

Manual for Formatting and Submitting a Master's Thesis or a Doctoral Dissertation

San Francisco State University, Division of Graduate Studies

<http://www.sfsu.edu/~gradstudy/>



Manual for Formatting and Submitting a Master's Thesis or a Doctoral Dissertation

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Manual for Formatting and Submitting a Master's Thesis or a Doctoral Dissertation

I. Introduction: Before You Begin Your Thesis/Dissertation

Congratulations! If you are reading this, you are nearing the most important and interesting part of your graduate education. As you complete the course work for your degree, you should be thinking about what your department/program or faculty advisors require of you for a Culminating Experience. Within the limits placed by your academic advisors, select a thesis/dissertation topic that you find fascinating, builds on your prior work, lays the foundation for any potential future academic endeavors or leads you into the world of work where you and others can benefit from your research.

Because your thesis/dissertation must meet the highest standards for scholarly publishing, you must ensure your written work meets peer review standards in your discipline for originality, documentation and writing style under the guidance of your thesis/dissertation committee members. You and the faculty members working with you on your thesis/dissertation are responsible for the academic content and the grammar and syntax appropriate for a published scholarly document.

The Division of Graduate Studies reviews only formatting of the document to ensure that it meets the standards for archiving in the University library and that the abstract is acceptable for digital publications. Only a thesis/dissertation completed in an 898 or 998 course is submitted to Graduate Studies for format approval. If you are enrolled in an 893 written creative work course, please see the *Guidelines for Formatting and Submitting Written Creative Works*.

Academic Integrity

Your writing must be your own; where the work of others is incorporated, the source should be acknowledged carefully and accurately according to accepted practices for scholarly publishing in the field. Students are responsible for obtaining written permission for the use of copyrighted images, tables, software, etc. and are required to submit copies of permission letters with the thesis/dissertation. For more guidance in appropriate use of copyrighted material and avoiding plagiarism, please check the information provided by the SFSU Center for the Enhancement of Teaching at:

http://academic.sfsu.edu/facaffairs/ctfd/fac_resources/plagiarism.php

Required Academic Status Before You Begin Your Thesis/Dissertation

There are three criteria that all graduate students must meet prior to beginning a thesis/dissertation: 1) You must have a 3.0 GPA in all post-baccalaureate course work; 2) You must have an approved Advancement to Candidacy form (formerly known as the Graduate Approved Program) on file with the Division of Graduate Studies; and 3) You must have an approved [Proposal for Culminating Experience Requirement form](#) also on file with the Division of Graduate Studies. After all three criteria have been met, you may register for the 898 or 998 Culminating Experience course required by your department or program. You may find the required forms on-line at: <http://www.sfsu.edu/~gradstdy/current-form.htm>

Meeting With Your Department/Program Advisor(s)

Before beginning your thesis/dissertation, you must work very closely with your graduate advisor(s) and in some departments, the graduate coordinator. Some department/programs may have very clear limitations on the allowable focus of the thesis/dissertation based on faculty interest. Developing and completing your final work should be a positive experience for both you and your graduate advisors and committee members. Determining who will work with you on your thesis/dissertation is a critical decision. Choose faculty members, especially the first reader, who have expertise in your area of interest and with whom you have developed a rapport. By planning with your committee members and setting clear deadlines for yourself, you should be able to complete your work within two semesters.

Selection of Thesis/Dissertation Committee

Select a thesis/dissertation committee to provide you with guidance during your thesis/dissertation research and writing process and to evaluate whether you have satisfactorily completed the thesis/dissertation requirement for your degree.

- The committee must consist of a minimum of two tenured/tenure-track members. A typical committee has three members.
- The chair and the second member of your committee must hold tenured/tenure-track faculty appointments in your major department.
- In circumstances where special expertise is available in another department, the dean of Graduate Studies may authorize a designated tenured/tenure-track faculty member from a related department to serve as second reader.
- With special permission, some long-term lecturers with terminal degrees in their field or with special expertise may serve as the second reviewer provided their curriculum vitae be on file in the Division of Graduate Studies. Due to the temporary nature of lecturer appointments, both you and the lecturer must understand the risk to the timely completion of your culminating experience.
- A third member of a committee may be from outside the major department or university. A lecturer may volunteer his/her services as a third member of a student's committee, but again, be aware that the lecturer may not be available each semester or for more than one year.
- If a faculty member leaves, you will need to reconstitute your committee and new faculty members often have different expectations. If you are working with a faculty member participating in the early retirement program or an emeritus professor, be sure that work can be completed during that faculty member's employment period. The culminating experience proposal must include a timeline for completion. Your faculty members' signatures signify their full participation through your designated completion deadline.
- To change officially the composition of your committee, you must submit a [Petition for ATC/GAP Substitution or Committee Revision](#) to the Division of Graduate Studies (ADM 250). You may find the form at: <http://www.sfsu.edu/~gradstdy/current-form.htm>.

