

Formats for Theses and Dissertations

Master's theses and doctoral dissertations may be written in one of two formats:

- The 'traditional' style which tends to be described as a coherent document that provides a complete and systematic account of the student's research; or
- A 'manuscript-based' style constructed around two or more related manuscripts that have been published or submitted for publication.

Students should consult with their supervisor early in their degree program to determine which format is best for the nature of their research area and the time frame for their program completion.

Each academic unit will have their specific reference guide for the format of papers, theses and dissertations, such as APA. The student is to follow the guidelines required by their academic unit and those guidelines set out by FGS (www.fgs.athabascau.ca). It is the responsibility of the student to be familiar with all the format regulations of their academic unit and FGS. Failure to meet the formatting requirements may result in the thesis being rejected by FGS and Library and Archives Canada and returned to the student for correction. These specifications on thesis formats (with samples of title pages, table of contents, length of abstract, and so on) ensure that Athabasca University theses are compatible with standards established by Library and Archives Canada and provide a standard and professional format for all theses that are requirements for the degrees offered by Athabasca University. Since the thesis is one of the requirements for the fulfillment of a degree, if the thesis does not conform with the format requirements, graduation will be delayed until the requirements are met.

1.0 Traditional format

The traditional style is the most common form of theses/dissertations. The titles and content of the chapters will vary by topic and discipline. For example, the first chapter of a thesis may be called ‘Chapter 1 Introduction’ or ‘Chapter 1 Significance of the Problem’. The subsections in this chapter may vary and may include an Introduction, Significance of the Problem or Issue, and Purpose of the Study. In some cases the theoretical framework may be called a conceptual model and may be included in a chapter of its own or included in the same chapter as the literature review. The important sections and their order of appearance are presented below.

1.1 Format for Traditional Theses/Dissertations

In order of appearance:

Prefatory pages

Frontispiece or Quote page (optional)

Title page (see example)

Approval page (provided by FGS to student)

Dedication (optional)

Acknowledgements (optional)

Abstract (see example)

Preface (optional)

Table of Contents (see example)

List of Tables (see example)

List of Figures and Illustrations

List of Plates

List of Symbols, Nomenclature, or Abbreviations (if any)

Body of Text

Chapter 1 Significance of the problem

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

Chapter 4 Methods (includes design, sample recruitment, sample characteristics, data collection method (tools, their reliability and validity), details on analytical methods, ethical/access considerations)

Chapter 5 Results (or Findings)

Chapter 6 Discussion (can also include implications for further research, education, practice, ...)

Chapter 7 Conclusion

Final Sections

Footnotes (if any)

References

Appendices (if any)

Index (optional)

2.0 Manuscript-based Format

Each faculty/centre will have guidelines regarding whether only published articles/materials will be accepted; the minimum number of published/unpublished materials to be included; whether multiple authored works are allowed; whether the materials should be submitted to or published in a referred journal; and whether book chapters are allowed.

The manuscripts that are included in the thesis/dissertation may be published or submitted for publication, depending upon the requirements set out by the student's academic unit. However,

FGS will not allow manuscripts to be included in a thesis/dissertation that has been ‘published’ in a newsletter, professional association newsletter, or newspaper. The student is producing an original work which is to create new knowledge or provide a unique interpretation of current knowledge, and therefore the publication must be recognized by the profession as one that is rigorous, considered credible by the student’s discipline/profession, and undergoes a review process that is conducted by experts in the related research field.

In the case where the supervisor and supervisory committee allow a ‘manuscript style’ dissertation as partial fulfillment toward the requirements of the degree, FGS specifies the following must be included:

- An introduction that sets the context of the work, sets out the overall objectives and implications of the work, summarizes and critiques the research on the topic as a whole, and provides the rationale for the current study;
- A section with a general discussion that links the separate manuscripts;
- A discussion on how the manuscripts relate to the student’s research topic as a whole;
- A concluding chapter that shows clearly how the articles form a coherent substantial body of work and should represent a significant advance of knowledge.

