MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY BILLINGS
GRADUATE STUDIES

GUIDELINES FOR THESIS PREPARATION

OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
INTRODUCTION

A thesis is an extended written analysis and interpretation of a specific topic or subject matter. It embodies a unique articulated perspective or specific claim with respect to the topic and it attempts to substantiate the legitimacy of the perspective or claim through a program of research. The research should be informed by a literature search and lead to properly qualified conclusions, which contribute to the discipline. The research project may feature data gathering through a questionnaire, testing procedure, observation, and experimentation. It may also emphasize reflective, analytical, comparative or similar approaches to research.

Students may have a thesis track available. Preparation of a thesis may be of great value for some graduate students and for the profession, because research projects are a crucial step in improving education. A desired outcome is to produce a paper of such quality and currency that it might be published in a professional journal or otherwise disseminated to the field. The student, advisor, and thesis committee have shared responsibility for defining the objectives and scope of the thesis. The presentation and oral defense of either project will be open to the academic community and are designed to give public recognition for the student’s achievement.

An approved graduate plan of study must be on file in the Office of Graduate Studies prior to enrollment in Thesis 599/699.

Graduate students may submit the thesis in electronic or paper format. Students submitting the thesis electronically will deliver the electronic file(s) on a USB drive and pay the appropriate binding fee for one copy to the Office of Graduate Studies. They may also order bound copies, paying the appropriate fee for each copy. Students submitting in paper format will submit three paper copies (two for the Library; one for the Office of Graduate Studies) and pay the appropriate binding fee for each.

PROSPECTUS

Before a student begins a thesis, the student’s thesis committee and the dean must approve a prospectus for the project. The thesis committee will consist of a minimum of three (3) members, one of whom will be from outside the student’s department. The thesis committee will meet with the student to review the prospectus. The thesis committee may be called together to review project progress at the discretion of the advisor. The acceptable format for a thesis follows the guidelines of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), 6th edition, or the recommendation of the student’s advisor. Research projects involving human subjects must conform to the MSU Billings human subject research protocol. Policy guidelines and protocol forms may be obtained from the Office of Grants & Sponsored Programs.

THESIS TIMELINE

Please note that it typically takes a year to complete the process.

The student begins discussions with his/her Advisor and files an approved Plan of Study; declares intent to do a thesis.

The student consults with advisor for approval to form a Thesis Advisory Committee. The Examining Committee Chair must have a terminal degree in the field. After a Committee is formed, the student submits a thesis prospectus for approval. This process may also involve registering for thesis credit, depending on the department. In order to use the library, faculty advisor, and other campus facilities, students must be enrolled in the thesis for the semester. Students must be enrolled every semester they are involved in work on the thesis including defense. In consultation with their advisor the number of credits per semester will be determined based on the work being done up to the maximum credits of the program.

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In consultation with the advisor, the student develops the thesis and periodically submits drafts for critique to the Thesis Committee. **In order to ensure sufficient time to review and defend the thesis, the final draft should be submitted to the thesis committee eight (8) weeks prior to the end of the intended semester of graduation.**

With the committee’s approval, the student and advisor schedule the thesis defense with the Graduate Studies Office. **This must be done four (4) weeks prior to the date of the defense.**

The student and advisor need to notify the Graduate Studies Office of the date, time, place and title of the Thesis. The Graduate Studies Office then notifies the campus faculty, staff, and students of the planned defense through a press release from University Relations. **This must be done two (2) weeks prior to the date of the defense.**

After successful defense, it is the student’s responsibility to obtain required signatures on the Title Page. Signatures include the Chairperson of the Examining Committee, Members of the Examining Committee, the Dean of the College, and the Director of Graduate Studies.