Submitting the Proposal for Culminating Experience to the Department/Program

Prior to submitting your *Proposal for Culminating Experience* form to the Graduate Studies office, you must have your Thesis/Dissertation Committee and your department chair and/or graduate coordinator approve and sign your proposal form. This form, as well as your *Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) form* which may be submitted prior to the Proposal for Culminating Experience, must be submitted by the published deadline the semester prior to the semester of enrollment in the Culminating Experience course (898 or 998 course).

Students will not be permitted to enroll in a culminating experience course until the Division of Graduate Studies has approved both of these forms. The plan for reviewing your on-going work and submitting the final documents should be discussed carefully with your faculty committee members. Remember that very few faculty members are available for reviewing documents or your thesis/dissertation drafts during the summer semester or the winter sessions.

Submitting the Culminating Experience Proposal to the University: Graduate Studies

Submit your completed and department-approved *Proposal for Culminating Experience* form to GradStop, ADM 250. You must use the online form (see link above). Type in the information required and download the form for signature. Handwritten forms WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. If you submit your ATC form at the same time, the ATC must be completed online and downloaded for signature. Again, handwritten forms will not be accepted. University deadlines for submission of the *Proposal for Culminating Experience* and ATC forms are:

April 1 for registration the next Fall semester

November 1 for registration the next Spring semester

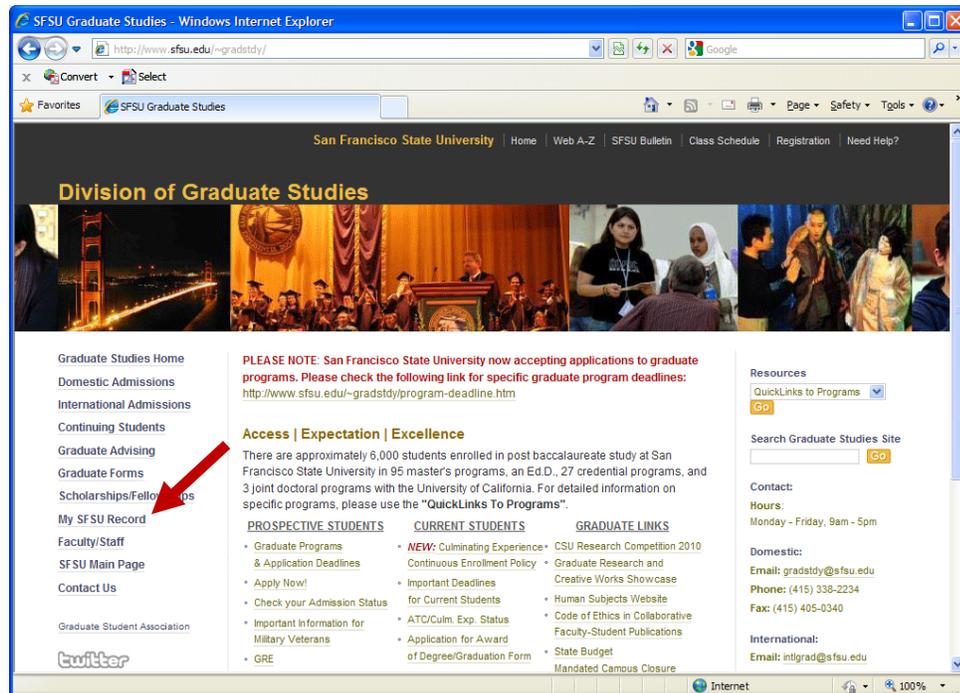
Remember: *Departments may have earlier deadlines.*

Human and Animal Subjects

Any thesis/dissertation/research that involves human or animal subjects must be approved by the Office for the Protection of Human and Animal Subjects (the Institutional Review Board or IRB). Approval must be obtained prior to the initiation of research. Review by the IRB is a federal requirement. Failure to submit your proposal for IRB review, or beginning a study using human or animal subjects without IRB approval can lead to charges of academic dishonesty and official reprimand by the university including possible expulsion. In addition, the university could lose all federal funding. For information on Human or Animal Subjects review, go to the website for the Office for Protection of Human and Animal Subjects at <http://www.sfsu.edu/~protocol>.

Culminating Experience Approval

You must receive approval from the Division of Graduate Studies to register for your culminating experience course. The registrar will block admission to a culminating experience class until approval is received. All documents must be submitted to GradStop in ADM 250. You can check the status of your ATC and your Culminating Experience approval online at <http://www.sfsu.edu/~gradstdy/>, click on My SFSU Record. See example on the next page.



