



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
FULLERTON

THESIS/DISSERTATION MANUAL

UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS
AND GUIDELINES

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LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

The master's thesis or doctoral dissertation are the culminating experience of your graduate program and a demonstration of your ability to develop and present a clear and scholarly work within your chosen field of study. Our goal in this final editorial process is to ensure that your scholarly work is a credit to this university and ultimately a lifelong source of pride for you.

Although our format requirements may differ from other formats in your particular field, our universally accepted style ensures that other scholars, wherever they may be or in whatever field, will understand the organization of ideas in your final published and archived work. Our format requirements are thus designed to provide a solid but "invisible" background to showcase your research and writing to as wide an audience as possible.

This manual includes general information regarding all university policies, procedures, and format requirements.

The manual answers most commonly asked questions about thesis/dissertation preparation and format and provides instructions on each step of the process at CSUF. My final advice to you for successful completion of your thesis or dissertation is to *get an early start!*

This manual cannot cover all situations or problems that may arise in the preparation of the manuscript. Any additional questions should first be discussed with the chair of your committee, of course, but do not hesitate to consult our staff at the Office of Graduate Studies or visit our [website](#), since we are the official campus authority for reviewing and approving form and style.

Finally, I would like to congratulate you on your scholarly achievement up to this point. It takes a deep knowledge of your discipline, perseverance, and hard work to reach this point in your program. When CSUF publishes your final manuscript, you will join a select community of graduate scholars. We are here to support you in accomplishing this important scholarly milestone.

Dr. Elaine Frey
Assistant Vice President for Graduate Studies

GENERAL INFORMATION

University Regulations

University regulations apply to all theses and dissertations. The Office of Graduate studies manages the publication and approval of all papers. After submission, your paper will be checked by the University Thesis/Dissertation Reader (“the Reader”) for conformity to the requirements of this Manual and the Thesis/Dissertation Template (available on our [website](#)). Then, upon student approval, the proofed work will be uploaded to Zenodo, an open access repository, and provided to the library for archiving and posting on the CSU-wide scholastic database, ScholarWorks.

Deadlines

Submission deadlines are listed on our [website](#). Typically, the deadline for submission for review by the Reader is approximately four weeks before the last day of classes (see below). We recommend you schedule your defense at least two weeks prior to your target deadline in order to ensure enough time to make any changes, as all content changes must be made prior to submission. The thesis or dissertation *must* meet the submission deadlines posted on the [thesis and dissertation website](#) in order to graduate on time. Students may not request exceptions to our deadlines.

Student submission deadlines are typically:

- Summer graduation: early July
- Fall graduation: mid-November
- Spring graduation: late April

University Thesis/Dissertation Reader

The Reader verifies that all CSUF theses and dissertations comply with university regulations and format requirements and are consistent in style. Our Reader is Eliot Cossaboom, who may be contacted at ecossaboom@fullerton.edu.

Contact and Links

- Our website: <https://www.fullerton.edu/graduate/academics/thesis.php>
- Our helpdesk: thesisdisshelpdesk@fullerton.edu
- Reader (Eliot Cossaboom): ecossaboom@fullerton.edu

THESIS PLANNING

The Committee

Before you begin writing your thesis or dissertation, you will choose a committee. The thesis committee is composed of a minimum of three full-time faculty members who supervise the research and writing of the thesis and approve its content, while dissertations must have at least two committee members. A qualified person who is not a full-time university faculty member may also serve as a visiting examiner, in which case they are a fourth committee member and are not a replacement for a full-time faculty committee member. After identifying your committee chair, you will work with them to choose a topic.

Student Responsibilities

It is solely your responsibility to comply with this manual and meet the required deadlines.

Departmental programs may specify the style manual and use of technical terminology (if applicable) for the paper. University guidelines govern all form and physical requirements such as font, margins, etc. Remember that you are producing a final product for archiving on several different platforms; therefore, university requirements take precedence if there is conflict between departmental or style requirements and this manual or the Thesis/Dissertation Template.

Before submission, be sure that your work meets all departmental and university style and formatting guidelines. Please proofread thoroughly and to the best of your ability. If this manual does not answer your questions, feel free to contact the Office of Graduate Studies. Failure to properly format and proofread may lead to delay of your paper.

In addition to your committee, the library, the University Learning Center, Graduate Success Consultants, the Graduate Student Success Center, and our office, the Internet abounds with help for writers, but ensure information you find is consistent with university and style requirements, and remember that university requirements take precedence.

Research Subjects and Copyright or Unpublished Material Approval

If you plan to use human participants, you may be required to obtain approval from the CSUF Institutional Review Board (IRB) (ASC-228). This approval process is based on federal regulations and university policies intended to protect you as well as your subjects. The process may take several weeks, so check with your committee chair and the IRB early about obtaining approval. Please see the [IRB website](#) for more information.

If you use copyrighted or unpublished material in your paper, whether directly copied or paraphrased, you must give full credit to the author and/or publisher. This includes images, graphs, charts, etc., as well as text. Be sure to obtain the appropriate permission, cite your sources appropriately, and abide by fair use guidelines.

