

THESIS AND DISSERTATION PREPARATION GUIDE 2025-2026



UNIVERSITY OF
CENTRAL
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GRADUATE SCHOOL

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Chapter I: General Information

Overview

This chapter provides essential information about the thesis and dissertation process at the University of Central Arkansas, including academic standards, research compliance requirements, and the responsibilities of students and faculty throughout the graduate research journey.

The Graduate Research Experience

Earning a doctoral degree or a master's degree with a thesis option requires the graduate student, in collaboration with a faculty research advisor and thesis or dissertation committee, to design and conduct an original research project. Scholarly activity and research should be encouraged from the outset of the student's graduate program and should continue to play an important role until completion.

The process of designing, writing, and completing the thesis or dissertation allows the student to draw upon and consolidate knowledge obtained from classroom lectures, research projects, teaching, and other experiences. However, the thesis or dissertation should be viewed as the beginning of the student's scholarly work, not its culmination.

Thesis or dissertation research should provide the student with hands-on, directed experience in the primary research methods of the discipline and should prepare the student for research and scholarship that will be expected after receipt of the degree.

Purpose of This Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide comprehensive information related to the preparation of a thesis or dissertation at the University of Central Arkansas. This preparation guide includes specific format requirements for the thesis or dissertation, as well as information about related policies and procedures.

Professional Style Manuals

In most disciplines, a professional manual is acknowledged as the accepted format guide for publication manuscripts. Common examples include the following:

- [APA Style](#) (American Psychological Association) - used in psychology, education, and social sciences
- [MLA Style](#) (Modern Language Association) - used in literature, languages, and humanities
- [Chicago Manual of Style](#) - used in history and some humanities disciplines
- [ACS Style](#) - used in chemistry and related sciences

Graduate students are encouraged to consult professional manuals for their disciplines when preparing the thesis or dissertation. However, the format requirements outlined in this guide take precedence over those in professional manuals. This policy ensures uniformity for Graduate School manuscripts across all disciplines.

Academic Integrity in Research

Standards and Expectations

The graduate student is expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity in research and scholarship. The following behaviors will not be tolerated:

- Plagiarism in any form
- Falsification or fabrication of data
- Misrepresentation of research findings
- Failure to properly attribute sources or collaborators

Students should familiarize themselves with their rights and responsibilities regarding their own work, as well as the procedures and policies that must be followed to respect the intellectual property rights of others.

Research Compliance Requirements

Federal regulations govern the use of certain materials and subjects in research, and compliance is monitored by various federal agencies. All students must verify compliance with appropriate approval procedures before initiating any thesis or dissertation-related research.

Types of Research Requiring Approval:

Human Subjects Research

- Requires review and approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB)
- Must be obtained before any data collection involving human participants

Animal Research

- Requires approval from the Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)
- Applies to all research involving live animals

Radiation and Hazardous Materials

- Requires approval from the Radiation Safety Committee for radioactive materials
- Special procedures required for handling and disposal of hazardous materials

Other Regulated Research

- Research involving recombinant DNA (Institutional Biosafety Committee)
- Studies using controlled drugs or substances

Getting Approval

For specific information regarding procedures for obtaining appropriate review of proposed research projects, visit: <https://uca.edu/researchcompliance/>

Graduate students conducting research in any of the above areas should consult with their research advisor, department chair, and/or the UCA Research Compliance Officer early in the planning process to determine required compliance measures and timelines.

Responsibilities and Support

Student Responsibilities

The thesis or dissertation represents a capstone project for many graduate students. While faculty members provide essential guidance, the graduate student must assume primary responsibility for the following:

- Content development and accuracy
- Adherence to formatting requirements
- Meeting established deadlines and milestones
- Maintaining high standards of scholarship and writing
- Producing a quality document that reflects well on all parties involved

Faculty Guidance and Support

Faculty advisors and committee members are expected to provide guidance in the following areas:

- Research methodology and design
- Literature review and theoretical framework development
- Data analysis and interpretation
- Writing and revision feedback
- Professional development and career preparation

University Resources

The University of Central Arkansas offers extensive support for graduate students writing a thesis or dissertation:

Technology and Equipment

- Computer labs/ printers/ film & production equipment
- Specialized laboratory equipment
- Statistical software and analysis tools

Research Support

- Torreyson Library resources and research assistance
- Interlibrary loan services
- Database access and research guides
- URC Student Research Grants
- Digital research tools

Committee Support

- Thesis or dissertation committee guidance
- Regular progress meetings and feedback
- Defense preparation assistance

Departmental Handbooks

Departments offering a Ph.D. must prepare comprehensive handbooks for Ph.D. students and faculty advisors that clearly outline the following:

- Departmental and disciplinary expectations for graduate education
- Specific dissertation requirements and standards
- Mutual responsibilities of advisors and students
- Detailed timeframes for completing each major stage of doctoral studies
- Milestone requirements and evaluation criteria

Similar handbooks are strongly recommended for master's programs, particularly those with a thesis option.

Timeline and Milestones

Students should work with their advisors to establish clear timelines that include the following:

- Committee formation deadlines
- Proposal development and approval
- Data collection periods
- Writing and revision phases
- Defense scheduling requirements

Final deadlines for defenses and manuscript submissions are posted on the Graduate School website [here](#).

