

**THESIS AND DISSERTATION FORMATTING GUIDELINES**

It is the exclusive responsibility of the student to ensure that the thesis or dissertation complies with the guidelines outlined in this document prior to submission to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) for approval.

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# Section 1. Introduction

The following guidelines should be consulted when writing your thesis/dissertation as the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) at Athabasca University has minimum formatting requirements, which must be met for acceptance. Furthermore, the thesis or dissertation is a published and archived document, so following the required guidelines for formatting and structure is important to ensure readability because the quality of the work reflects both the student and the university.

It is important to note that each degree program may also have additional style guidelines and a preferred citation format, so students are encouraged to check with their supervisor and program director for any additional requirements. It is the exclusive responsibility of the student to ensure that the thesis/dissertation is formatted properly and follows all the citation and structure guidelines before submission to FGS. Students should request that their supervisor review the thesis or dissertation before submission to FGS for approval. Once approved by FGS, the thesis or dissertation will be deposited into the DTheses repository (<https://dt.athabascau.ca>) and then harvested by Library Archives Canada, where it will become a publicly accessible document.

The following guidelines contain the information required for formatting a thesis/dissertation according to minimum institutional requirements. In addition to these requirements, most programs require the thesis/dissertation to be written in APA format. Please check with your program. An APA-style thesis/dissertation template is also available on the FGS website, as well as APA formatting resources, a checklist for completion, and the required copyright declaration form. This form must be submitted along with the final thesis or dissertation.

# Section 2. Types of Theses and Dissertations

Master’s theses and doctoral dissertations may be written in one of three styles. The ‘traditional’ style is described as a fully written coherent document that provides a complete and systematic account of the student’s research. A ‘manuscript-based’ style is a thesis/dissertation constructed around two or more related manuscripts published or submitted for publication. A ‘multimodal’ style is a thesis/dissertation that contains, in addition to a traditional academically written component, at least another non-traditional scholarly product, which may take various forms including but not limited to text-based documents for non-academic audiences, videos, audio files, artwork, applications, computer code and/or data set and whose key elements of appreciation may depend on direct experience.

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 timeframe for their program completion. The following table (in APA format) outlines the differences between the three types of theses/dissertations:

#### Table 1: Criteria for different styles of theses and dissertations

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Manuscript-Thesis/Dissertation | Traditional Thesis/Dissertation | Multimodal Thesis/Dissertation |
| Permission from supervisor/supervisory committee required |  | Permission from supervisor/supervisory committee required |
| Written as a collection of papers by the student either submitted or accepted for publication or previously published  | A monograph that includes original, unpublished work by the student | A body of original, innovative, and/or creative work by the student that merit publication or other appropriate public dissemination |
| Includes full chapters of previously published work | Can consist of information from previously published work as the student and supervisor see~~s~~ fit | Can consist of any publication, object or scholarly product obtained because of innovative academic work  |
| Presents a cohesive report of a single area of research based on one or more related manuscripts | Presents the study of a single area of research based on one manuscript | Presents the study of a single area of research and/or scholarship based on a manuscript and any acceptable scholarly product  |
| Student can author or co-author the paper/chapter but must have done most of the writing and obtained co-authors’ permission | Student is the author | Student can be the sole author/innovator/creator/developer of the scholarly product or can play a leading role in a team but get permission from other members to include in the thesis/dissertation  |

Formatting guidelines for each type of thesis/dissertation can be found in Sections 4-6 of this document, following the general formatting guidelines in Section 3. Make sure you follow the general guidelines set out by FGS ([www.fgs.athabascau.ca](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cshaunaz%5CDocuments%5CFGS%5Cwww.fgs.athabascau.ca)) in Section 3, the style guidelines outlined by your program (often APA), as well as the guidelines applicable to the type of thesis/dissertation chosen (Sections 4-6).