Registration and Grading Procedures for Culminating Experience Courses:

Once you have received approval to begin your Culminating Experience, you may register for the 898 or 998 course required by your department/program. If you do not complete the course by the end of the semester of registration, you will receive a grade of “RP” (Report in Progress). Do not register for the course again. When the project is completed, meet with your committee members to ensure that they submit a grade change from “RP” to “CR” for you to the Registrar at One Stop in the Students Services Building and that you have all the required forms signed. The Graduate Studies office cannot enter or change your grade for the Culminating Experience.

New Culminating Experience Continuous Enrollment Policy

This requirement applies to all students admitted or re-admitted for Fall 2008 or later.

Once you enroll in your Culminating Experience course, you are required to maintain continuous enrollment through the College of Extended Learning (CEL) if you do not complete your project and earn your degree **within two semesters** (the semester of enrollment and one “grace semester”).

For example, if you enroll in your Culminating Experience course in Spring 2010, you are permitted to continue your work through the Fall 2010 semester without enrolling. However, if you do not complete your Culminating Experience by the end of the Fall 2010 grace semester, you must enroll in the CEL course in Spring 2011, and each semester following, until you earn your degree.

Each College has a Culminating Experience Continuous Enrollment course on the CEL schedule under your department’s college name, with the course number 0499. For example, if you are in Biology, you will need to enroll in CEL under Science and Engineering, course number 0499.

If you do not maintain continuous enrollment, and wish to return to complete the degree, you will need to retroactively enroll in the CEL course for each semester following the grace semester, and pay all applicable fees. Please keep in mind that the 7-year time limit, from earliest course in your degree program to date of graduation, still applies. For more detailed information please refer to Academic Senate Policy S08-246.

II. Thesis/Dissertation Guidelines

A. Format Guidelines

These guidelines are suggested for the professional presentation of theses/dissertations; a direct reflection of your work, the department, and San Francisco State University. The guidelines primarily address preliminary pages, margins, illustrations, and oversized pages.

The main body of the work, footnotes, appendices and lists of references should conform to the style manual accepted in the field. Seek approval from your thesis/dissertation committee before selecting a style manual. Examples of style manuals include:

- *The American Psychological Association Publication Manual*
- *The Chicago Manual of Style*
- *The CBE Manual* (Council of Biology Editors)
- *The MLA Style Manual* (Modern Language Association)

B. General Specifications

These guidelines primarily address readability and clarity in reproductions, particularly when microfilmed.

1. Paper and Printing. The final copy of the thesis/dissertation or written creative work should be on high quality plain white paper, 8 ½" x 11," which meets the following standards:

- A. 25%-100% cotton content (watermark indicated);
- B. 16lb. or 20lb. weight;
- C. 8 ½" x 11" size (unpunched, unlined);
- D. Single-sided printing only, double-sided printed materials will not be accepted.

Print should be letter quality with clear, dark black characters.

2. Font Size and Style. Select the font size and style with consideration for readability; fonts such as Arial or Times New Roman are recommended; font sizes less than 10 or 12 point are not acceptable because they cannot be reproduced clearly. Except for purposes of creative expression, the same font size and style is typically used throughout. Do not bold, underline or italicize text unless required, such as in the case of Latin names of animal and plant species.

3. Text Spacing. Double-space in the body of the text. Prepare long quotations, footnotes, references, tables, etc., as dictated by the style manual.

4. Margins. The left margin **must** be a **minimum of 1 ½ inches for binding.** The top, right and bottom margins must be a minimum of 1 inch. Larger margins are acceptable when approved by the thesis/dissertation committee.

5. Page Numbering.

1. Preliminary pages (all pages before the text begins). Use lower case Roman numerals for preliminary pages. Begin the page count with the title page, but do not display numerals on the title, copyright, certification of approval and abstract pages. Display the Roman numerals on the acknowledgement, table of contents and list pages. Roman numerals should be centered, one inch from the bottom of the page, and one inch from any text.
2. Main Text Use **Arabic numerals** (i.e. 1, 2, 3...) starting with page one of the text. Position the page numbers in the upper right hand corner, one inch from the top and one inch from the right. The text be an additional one-inch away from the page number (or provide some visual spacing between page number and first line of text.

6. **Oversized pages.** If oversized pages are submitted, they should be folded to fit the 8 ½" x 11" text block and include a visible page number.
7. **Illustrations, figures, tables, etc.** Whenever possible, illustrations should be in black and white. Some tips for good reproductions:
 1. Illustrative material drawn or computer-generated in black will reproduce satisfactorily, while colors will appear as slightly varying shades of gray.
 2. Lines on a graph should be identified by labels or symbols rather than colors.
 3. Shaded areas – such as countries on a map – will have better contrast if you use cross-hatching.
 4. Color photographs are best reprinted in black and white by a photo lab or high quality digital photo printer (photocopies are unacceptable).