If submitting electronically, the student will deliver a USB drive containing the electronic file(s) to the Office of Graduate Studies. If submitting in paper format, the student will deliver three (3) printed copies of the completed thesis (with all required signatures) to the Graduate Studies Office. The student pays the binding fee per copy in the Business Office and brings the receipt of payment to the Graduate Studies Office with the printed copies. **This must be done before finals week.**

The Graduate Studies Office will arrange to have the three copies of the thesis bound and will deliver two copies to the MSUB Library and will keep one copy in the Graduate Studies Office. Students may also pay the binding fee for additional bound copies for personal use. The student is responsible for any postage fees for mailing bound copies.

**DEFENSE AND FINAL DISPOSITION**

*When your thesis is ready to present, you must do the following:*

1. **Schedule the oral defense with the advisory committee no later than eight weeks prior to the end of the semester in which you intend to graduate. Members of the advisory (examining) committee must have a copy of the paper for review no later than one week prior to the final examination.**

2. **Make revisions required by the advisory committee if necessary.**

3. **Obtain the signed approval page with the revised, final copy of the paper from your advisor and advisory committee.**

4. **If submitting in electronic format, pay the binding fee for one copy at the MSU Billings Business Office deliver the Thesis Submission Form with a USB drive containing the electronic file(s) to the Graduate Studies Office. The Graduate Office will deliver the USB to the library for publication to the web.**

5. **If submitting in paper format, pay the binding fee at the MSU Billings Business Office for the total number of bound copies, deliver the Thesis Submission Form and the unbound copies to the Office of Graduate Studies with the receipt of payment. The Office of Graduate Studies delivers the unbound copies of the thesis to the MSUB Library for binding. Two copies, including the original, remain in the MSUB Library and one copy is returned to the Office of Graduate Studies for the graduate archives.**

6. **Additional copies of a thesis may be bound for the student’s use, provided arrangements are made in advance and appropriate binding fees are paid. The student is responsible for any postage costs of mailing.**

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Preparing Your Thesis or Professional Paper

Recommended Style Guides: Your thesis or professional paper should be neat, crisp and technically perfect in its final form. See the following style guides for reference.

- University of Chicago stylebook, Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations. Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*
- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*

Library Services For Graduate Students

CHECKLIST – FINAL COPIES OF PAPER

- **Paper:** Final copies may be printed on 25-50% cotton bond paper OR acid free paper. Regular copier or printer paper is NOT acceptable. Check with the Office of Graduate Studies if you have questions.

- **Margins (Very Important!):** Left Margin = one and one-half inches (1 ½”); Other Three Margins = one inch (1”)

- **Format and Page Numbers:** Every page except the title page contains a page number. Page numbers must not be placed in the margins. See the appropriate pagination guidelines below for preliminary pages, text and references.

Preliminary Pages: (Lower case Roman numerals, center bottom, except title page.)

- **Title Pages:** (No page number)
- **Abstract:** (page ii)
  - Initialed by committee chair
  - No more than 350 words
  - Single-spaced on one page
  - Two-spaced paragraph indentation
- **Preface** (Optional)
- **Table of Contents**
- **List of Tables** (titles and page references)
- **List of Illustrations** (titles and page references)

Text: (Use Arabic numerals, center bottom OR upper right. Double-space your text; lengthy quotations, abstract, footnotes, tables and bibliography may be single-spaced. Use a readable font size 10 or 12.)

References: (Use Arabic numerals, continued from text.)

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• Appendices

• Bibliography

• Footnotes: Observe the format in the standard journals in your discipline. Notes may be placed at the bottom of each page, at the end of chapters or at the end of your paper.

• Maps, Graphs, and Photos: The library will fold oversized charts, graphs, maps and tables. These and overlays will be placed in a pocket, so should be properly marked and identified. Since they present microfilming problems, they should be used sparingly. Please avoid color photos in dissertations because of microfilming difficulties. Black and white photos should show a full range of contrast. Rubber cement and glue are acceptable in attaching photos, but dry-mounting is best.

• Printing: Use a letter-quality printer. Print in black ink on one side only.