FGS has provided minimal guidelines, as well as an FGS APA-formatted thesis/dissertation template and additional resources on APA-formatting. Please note that there are minor differences between the FGS guidelines and an APA-formatted manuscript for running headers and page numbers. Please consult the FGS APA-formatted thesis/dissertation template, as this document clearly demonstrates what is expected in the final submission. It is also important to note that the template provided by FGS includes information on the possible ways the chapters and headings may be organized, depending on the nature of the thesis/dissertation.

Failure to meet the formatting requirements may result in the thesis being rejected by FGS AU Library and Scholarly Resources and returned to the student for correction. These specifications on theses/dissertation formats (with samples of title pages, table of contents, length of abstract, and so on) ensure that Athabasca University theses/dissertations 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/dissertation is one of the requirements for the fulfillment of a degree, it must conform with the format requirements, or graduation will be delayed until the requirements are met.

FGS provides students with a “Next Steps” email before depositing their thesis/dissertation into the DTheses repository. Students should follow the instructions contained in this email. One important note is that the title of the thesis/dissertation cannot have any spaces in it for submission to the repository as Library and Archives Canada cannot harvest the thesis/dissertation if there are spaces in the title. This and other important information in the “Next Steps” email should be followed in conjunction with the guidelines in this document and the thesis/dissertation template.

# Section 3. General Formatting Requirements for all Theses/Dissertations

The thesis/dissertation proposal and the final thesis/dissertation must be written according to a standard style acknowledged by a particular field of study and recommended by the program of study. Most programs at Athabasca University use APA format, but students should check with their program. This section outlines the general formatting guidelines required by FGS for submission to AU Library and Scholarly Resources.

## General Organization

In general, the organization of the thesis/dissertation includes the following key components, illustrated in the figure below. The structure may vary depending on the type of thesis/dissertation you write. However, each of these overall components is required unless otherwise noted.

\* Indicates optional components.

\*\* Indicates components that are only required when applicable.

Please do not include the following in the thesis/dissertation: student identification numbers, signatures, emails, mailing addresses, and a signed Library and Archives Canada page. Please also ensure that signatures or any personally identifiable information is removed if a research ethics approval page and a copyright permissions page are included in the Appendix.

## Page Size, Layout, and Spacing

The standard page size is 8.5 x 11 inches (North American Letter size) and should be in portrait orientation. All the pages of the thesis/dissertation are to be single~~-~~sided. Blank pages should not appear in the document. Recommended margins for all pages must be at least 1 inch (2.54 cm) on all sides (top, bottom, left, right). A wider left margin should be used if binding, 1.5 inches (3.8 cm).

Large tables, figures, illustrations, and appendices should be reduced to fit within the margins, provided the print clarity is not affected. If the print quality deteriorates, exceeding margins as little as possible is preferable. Wherever possible, charts, blueprints, graphs, maps, and tables larger than the standard page size must be photo-reduced to keep the material legible. It is recommended that such pages be avoided unless necessary. Tables and figures should be at most two pages, if possible.

All pages should be double- or one-and-a-half-spaced, including the Abstract and other preliminary pages. If the Table of Contents, List of Figures, or List of Tables are long, it is possible to use single-spacing. Single-spacing may also be used for long quotes.

Pages may be justified (even left and right-hand margins) or left justified (ragged right-hand margins), which is used by APA, but the type of justification used must be consistent throughout.

## Font

Use only one typeface (font) with italic and bold variants for titles of sections throughout the thesis, such as title pages, acknowledgements, references, and appendices. APA formatting recommends 12-point serif fonts like Times New Roman or 11-point sans serif fonts, although a smaller type size may be used for graphs, tables, formulas, and appendices. Do not use multi-coloured font. Black font is recommended, except for hyperlinks, which should be blue.