Our Commitment to Excellence

The Graduate School works in partnership with you and your thesis or dissertation committee to ensure your completed research reflects positively on your scholarly development, your committee and department, the Graduate School, and the University of Central Arkansas as a whole. This collaborative approach ensures that your thesis or dissertation meets the highest standards of academic excellence while preparing you for a successful career in your chosen field.

Chapter II: Thesis/Dissertation Process

General Information

A thesis or dissertation represents the culmination of your graduate studies, an opportunity to contribute meaningful research to your field through rigorous analysis and scholarly writing. This capstone project allows you to identify gaps in existing research and fill them with original work that advances knowledge in your discipline.

The process culminates in a defense, where you present your research to a committee of faculty experts who will evaluate your mastery of the subject matter and the quality of your scholarly contribution.

Departments determine whether they require, or provide an option for, master's students to submit a thesis. **All Ph.D. candidates must complete a dissertation.** The following sections outline the general timeline, policies, and procedures for producing a thesis or dissertation at the University of Central Arkansas.

It is important to read and understand the contents of this manual fully. You must allow sufficient time for the logistics of conducting research and writing your thesis or dissertation.

Step 1: Building Your Foundation

Most graduate programs don't expect students to begin thesis research during their first semester. Instead, this initial period serves three critical purposes:

- Program orientation: Understanding your program's goals, expectations, and academic culture
- Foundational coursework: Developing the theoretical and methodological knowledge that will support your future research
- Academic integration: Building relationships with faculty, peers, and the broader scholarly community

During these foundational courses, actively engage with the material and pay attention to topics that spark your curiosity. Begin identifying knowledge gaps or opportunities to expand on existing research; these observations will be invaluable when selecting your thesis topic.

Step 2: Identifying Your Research Topic

Once you've developed a solid understanding of your field and identified your research interests, you can begin narrowing your focus into specific research goals. This process requires careful consideration of several factors.

Research Landscape Assessment

Conduct a thorough review of existing literature in your area of interest. Your thesis should build upon previous work rather than duplicate efforts already completed. Look for opportunities to extend, challenge, or apply existing research in novel ways.

Scope Considerations

When selecting your research focus, carefully evaluate these key factors:

- Timeline feasibility: Ensure your research can be completed within your remaining program time
- Appropriate breadth: Choose a topic substantial enough for extensive analysis but focused enough to cover effectively
- Resource availability: Consider whether you have access to necessary data, materials, or research sites

If you're struggling to narrow your focus or concerned about your project's scope, consult with faculty members or peers who can provide valuable perspective.

Topic Selection and Approval Process

Selection of a thesis or dissertation topic is the responsibility of the student. You are advised to consult with an advisor and other faculty members to explore possible fields of interest and available resources and expertise that may exist within the discipline and the University. The potential contributions of faculty members to the development of your thesis or dissertation should be thoroughly investigated before the topic is selected.

Approval Requirements: The major professor and committee must approve the thesis or dissertation topic. You will submit a written statement outlining the scope of the proposed study and procedures to be followed for approval. These procedures must comply with University policies regarding research and the use of human subjects, animals, radioactive materials, and potentially biohazardous materials. The original approval statement and outline are to be maintained in the department office.

Step 3: Assembling Your Committee

Your thesis or dissertation committee serves as your scholarly support system, providing guidance, feedback, and expertise throughout the research process. Every graduate student who is writing a thesis or dissertation works under the direction of a committee of graduate faculty at the University of Central Arkansas. **Note: All committee members must have graduate faculty status before a committee will be approved by the Graduate School.**

Committee Chair Selection

Your committee chair will monitor your thesis hours and progress, making this your most important committee decision. Choose someone who

- Has expertise in your research area
- Knows you and your academic interests
- Can provide constructive feedback that advances your work
- Is available and committed to supporting your timeline
- Must be a full member of the UCA Graduate Faculty

Committee Composition Requirements

Master's Thesis Committee: A minimum of three members:

- The major professor (must be a full member of the UCA Graduate Faculty)
- A second member of the graduate faculty of the discipline involved
- A third graduate faculty member who may be from outside the student's department

Doctoral Dissertation Committee:

- PhD in Counseling Psychology and PhD in Physical Therapy: A minimum of five members
- PhD in Change Leadership: A minimum of four members

PhD Committee qualifications:

- The chair (must be a full member of the UCA Graduate Faculty)
- At least one member from outside the student's department
- Established according to departmental guidelines

External Committee Members: Committees may include one external member from outside the university, who must obtain graduate faculty status before serving.

Committee Formation Process and Deadlines

The committee chair is responsible for submitting the [Thesis/Dissertation Committee Selection Form](#) with signatures from the following:

- You (the student)
- Your committee chair
- Your program coordinator
- The Graduate School Graduation Coordinator

Critical Deadline: This form should be submitted no later than the end of the first semester in which the student enrolls in thesis/dissertation hours.

The committee should be selected within the timeline of the particular degree program in which the student is enrolled.