C. Preliminary Pages

The appearance of preliminary pages is standard for all SFSU theses and dissertations; do not use a style manual or previously approved theses/dissertations for guidance. The required layout of each page is illustrated on sample pages and can be downloaded from the Graduate Studies website (<http://www.sfsu.edu/~gradstdy/thesis.htm>).

1. **Official Degree Title.** You must use the official degree title on the title page, certification of approval page and the Culminating Experience form. The list is available at <http://www.sfsu.edu/~bulletin/current/programs/degpost.htm>
2. **Title Page.** In thesis/dissertation titles, use word substitutes for formulas, symbols, superscripts, Greek letters or other non-alphabetical symbols to facilitate retrieval in computer searches of the online catalog or other databases.
3. **Copyright/Publication Rights.** Use the sample format unless your department has an alternative style approved by Graduate Studies.
 - a. Note: Since the written work is submitted in satisfaction of a part of the requirement for an advanced degree, the student automatically conveys to the University a license for limited use including: (1) microfilming, (2) distributions to your department or other libraries, or (3) responses to inquiries regarding research in the subject area of the work.
 - b. According to the Copyright Act of 1976, a student has five years from the date of publication to register a copyright with the Copyright Office.
4. **Certification of Approval.** When submitted, this page must have original signatures from thesis/dissertation committee members.
5. **Abstract.** Justify and double space or 1.5 space the text and limit the size to no more than one single page. The Thesis/Dissertation Committee Chair must certify this page for accuracy.

- a. Abstracts for theses should be a brief statement concerning the nature of the study, the research methods and design, and the findings or conclusions; follow guidelines in the discipline, if available.
6. ***Preface and/or Acknowledgments*** (Optional). Double space or 1.5 space the text and limit the size to no more than one single page for the Preface and one single page for the Acknowledgements (if you decide to include either or both).
7. ***Table of Contents***. Begin the contents with the sections following this page, including lists of figures, etc.; follow guidelines in the discipline, if available. Include leader dots to clearly designate the appropriate page number for each list/table/figure.
8. ***Lists***. Lists might include tables, figures, maps, etc.; follow guidelines in the discipline, if available.
9. ***Other***. Other features such as prologues, epilogues, initial quotations, etc. are acceptable only if approved by the thesis/dissertation committee.

III. Final Steps in Preparation

Note the official deadline and allow a few weeks for the final review and approval process in case revisions are necessary. Again, the work will be reviewed for compliance with the format guidelines; it will not be checked for content, grammar, spelling or other scholarly publishing standards.

1. ***Preliminary Format Check***. Take printouts of the preliminary pages and samples from the text, illustrations, list of references, and any questionable pages to Graduate Studies for review and revision advice. For this step, these pages **do not** need to be on high quality thesis paper.
2. ***Official Signatures***. After approval by Graduate Studies, print out your work on quality white paper. Then obtain signatures for the Certification of Approval and Abstract pages.
3. ***Copyright Permissions***. Obtain permission letters for use of copyrighted materials.
4. ***Final Collation/Grammar/Spelling Check***. The student author is responsible for ensuring that all pages are included and in the proper order; it is not checked later and will be published as submitted. Automated grammar and spell-check programs will not identify all problems; it is recommended that you ask someone else to proofread it.
5. ***Presentation***. Double-check that the preliminary pages follow the layout guidelines illustrated in the sample pages and that font and illustration choices are clear and readable.
6. ***Final Review and Approval, and Master's Thesis/Dissertation Receipt***. Bring your entire thesis/dissertation with signatures, printed on quality white paper to Graduate Studies for a final review. Graduate Studies will give you a "Master's Thesis/Dissertation/Written Creative Work Receipt."
7. **Deadlines for Submitting Completed Culminating Experience**
Deadlines for having your thesis/dissertation officially approved are published on the Graduate Studies web site <http://www.sfsu.edu/~gradstdy/degree-completion-deadline.htm>. Start your writing early to allow time for preliminary format checks and for making revisions, if needed.

IV. Submission Process

1. Submission to the Campus Copy Center.

Submit the following to the Campus Copy Center (located in the César Chavez Student Center, M110):

- A. Print out all pages, bring original signed Certification of Approval page, and signed abstract page.

Letters providing permission to use copyrighted materials, if required.

Third party software licenses, if required.

- B. Pay the binding fee of \$25 per copy. This fee includes one volume, about 250 pages. If you need more than one volume because your thesis/dissertation exceeds 250 pages, you must pay an additional binding fee.

- 2. **Personal and Department copies.** Many departments require students to provide them with a copy; check with your thesis/dissertation committee. You may elect to order copies from the Campus Copy Center with a variety of bindings.

**Questions regarding these guidelines should be
directed to Graduate Studies – ADM 254**

(415) 338-2234