## Page Numbers

All pages should be numbered, except the Title Page, and the page numbers should appear in the same place throughout the thesis/dissertation. Please note that APA paper format uses page numbers at the top right-hand corner of the page, but this is not required for theses/dissertations, providing the page numbers are consistent throughout. Prefatory or preliminary pages must be numbered with lowercase Roman numerals (ii, iii, iv, etc.). The Body of the thesis/dissertation must be numbered with lowercase Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.). If the thesis/dissertation calls for it, for example, includes an original artistic work, the pages may be numbered differently than the standard requirements.

## Header

The header should be placed in the upper left corner of each page of the thesis/dissertation, beginning on the Abstract page. It should continue appearing on every page, including the references and appendices pages. The header title should consist of a few keywords from the title (less than 50 characters). The header should be capitalized, e.g., FGS THESIS/DISSERTATION GUIDELINES. This is shown in the header above for this document and in the Thesis Template in APA format (7th edition) on the FGS website. Note that on an APA format paper, the header for the title page includes the words “Running Head” preceding the header title for the title page only, but this is not required for a thesis/dissertation.

## Title Page and Title

A title page should be included at the beginning of the thesis/dissertation. This page is important because it provides information about the author and the work. All items on the title page must be in uppercase letters, double-spaced (even the title) and centred within the margins.

The name ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY is at the top of the page, followed by the title, the word “BY,” and the student's name. The student's name should be identical on the title page (under the title and after the copyright symbol at the bottom). The student’s name should be the legal name as it appears in university records. The full name of the degree should be listed. If the degree is interdisciplinary, the home graduate program is listed first, followed by the word “and” before the second graduate program is listed. The institution's location, ATHABASCA, ALBERTA, should have a comma in between. The name of the month and the year that the final copy of the thesis/dissertation was submitted to FGS should be listed and separated by a comma. The copyright symbol appears to the left of the student’s name. There is no month or year for the copyright. Please note that if the thesis/dissertation is to be released under a Creative Commons license, the symbol to be used is (cc) with the appropriate conditions added. Please consult the copyright form and guidelines (www.fgs.athabascau.ca) for more information. Please see the example of a proper title page on the thesis/dissertation template on the FGS website.

The thesis/dissertation title should be meaningful and descriptive of the content of the work but should be less than or equal to 12 words. The thesis title will be a valuable reference for other scholars only if it can be easily located within the libraries. Retrieval systems use keywords in the title to find the thesis. The title of the thesis/dissertation should be identical on the Thesis/Dissertation Approval Page and the Final Oral Exam Report (including capitalization and punctuation).

## Abstract

The abstract should concisely and accurately summarize the thesis/dissertation, presenting the problem, study method, and general conclusion. 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. Keywords are required on the abstract page. The work *Keywords* should be followed by a colon. The first line of the *Keywords* should be indented. The second line (if applicable) should be flush left. Only capitalize proper nouns for the keywords.

## Bibliography/References or Literature Cited

This list compiles all the relevant material you sourced in writing the thesis/dissertation. Use a citation format that your program has approved. Any approved format can be used, but it must be used consistently throughout the work. The Bibliography or References are to be placed at the end of the thesis preceding the appendices. Any non-textual work, such as works of art, must be listed as “References” and cannot appear as part of a “Bibliography.”

## Illustrative Material

Illustrative material, such as maps, tables, and figures, must be of excellent quality, and all labelling must be clear and sharp. All photographs and reproductions of photographs should be of professional quality with a sharp contrast. 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.

## Tables and Figures

Number all tables and figures and identify each 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. According to APA form, the table and figure number and the title or caption should be located at the top of the tables and figures. The entire table or figure should be on one page (in other words, not straddle across two pages), if possible. The table or figures should be inserted as close to the relevant text as possible rather than putting the material in groupings at the end of the chapter or thesis/dissertation. Please see the thesis/dissertation template for examples of formatting tables and figures on the FGS website.

## Accompanying Materials

Items not contained within the text of the thesis (e.g., audio and video recordings) are not included in the copy provided to AU Library and Scholarly Resources. Audio and visual files may be uploaded to the Athabasca University DTheses repository. The files must be saved separately 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. There should be no spaces in your file name as it affects harvesting by Library and Archives Canada.

