

# Thesis Preparation Guide



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ARKANSAS  
TECH  
UNIVERSITY

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*Graduate College*

Graduate College  
Arkansas Tech University  
Tomlinson 113  
Russellville, AR 72801

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## Introduction

As a formal research paper, the thesis should reveal the candidate can produce original research that meets the professional standards of the discipline. Preparation for writing a thesis should include careful and wide reading of professional journals and texts of involved disciplines, including the most recent scholarly work in the academic field. Students must exhibit capabilities of gathering, organizing, evaluating, and reporting data which are pertinent to the topic of investigation, as well as exhibiting their ability to use technology appropriate to the discipline.

The following guide includes information applicable to all master's theses produced at Arkansas Tech University. Students must also follow procedures and guidelines set forth by their individual departments.

### Graduate College Deadlines (See Table 1 for Breakdown of Tentative Deadlines)

- Students must apply for “**Admission to Candidacy**” upon completion of twelve (12) graduate credit hours. Completion of the candidacy requires proposing a complete program of study with anticipated semester for degree completion and graduation. These forms are available on the Graduate College website. Upon completion of twelve (12) graduate credit hours, a hold will be applied to a student’s records. Receipt and approval of a candidacy form will remove the hold.
- In addition to satisfying all degree requirements, a candidate for a degree must file an “**Application for Graduation**” with the Registrar’s Office after completing twelve (12) graduate credit hours. If a student applies for graduation but fails to satisfy their graduation requirements, the student must reapply and pay an additional diploma fee.
- Students must complete the “**Topic Approval Form**” prior to beginning thesis work. A signed copy of the form and a thesis summary should be submitted to the Graduate College Dean. No further work should be completed until an approved topic has been given.
- A thesis draft must be submitted for committee approval before the final thesis is prepared. The thesis committee must receive the thesis at least six (6) weeks before the degree is to be conferred for Fall or Spring graduates and four (4) weeks before the degree is to be conferred for Summer graduates.
- A committee-approved thesis draft must be submitted electronically to the Graduate College at least four (4) weeks before the degree is to be conferred for Fall or Spring graduates and two (2) weeks before the degree is to be conferred for Summer graduates.
- The final version of thesis, in acceptable form, with signatures of all committee members on the “**Thesis Oral Defense Form**,” must be filed with the Graduate

College no later than the close of the work day which precedes the date of graduation by two (2) weeks for Fall or Spring graduates and one (1) week before the degree is to be conferred for Summer graduates.

### **Master's Thesis Committee Composition**

The graduate student who plans to write a thesis is responsible for determining the content area of the projected study in consultation with the thesis chair. The thesis chair must be a member of the graduate faculty with expertise in the selected topic area. Together they will decide upon the other members of the thesis committee, which will include two other qualified members of the graduate faculty. The program director will have final approval of the thesis advisor and committee.

Only full-time regular Graduate Faculty members may serve as the Thesis Committee Chair. Of the three-person committee, at least one other member must hold regular Graduate Faculty status. If more than three members are appointed to the Thesis Committee, a majority of the members must hold regular Graduate Faculty status. A Graduate Faculty member holding non-regular Graduate Faculty status may serve on a thesis committee, with prior approval of the program director and written approval by the Graduate College Dean.

In addition to the regular or non-regular graduate faculty members' eligibility to serve on a thesis committee, a person having no official relationship with Arkansas Tech University may be appointed to serve with prior approval of the Graduate College Dean. When nominating a non-affiliated person, the program director must submit a letter of request, describing the qualifications of the non-affiliated person, along with their current résumé.

Membership on the Graduate Faculty terminates at the time of retirement. The chair of a thesis committee, who retires, may no longer continue to serve as the chair. However, the retired faculty member may remain on the committee, if the student wishes for the relationship to continue and has received approval from the program director and Graduate Dean.

If a Thesis Committee makes a change in its membership, a “**Thesis Committee Member Change**” form must be submitted to the Graduate College Dean for approval.

### **Responsibilities of the Thesis Committee**

The committee will approve the thesis proposal, and ensure particulars of the proposal are carried out. Other responsibilities include: reading the thesis for content, style, and standard English usage; ensuring mechanics of typing and printing are followed according to departmental and university guidelines; affirming proper research techniques are followed, an in-depth review of the literature is completed, and the conclusions reached are both legitimate and supported by data; and ensuring plagiarism does not occur. The committee should make certain the thesis is of quality and reflects

high standards of scholarly writing. The thesis committee chair is responsible for the initial reading and initial corrections of the student's paper. The chair is then responsible for submitting the thesis to the committee members for their review. Please utilize the Graduate College "**Thesis Timeline**" that governs this process. The committee and chair will meet with the student as needed during the time the student is engaged in the thesis process.

### **Topic Approval Form**

A topic approval must be prepared by the student and approved by the thesis committee before work on the thesis begins. A "**Topic Approval Form**" is available on the Graduate College website. After the thesis proposal has been approved and signed by the thesis committee and the program director, it is then submitted to the Graduate College Dean for final approval.