You should investigate the interests and abilities of faculty and their ability to assist in your particular project and may suggest faculty for consideration as members of the committee.

While you may begin enrolling in thesis hours once your chair is identified, your committee chair must complete this form before registering for your second semester of thesis hours.

Step 4: Thesis/Dissertation Hours

Thesis hours begin once you've identified your research topic, selected your committee chair, and completed required coursework. Your committee chair monitors your progress through regular individual meetings, with expectations established collaboratively between you and your chair.

Progress Tracking and Grading

- Satisfactory progress receives a "PR" (credit) grade in DegreeWorks. Used for all terms leading up to the final term of completion unless the student hasn't made any progress.
- Satisfactory completion receives a "CR" (credit) grade in DegreeWorks. Used only in the **final semester** upon completion of the thesis or dissertation.
- Requirements: Total required hours vary by program; check DegreeWorks as well as the Graduate Bulletin for your specific requirements
- Flexibility: Progress expectations are determined individually with your committee chair

Continuous Enrollment Requirements

Master's students must register for at least one hour of graduate thesis credit each semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer) after enrolling in their first thesis course, whether the student is in residence or away from the campus.

Doctoral students must register for at least one hour of dissertation credit each semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer) following approval of dissertation proposal until the work is completed, whether the student is in residence or away from the campus.

Step 5: Research Proposal

Your research proposal represents one of your first major milestones, typically consisting of your thesis's opening chapters. This document serves multiple purposes:

- Provides your committee with a comprehensive understanding of your planned research
- Allows committee members to offer guidance on research strategies and methodologies
- Helps you clarify your research questions and approach

Proposal Timeline and Requirements

A thesis proposal (generally containing the first three chapters of the thesis) should be completed and filed with the department chair as early in the thesis process as possible, but at least by the end of the first semester in which the student registers for thesis credit. Doctoral program requirements vary.

Most programs expect proposal completion by your second semester of thesis hours, though requirements may vary based on your committee's preferences and program specifications.

Doctoral students should remember that continuous enrollment requirements apply once the proposal has been approved.

Step 6: Preparing for Defense

Application for Graduation & Notification of Defense

- The Application for Graduation must be completed by the deadline set for each term. This is typically very early in the term and includes the non-refundable payment of a graduation fee. This deadline is included in the [Academic Calendar](#).
- Students must submit an Application for Graduation to receive their degree, regardless of whether they plan to attend the commencement ceremony.
- You must contact the Graduate School Program Coordinator (Jennifer Bell) with your thesis/dissertation title and date of defense.
- Information regarding applying for graduation can be found at:
<https://uca.edu/graduateschool/graduation/>

Important: If you apply but don't graduate in a given semester, you must reapply for the semester when you expect to graduate and pay the graduation fee again. **Graduate applications and fees are non-transferable and non-refundable.**

Manuscript Draft Preparation

To aid in formatting your thesis/dissertation, a template for the front matter is available in the appendices of this guide. Students are encouraged to utilize this template in preparing their drafts. The Dissertation and Thesis: Initial Draft Review Checklist (see Appendix D) is available to support the committee chair in reviewing the draft.

Step 7: The Defense

The defense represents the culmination of your thesis work, a formal presentation and examination of your research before your committee.

Defense Scheduling and Deadlines

The deadline for defending the thesis/dissertation is four weeks before the date of graduation.

Preparation Process

Each committee member must receive a complete copy of your thesis with adequate time for thorough review. The defense can only proceed once all members have read and approved the work in substance.

The announcement of day/time for the defense should be sent to the college dean along with a copy of the thesis/dissertation draft.

Defense Announcement

For Master's Students: If you would like to invite the campus to the defense, the committee chair should complete the [Thesis Announcement form](#).

For Doctoral Students: The committee chair should complete the [Dissertation Announcement form](#).

The chair will be prompted to provide the department, student name, date and time of the defense, degree, thesis/dissertation title, virtual link and/or location, and the names of the committee members. The defense will then be announced to the UCA campus.

Defense Format

The oral examination serves as a defense of your thesis, providing opportunities to

- Present your research findings formally
- Demonstrate your expertise and understanding
- Address committee questions and concerns
- Receive final approval or guidance for revisions

Attendance

The Graduate Dean, college dean, and department chair should be invited, and the defense is open to public attendance.

Post-Defense Approval

After the student successfully defends the thesis/dissertation, the Committee Chair should complete the [Thesis/Dissertation Defense Approval form](#) available on the Graduate School website.

Once access is granted, the Committee Chair will receive additional instructions regarding how to complete the form and route for signatures.

The Committee Chair should not initiate this form until after the thesis/dissertation has been successfully defended and all committee members (including the chair) are ready to approve the work.

Step 8: Final Submission Process

Following your successful defense, address any requested revisions, corrections, or additions to your manuscript.

Digital Submission to ProQuest

The final draft of the thesis/dissertation must be uploaded to ProQuest three weeks before the date of graduation.

Submission Process:

- Create a [ProQuest](#) account.
- Ensure your manuscript follows the appropriate style and is free from content, grammatical, or mechanical errors
- Your committee chair will need to submit a plagiarism check to the Graduate School (Jennifer Bell)
- Upload a PDF of your completed thesis/dissertation

The dean of the Graduate School will review the final draft. In the event of requested revisions, a revised final draft must be uploaded to ProQuest.