The document must be a coherent presentation of the student’s research work. The different chapters or sections must contribute to the general theme. Repetition of material that appears in more than one journal article (e.g. introductions, background, methodology) should be avoided.

2.1 Multiple Authors

In the case of multi-authored works, the student should be the first author. There must be a preface to the thesis that documents clearly the student’s contribution to each of the multiple-authored works. The student’s original contributions should be indicated, thereby justifying in

what way this work becomes the student's dissertation. In terms of copyright, the status of the rights of each co-author in the work must be determined. The candidate must secure from any co-author of a published work a written waiver of all rights in favor of Athabasca University and the National Library of Canada so as to permit publication of the thesis in their repositories. In addition, written permission must be obtained from any co-author who retains copyright or the person to whom the co-author has assigned copyright, by way of a grant of an irrevocable non-exclusive license to Athabasca University and the National Library of Canada to reproduce material generated by the student as part of the thesis. The thesis should indicate that articles have been printed either 'with permission' or 'under license' (either by a statement in the preface or on the first page of each article). Copies of the letters of permission or licenses should be provided to the supervisor and FGS prior to arrangements for the final oral examination.

2.2 Unpublished Works

It is permissible to include in the thesis the 'pdf' created by the publisher of the submitted articles. For unpublished works (e.g. a paper that has been submitted but not yet published), a statement concerning the status of any dealing or contemplated dealing with the copyright or the auspices under which the work was prepared must be on the first page of the separately prepared, unpublished work. A letter from the publisher that the paper is under review or in press should be included in the Appendix of the dissertation.

2.3 Published Works

It is permissible to include in the thesis the 'pdf' created by the publisher of the published articles. For each published article, a complete citation, including the first and last page number in the journal publication, and recognition of the copyright holder must be printed on the first page of the article.

Written permission to include copyright material in the thesis must be obtained by the student from the copyright holder. See the Copyright section of the FGS guidelines.

2.4 Page Numbers

The previously published or prepared materials should be assigned page numbers that are sequential within the thesis. To reduce confusion, it is preferable to remove the journal page numbers.

2.5 References

A list of references will form a part of most journal articles or manuscripts that are reproduced for inclusion in a thesis. References should remain self-contained, within each article, if that is how they appear in the original document. The references for the new material in the thesis should be listed at the end as usual. Material that is referenced in one or more of the reproduced articles or manuscripts should be included in the main thesis reference list only if it is also cited in the new material.

2.6 Format for Manuscript-style Theses/Dissertations

In order of appearance:

Prefatory pages

Frontispiece or Quote page (optional)

Title page (see example)

Approval page (provided by FGS to student)

Dedication (optional)

Acknowledgements (optional)

Abstract (see example)

Preface (optional)

Table of Contents (see example)

List of Tables (if any)

List of Figures and Illustrations (if any)

List of Plates (if any)

List of Symbols, Nomenclature, or Abbreviations (if any)

Body of Text

Introductory chapter (Introduction) to the entire thesis (scope of study, purpose, significance of the work, a summary and critique of current literature)

Discussion of methods (how study performed, how each manuscript relates to each other, what was not published but conducted with the findings of the work that was not published)

Each subsequent chapter comprises each manuscript with its preface – role of the student if multi-authored; how each manuscript fits with the rest of the manuscripts and the overall research problem (if not included in the introduction)

Final Chapter (general discussion, significance of the findings and how study has advanced knowledge, implications for further research overall as a result of thesis)

References

Appendices (may include ethics approval; permissions from publishers; details of methodology, tabulated data and other information not provided in detail in the previous chapters)

3.0 General Style of all Theses/Dissertations

The thesis proposal and the final thesis must be written according to a standard style acknowledged by a particular field of study and recommended by the academic unit.

Use only one single typeface (font) with italic and bold variants used for titles of sections through the entire thesis, such as title page, acknowledgements, references, and appendices.

