee

In preparation for the final project, the student should select a topic of interest related to his or her discipline and begin a preliminary search of the literature available. The student should then arrange a meeting with a graduate faculty member from within his or her department who might serve as the committee chair. It is recommended that students choose faculty members whose areas of expertise relate to their proposed thesis topics. If the faculty member agrees to serve as chair, the faculty member will then work with the student to select and develop a topic for the thesis proposal.

The student must have a minimum of three faculty members on his or her committee holding Graduate Faculty status: the committee chair, another member of faculty from within the student’s department, and a faculty member from any department.

The Thesis Proposal Form

Once a topic is chosen and a committee formed, the student must submit a signed copy of the Thesis Proposal Form (see Appendix A) and attach the committee-approved written proposal. Proposal formats may vary depending on the nature of the research. Proposals generally provide the following information:

- If Quantitative
  - Introduction to the topic
  - Statement of the problem and/or its significance
  - Purpose of the study
  - Literature review
The Thesis Proposal Form must be signed by all advisory committee members and a scanned PDF file copy emailed to the Graduate School Office at graduateschool@tamuct.edu with the subject line “[Student Last Name, First Name] – Thesis Proposal, [Degree], [Semester and year of proposed graduation].”

If any changes of style, thesis topic, committee membership, or other information provided in the proposal form occur, the student must re-submit the proposal form prior to defense and submission of the thesis. Failure to do so may result in the rejection of the thesis by the Graduate School Office.

**The Defense**

The next step in submitting the thesis is the defense. The student should work with the committee chair and other members of the committee to arrange a time and place where the student must defend his or her research by answering questions posed by members of the committee. The thesis defense demonstrates the candidate’s ability to conduct independent research and successfully defend his or her findings and conclusions.

Students must submit a Schedule for Thesis Defense Form (see Appendix B) signed by all members of their advisory committee with a proposed date and time for the defense to take place. A scanned PDF copy should be emailed to graduateschool@tamuct.edu with the subject line “[Student Last Name, First Name] – Thesis Defense, [Degree], [Semester and year of proposed graduation].”

At the time of the thesis defense, the committee determines whether the student has satisfactorily defended the thesis or record of study. In many cases, the committee will discuss and/or require revisions or further research for the thesis to be approved. If the committee determines that revisions are required, the student will make the necessary revisions and resubmit the thesis to the chair for approval.
Once the defense is successful and all changes (if any) required by the committee are completed, students are ready to prepare and submit their work to the Graduate School Office. All signatures on the Approval Form (See Appendix C) are required by the Graduate School Office for the submission to be complete.

Submission to the Graduate School Office

Once the thesis or record of study is successfully defended and a final draft is approved by all members of the student’s advisory committee, the student must submit the following items electronically to the Graduate School Office:

1. **A final draft of the completed and approved thesis or record of study must be submitted as a single PDF file (no exceptions).**
   - The document must be a finished, final draft. All editor comments, highlighting, and notations must be removed. Students must proofread to correct all spelling and grammatical mistakes.
   - Students are responsible for ensuring that the chosen style guide, the instructions provided in the Thesis Manual, and the Basic Template provided by the Thesis Office have been implemented correctly. All citations, pagination, spacing, and margins should be verified for accuracy.

2. **A scanned copy of the Approval Page (See Appendix C) with all required signatures must be submitted with the thesis as a separate PDF file.**
   - Signatures are required from all members of the student’s advisory committee, the Department Chair, the Dean of the College, and the Director of the Graduate School.
   - For assistance with creating a PDF file of a scanned document or image, visit the University Writing Center in Warrior Hall, Room 416 or see a librarian at the University Library.

Both items must be sent directly to the Graduate School Office at graduateschool@tamuct.edu with the subject line “[Student Last Name, First Name] – Thesis, [Department], [Semester and year of graduation].” Once both items are received, the Graduate School Office will forward the thesis to the Thesis Office for style and formatting approval.

Both documents must be received by the Graduate School Office by the date published on the academic calendar – NO EXCEPTIONS.

