

# 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

*Updated  
May 16, 2019*

## Tables of Contents

	Page
INTRODUCTION .....	4
Graduate College Deadlines .....	4
Master’s Thesis Committee Composition.....	5
Responsibilities of the Thesis Committee.....	5
Topic Approval Form .....	6
Thesis Defense Form .....	6
Thesis Approval .....	6
Credits and Grades .....	6
POLICY MATTERS .....	6
Protocols for Researching Involving Human Subjects or Animals .....	6
Plagiarism .....	7
THESIS ELEMENTS AND STYLE .....	7
Style Guides .....	7
Number of Copies .....	7
Typeface.....	7
Line Spacing .....	7
Margins and Justification.....	7
Illustrations .....	8
Original Documents .....	8
Pagination .....	8
Footers.....	8

PRELIMINARY PAGES FORMATTING .....	9
Title Page .....	9
Signature Page .....	9
Abstract.....	9
Table of Contents.....	9
List of Tables/List of Figures.....	9
List of Symbols and/or Abbreviations .....	10
Arrangement of Thesis Materials.....	10
THESIS STUDENT SUBMISSION PROCESS .....	10
LIST OF TABLES .....	12
Table 1: Summary of Steps and Required Forms .....	12
Table 2: Arrangement and Numbering of Pages.....	13
APPENDICES .....	14
Appendix A: Sample Thesis Preliminary Pages .....	14

## Introduction

As a formal research paper, the thesis should reveal the candidate's ability to 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**” at 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 Defense & Final Draft Approval 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 Graduate Faculty Nomination form, 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 use 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 “**Thesis Defense**” 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, unless 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 given to the source in your writing.

## **Thesis Elements and Style**

### **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.

### **Copies**

The library will cover the cost of the printing and binding fees for the library. In addition, the library will publish a copy of the thesis via its online repository. If a student wishes 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.

### **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 requisite style guidelines. Usually, these items 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.
- Preliminary pages are numbered with lower-case Roman numerals centered at the bottom of the page, starting with i on the Permission page. See examples in Appendix A on page 12 of the *Thesis Preparation Guide*.
- Pages in the body of the text are numbered with Arabic numerals, beginning with the first page of the text, which will be page 1.
- Opening pages of chapters, appendices, tables, and addenda are numbered in the lower center of the page with subsequent page numbers in the chapter in the top right hand corner.

## **Footers**

- Varied Footers can be used throughout a document.
- To Change the Footer in Microsoft Word 2016:
  - 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**

### **Title Page**

The format of the title page shall follow the model in Appendix A. 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 centered as shown in the sample page and 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.

### **Signature Page**

Must include signatures of thesis advisor and all committee members, the program director, and Graduate College dean.

### **Abstract**

The thesis abstract of no 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.

Setting Tab Stops will provide a uniform leader.

- To set Tab Stops in Microsoft Word 2016, right click where the leader is to begin.
- Select Paragraph, then click on the Tabs...button.
- Enter a Tab Stop Position of 6", an Alignment of Right, and a Leader of periods.
- A Default Tab Stop of .5" will already be entered. Click Set then OK.
- For subheadings, an additional Tab Stop of .5", Left Alignment, and no Leaders should be set.

### **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, unless otherwise noted in requisite style guide:

- Blank Sheet
- Title Page
- Signature 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

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 students name, contact information, major, and committee chair's contact information. The Graduate College Reader will check for form, style, and accuracy of documentation as well as for clarity and major errors in grammar.

The Graduate College 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. This procedure will be repeated until the document is error-free. The deadline for submission of the final draft may be found on the Thesis Timeline.

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 the ProQuest website for publication. The "**Thesis Defense Form**" with all original signatures should be sent to the Graduate College in Tomlinson 113 by the date indicated on the Thesis Timeline.