### **Thesis Defense Form**

An oral defense of the thesis is required. It will be conducted by the thesis committee, which will then notify the Graduate College Dean, in writing, the student has passed the oral defense. The "**Oral Examination Approval**" form is available on the Graduate College webpage. The oral defense of the thesis must be passed at least two (2) weeks before the degree is conferred for Fall or Spring graduates and one (1) week before the degree is conferred for Summer graduates. After the oral defense, the student may make no change to the thesis, not authorized by the thesis committee.

### **Thesis Approval**

The thesis committee, program director, graduate college reader, and graduate college dean must approve a thesis before it is reproduced in its final form.

### **Credits and Grades**

A grade of **R** is given on all thesis enrollments until the thesis is accepted, and then appropriate credit is granted. The mark **R** gives neither credit nor grade points toward a graduate degree. The mark **CR** gives credit for hours only. Departments may choose to assign a letter grade or only give credit for hours.

## **Policy Matters**

### **Protocols for Research Involving Human Subjects or Animals**

Candidates using surveys, experiments, etc. involving human subjects or animals should contact the Office of Institutional Research before beginning any research. Research involving human subjects must be reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Once a student's research project has been approved by the IRB, an official Protocol Approval Statement must be included in the thesis with in the Appendices section of the thesis.

### **Plagiarism**

Claiming the exact words, paraphrases, ideas, arguments, or thoughts of another as your own is plagiarism, and Arkansas Tech University requires disciplinary action (possibly including dismissal) and/or grade adjustments for this offense. Quotation marks should be used to indicate the exact words of another. Each time you paraphrase the words of another (such as in summarizing passages, rearranging sentence order, or changing words), or referencing someone else's ideas, credit must be giving to the source in your writing.

### **Thesis Elements and Style**

*Students are expected to use the "Thesis Template" available on the Graduate College website.*

### **Style Guides**

Each department will determine and specify the required style guide for theses within its own discipline. Students should avoid referring to previous theses as guides since newer editions of style manuals frequently include substantive changes. Regardless of the style used by the student's departments, the requirements described below apply to all theses at Arkansas Tech University.

### **Number of Copies**

A minimum of two copies of a thesis are required. The first is for the library and the second for the major department. The library will cover the cost of the printing and binding fees for the library and departmental copy of the approved thesis. If a student wants to purchase personal copies of their thesis, the Graduate College will email the student a website link to order personalized copies online.

### **Typeface**

The typeface must be clear, non-distracting, and consistent throughout. Style manuals may specify the use of italics and allow exemptions for graphs, illustrations, and appendices. Use a 12-point font size and black ink.

### **Line Spacing**

The entire text must be double-spaced, unless exceptions are specified in the specific style manual. Half spacing is not acceptable. Do not split words from one page to the next (turn widow-orphan on in Microsoft Word).

## **Margins and Justification**

All left margins must be 1.5 inches to provide space for binding. All other margins (top, bottom, and right) should be one inch. Do not hyphenate words between lines. The right hand margin may not be justified.

## **Illustrations**

Formatting and positioning of tables, graphs, drawings, figures, and photographs should follow the requisite style guidelines. Usually they are placed as near as possible to the first textual reference. Computer-generated tables and graphs must be clear, distinct, and must fit within the required margins. Photographs may be reprinted or photocopied only if the quality of the photograph does not diminish in shading, color, or clarity. Each submitted copy of the thesis must contain identical mounted materials.

Lettering and drawing for charts, figures, tables, and exhibits must be done neatly in black, permanent ink. Computer-generated text from plotters or laser printers is preferred for lettering and drawing; hand lettering or drawing must be of professional quality. Each should be placed in the appropriate place in the text or on a separate page immediately following the page on which it is first cited.

## **Original Documents**

Original letters or documents should be photocopied on the requisite paper and submitted as part of the thesis. Students should retain the originals. Margin requirements may make size reduction necessary.

## **Pagination**

- Every page of the thesis is numbered except for the title page and the blank pages at the beginning and end of the document.
- Preliminary pages are numbered with lower-case Roman numerals centered at the bottom of the page, starting with ii on the Permission page.
- Pages in the body of the text are numbered with Arabic numerals centered at the bottom of the page, beginning with the first page of the text, which will be page 1.

## **Footers**

- Varied Footers can be used throughout a document.
- To Change the Footer in Microsoft Word 2010:
  - Click at the bottom of the preceding page (not in the Footer)
  - Then go to the Page Layout tab in the toolbar.
  - Click on the arrow beside Breaks, in the Page Setup box; double-click on Continuous.
  - Put your cursor in the Footer of the page needing a different style.
  - Deselect Link to Previous in the Navigation box, located in the Design tab.

- A new Footer may now be placed on this page. Continuous breaks may be used to change Footers throughout the document.

### **Preliminary Pages Formatting**

*Students are expected to use the “Thesis Template” available on the Graduate College website.*

#### **Title Page**

The title should indicate the contents of the thesis. It should be in all capital letters and centered two inches below the top of the page. The rest of the page is spaced to maintain optical balance. The date of the thesis on the title page must be that of the month and year in which the degree is awarded.