• Electronic: USB drive/PDF format

• Total Number of Unbound Copies:
  o Master’s Thesis / Professional Paper = 3 copies
  o Master’s Thesis / Professional Paper Electronic = 1 electronic copy

• Fees: (Make checks payable to MSU Billings)
  o Binding (Check with Graduate Studies Office for current fee schedule)

• Completion Document: (Bring with your final copies or the department can send via campus mail.

• Final Copies: (DEADLINE ________________)

Prepare the final version according to the guidelines above. Take the appropriate number of unbound copies to the Office of Graduate Studies and pay the appropriate fees. Be sure final copies have the appropriate signatures. The Graduate Office will obtain the Directors signature. Commercial binding is available for your personal copies.

For any questions or additional information, please contact:

OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
1500 University Drive
Montana State University Billings
Billings, MT 59101

Phone: (406) 657-2238
Fax: (406) 657-2302

E-mail: gradstudies@msubillings.edu
dsullivan@msubillings.edu
Web: http://www.msubillings.edu/grad

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EXAMPLE OF TITLE PAGE FOR MASTER'S THESIS

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY BILLINGS
BILLINGS, MONTANA
GRADUATE STUDIES

(TITLE OF STUDY IN AN INVERTED PYRAMID FORM IF TWO OR MORE LINES)

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
(Master of Education)
(Master of Science)

(Student’s Name)

(College)

(Date, 20??)

(Month and year in which author graduates)
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION ......................................................... #
   Statement of the Problem
   Limitations of the Study
   Hypotheses

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE ......................................... #

III. METHODOLOGY ...................................................... #

IV. ANALYSIS ............................................................ #

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ............... #
EXAMPLE OF ABSTRACT PAGE

ABSTRACT


The body of the abstract shall continue from this point single spaced and with no more than 300 words.
NON-PLAGIARISM AFFIRMATION

THE STUDENT MUST SIGN THIS AFFIRMATION AT THE TIME THE STUDENT TURNS IN THE THESIS AT THE GRADUATE STUDIES OFFICE.

Each graduate student when he or she files a master’s thesis must sign the statement below affirming that he or she has NOT been guilty of plagiarism in preparing his or her study.

I, ______________________________, a candidate for the degree of ______________________________, affirm that I have NOT engaged in plagiarism.

“Plagiarism”: The act of appropriating the literary composition of another, or parts or passages of his/her writings, or the ideas or language of the same, and passing them off as the product of one’s own mind. To be liable for plagiarism, it is not necessary to exactly duplicate another’s literary work, it being sufficient if unfair use of such work is made by lifting a substantial portion thereof, but even an exact counterpart of another’s work does not constitute plagiarism if such counterpart was arrived at independently” (Black, 1979, p. 1035).

I understand that if plagiarism is subsequently discovered in the preparation of this document, Montana State University-Billings may, after a hearing, take appropriate action against me including possible revocation of my graduate degree.

Signed ______________________________

Dated ____________________

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As members of the Examining Committee of (Your Name), we certify that we have read the (Choose either Professional Paper or Thesis) entitled, “(Name of your paper)” and have participated in an examination of the candidate. It is our recommendation that the paper be accepted as fulfilling the (choose either Professional Paper or Thesis) requirement for the degree of (List your degree.)

Chair of the Examining Committee: _____________________________ Date: __________

Members of the Examining Committee:

______________________________ __________

______________________________ __________

______________________________ __________

______________________________ __________

Dean of College:

______________________________ __________

Director of Graduate Studies:

______________________________ __________
Thesis Submission Form
This form serves as the official record of thesis submission to the Office of Graduate Studies. This form is NOT included in the thesis.