Permission Form & Final Hard Copy Submission

Once the final draft has been approved in ProQuest, you will receive notification from the Graduate Dean.

You will then submit the [copyright permission form](#) indicating your preferences regarding the availability of your manuscript.

A paper copy of the final, approved thesis/dissertation must then be submitted to the Graduate School at least three days before the date of graduation.

Ensure the paper copy includes a **1.5 inch left margin** and is **printed one-sided only**.

Degree Award Requirement: The electronic submission of the revised thesis/dissertation to ProQuest must be complete, and the final copy of the thesis/dissertation and permission form must be submitted to the Graduate School before the degree will be awarded.

This process represents a significant academic journey that will challenge and reward you in equal measure. Remember that your committee, program coordinators, and Graduate School staff are valuable resources throughout this process; don't hesitate to seek guidance when needed.

Chapter III: The Research Proposal

Once a student selects a topic, they must prepare and submit a formal proposal for approval by their thesis or dissertation committee. Students who choose to use the journal manuscript format must identify and specify in their proposal the intended target journals for each manuscript chapter, including rationale for journal selection based on scope, audience, and appropriateness to the research.

This proposal outlines the student's intended research and allows the committee to review and provide feedback. The committee may request revisions before granting approval, but once approved, the student can reasonably expect committee approval of the final thesis or dissertation if the work is executed competently according to the proposal.

Approved proposals must be distributed to the department chair for departmental files, the major professor, and the student. Any subsequent modifications to the proposal require committee approval.

Graduate students must present their proposal to their committee in a formal presentation. This allows committee members to assess the student's knowledge and understanding of the proposal, as well as their ability to reason through and logically explain aspects of their research.

The presentation follows a scholarly seminar format, with the student providing an overview that highlights key aspects of the proposed research. Students may use audiovisual aids to help communicate essential points effectively.

After the presentation, there is typically a question-and-answer session where committee members may ask the student to explain their rationale for selecting particular theoretical frameworks, instruments, or data analysis techniques. Based on this meeting, committee members may suggest proposal changes and will either approve or disapprove the proposal for implementation. Committees may require revisions before granting final approval.

Proposal Format (Quantitative/Qualitative)

This section overviews proposal contents, emphasizing scientific and social-scientific research reporting. While humanities and arts theses may not follow these exact terms, their components are generally analogous to those described here. **Departments may modify these requirements to suit programmatic needs.**

Quantitative Research (Chapter Format)

Proposals written in chapters are the most common format but will differ in their content by discipline and by the type of proposal (i.e., quantitative or qualitative research). Students should work closely with their research advisor to determine the specific content required for the type of research to be conducted and for their discipline.

The proposal is often the first three chapters of the student's thesis or dissertation. The proposal is discussed in terms of what will be done in conducting the research.

Quantitative Research Proposal: Sample Outline

Chapter I: Introduction

- A. Introduction (provides a brief orientation to the reader)
- B. Statement of the problem
- C. Significance of the problem (addresses the importance of the problem to the discipline)
- D. Statement of the purpose (a clear, concise statement of the purpose of the study)
- E. Theoretical/Conceptual framework (provides a framework for examining the problem and for linking it to relevant literature)
- F. Objectives, hypotheses, research questions (to be derived from the purpose and framework and provide specific direction for data analysis and interpretation)
- G. Assumptions/theoretical limitations
- H. Definition of relevant terms

Chapter II: Review of Literature

Provides an overview of essential information that will guide the study and illustrates that the researcher has command of current knowledge regarding the proposed problem.

- A. Review of relevant research literature
- B. Summary

Chapter III: Methodology

Description of the research design (the general strategy for conducting the study)

- A. Population and sample (population to which the findings will be generalized and from which the sample will be selected; how the sample will be selected)
- B. Setting (where the study will be conducted)
- C. Protection of subjects' rights (illustrates recognition and protection of rights and welfare of subjects where appropriate)
- D. Measurement methods (methods of measuring study variables described, including instruments)
- E. Plans for data collection (collection procedures and responsible personnel)
- F. Plan for data analysis (statistical analysis techniques that will be used)
- G. Limitations (methodological limitations)
- H. Study budget and timetable (might be an appendix)

References

Appendices

Qualitative Research (Chapter Format)

Qualitative research proposals may vary considerably, yet they do contain some common features. The specific theoretical framework selected for qualitative studies significantly influences the content of the proposal.

Qualitative Research Proposal: Sample Outline

Chapter I: Introduction

- A. Identification of the phenomenon
- B. Study purpose
- C. Theoretical framework or philosophy
- D. Study questions or aims
- E. Significance of the study
- F. Identification of assumptions
- G. Limitations

Chapter II: Review of Literature

Relevant literature reviewed (as appropriate for the type of qualitative study planned).

