

# Graduate Thesis & Dissertation Pre-Submission and Formatting Guidelines

Before submitting your final manuscript to the Graduate School, carefully review and complete the checklist below. Following these steps will ensure a smooth and timely review and approval of your dissertation or thesis.

## 1. Template and General Formatting

- Use the official university template.**
  - Open the official thesis/dissertation template and compare your document *side-by-side*.
  - Copy and paste your text into the template rather than reformatting the template to match your document.
  - Confirm all margins, spacing, pagination, and headings match the template exactly.
- Margins:**
  - Standard margins: **1" on all sides**.
  - If you plan to have your dissertation bound, use a **1.5" left margin** and **1" right margin**.
- Page Margins by Section:**
  - First page of each chapter: **2" top margin**.
  - All other pages: **1" top and bottom margins**.
- Page Numbering:**
  - Preliminary pages use **lowercase Roman numerals (i, ii, iii)** starting with the Abstract.
  - Main text begins with **Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3)** starting on Chapter I.
  - Page numbers appear **bottom center**—no running head is used.
- Spacing:**
  - **Double-space throughout** the manuscript.
  - No extra space between paragraphs or sections. (Turn off *Add Space After Paragraph*)
  - **Single-space** only on the Acknowledgments and Dedication pages.
  - Use **one space** after a period at the end of a sentence.
- Font and Alignment:**
  - Use **12-point Times New Roman** (unless otherwise approved).
  - Use the “center” alignment button—not the tab key—to center chapter titles or headings.
- Check Front Matter Order:**

Title Page → Copyright Page → Signature Page → Fair Use Page → Abstract → Table of Contents → Acknowledgments → Main Chapters → References → Appendices.

## 2. Headings and Structure

- Ensure all **chapter titles and headings** follow the required APA 7th edition style and hierarchy (up to five levels).
- Each heading must have text following it—avoid **“hanging headers.”**
- If a heading falls at the bottom of a page with fewer than two lines of text following, move the section to the next page.
- Maintain consistent **capitalization, indentation, and spacing** of headings.

### 3. Tables, Figures, and Appendices

- Include a **List of Tables** or **List of Figures** only if you have **three or more** of each.
- Tables:**
  - Titles go **above** the table, with one blank line between the title and table.
  - Notes are **double-spaced** below the table.
- Figures:**
  - Titles go **below** the figure.
  - Figures may be in color or black and white.
- Formatting:**
  - Each table/figure is numbered sequentially and referenced in the text before appearing.
  - Captions and labels follow APA 7th edition format.
  - Appendices are labeled (Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.) and referenced in the text.

### 4. Citations and References

- Cross-check all in-text citations with your References list.**
  - In Word, use **Ctrl + F** to search for parentheses “(” or author names.
  - Every citation in text must appear on the References page.
- Cross-check all references with in-text citations.**
  - Highlight each reference as you verify it’s cited in the text.
  - Remove any reference not cited in the manuscript.
- Follow APA 7th Edition formatting** for all citations and references.

Examples:

- **Book:** Author, A. A. (Year). *Title in italics: Subtitle capitalized*. Publisher.
- **Journal:** Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Journal*, volume(issue), page range. <https://doi.org/xxxx>
- Ensure **hanging indentation (0.5")** for all reference entries.
- Use consistent punctuation, italics, and capitalization.
- Be consistent in expressing percentages—either use the symbol (%) or the word (percentage), but not both.

### 5. Quotation Marks and Symbols

- Use **Ctrl + F** to search for " and ' .
  - Replace all **straight quotes** with **curly (smart) quotes** for professional formatting.
    - *In Word: File → Options → Proofing → AutoCorrect Options → AutoFormat → Replace straight quotes with smart quotes.*
- When using mathematical or statistical symbols (=, <, >, +):
  - Place **one space before and after** each symbol.
    - Example:  $n = 45, p < .05$

## 6. Grammar, Mechanics, and Consistency

- Run **Spelling and Grammar Check** in Word.
- Read your document aloud to catch awkward phrasing or repetition.
- Keep verb tenses consistent—**past tense** for methods; **present tense** for discussion.
- Define all abbreviations at first use.
- Follow APA rules for numerals (use numerals for 10 and above; words for nine and below).
- Use **Ctrl + H** to replace any **double spaces** with single spaces.
- Verify **consistent font and spacing** throughout (including tables, figures, and appendices).

## 7. Final Document Review

- Review all front matter for correct alignment, labeling, and order.
- Make sure **chapter titles begin on new pages**.
- Enable **widow/orphan control** (no single lines stranded at the top or bottom of a page).
- Update the **Table of Contents** and **Lists of Tables/Figures** (right-click → “Update Field”).
- Ensure the **IRB approval or exemption letter** is included as an appendix and cited in-text (usually in the Methodology chapter).

## 8. Final Verification and Submission

- Save your document as a **PDF** to confirm all formatting transfers correctly.
- Review the PDF for alignment, page breaks, and spacing issues.
- Name your final file following university submission guidelines (e.g., *Lastname, Firstname\_Date.pdf*).

### **Final Tip:**

Take your time with this checklist. A well-formatted dissertation not only meets requirements, but it reflects professionalism, precision, and care in your scholarly work.