Upon receipt, the Reader will forward a PDF copy of the work to the library for printing and binding. The thesis student, program director, and committee chair will also be included on this correspondence. The library will cover the cost of the printing and binding fees for the library copy. 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**

<b>What?</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>Where?</b>
1. Complete “ <b>Application to Graduation</b> ”	After completing twelve (12) graduate credit hours	It can be completed on the Graduate College website
2. Complete “ <b>Topic Approval Form</b> ”	Dates vary for each term. Visit <a href="http://www.atu.edu/gradcollege">www.atu.edu/gradcollege</a> and click on “Resources and Forms” in the menu for the current Thesis Timeline Term.	Graduate College
3. Submit a committee-approved draft electronically for review by the Graduate College	Dates vary for each term. Visit <a href="http://www.atu.edu/gradcollege">www.atu.edu/gradcollege</a> and click on “Resources and Forms” in the menu for the Thesis Timeline Term.	Graduate College
4. Last day to submit final version of master thesis. The Graduate College will provide successful candidates with publishing information.	Dates vary for each term. Visit <a href="http://www.atu.edu/gradcollege">www.atu.edu/gradcollege</a> and click on “Resources and Forms” in the menu for the Thesis Timeline Term.	Graduate College
5. Complete “ <b>Thesis Oral Defense Form</b> ”	Dates vary for each term. Visit <a href="http://www.atu.edu/gradcollege">www.atu.edu/gradcollege</a> and click on “Resources and Forms” in the menu for the Thesis Timeline Term.	Graduate College
6. Approved master theses will be submitted to library for printing and uploading to BePress	After all requested revisions have been made	Graduate College

**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	First page of section is bottom-center, each page after in the section/chapter is top-right. This process is repeated for each new section/chapter.	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.	First page of section is bottom-center, each page after in the section is top-right	Yes
Appendices	Required if in used in text.	First page of section is bottom-center, each page after in the section is top-right	Yes

Appendix A

**THESIS SAMPLE PRELIMINARY PAGES**

Title Page – page i

Permission – page ii

Copyright – page iii

Abstract – page iv

Table of Contents – page v

List of Tables – page vi

CENTER THESIS TITLE TWO INCHES BELOW THE TOP OF THE PAGE, IN ALL  
CAPITAL LETTERS; TITLES MORE THAN ONE LINE SHOULD HAVE ALL  
ENSUING LINES SHORTER THAN PREVIOUS, SINGLE-SPACED

By

STUDENT NAME

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College of  
Arkansas Tech University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
MASTER OF (DEGREE) IN (PROGRAM)  
Graduation Month & Year

## Thesis Approval

This thesis, “[The Complete Title of your Dissertation],” by [your full name here as it appears on university records], is approved by:

Thesis Advisor:

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[Full name of Thesis Advisor]  
(For example, Bob Smith)  
[Academic Rank and Department]  
(For example, Professor of Chemistry)

Thesis Committee  
[include as many name blocks  
as needed]:

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[Full name of Committee Member]  
[Academic Rank and Department]

---

[Full name of Committee Member]  
[Academic Rank and Department]

Program Director:

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[Full name of Program Director]  
[Academic Rank and Department]

Graduate College Dean:

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[Full name of Graduate College Dean]  
[Academic Rank and Department]



© Year Student Name

## Abstract

The *Abstract* heading should be in upper and lowercase, centered, one inch from the top of the page. Text for the abstract should be double-spaced, in a single paragraph form without paragraph indentation. The word count should not exceed 250. Keywords are permitted and should be found at the end of the Abstract; these are not taken into the total word count.

Keywords: thesis; formatting

## Table of Contents

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	i
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	vii
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
Subheadings Are Upper and Lowercase Title Format.....	3
III. METHODOLOGY.....	26
IV. RESULTS.....	29
V. CONCLUSIONS.....	44
REFERENCES.....	47
APPENDICES.....	50
Appendix A. Upper and Lowercase Title Format.....	50
Appendix B. Upper and Lowercase Title Format.....	53

\* Please note, headings and subheadings should be appropriately titled per individual program guidelines and thesis content relevance. Check with your department for proper titles.

List of Tables

Table 1: Upper and Lowercase Title of Table .....38

Table 2: Upper and Lowercase Title of Table .....43