

Next Stop: Graduation

Formatting and Submitting Your Electronic Thesis or Dissertation

You've cleared the highest hurdle of your graduate program and finished your thesis or dissertation. It's time to feel good about yourself and your accomplishments. It's also time to submit your work for a format check. Here's how to get through the format check and submit your final document to the Graduate School.

Think Formatting

Begin by writing your thesis or dissertation with the Graduate School's formatting requirements in mind. This is not just extra work: a well-formatted document appears more professional and impressive. Before you start writing, download and review the Graduate School style manual (<http://www.uga.edu/gradschool/academics/thesis.html>). The cardinal rule is to be consistent: use the same margins, fonts, page number placement, capitalization style and numbering style throughout. If you use articles you've published as chapters in your thesis or dissertation, follow the instructions in the manual for "manuscript" or "chapter" style. A few other formatting tips to keep in mind:

- Use a 1.5-inch left margin and a 1-inch right margin if you plan to have your thesis or dissertation bound, because you'll lose half an inch on the left to the binding. Otherwise, set both margins to 1 inch.
- Use simple, non-proprietary fonts. They're more readable and won't create problems for readers using other computers. All Microsoft Word fonts are public-domain. Times New Roman and Arial are two of the most readable.
- Avoid using section breaks, as they can make formatting tricky.
- Use two, double-spaced returns to create the 1.75-inch top margin required for the first page of each chapter.
- Use the option in your word processing software that allows you to see formatting codes any time you need to double-check your formatting.
- Save your work often and in multiple locations so that you don't lose everything in the event of a computer crash, theft, fire or other crisis. Save at least one copy on a non-erasable storage device such as a CD-ROM.

The Front Matter Matters

Use the templates to create the front matter for your document. These are Word files you can download from the Grad School's Web site (http://www.uga.edu/gradschool/academics/thesis_template.html). All of the formatting is done for you: simply type your information in the fields embedded in the document. The templates include a title page, acknowledgments and dedication (both optional), a table of contents and other required components.

You must include an abstract and index words. Most likely, you'll complete these at the end of the process, but invest some time in them nonetheless. The abstract – a very brief summary of your work – is what researchers will encounter when they search dissertation abstracts. It's the first thing they'll read as they decide whether to cite your work. Search the electronic dissertations and abstracts in the library catalog or check the bound copies in your department to see how others in your field have written abstracts. The index words you choose determine whether a user will find your document based on his or her search. Think: What words would a reader likely enter into a search form if he or she were looking for a document like mine? Be specific.

The front matter templates include a copyright page in which you insert your name and the date of publication. Anything you write is automatically copyrighted, and this simple mark protects it; you do not have to register your copyright.

Put It All Together

You must submit your thesis or dissertation as a single .pdf document. For best results, save the body of your work as one file with all formatting and page numbering in place. Save the front matter templates as a second file. Convert each document individually to .pdf using Adobe Acrobat. Open the .pdf document containing the body of your work and insert the front matter from the other .pdf. This way, your page numbering will not be lost or modified when you add the front matter. After you've combined your documents into one, use the "tools" menu in Acrobat to activate all Web links in the text.

Check with your coordinator of instruction to find out which computers in your department have Adobe Acrobat for graduate student use. The computers in the Student Learning Center are equipped with Acrobat. If you are unsure how to convert and combine your documents in Acrobat, contact the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Lab in the Graduate School for assistance.

There are two final considerations before you're ready to submit your thesis or dissertation for a format check. First, if you used human subjects in your research, you must have the necessary approval documentation from the Office of Human Subjects/IRB (<http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso/>). You and your major professor must also sign a Release Options form, on which you indicate whether you would like your thesis or dissertation to be made available on the Web immediately, after a wait period or never.

Format Check and Final Submission

Each semester there is a deadline by which graduating students must submit their theses or dissertations to the ETD lab for a format check. Upload your complete .pdf document from the format check submission page (<http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso/>). Name the document using the following convention: lastname_firstname_middleinitial_graduationdate(yyymm)_degree.pdf, for example: smith_mary_a_200605_phd.pdf. On the submission form, be sure to enter the address of an email account you check regularly, because this is how the Graduate School will communicate with you about your format check and final submission.

The ETD lab reviews your thesis or dissertation to ensure that all formatting is correct, but will not proofread, check for adherence to your discipline's publication style, ensure that footnotes are done correctly, etc. Once the format check is complete, you will receive an e-mail from the Graduate School with a list of corrections and a URL at which you can find your document with electronic Post-it notes showing

where corrections should be made. The Graduate School will e-mail you, even if your document is perfect. If you have not been contacted after ten working days, contact the ETD lab.

Once you receive the results of the format check, make corrections in your original document and create a new .pdf, giving it the same name as the document you submitted for the format check.

Go to the final submissions page (<http://www.gradsch.uga.edu:5080/etd/final.htm>), complete the online form and upload your new document. The Graduate School will verify that you have made all necessary corrections and send you a final congratulatory e-mail when your final document has been accepted.

The University no longer requires students to submit bound copies of theses or dissertations; instead, all documents are catalogued and stored electronically by the libraries. This process takes some time, though, so your final e-mail from the Grad School will contain a link to a server on which your document is hosted. You can provide this link to potential employers or anyone you want to access your thesis or dissertation online. If your department requires you to provide a bound copy, or if you want a personal copy, Print and Copy Services in the Tate Center will print and bind copies – using only the final document from the Graduate School – for a reasonable price. ■

Based on the Graduate School seminar "Hitchiker's Guide to Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Submission" by David Knox and Krista Haynes, the Graduate School. To view this seminar in full, visit <http://www.grad.uga.edu>.