If you are unsure if your citations are correct, are concerned that something may not be fair use, or have any questions about citation and references, please contact the [Reader](#) and consider making an appointment with a [Graduate Success Consultant](#) or seeking help through [Pollack Library](#). It is much easier to make citation and reference corrections earlier in the process, rather than later, so please plan accordingly.

MANUSCRIPT GUIDELINES

The Thesis/Dissertation Template

The Thesis/Dissertation Template is available on our website and contains complete instructions and examples for formatting requirements. It also serves as the final file into which content must be copied before submission. The Template is divided into the following parts, described briefly below. For full instructions refer to the Template itself.

1. TITLE PAGE & ABSTRACT
2. TABLE OF CONTENTS
3. LIST OF TABLES (if any)
4. LIST OF FIGURES (if any)
5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (if any)
6. BODY
7. APPENDIX or APPENDICES (if any)
8. REFERENCES

TITLE PAGE & ABSTRACT. Contains the paper title, student name, degree title, department, etc., and your Abstract. Your Abstract should include a statement of the problem, procedures or methods, results, and conclusion—equivalent to a short response to the question “What is your paper about?”

TABLE OF CONTENTS, LIST OF FIGURES, LIST OF TABLES. The Table of Contents includes all section titles and some subheading. The List of Figures and List of Tables list all figures and tables except those that only appear in appendices. Please double-check all page numbers before submission.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS. An optional personal statement.

BODY. Your work divided into chapters. May optionally include tables and/or figures.

APPENDICES. Supplemental materials that do not fit in the body of the paper.

REFERENCES. References/bibliography/works cited formatted in the style selected by the committee.

Style Manuals

Styles act as a standardized source for how to cite sources in the text and reference them. The academic unit, through the student’s advisor and/or committee, is responsible for the academic content and English usage in a student’s paper, and for choosing and enforcing a style. Common citations styles include APA, IEEE, Chicago, and JSCR, but committees are free to choose any style that is well-documented. Please note that the Reader may request documentation style guidelines for less common formats. When signing off on your paper, your chair will identify which style you are to use, but it must be the latest edition of that style. The Reader will then check that your citations and references comply with that style.

Style manuals are only used for citations, references, and language. They are not used for headings, table titles, figure captions, etc. In the case of conflict between the Template and style manual, the Template always takes precedence.

Identify your style early and comply with it. It is easier to do your citations correctly from the start than to revise them.

THESIS REVIEW PROCESS

Preliminary Check

We urge candidates to obtain a preliminary review by the Reader after pasting their text into the Template. The Reader will check general formatting and briefly review citations. This review is not mandatory but is recommended. These checks can save you needless reformatting headaches and wasted time. In general, preliminary checks lead to fewer revisions at the end of the semester. Requests for preliminary checks may be made directly to [the Reader](#).

Submission

Once you have passed your defense, made all revisions requested by your committee, and formatted and proofread your paper to the best of your abilities, you are ready to submit your paper to the Office of Graduate Studies by completing a CSUF Thesis/Dissertation Submission Form, available on [our website](#). After you have submitted your thesis or dissertation to us, no changes to content are allowed (this is referred to as a content-lock), and your paper may not be withdrawn from publication.

After you complete your Submission Form, your committee will be contacted to ensure that your paper is ready for publication. Once we have received all signatures, the Office of Graduate Studies will review your submission information to make sure it is all correct, and your paper will be passed to the Reader for review.

Revision

The Reader will verify that your paper meets all requirements listed in this manual and the Thesis Template. Note that the Reader does not proofread—that is the student’s responsibility—but may point out additional issues to the student.

After this review, the student is notified if (a) any general corrections are needed, or (b) all university regulations have been met. If there are corrections, it is the student’s responsibility to correct their work and resubmit it directly to the Reader in accordance with their instructions. This process continues until all university regulations have been met, at which point the student is sent the final PDF for approval. All communication with the Reader will take place via the student’s CSUF email address. Please check regularly to avoid delay during the review process.

Finalization & Publication

Once your paper meets all university standards and you approve, the Reader will alert the Office of Graduate Studies that your paper has been finalized, and it will be sent for publication. Our primary publishing platform is ScholarWorks, the CSU-wide scholastic database for student and faculty research, but we also post papers on Zenodo in order to mint DOIs. During the Submission Form, the student will be asked to select a publishing visibility level for ScholarWorks. The options are Public (available to everyone), CSU (available to CSU logins), and Private (only available to the student).

Award of the Degree

The appropriate faculty reports the thesis or dissertation grade to the registrar in the usual manner. After all steps in the thesis submission and review process have been completed (and assuming an Application for Graduation Check for the Master’s Degree has been filed by the appropriate deadline), the Office of Graduate Studies will determine if all other university requirements are complete. Only after these reviews and certifications is the student recommended for the award of the master’s degree. This review occurs in the weeks following the end of the semester and can take from one to three months.