**At this point, no changes may be made by the student or members of the advisory committee to the content of the document except those changes requested by the Thesis Office.**

Thesis Office Review

The Thesis Office will contact the student directly with any changes or issues that require attention before final approval is given. If the Thesis Office identifies significant problems in the initial pages of the thesis, it will be assumed that similar problems exist throughout the paper. In these cases, the Thesis Office will discontinue review, and the document will be sent back to the
student for further editing and resubmission once corrections are made. The student is encouraged to seek the advisory committee’s assistance if needed. The Thesis Office checks for the following quality indicators:

- Grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- Correct citations in the text that correspond to entries in the References section
- Appropriate formatting based on this guide and the student’s chosen style guide

Once all required corrections are made, the student must send a copy of the revised document as a single PDF file to the Thesis Office at thesis.office@tamuct.edu for additional review. If further corrections are still required, the process will repeat. The student should plan to make any corrections as soon as possible to meet the deadlines imposed by the Graduate School Office. If the revised copy is not received by the assigned date, graduation may be delayed.

Upon final approval, the Thesis Office will submit the revised thesis to the Graduate School Office. The student will be notified of his or her successful completion of the project and the document’s submission to ProQuest and the Digital Archives for online publication.

*The deadline for theses to clear the Thesis Office is the date listed on the Academic Calendar – NO EXCEPTIONS.*

In the event that the Graduate School Office and/or the Thesis Office declares a thesis is unacceptable, the Graduate School Office will return the thesis to the student, his or her committee chair, and the Department Chair with an explanation of the deficiencies that need to be addressed.

**Thesis Quality Control**

**Academic Integrity**

Academic Integrity is defined as the commitment by students, faculty, and staff to follow and uphold the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility (The Center for Academic Integrity, 1999).

The Office of Student Conduct at A&M-Central Texas defines academic dishonesty as plagiarism, cheating, and collusion.

- **Plagiarism** is taking another person’s work without giving appropriate credit
- **Cheating** is intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials or technological devices in any academic work. This may include unauthorized assistance given to the student prior to approval by the instructor.
- **Collusion** is unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work in any academic setting. (Office of Student Conduct, 2018)
The committee is required to ensure that the thesis or record of study is verified using plagiarism software such as VeriCite prior to submission to the Graduate School.

For more information on Academic Integrity and other resources, visit the Office of Student Conduct’s web page at https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct.html.

**Summary of the Submittal and Review Process**

- **The Submittal Process** – Students should…
  - Successfully defend the thesis.
  - Make all revisions required by members of the advisory committee.
  - Obtain all required signatures on the Thesis Approval Form (including the committee chair and members, Department Chair, and the Dean of College). Create a scanned copy of the signed form as a PDF file.
  - Convert the final thesis to a single PDF file. Submit both the PDF copy of the final thesis and a PDF copy of the signed Thesis Approval Page to the Graduate School Office at graduateschool@tamuct.edu with the subject line “[Student Last Name, First Name] – Thesis, [Department], [Semester and year of graduation].”

- **The Correction Process** – Students should…
  - Regularly check their A&M-Central Texas student email accounts for an email detailing the list of necessary changes from the Thesis Office after the thesis has been reviewed.
  - Make all required revisions to the original document and resubmit it as a single PDF file to the Thesis Office at thesis.office@tamuct.edu.
  - Regularly check their A&M-Central Texas student email accounts for correspondence from the Thesis Office. If further changes are required, the review process and correction process will begin again.

**Organization and Formatting of the Thesis**

**General Formatting**

- **Font** – All text must be consistent throughout the document. The thesis must be typed in 12 point font. Either Arial or Times New Roman may be used.

- **Margins** – All margins (left, right, top, bottom) must be set to 1”.