# Section 4. Formatting Requirements for Traditional Theses/Dissertations

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 include an Introduction, the Significance of the Problem or Issue, and the Purpose of the Study. In some cases, the theoretical framework may be called a conceptual model. It 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 as follows:

Prefatory pages:

Title page (see example)

Approval page (provided by FGS to student)

Frontispiece or Quote page (optional)

Dedication (optional)

Acknowledgements (optional)

Abstract (see example)

Preface (optional)

Table of Contents (see example)

List of Tables (see example)

List of Figures and Illustrations (see example)

List of Plates, List of Symbols, Nomenclature, or Abbreviations (if any, see example)

Body of Text:

Chapter 1 Significance of the Problem (or Introduction)

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) (in some cases, students may include two results chapters separating qualitative and quantitative results)

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

Chapter 7 Conclusion

Final Sections:

Footnotes (if any)

References

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

Index (optional)

# Section 5. Formatting Requirements for Manuscript-style Theses/Dissertations

Each program will have guidelines for manuscript-style theses/dissertations, including the following:

* 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 refereed journal
* whether book chapters are allowed

The manuscripts in the thesis/dissertation may be published or submitted for publication, depending upon the requirements set out by the student’s program. 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 to create new knowledge or provide a unique interpretation of current knowledge. Therefore, the publication must be recognized by the profession as rigorous, considered credible by the student’s discipline/profession, and undergo a review process that experts in the related research field conduct.

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 cohesive presentation of the student’s research work. The different chapters or sections must contribute to the general theme. Repetition of material appearing in multiple journal articles (e.g., introductions, background, methodology) should be avoided.

The important sections and their order of appearance are as follows:

Prefatory pages:

Title page (see example)

Approval page (provided by FGS to student)

Frontispiece or Quote page (optional)

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)

Chapter 1 (Introduction)

Chapter 2 (the methods and how each manuscript is related to the study)

Chapter 3 (may consist of the manuscripts)

Chapter 4 (Conclusion, implications, limitations)

References (for areas of thesis not cited in the manuscripts)

Appendices

Body of Text: Each chapter should begin at the top of a new page and be in APA paper format.

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 the study was 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 – the 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, how the study has advanced knowledge, and implications for further research overall as a result of the thesis).

## Multiple Authors

In the case of multi-authored works, the student should be the first author. A preface to the thesis must be included that clearly documents the student’s contribution to the multiple-authored works. The student’s original contributions should be indicated, justifying how this work becomes the student’s dissertation. Regarding 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 favour of Athabasca University and the National Library of Canada to permit publication of the thesis in their repositories. In addition, written permission must be obtained from any co-author who retains the copyright or the person to whom the co-author has assigned copyright by way of a grant of an irrevocable nonexclusive license to Athabasca University and the National Library of Canada to reproduce material generated by the student as part of the thesis/dissertation. The thesis/dissertation 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 before the final oral examination arrangements.

## Unpublished Works

For unpublished works (e.g., a paper that has been submitted but not published yet), 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 thesis/dissertation.

## Published Works

It is permissible to include in the thesis/dissertation 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 article's first page. Written permission to include copyright material in the thesis/dissertation must be obtained by the student from the copyright holder. See the Copyright section of the FGS guidelines.

## Page Numbers

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

## References

A list of references will be part of most journal articles or manuscripts reproduced for inclusion in a thesis. References should remain self-contained within each article if that is how they appear in the original document. As usual, the references for the new material in the thesis should be listed at the end. Material referenced in one or more reproduced articles or manuscripts should be included in the main thesis/dissertation reference list only if it is also cited in the new material. References should be in alphabetical order, contain working links, and be underlined in blue.