The information provided below should INCLUDE THE SAME INFORMATION approved on the title page of your thesis TYPE this information for legibility

Student ID # ___________________________ Semester & Year of Graduation ____________________

Authors:
First Name __________________________ Middle Name _________________ Last Name _______________________________

Degree Type: ________________________ Degree Program ___________________________ College _____________________
Title: __________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Keywords or Phrases concerning subject of thesis (separated by commas, 256 character max):

Student Agreement:
1. I hereby certify that, if appropriate, I have obtained and attached hereto a written permission statement from the owner(s) of each third party copyrighted matter to be included in my thesis allowing distribution as specified below.
2. I certify that the version I submitted is the same as the final copy approved by my advisory committee.
3. I hereby grant to MSU Billings and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive and make accessible my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of the thesis.

Student and Committee Agreement (select one of the following):

1. Release the entire work, which includes any supplementary material, immediately for access worldwide.

2. Secure the entire work, which includes any supplementary material, for patent and/or proprietary purposes for a period of one year. At the end of the one year secure period, the work will be handled under option 1 above.

I intend to submit my thesis in: [ ] Print [ ] Electronic format

Electronic Submission:
[ ] I have delivered a USB drive containing the electronic files to the Office of Graduate Studies with all the appropriate paperwork. Received

Date: ____________________________

Print Copy Submission:
[ ] I have delivered three (3) paper copies on the required paper to the Office of Graduate Studies with all the appropriate paperwork. Received

Date: ____________________________

Personal Print Copies
[ ] I intend to purchase _____ print copies. I have provided the copy/copies to the Office of Graduate Studies and paid the binding fee(s). I understand that I am responsible for postage fees for mailing.

_________________________________ ____________________ ____________________ ____________________
Student/please print Signature Date

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APPROVAL

Of a Thesis submitted by

[full name, first, middle, last]

This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citation, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the Office of Graduate Studies.

Chair of Committee [Name]:

______________________________  ___________________________  __________
Print Name  Signature  Date

Approval for the Department of [Department]

Department/Unit Chair [Name]:

______________________________  ___________________________  __________
Print Name  Signature  Date

Approval by Dean of College of [College]

Dean [name]:

______________________________  ___________________________  __________
Print Name  Signature  Date

Approval by Director of Graduate Studies

Dr. Diane Duin

______________________________  ___________________________  __________
Print Name  Signature  Date

This form must accompany the Thesis Submission Form.

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THESIS TIMELINE/CHECKLIST ELECTRONIC OR PAPER

Defense Date: _____________________  Student Name: ______________________________

Thesis Title: ____________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

TWO SEMESTERS PRIOR TO DEFENSE (ONE YEAR OUT)

☐ Meeting with advisor; declare intent to do a thesis
☐ With advisor, form Thesis Advisory Committee and send names to Graduate Office
☐ Student submits prospectus to advisory committee for approval and registers for thesis class
☐ Student submits approved prospectus to Office of Graduate Studies to be placed in their file
☐ Student in consultation with advisor develops thesis
☐ Submit Human Subjects Protocol to University IRB (if necessary)
☐ Turn in copy of this form to the Graduate Office with Thesis title and Committee names.

SEMESTER PRIOR TO DEFENSE

☐ Student submits draft to advisor and committee for critique

EIGHT WEEKS PRIOR TO DEFENSE

☐ Final draft submitted to thesis committee & Graduate Office to check format

FOUR WEEKS PRIOR TO DEFENSE

☐ With the committees’ approval, student and advisor schedule the thesis defense, secure the room and necessary electronics and notify the Graduate Studies Office who will publicize, through University Relations, the defense date, title, and location for interested parties to attend.

ONE WEEK PRIOR TO DEFENSE

☐ Committee members must have a copy for review

AFTER DEFENSE

☐ Student obtains required signatures on the title page and delivers a minimum of three (3) copies to the Graduate Studies Office for bound or on USB drive for electronic, with a copy of the receipt from the Business Office that payment for all copies has been made.

**students must be enrolled any semester they are working on their thesis including the defense.

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