#### **Permission Page**

It allows students to grant permission to the library the usage of the thesis, which is under control of Arkansas Tech University, it is understood that due recognition shall be given to the thesis author and to Arkansas Tech University in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in the thesis.

#### **Abstract**

The thesis abstract of not more than 250 words, double-spaced must be included in each copy of the thesis. Individual programs will specify the content of the abstract.

#### **Table of Contents**

All components of the thesis must be listed in the Table of Contents, along with page numbers for each item. Preliminary pages, chapters, and subsections should be listed. Items on the Table of Contents should only be at the heading and subheading levels. Please note, headings and subheadings should be appropriately titled per individual program guidelines and thesis content relevance. See Table 2 for complete list of what pages need to be included and how.

#### **List of Tables/List of Figures**

All tables should be listed by title with page numbers. On a separate page, all figures should also be listed by title and page number.

#### **List of Symbols and/or Abbreviations**

Abbreviations and symbols not universally accepted within a discipline or as a part of the style guidelines should be defined, although they should also be explained upon initial use within the text.

## **Arrangement of Thesis Materials**

Materials in the thesis should be arranged in the following order:

- Blank Sheet
- Title Page
- Permission Statement Page
- Copyright
- Acknowledgements (optional)
- Abstract
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables/List of Figures/List of Illustrations (if any)
- List of Symbols and/or Abbreviations (if any)
- Main Text
- Bibliography/List of References/Literature Cited
- Appendices (if any)
- Blank Sheet

## **Thesis Student Submission Process**

### **Submission of First Draft**

The thesis committee chair (not the thesis student) must submit the first committee-approved draft electronically (Microsoft Word format) via email attachment to [graduaterreader@atu.edu](mailto:graduaterreader@atu.edu) by the date specified on the official Thesis Timeline. The email should include the student's name, contact information, major, writing style used, and committee chair's contact information.

### **Review and Editing Process**

The Graduate College Reader will check for form, style, and accuracy of documentation as well as for clarity and major errors in grammar. If errors are found, the Reader will return the thesis for corrections via email. The student will then need to make the desired corrections and return it to the Reader via email. It is important that students *only work from the thesis file that they receive from the Reader*, as the Reader will make any small edits needed in formatting throughout the process of reviewing the thesis draft.

Theses are reviewed in the order in which they are received. Students will be given a set number of days to complete the revisions sent by the Reader and are expected to resubmit their revised draft by that established due date. *Failure to submit by your assigned date will move your thesis to the bottom of the review list.* The deadline for submission of the final draft may be found on the Thesis Timeline.

### **Approval and Final Submission**

Once the thesis is approved, the Reader will send a PDF thesis copy to the library, and the library personnel will upload the thesis to an electronic database for publication. Once

the student approves the final copy of their thesis and it is submitted to the library, no additional changes can be made to the document by either the student or the Reader. The **“Thesis Defense Form”** with all original signatures should be brought to the Graduate College in Tomlinson 113 by the date indicated on the Thesis Timeline.

The library will cover the cost of the printing and binding fees for the library and departmental copy of the approved thesis. If a student would like to purchase personal copies of their thesis, the Graduate College will email the student a website link to order copies online.

**Table 1: Summary of Steps and Required Forms**

What?	When?
1. Complete <b>“Application to Graduation”</b>	After completing twelve (12) graduate credit hours
2. Complete <b>“Topic Approval Form”</b>	See Thesis Timeline
3. Submit a committee-approved draft electronically for review by the Graduate College	See Thesis Timeline
4. Complete <b>“Thesis Oral Defense Form”</b>	See Thesis Timeline
5. Complete revisions requested by the Reader	By the Reader’s assigned due date(s)
6. Complete the release form sent by the Reader with the PDF copy of your finalized thesis	After all revisions have been made
7. Approved theses will be submitted to the library	After the release form is submitted and approved

**Table 2: Arrangement and Numbering of Pages**

<b>Order</b>	<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Page Number Placement</b>	<b>Listed in Table of Contents</b>
<b>Preliminary Pages</b>	<b>Required/Optional</b>	<b>Lower-Case Roman Numerals</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
Title Page	Required	Count but do not number	No
Permission Statement Page	Required	Bottom center	No
Copyright	Required	Bottom center	No
Acknowledgements	Optional	Bottom center	No
Abstract	Required	Bottom center	Yes
Table of Contents	Required	Bottom center	No
List of Tables	Required if used in text	Bottom center	Yes
List of Figures or Illustrations	Required if used in text	Bottom center	Yes
List of Symbols and/or Abbreviations	Required if used and not explained in text	Bottom center	Yes
<b>Thesis Content</b>	<b>Required/Optional</b>	<b>Arabic Numerals, Starting over at 1</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
Body of Text	Required	Bottom center	Yes. List all headings.
<b>End Pages</b>	<b>Required/Optional</b>	<b>Arabic Numerals, (continue sequential numbering)</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
References	Required. Format according to discipline's style manual.	Bottom center	Yes
Appendices	Required if in used in text.	Bottom center	Yes