- **Pagination** – Every page of the thesis is numbered except the Title Page and the Approval Page.
  - Preliminary pages are numbered with lower case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii . . .) centered in the footer of each page.
  - The first numbered page is the Abstract, and should be numbered “iii” in the footer of the page.
  - All pages of the text and supplementary sections are numbered in Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3. . .) centered in the footer of each page.
Three Components

All theses or records of study produced by A&M-Central Texas students should be categorized into three components: Preliminary pages, Text (or Body) of the thesis, and Supplementary pages. Students are encouraged to use the Basic Thesis Template (see Appendix D) as an example of appropriate thesis formatting.

Component I. Preliminary Pages

The Preliminary pages include the following:

- **Title Page** – This is the first, unnumbered page of the thesis or record of study. All text must be centered and include the following:
  - Title (in all capital letters)
  - Designation as “A Thesis” or “A Record of Study”
  - Author’s Name
  - Degree sought (Master of Arts, Master of Science. . .)
  - Name of Program (History, Social Work. . .)
  - The name (Texas A&M University-Central Texas) and town (Killeen, Texas) of the university.
  - Copyright phrase – “Copyright [Year of Graduation] [Student Name]”

- **Approval Page** – This unnumbered page must list the title, author’s name, degree, and defense date as well as a list with the names (first and last only) of the committee chair, all committee members, the Department Chair, the Dean of the College, and the Director of the Graduate School.

- **Abstract** – This page provides a succinct overview of the document.
  - The Abstract is the first numbered page of the thesis or record of study.
  - The Title and Approval pages are considered pages “i” and “ii” respectively, but are unnumbered.
  - The Abstract is the first numbered page and should bear the number “iii” in the footer.
  - The Abstract should provide the main argument or problem, the evidence found and/or methods of research, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future study.
  - The abstract must be no longer than 250 words.

- **Dedication Page (optional)** – This page follows the Abstract. Generally, a dedication includes 1-2 sentences stating how the author wishes to dedicate his or her work to a specific person, group, or entity. If used, the Dedication should be listed in the Table of Contents.

- **Acknowledgements (optional)** – This page is limited to 250 words. It is included if there are multiple individuals or groups the author wishes to thank for their help or assistance. If used, the Acknowledgements should be listed in the Table of Contents.
**Table of Contents** – This page includes a listing of all sections and subsections with corresponding page numbers within the thesis.
  o It must be double-spaced.
  o Chapter headings and subheadings must be indicated by appropriate spacing and indentation.
  o Chapter numbers and headings should be written in all capital letters while subheadings are written in mixed case.
  o Supplemental pages, including References and each Appendix, must be included.

**List of Figures (if necessary)** – This page includes a list of all figures and/or graphics appearing in the thesis, along with corresponding page numbers.
  o Figures are numbered using Arabic numerals.
  o Figure numbers and titles should be written in all capital letters (for example, FIGURE 1. EXAMPLE GRAPHIC).
  o Students are encouraged to consult the manual of their chosen style guide for examples of how to properly format graphics within their thesis.

**List of Tables (if necessary)** – This page includes a list of all tables appearing in the document, along with corresponding page numbers.
  o Tables are numbered using Arabic numerals.
  o Table numbers and titles should be written in all capital letters (for example, TABLE 1. EXAMPLE TABLE).
  o Students are encouraged to consult the manual of their chosen style guide for examples of how to properly format graphics within their thesis.

**Component II. Text of the Thesis**

The main body of the text is divided into chapters designated by headings and subheadings (though subheadings are not required). Each chapter heading and subheading must be designated in the Table of Contents.

- Each chapter number should be centered, written in all capital letters at the top of the page, and numbered using Roman Numerals (CHAPTER I, CHAPTER II . . ).

- The chapter title should be one double-space below the chapter number, centered, and written in all capital letters.

- There should be two double spaces between the last line of the chapter title and the first line of chapter text.

- Each subheading should be set to the left margin and typed in boldface.

- There should be only one double space before and after any chapter subheadings. Do not begin a subheading on a new page.
• The first chapter is generally titled Introduction, in which the student presents his or her thesis statement or hypothesis and provides an overview of each chapter, research methods used, and foreshadows any conclusions drawn.