Chapter III: Methodology

- A. Researcher's credentials (demonstration of the researcher's ability to conduct the type of study proposed)
- B. Site and population (description of the site for study and population to be used)
- C. Sample (description of the sample and its selection)
- D. Data collection process
- E. Data analysis (techniques to be used to analyze data)
- F. Study budget and timetable (might be located in the appendix)

References

Appendices

Chapter IV: Completing Your Thesis/Dissertation After Proposal Approval

Once your proposal has been approved by your committee, you will transition from planning your research to conducting it and reporting your findings. This chapter outlines the components you'll need to complete for your final thesis or dissertation manuscript. **The specific content and organization will vary by discipline and research methodology, but the guidelines below provide a framework for both quantitative and qualitative studies.**

Remember that your approved proposal typically becomes the first three chapters of your final manuscript. After completing your research, you'll add the remaining chapters that present and interpret your findings.

Transitioning from Proposal to Final Manuscript

Key Changes Required

When converting your proposal to the final manuscript, check the following:

- Tense shifts: Change all future tense statements about methodology to past tense
- IRB/IACUC updates: Include final approval numbers and any modifications
- Refinements: Update literature review with any new relevant studies published during your research
- Alignment: Ensure your actual methods match what you describe (note any deviations from the proposal)

Maintaining Academic Rigor

Throughout the data collection and analysis phases, maintain detailed records of the following:

- All procedural decisions and changes
- Data collection challenges and how they were addressed
- Analysis decisions and rationale
- Audit trails for qualitative work
- Statistical output and decision trees for quantitative work

Quantitative Research: Final Chapters

For quantitative studies, you'll typically add Chapters IV and V to your approved proposal (which contained Chapters I-III). These chapters represent the culmination of your empirical work and your contribution to the field's knowledge base.

Chapter IV: Results

The results chapter presents your findings without interpretation, serving as an objective report of what your data revealed. This chapter should be organized to directly address each research question or hypothesis you presented in Chapter I, creating a clear narrative thread through your document.

Participant Demographics and Descriptive Statistics

Begin with a description of your participant demographics and descriptive statistics. Readers need to understand who participated in your study, including the final sample size, response rate, and key demographic characteristics. Present descriptive statistics for all key variables in clearly formatted tables that summarize participant characteristics. This foundational information helps readers evaluate the generalizability and context of your findings.

Data Screening and Assumption Testing

Your next section should address assumption testing and data screening procedures. Even though you planned these analyses in your proposal, the actual execution often reveals unexpected issues that require careful documentation. Describe how you handled missing data, including the extent of missingness and the procedures you used to address it. Report the results of tests for normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity, explaining any violations and how you addressed them.

Key elements to document:

- Outlier identification and treatment decisions
- Reliability coefficients for all instruments
- Comparison with published psychometric properties
- Any data transformations performed

Primary Analyses

The heart of your results chapter presents your primary analyses, organized systematically by research question or hypothesis. For each question, present the appropriate statistical tests as outlined in your methodology chapter, including not just p-values but also effect sizes and confidence intervals. Create professional tables and figures that clearly communicate your key findings, ensuring each is referenced in the text and adds value beyond what words alone could convey.

When reporting results, always include:

- Exact p-values (not just " $p < .05$ ")
- Confidence intervals
- Effect sizes with interpretation
- All findings, even non-significant results

Supplementary Analyses

If you conducted supplementary analyses, present these in a separate section, clearly distinguishing them from your planned analyses. These might include post-hoc tests that emerged from significant omnibus tests, exploratory analyses that weren't originally planned but provide valuable insights, sensitivity analyses that test the robustness of your findings, or alternative models that examine different ways of understanding your data.

Writing Style Considerations

Throughout your results chapter, maintain a clear, objective writing style using past tense. Be concise while ensuring completeness, letting the data speak without adding interpretation or speculation. Every table and figure should be referenced in the text, but avoid redundancy by not repeating in words everything shown in tables.

Chapter V: Discussion

The discussion chapter transforms your results from mere numbers into meaningful contributions to knowledge. This is where you interpret your findings, connect them to existing literature, and explore their implications for theory and practice.

Summary of Findings

Open with a summary that reminds readers of your study's purpose and provides a concise overview of your major findings. State clearly whether each hypothesis was supported, creating a bridge between your results and their interpretation. This summary should be brief but comprehensive, giving readers a clear understanding of what you found before delving into what it means.

Interpretation of Results

The interpretation section forms the core of your discussion, where you explain what your findings mean for your field. Compare your results with previous research, explicitly noting where your findings agree or disagree with established knowledge. Explore the theoretical implications of your work, discussing how your results support, extend, or challenge existing theories.

When interpreting your findings, consider:

- How results align with or contradict previous research
- Theoretical implications for your field
- Unexpected findings and possible explanations
- Alternative interpretations of the data

Address any unexpected findings honestly, offering possible explanations while acknowledging uncertainty where it exists. Demonstrate the thoughtful analysis expected of doctoral-level scholarship by considering multiple perspectives on your data.

Study Limitations

Every study has limitations, and acknowledging them demonstrates scientific integrity and helps future researchers build on your work. Discuss sample limitations, including size, characteristics, and selection procedures that might affect generalizability. Address measurement limitations, such as reliability concerns, validity questions, or limitations of self-report data.

