

Difference in margins when printing PDF documents

A member of the [NDLTD](#) (Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations) [email list](#) posted the the following message last week regarding Electronic Theses and Dissertations from their students:

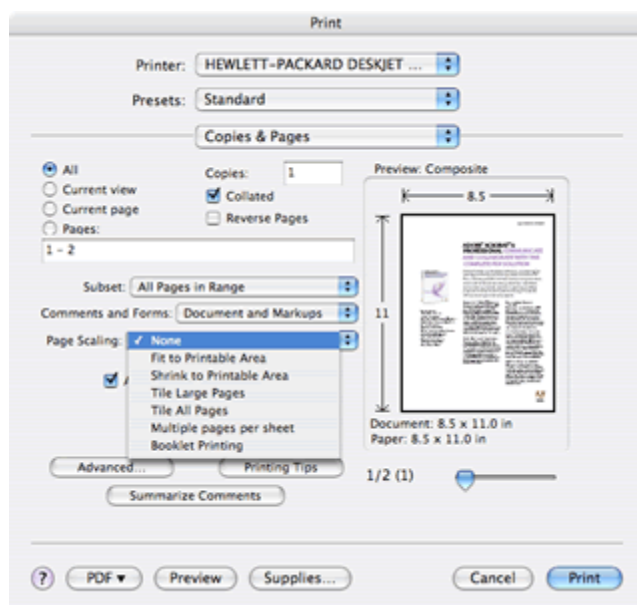
I have had 3 or 4 students over the last couple of months who have reported that their margin specifications have NOT been retained when they convert their ETD from Word to PDF. Our Grad School has rejected the documents, and the students are confused because Word shows that their margins should have been correct.

I just created a dummy document and printed a page in Word then converted to PDF and printed that. (I have Acrobat 7 Professional). The margins on the printed pages were different by a quarter inch. Has anyone else had a problem with this and have you found a solution?

The margins in this case weren't changing on conversion from DOC to PDF, but when the PDF was printed. Acrobat and Reader may scale pages on printing, depending on the printer and print driver. Make sure you choose "None" from the "Page Scaling:" drop-down list in Acrobat or Reader's Print dialog box. The setting is sticky so if you set it once it should remain that way until you change it again.

By default, Acrobat and Reader will use one of the scaling options to make sure all the page content fits in to the printable area of a page. A PDF file is inherently scalable, and need not have white margins (a color brochure, for example). Also some desktop printers don't print all the way to the edges of the page. Hence the page scaling options.

The screen shot below is from Acrobat 8 Professional on Mac OS X. Windows and earlier versions of Acrobat and Reader may have slightly different options, but the main page scaling options are there.



If you ever come across printing problems like this one, then use [Adobe's online support knowledge base first](#) (you DO check there, don't you?). Search for "troubleshoot printing" on the support pages at www.adobe.com/support. For example, [here is one for Troubleshooting Printing Problems in Acrobat 8 on Mac OS X](#).

The scenario and solution I write about above is just one possibility: there are others as you'll see if look through the troubleshooting technical notes. I am happy to report that this particular issue was addressed by my answer, and it has not deterred the school from using PDF as *the* format for sharing and archiving electronic documents that must be viewed on screen *and* in print, both now and in the future.