• The final chapter is generally titled Conclusion, in which the author summarizes his or her research and relates what can be inferred from it. If there are any recommendations for future study related to the thesis, it is generally mentioned in the concluding chapter as well.

Component III. Supplementary Pages

• References – The thesis must contain a References section. All citations should follow the guidelines of the student’s chosen style guide.
  o The title “REFERENCES” should be written in all capital letters, centered at the top of the first page of the References section.
  o The second line of each entry should have a hanging indent of .5 inches.
  o References should include only those references cited in the thesis or record. Items consulted, but not cited in the document itself, must not be included in the references section.

• Appendix or Appendices – Any supplementary material mentioned, but not presented within the body or text of the thesis (due to size, length, or nature of material), should be presented in an appendix.
  o This may include the following types of materials:
    ▪ Original data not presented in the thesis.
    ▪ Documents not readily available to readers.
    ▪ Laws or legal opinion forms.
    ▪ Any material not easily reproduced in the text (surveys, lengthy emails, etc.).
    ▪ Any permission forms or correspondence relating to the use of copyrighted materials.
  o All appendices are labeled alphabetically (APPENDIX A, APPENDIX B . . .)
  o The title “APPENDIX [Insert appropriate letter]” should be written in all capital letters, centered at the top of the first page for each appendix.
    ▪ If there are multiple appendices, each new appendix should begin on a new page.
    ▪ If the appendix is oversized or will not allow room for the title, then that appendix should be preceded by a page with “APPENDIX [Insert appropriate letter]” written in all capital letters, centered in the middle of the page.
  o All appendices must fit the same margins as the rest of the document.
  o If the item is a scanned image, the image must be made to fit within the margins of the rest of the document.
  o Each appendix must be listed individually at the end of the Table of Contents.
Additional Items Used in Thesis

Photographs

If using photographs:

- All photographs must follow the same guidelines as the rest of the document (margins, labeled according to chosen style guidelines, etc.).

- Scanned photographs should be high, print quality images (no blurry lines, objects or individuals within the image are easily discernable).

- Oversized images must be oriented to fit the page (see example of an Oversized Graphic in the Basic Thesis Template, Appendix D).

Graphics (Tables, Figures, and Illustrations)

Tables, figures, and illustrations may be placed within the text of the thesis or record of study if they can be made to fit within the stated margins (1”) or oriented to fit the page if oversized (see example of an Oversized Graphic in the Basic Thesis Template, Appendix D).

- Title should be written in all capital letters and numbered consecutively throughout the text (for example, FIGURE 1. EXAMPLE)

- All tables, figures, and illustrations are numbered using Arabic numerals.

- All figures, tables, and illustrations should be listed. Respectively, following the Table of Contents.

- Lengthy titles should be listed by the first sentence of the title only.

In Text Citation of References

- All references must be cited in the text.

- All citations must be listed in the References section of the Supplementary pages.

- All in text citations must match their Reference citations (particular attention should be given to ensure the correct citations are used when using several different resources written or produced by the same author).

- All in text and References citations must follow the style guide chosen by the student and his or her committee. It is highly recommended that the student consult the newest edition of his or her chosen style guide as citation requirements are subject to change.
Common Errors and Additional Guidelines

The Master’s thesis or record of study is a permanent record that reflects not only upon the student, but the faculty, the department, and the university itself. As such, faculty advisors and committee members should require and accept only those scholarly works that demonstrate attention to detail, quality of research and writing, and consistency in both style and presentation.

The purpose of this manual and supplemental materials provided through the Graduate School and the Thesis Office is to help students and their advisory committees meet the goal of ensuring that all projects meet the high educational standards expected of the graduates of A&M-Central Texas.

Common Formatting Errors

On the title page of the thesis, the specific degree should not include the major or minor (for example, “MASTER OF FINE ARTS” rather than “MASTER OF FINE ARTS, HISTORY”).

The month and year of Graduation are not separated by a comma.

There are no commas in the copyright sentence on the title page.

The chapter headings and subheadings found in the text must match those listed in the Table of Contents.