Common limitations to address:

- Sample characteristics and generalizability
- Measurement tool constraints

- Design limitations
- Potential sources of bias
- External validity considerations

Be honest about these limitations while avoiding excessive self-criticism that undermines your contributions.

Implications for Research and Practice

The implications section translates your findings into actionable knowledge. Discuss the theoretical contributions your work makes to the field, explaining how it advances understanding of your phenomenon. Explore practical applications, considering how practitioners might use your findings to improve their work. If relevant, address policy implications, suggesting how your results might inform decision-making at organizational or governmental levels. For studies with clinical applications, distinguish between statistical and clinical significance, helping readers understand the real-world importance of your findings.

Future Research Directions

Your recommendations for future research should be specific and actionable, not generic suggestions to "study this topic more." Propose concrete ways future studies could address your study's limitations, identify new questions your findings raise, and suggest methodological improvements that could strengthen future investigations. These recommendations demonstrate your developing expertise and help establish a research trajectory for yourself and others.

Conclusion

Conclude your discussion with a final synthesis that captures the essence of your contribution without merely repeating earlier content. Craft a clear take-home message that readers will remember, while avoiding the temptation to overstate your findings or make claims beyond what your data support.

Qualitative Research: Final Chapters

Qualitative studies often have more flexibility in structure, but most add Chapters IV and V to the proposal, though these may sometimes be combined depending on your methodology and disciplinary conventions. The richness of qualitative data requires careful attention to how you present and interpret your findings while maintaining the trustworthiness of your analysis.

Chapter IV: Findings

The findings chapter presents the themes, patterns, or theory that emerged from your analysis, providing readers with a rich understanding of your participants' experiences and perspectives. Unlike quantitative results, qualitative findings interweave data presentation with initial interpretation, though deeper theoretical interpretation typically waits for the discussion chapter.

Participant Description

Begin by describing your participants in enough detail that readers can understand the context of your findings. Provide rich descriptions that go beyond demographics to capture relevant characteristics that might influence participants' perspectives. Describe the context and setting where data collection occurred, as these environmental factors often shape participants' experiences.

Include details about the following:

- Recruitment outcomes and any challenges
- Participant characteristics relevant to your phenomenon
- Context and setting descriptions
- Final sample composition

While qualitative research doesn't typically emphasize numbers, a demographic table can efficiently convey participant characteristics when appropriate.

Analysis Process Overview

Briefly overview your analysis process to help readers understand how you moved from raw data to findings. Describe your analytical approach and how it evolved during the analysis, including how your initial codes developed into final themes. Explain how you used memos and field notes to capture analytical insights and track your developing

understanding. Document the trustworthiness strategies you employed during analysis, such as peer debriefing, member checking, or triangulation across data sources.

Presentation of Themes/Findings by Methodology

The presentation of your themes or findings forms the heart of this chapter, and the structure depends on your chosen methodology.

For Thematic Analysis: Organize your findings around major themes with descriptive titles that capture the essence of each pattern. Develop each theme through rich, thick description that helps readers understand not just what participants said but what they meant. Include multiple participant quotes that support each theme, selecting powerful examples that represent the range of perspectives within that theme. Don't ignore deviant cases or contradictory data; instead, discuss how these outliers enhance understanding of the phenomenon. Consider including visual models or diagrams that illustrate relationships between themes.

For Grounded Theory: Focus on the core category you identified and its relationship to other categories. Describe the properties and dimensions of each category, showing how they relate to form a coherent theory. Present your theoretical model with clear explanations of the processes and relationships it depicts, demonstrating how your theory emerges from and remains grounded in your data.

For Phenomenology: Capture the essence of the lived experience you studied. Provide textural descriptions that convey what participants experienced, using their words to help readers understand the phenomenon from the inside. Complement these with structural descriptions that explain how the experience unfolded, including temporal, spatial, and relational dimensions. Weave individual experiences into a composite description that captures the essential, invariant structure of the phenomenon.

For Case Study: Structure findings within and across cases, depending on whether you conducted a single or multiple case study. For each case, provide thick description that helps readers understand the complexity and uniqueness of that bounded system. If studying multiple cases, conduct cross-case analysis to identify patterns while preserving the integrity of individual cases.

Effective Use of Participant Quotes

Throughout your findings, use participant quotes effectively to bring your data to life. Select quotes that are powerful and representative, avoiding the temptation to over-quote or to rely on just your most articulate participants.

Guidelines for using quotes:

- Provide sufficient context for understanding
- Balance quotes across participants
- Use block format for longer quotes (40+ words)
- Maintain confidentiality through pseudonyms
- Alter potentially identifying details when necessary

Chapter V: Discussion and Implications

The discussion chapter for qualitative research interprets your findings within broader contexts, connecting them to existing literature and exploring their significance for theory and practice.

Synthesis and Interpretation

Begin with a synthesis that draws together your major findings into a coherent narrative about what you've learned. This isn't simply a repetition of your themes but rather a higher-level interpretation that explains their collective significance. Connect your findings explicitly to your theoretical framework, showing how your empirical work supports, extends, or challenges existing theoretical understanding.