## Appendices

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

# Section 6. Formatting Requirements for Multimodal Theses/Dissertations

A multimodal style is flexible by design to incorporate non-traditional scholarly products, including written documents intended for non-academic audiences, videos, audio, blueprints, and interactive digital works. The basic formatting requirements are the same as for traditional theses/dissertations, plus requirements for added non-traditional scholarly products. Each program will have guidelines for multimodal-style theses/dissertations, including the following:

* the type of non-traditional scholarly products that can be part of theses/dissertations.
* the maximum number of non-traditional scholarly products to be included.
* whether non-traditional scholarly products from collaborative work with others are allowed.

## Scholarly products from collaborative work

In the case of the inclusion of non-traditional scholarly products obtained from collaborative work with others, the student should lead the project. A preface to the thesis/dissertation must be included that clearly documents the student’s contribution to the obtention of these non-traditional scholarly products. The student’s original contributions should be indicated, justifying how these scholarly products become part of the student’s thesis/dissertation. In terms of copyright or patents, the status of the rights of each project team member must be determined. The candidate must secure from any collaborator of a scholarly product a written waiver of all rights in favour of Athabasca University and the National Library of Canada to permit publication of the thesis/dissertation in their repositories. In addition, written permission must be obtained from any collaborator who retains copyright or the person to whom the collaborator has assigned copyright by way of a grant of an irrevocable nonexclusive license to Athabasca University and the National Library of Canada to reproduce material generated by the student as part of the thesis/dissertation. The thesis/dissertation should indicate that scholarly products have been included either ‘with permission’ or ‘under license’ (either by a statement in the preface or on the first page of each scholarly product). Copies of the letters of permission or licenses should be provided to the supervisor and FGS before the final oral examination arrangements.

## Non-traditional written scholarly documents

Non-traditional written scholarly documents (e.g., reports, policy papers, opinion pieces, business plans) can be included in their published forms. Each inserted document must be placed in one or more separate text boxes, with a text box for each page of the thesis/dissertation. Text boxes should be indented 0.5” on the right and left margins. The insertion of such a document must be preceded by one or two paragraphs explaining its importance in the general research context of the thesis/dissertation. The typeface (font) used across the document should be kept in boxes. However, the font size used in boxes should be the same as that used for graphs, tables, and formulas. It is permissible to include in the thesis/dissertation the ‘pdf’ created by the publisher of non-traditional scholarly products.

For each published copyrighted product, a complete citation, including the first and last page number in the publication, and recognition of the copyright holder must be printed on the first page of the publication. Written permission to include copyright material in the thesis/dissertation must be obtained by the student from the copyright holder. See the Copyright section of the FGS guidelines.

When applicable, for unpublished written products (e.g., a paper that has been submitted but not published yet), 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 thesis/dissertation.

## Other non-traditional scholarly products

The insertion of non-written scholarly products (e.g., videos, audio, blueprints) in the thesis/dissertation is subject to AU Library and Scholarly Resources' ability to handle their size. It must be preceded by one or two paragraphs to explain its importance in the general research context of the thesis/dissertation. Students must consult the FGS for advice if they anticipate their thesis/dissertation file size exceeding 50M.

For non-written scholarly products as well, written permission to include copyrighted material in the thesis/dissertation must be obtained by the student from the copyright holder. See the Copyright section of the FGS guidelines.

## Page Numbers

The previously published or prepared materials should be assigned sequential page numbers within the thesis/dissertation. To reduce confusion, it is preferable to remove the page numbers from the previously published version of the document.

## References

A list of references will form a part of most reproduced documents for inclusion in a thesis/dissertation. References should remain self-contained within each document if that is how they appear in the original document. As usual, the references for the new material in the thesis/dissertation should be listed at the end. Material referenced in one or more reproduced documents should be included in the main thesis/dissertation reference list only if cited in the new material.

## Appendices

Appendices may include ethics approval and renewals, permissions from publishers, technical notes, details of methodology, tabulated data and other information not provided in detail in the previous chapters.