Numbers

All numbers over nine should be written as numerals (10, 11, 12 . . .), unless the number begins a sentence (which should be avoided in formal writing). Some numbers below 10 will need to be in numerals, but this will depend on the situation (for example, “9.5 out of 10 participants agree…”).

Percentage symbols that accompany a number should always appear after a numeral with no space between them (for example, 50%, 25%, 8% ...).

Word Choice

Do not treat inanimate objects as persons (for example, “The institution felt that the student should be admitted to the program” is incorrect because an institution is an inanimate object and, therefore, has no feelings).

The use of that and which are not interchangeable. A general rule of thumb is if the sentence does not need the clause, use which. If it does, use that (for example, “My coat, which I need to bring, is in the closet” vs. “My coat that I need to bring is in the closet”).

Likewise, while and since are often used incorrectly. While often denotes something occurring for an uncertain duration of time, a period of time, or at the same time (for example, “While she went to the store, he stayed at home”) whereas since denotes a time from the past (for example, “He has been working for the same company since he graduated from college”).

19
Relative pronouns must agree with the nouns they replace.

**Punctuation**

In American usage, periods and commas *never* fall outside quotation marks. Other punctuation marks are only placed inside quotation marks if they are a part of the actual quote.

Underlining should not be used anywhere in the text. Use italics if emphasis of a phrase or word is necessary.

In a series of two or more items, separate all items with a comma (for example, “The dog was small, white, and fluffy” or “You can walk here, there, or anywhere”).

An apostrophe is not used to form the plural of an abbreviation or a number (for example, “I know my ABCs” or “I grew up in the 1980s”).

Hyphens and dashes should appear without spaces either before or after them, unless they are used as a negative sign (for example, “the temp was - 34 degrees”) or a minus sign (for example, “34 - 2”).

For additional usage of commas and other punctuations, the student should check his or her chosen style guide.

**Quotations**

Block quotations are a frequent site of errors. Each style guide has specific guidelines as to the minimum word count (APA dictates 40 words) or number of lines (MLA dictates at least four) necessary before block quotations are used. Correct spacing and margins will vary as well. Students should follow instructions provided by the chosen style guide.

Single quotation marks can only be used within double quotation marks (for example, “He asked her, ‘Can you hear me now?’”).

**Agreement**

Students should double check agreement between pronouns and verbs.

Students should also double check subject-verb agreement, especially when referring to an individual (for example, “A student should post his/her [not their] response…”). To avoid this problem, several study guides (such as APA and MLA) suggest using plural forms (for example, “Students should submit their responses…”).

**References**

Any reference cited in the text *must* be listed in the Reference list in the Supplementary pages. Similarly, all references in the Reference list must be cited in the text. If a source is consulted but is not cited within the text, *do not* include it in the Reference list.
The style manuals require a very specific format for each type of reference. Frequent consultation with the most current style guide, attention to detail, and proofreading for errors are essential habits for every student to develop.

**Tables and Figures**

The student should consult with his or her chosen style guide when choosing how to format tables, figures, or illustrations within the text. Each graphic must be numbered consecutively with Arabic numerals and include a title and a caption.

The body of a table must be double-spaced. In addition, tables and figures must be cited in the text (by number, not by location [“see below”] or by page number [see figure on p.2]). No table or figure can be placed in text prior to its first reference, though the placement need not be immediately after the reference. **NOTE:** A page break should not follow the sentence or paragraph with the table or figure reference if it leaves more than two lines of white space. A paragraph can be broken by the placement of a table or figure.

The placement of tables and figures at the top of a page will assist the reader. Regardless, do not break a table or figure that can fit on to one page. If the table or figure is oversized, it may be converted to landscape format to make it fit within the margins of the page (see oversized figure in the Basic Thesis Template, Appendix D). In landscape format, ensure that the top left corner of the graphic sits in the bottom left corner of the page.