Key areas to address:

- Relationship to theoretical framework
- Connections to existing literature
- Confirmations and contradictions with prior research
- New insights or unexpected discoveries

Highlight new insights or unexpected findings that emerged from your analysis, as these often represent your most important contributions.

Reflexivity Statement

Include a reflexivity statement that acknowledges your role in the research process. Discuss how your background, experiences, and perspectives influenced the research, from topic selection through interpretation. Describe how your preconceptions evolved through the research process and what you learned about yourself as well as your topic. If you used bracketing or other strategies to manage your influence, discuss their effectiveness and any challenges you encountered. Some researchers find it valuable to discuss their personal transformation through the research, particularly when studying sensitive or profound topics.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Address the trustworthiness of your research by discussing how you established rigor throughout the study. Explain the specific strategies you used to ensure credibility, such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, or triangulation, and provide evidence of their effectiveness.

Trustworthiness criteria to address:

- **Credibility:** How you ensured accurate representation of participants' perspectives
- **Transferability:** The potential applicability of findings to other contexts
- **Dependability:** Consistency and stability of findings over time
- **Confirmability:** How findings emerge from data rather than researcher bias

If you conducted member checking, discuss participants' responses and how you incorporated their feedback.

Acknowledging Limitations

Address the scope boundaries of your work, explaining what you could and couldn't explore within your study's parameters. Discuss methodological constraints, such as limitations of your chosen approach or challenges in data collection. Consider researcher limitations, including your own positioning, skills, or access to participants. Acknowledge time and resource constraints that may have affected the depth or breadth of your investigation. Be explicit about the limits of transferability, helping readers understand the boundaries of your findings' applicability.

Implications and Applications

The implications of qualitative research often extend beyond traditional academic contributions to include practical, policy, and social justice dimensions. Discuss your theoretical contributions, explaining how your work advances conceptual understanding of your phenomenon. Explore practice implications, considering how professionals in relevant fields might apply your findings to improve their work.

Consider multiple levels of impact:

- Theoretical advancements in your field
- Practical applications for practitioners
- Policy recommendations (if applicable)
- Social justice implications (if relevant)
- Methodological contributions to qualitative research

Directions for Future Research

Your suggestions for future research should emerge organically from your findings and their limitations. Identify questions that emerged from your findings but lay outside your study's scope. Suggest different populations or contexts where similar research might yield valuable insights. Propose methodological variations that might deepen or extend understanding. If you generated theory, suggest ways it might be tested or refined through future research.

Concluding Reflection

Conclude with a reflection that captures the essence of your contribution and its significance. Unlike quantitative studies that often end with definitive statements, qualitative research may conclude with thoughtful reflections that honor the complexity and nuance of human experience while still providing clear insights and implications.

Mixed Methods Research: Final Chapters

Mixed methods studies require careful attention to integration, as the power of this approach lies not just in collecting both types of data but in bringing them together to create insights neither could provide alone.

Structuring Mixed Methods Results

The structure of your final chapters depends on whether you used a concurrent or sequential design, but most mixed methods dissertations include separate presentation of each strand followed by integration. Your results/findings chapter should present quantitative results and qualitative findings in separate sections, maintaining the integrity of each methodological approach.

Follow the guidelines above for each type of data, but add a critical integration section that shows how the strands relate. This might involve:

- Creating joint displays that visually present both types of data
- Discussing convergence where findings reinforce each other
- Exploring divergence where findings seem contradictory
- Examining how contradictions reveal complexity

Integrated Discussion

The discussion chapter for mixed methods research requires integrated interpretation that goes beyond discussing each strand separately. Develop meta-inferences that emerge from considering both types of data together, explaining how the combination provides insights beyond what either could offer alone. Address mixed methods quality criteria, such as whether you achieved the integration you planned and whether the mixed methods design added value beyond a single method study.

Special Considerations by Discipline

Education and Social Sciences

These fields often require extensive discussion of practical implications, as they value research that can improve practice. You may need a separate section on implications for practitioners, policy recommendations for educational or social systems, and consideration of how findings might affect diverse stakeholder groups. The discussion of limitations might include attention to cultural factors, contextual constraints, and the challenges of studying complex social phenomena.

Health Sciences

Health sciences dissertations must address clinical significance beyond statistical significance, helping readers understand what findings mean for patient care. Discuss implications for both patients and providers, considering how findings might change practice. Address healthcare system considerations, including feasibility of implementing findings in real-world clinical settings. When relevant, include discussion of cost-effectiveness, as healthcare increasingly requires economic as well as clinical justification for practice changes.

Humanities

Humanities dissertations often have more flexibility in structuring final chapters, perhaps organizing findings chronologically, thematically, or through other logical frameworks that serve the research questions. These dissertations typically engage more extensively with theoretical and philosophical literature throughout the findings and discussion, rather than separating empirical and theoretical content. The interpretation may be more openly subjective, acknowledging the researcher's interpretive role while maintaining scholarly rigor.

STEM Fields

STEM field dissertations emphasize reproducibility and technical precision. Results chapters may include extensive technical details, with additional information in appendices for readers who want to replicate the work. Maintain clear separation between results and discussion, as scientific convention typically demands objective presentation of findings before interpretation. Include a specific section on future experiments, as scientific research often proceeds through iterative experimental programs rather than standalone studies.