Only font size twelve is acceptable, although a smaller type size may be used for graphs, tables, formulas and appendices. All pages of the thesis are to be single-sided.

3.1 Page Size & Margins

Margins must be at least:

- Left: 1.25 to 1.5 inches (3.75 to 3.8 cm)
- Right: 1.25 to 1.5 inches (3.75 to 3.8 cm)
- Top: 1 inch (2.54 cm)
- Bottom: 1 inch (2.54 cm)

Large tables, figures, illustrations, appendices should be reduced to fit within the margins, provided that the print clarity is not affected. If the print quality deteriorates, then it is preferable to exceed margins as little as possible.

3.2 Thesis Title

The thesis title will be a valuable reference for other scholars only if it can be easily located within the libraries. Retrieval systems use key words in the title to locate the thesis. It is important that the title be meaningful and descriptive of the content of the work.

3.3 Abstract

The abstract should be a concise and accurate summary of the thesis. Abstracts must not exceed **150 words for a master's thesis** and **350 for a doctoral dissertation**. The abstract must be

double-spaced. Do not use graphs, charts, tables or illustrations in the abstract. Do not include references in the abstract. Display symbols, foreign words and phrases clearly and accurately.

3.4 Bibliography/References or Literature Cited

Use a citation format that has been approved by your academic unit. The Bibliography or References are to be placed at the end of the thesis preceding the appendices.

3.5 Illustrative Material

Illustrative material, such as maps, tables and figures, must be of excellent quality and all labeling must be clear and sharp. Maps should be redrawn if acceptable quality is not obtained. Maps taken from published sources usually require copyright permission. Students should follow the information in the Copyright Permission section found in the FGS guidelines.

3.6 Oversized pages

Wherever possible, charts, blueprints, graphs, maps, and tables which are larger than the standard page size must be photo-reduced in such a way that the material remains clearly legible. It is recommended that such pages be avoided unless absolutely necessary.

3.7 Tables and Figures

All tables and figures are required to be numbered. Each table or figure is to be identified with the word “Table” or “Figure” and its number. Whenever possible, the title and caption of each table and figure should be on the same page as the figure or table. The entire table or figure should be on one page (in other words, not straddle across two pages). The table or figures should be inserted as close as possible to the relevant text rather than putting the material in groupings at the end of the chapter or thesis.

3.8 Photographs

All photographs and reproductions of photographs should be of professional quality with a sharp contrast.

3.9 Accompanying Materials

Items which are not contained within the text of the thesis (e.g. audiorecordings, video recordings) are not included in the copy provided to Library and Archives Canada.

Audio and visual files may be uploaded to the Athabasca University DTheses repository. These files must be saved as separate files and not embedded within the thesis. They may be added to DTheses with the pdf version of the thesis. DTheses accepts many file formats such as pdf, ppt, jpg, gif, zip, xml and bmp. The files must be virus free.

ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

TITLE OF THESIS/DISSERTATION

BY

STUDENT FULL NAME

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF [INSERT FULL NAME OF DEGREE]

FULL NAME OF HOME FACULTY & CENTRE

ATHABASCA, ALBERTA
[MONTH, YEAR]

© STUDENT NAME

Approval Page

This page is prepared by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and given to the student for insertion into their thesis/dissertation immediately after the title page.

Dedication

The dedication page is optional. It is where you dedicate your thesis to an important person.

Acknowledgements

The acknowledgement page is an optional page where you can acknowledge other individual's contributions to your thesis.

Abstract

This page is required for all graduate theses and dissertations. An abstract is a short paragraph explaining the major points and conclusions of the thesis. It must be double-spaced. For master's theses, the abstract must be no more than 150 words, while doctoral abstracts can be no longer than 350 words. References are not included in the abstract.

Preface

The preface is an optional preliminary statement to introduce your thesis that explains its scope, intention, or background.

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