**Abbreviations**

Except for commonly used abbreviations (consult the chosen style guide for an appropriate list), complete words are preferred over abbreviations. However, in some instances the use of abbreviations better aids the flow of the text. When an abbreviation is used, the term must be written out in full on its first appearance with the abbreviation following immediately in parentheses (for example, “Central Texas College (CTC)”). From then on, the abbreviation is used in lieu of the full term.

Abbreviations should be avoided in tables, if possible.

The ampersand (&) is never used in text (with the exception of Texas A&M University-Central Texas). It is used only in parentheses (for example, APA style requires the use of the ampersand in citations with multiple authors).

Periods and spaces are not used in abbreviations made up of capital letters, such as degree names and states (for example, PhD, EdD, MA). However, periods and spaces are used with initials of names (for example, T. S. Eliot). In addition, styles such as APA require periods with no space to be used in the abbreviation for United States, when it is used as an adjective (for example, U.S. Army).

**Page Formatting**

Avoid manipulating the page margins to make lines, figures, tables, or illustrations fit within the page. All margins must remain set at 1” on all sides. If an item is too large to fit within these
margins, it can be added as an Appendix in the Supplementary materials sections and formatted according to the guidelines set up in the Basic Thesis Template (see Appendix D).

**Additional Guidelines**

**Wording**

Do not use the word *methodology* when referring to the method of a single study. *Method* and *methodology* are not interchangeable terms. *Methodology* refers to all methods.

Avoid judgments, personal opinions, bias, and self-assessment. Interpretation of the findings should be withheld until the conclusions section. Also, avoid the use of overly general and evaluative words such as *must, obviously, necessary, bad, good, true, nice, terrible, stupid, perfect, ideal*, and *always*.

The thesis or record of study is a professional, scholarly work. As such, careful, conscientious word selection is essential, and the student should make every effort to ensure that his or her work avoids common pitfalls:

- **Time references should be clear and precise, not vague or general.** Words such as *today, now, soon, the past few years, or current* may no longer be accurate in a 10-year-old thesis.

- **This, That, These, and Those** – These terms are frequently unclear when used as pronouns instead of as adjectives.

- **Avoid Informality** – A thesis or record of study is not a personal journal entry, a blog post, or an email to a friend. Contractions, colloquialisms, figures of speech, jargon, slang, flowery language, and jokes are not appropriate for use in formal, scholarly writing.

- **Avoid ending sentences with a preposition** – Though not a grammatical error, it is considered informal and should be avoided in scholarly writing.

- **Missing or extra words** – Proofreading is key to avoiding missing and/or extra words.

- **Read the sentence or paragraph aloud** – This practice will help reveal missing words or wordy phrases.

- **Split infinitives are generally not acceptable in formal writing** – Though some would argue it is grammatically correct to do so, using split infinitives is generally frowned upon in formal writing (for example, *to boldly go, to more than double, and to always be* should be avoided).

- **First and second person pronouns are not generally acceptable in formal writing** – Students should check with the committee chair because some departments allow for the
use of first and second person pronouns. In general, students should write using third person.

**Format**

Do not justify right margins.

Do not use additional parentheses within a set of parentheses. Use brackets if needed (for example, “…the practice [at the time] was widespread.”).

**Research Procedures**

Statistical and qualitative data gathering and analysis procedures must conform to the systematic requirements and assumptions of the selected method, as described in the research literature.

Students need to be accurate in using the terms *sample* and *population*. The terms are not interchangeable and should not be used together.

Research findings are not conclusions. The author must state the research findings objectively and interpret them to draw conclusions for the reader.
APPENDIX A – Thesis Proposal Form
Thesis Proposal

From: [Last Name] [First] [M.I.] [Student ID]

Date: _____

I submit for approval the attached proposal for a thesis to be completed in partial fulfillment for the degree of _____.

The tentative title of the thesis is: _____

The style guide or journal format which I will follow in preparing the thesis is: _____

I understand that upon approval of my proposal I must enroll in a thesis course each semester (fall, spring, summer) thereafter until the thesis has received final approval.

Approval Recommended:

Chair, Advisory Committee [Signature] [Print] [Date]

Committee Member [Signature] [Print] [Date]

Committee Member [Signature] [Print] [Date]

Department Chair [Signature] [Print] [Date]

APPROVED:

Director of Graduate School [Signature] [Print] [Date]
APPENDIX B – Thesis Defense Form
Thesis Defense/Final Examination Agreement

Student Name [Print]: _____  Student ID: _____

Degree: _____  Program: _____

I have read the student’s thesis/record of study titled: _____

and concur by my signature below that the thesis has been checked for plagiarism and that it is ready to be defended.

Chair, Advisory Committee [Signature]  [Print]  [Date]

All committee members have been consulted and have agreed to the following:

| Scheduled Thesis Defense/Final Examination: |
| Date: | |
| Time: | |
| Location: | |

Chair, Advisory Committee [Signature]  [Print]  [Date]

Committee Member [Signature]  [Print]  [Date]

Committee Member [Signature]  [Print]  [Date]

Department Chair [Signature]  [Print]  [Date]
APPENDIX C – Thesis Approval Form
THE TITLE OF THE STUDENT'S THESIS TYPED IN CAPITAL LETTERS, DOUBLED SPACED AND ARRANGED IN INVERTED PYRAMID FORM

Student's Name

THESIS APPROVED:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chair, Advisory Committee [Signature]</th>
<th>[Print]</th>
<th>[Date]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committee Member [Signature]</td>
<td>[Print]</td>
<td>[Date]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Member [Signature]</td>
<td>[Print]</td>
<td>[Date]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Chair [Signature]</td>
<td>[Print]</td>
<td>[Date]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean of Department [Signature]</td>
<td>[Print]</td>
<td>[Date]</td>
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<td>Director of Graduate School [Signature]</td>
<td>[Print]</td>
<td>[Date]</td>
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[INSERT THE FIRST LINE OF THE TITLE CENTERED AND IN ALL CAPS HERE]

[INSERT SECOND LINE OF TITLE IN ALL CAPS HERE]

by

[INSERT YOUR NAME IN ALL CAPS HERE]

[A Thesis / A Record of Study (Insert One Here)] submitted

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

[INSERT FULL DEGREE TITLE IN ALL CAPS HERE]

Defended on [Month] [Day], [Year]

Approved by:

Advisor/Chair: [Insert Name]

Committee: [Insert Name]  
[Insert Name]  
[Insert Name]

Department Chair: [Insert Name]

Dean of the College: [Insert Name]

Director of Graduate School: [Insert Name]
ABSTRACT

The title ABSTRACT is capitalized and centered at the top of the page. The text will begin two double spaces below. The first page of the Abstract will be the first numbered page of the thesis. Treating the Title page as page one and the signatures page as page two, the Abstract page should be labeled with the Roman numeral iii.

The abstract should provide a succinct overview of your work, informing the reader of the content of your thesis regardless of any background information or knowledge. The abstract itself should not exceed 250 words.

The first paragraph should introduce your thesis and/or the specific problem you are addressing. The remaining paragraphs should summarize your approach to the problem, describe the type of research done (including methodology employed to conduct the study), describe any findings, and state conclusions drawn or implications for future study.
DEDICATION

The Dedication page is optional and follows the Abstract. The title DEDICATION is capitalized and centered at the top of the page. The text of the Dedication starts two double spaces below the title. The font size, style, and spacing must match the rest of the thesis or record of study. If used, the Dedication should be listed in the Table of Contents.

I would like to dedicate this study to my dog who never questioned my long hours at the library as long as there was food in his bowl.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Acknowledgements page is optional and limited to one page. The title ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS is capitalized and centered at the top of the page. The text of the Acknowledgements starts two double spaces below the title. The font size, style, and spacing must match the rest of the thesis or record of study. If used, the Acknowledgments page should be listed in the Table of Contents.

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Watson, and my committee members, Dr. Hawking, Dr. Oz, and Dr. Drew, for their guidance and support throughout the course of this research.

Thanks also go to my friends and colleagues for making my time at Texas A&M University-Central Texas an enjoyable experience. I also want to extend my gratitude to my parents, who reminded me to eat, take deep breathes, and step outside once and a while.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE NEXT CHAPTER</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANOTHER CHAPTER</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsection One</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsection Two</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YET ANOTHER CHAPTER</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsection One</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsection Two</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER V</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURES</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 1. EXAMPLE GRAPHIC</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 2: OVERSIZED GRAPHIC</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLES</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 1: TITLE</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 2: TITLE</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The text of the chapter starts two double spaces below the chapter heading (CHAPTER I) and subheading (INTRODUCTION).

The margins of this page and all pages of text should be consistently set at 1” on all sides (left, right, top, and bottom). All page numbers should be centered in a footer at the bottom of each page. The preliminary pages (minus the Title and Signature pages which remain unnumbered) are numbered using Roman numerals (i.e. i, ii, iii, etc.). Beginning with Chapter I, all pages through the rest of the document (including References or Works Cited and all Appendices) are numbered using Arabic numerals (i.e. 1, 2, 3, etc.).
CHAPTER II
THE NEXT CHAPTER

To update the Table of Contents with new chapters, subheadings, and page numbers, hover over the body of the Table of Contents and right click. Select the option “Update Field” and “Update Entire Table”.

To ensure your Table of Contents is double spaced, highlight all text and right click. Select Paragraph and set line spacing to double.

Check with your program regarding which formatting style (APA, Chicago Manual of Style, etc.) to use within the body of the thesis on tables, charts, references, etc. In instances where instructions given in this template or the Texas A&M University-Central Texas Thesis Manual conflict with your chosen style, the instructions given in the thesis manual take precedence. For example, some styles require the font of chapter headings be set to bold, italicized, and/or underlined while the thesis manual requires all headings be capitalized with no bold, italicized, or underlining used.
CHAPTER III

ANOTHER CHAPTER

Breaking up a chapter into subsections is optional, but it can be a helpful for the reader to divide longer chapters into smaller sections.

**Subsection One**

If you are breaking your chapter into subsections, the subsection heading should be bold and aligned to the left.

**Subsection Two**

Do not add an extra space before or after the heading. Each subsection’s heading should appear in the Table of Contents.
CHAPTER IV

YET ANOTHER CHAPTER

Subsection One

Subsection Two
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

As a reminder, all text must be double-spaced. Also ensure that the options to “Add Space Before Paragraph” and “Add Space After Paragraph” from the Line and Paragraph Spacing drop-down menu are not selected.
FIGURE 1. EXAMPLE GRAPHIC

All labels of and descriptions for Figures and Tables should follow the same font style, size, and spacing of the rest of the text.
FIGURE 2: OVERSIZED GRAPHIC

If you have a figure that will not fit within the margins in portrait mode, you can choose to use landscape mode. All text must still match the rest of document (12 point font, double spaced, 1” margins).
REFERENCES

Here you will list all references used in writing your thesis or record of study (this *does not include* works consulted during the research process, but not cited in the thesis itself). Make sure every entry is in alphabetical order, not in the order in which they appear in the thesis.

Be sure to follow your chosen style guide when formatting each entry.
APPENDIX A: TITLE

Appendices can be used for supplemental information that is not used in the main body of the text. If used, appendices appear after the REFERENCES section and are labeled by letter (i.e. APPENDIX A, APPENDIX B, etc.). Unlike Figures and Tables, Appendices should be listed individually at the end of the main Table of Contents.

The text (or image) of the Appendix starts two double spaces below the Appendix letter and title. All appendices must fit within the same margins (1”) as the rest of the text. If the appendix is oversized, then follow the same guidelines described for oversized Figures and Tables.

If the Appendix cannot be made to fit within the set margins of a page and still leave room for a title, then place the title in the middle of a blank page and the image or object on the following page. For an example, please see APPENDIX B on the following page.
APPENDIX B: OVERSIZED EXAMPLE, CREATIVE COMMONS