Overall Quality Indicators for Final Chapters

Strong Results/Findings Chapters

Strong results or findings chapters share several characteristics regardless of methodology. They directly address all research questions posed in the introduction, creating clear connections between what was asked and what was found. Data presentation is clear and complete without being overwhelming, using tables, figures, and quotes effectively to communicate findings. The writing maintains appropriate objectivity or reflexivity for the chosen methodology, and all relevant analyses or themes are included, not just those that support the researcher's expectations.

Strong Discussion Chapters

Strong discussion chapters demonstrate deep engagement with the findings and their meaning. They thoughtfully interpret all major findings, not just the expected or significant ones. Authors acknowledge and attempt to explain contradictions rather than glossing over them. The discussion shows deep engagement with relevant literature, connecting findings to the broader scholarly conversation. Limitations are assessed honestly without being overly self-deprecating, and the contribution to the field is articulated clearly but without overstatement. The conclusion is memorable and impactful, leaving readers with a clear understanding of why the work matters.

Strengths to Aim for in Results/Findings

- Clearly report results without adding interpretation in the quantitative section.
- Present all findings, including those that may not support your hypothesis, for a balanced view.
- Focus on your data and analysis, reserving literature review for the appropriate section.
- Summarize data in a clear, accessible way rather than including raw datasets in the main text.
- Always report effect sizes alongside statistical results for transparency and rigor.

Strengths to Aim for in Discussion

- Interpret findings thoughtfully without overstating or generalizing beyond your data.
 - Concentrate on explaining results already presented, rather than adding new ones.
 - Address contradictory findings to show depth and critical engagement.
 - Use careful language when describing relationships, avoiding causal claims from correlational data.
 - Conclude with a clear, purposeful ending that ties the discussion together.
-

Final Manuscript Preparation Tips

As you prepare your final manuscript, conduct a thorough consistency check to ensure alignment between your research questions, methods, results, and discussion. Share drafts with committee members individually before submitting to the full committee, as this allows for more detailed feedback and reduces the likelihood of major revisions after committee review.

Consider these final preparation strategies:

- Professional editing for grammar and style compliance
- Multiple revision cycles for refinement
- Careful preparation of appendices with supplementary materials
- Verification that all citations are complete and accurate
- Ensuring all tables and figures are properly formatted

Remember that these chapters represent the culmination of your research journey. Take time to craft them thoughtfully, as they contain your original contribution to knowledge in your field.

Chapter V. Journal Manuscript Format for Thesis/Dissertation

A department may choose to allow students to submit portions of a thesis or dissertation in journal manuscript format. When using this format, each chapter should be written as a manuscript ready for submission to a journal in the student's field. This option is entirely at the department's discretion and should align with disciplinary norms and program goals. Departments may modify any of the specific journal manuscript requirements noted below to best suit their field and student needs.

Students who select this format are required to submit these manuscripts for publication following successful completion of their oral defense. This requirement ensures that students choosing the manuscript format commit to the full publication process, not merely the formatting structure, thereby maintaining the rigor and scholarly purpose of this dissertation option.

Proof of submission (such as journal submission confirmation emails) must be included as an appendix in the final dissertation document submitted to ProQuest.

Effective with dissertation proposals defended in Spring 2027 or later, students selecting the journal manuscript format must include a minimum of three journal manuscripts, each suitable for submission to peer-reviewed publications. Students who successfully defend their dissertation proposal prior to Spring 2027 are not subject to this three-manuscript minimum.

Manuscript Requirements

Each manuscript chapter must

- Be of publishable quality and meet the standards of target journals, the names of which must be included in the proposal
- Represent original, rigorous research that contributes to academic discourse
- Include all necessary sections (introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion) as required by the target journal
- Contain its own references and appendices as appropriate
- Be approximately 7,500 words in length, ensuring consistency with the standard expectations for scholarly journal articles

Authorship and Publication Rights

Candidates may not include previously published manuscripts or manuscripts currently under review. However, they retain the right to submit manuscripts for publication after successful dissertation defense.

While the assistance of the dissertation committee and chair may be invaluable to the completion of the body of your traditional work or the journal manuscripts within the scope of the dissertation process, **the authorship must be solely that of the candidate prior to the oral defense of the dissertation and for the initial submission of the manuscripts for publication.**

Journal Manuscript Format: Ensuring Methodological Rigor

The journal manuscript format must demonstrate the same level of scholarly rigor, methodological sophistication, and comprehensive analysis as the traditional dissertation format. Certain methodologies require extended treatment to adequately demonstrate the depth of analysis, reflexivity, and theoretical engagement expected at the doctoral level.

Methodologies requiring extensive methodological exposition and reflexive analysis (such as autoethnography, narrative inquiry, phenomenology, critical ethnography, and complex mixed-methods approaches) are generally not appropriate for the journal manuscript format unless the proposed manuscripts can demonstrably provide the comprehensive methodological transparency and analytical depth required for doctoral-level work.

The dissertation committee chair must secure approval from the program director (or the program department chair) before approving a journal manuscript format for any methodology that requires substantial methodological explanation, extended reflexive analysis, or comprehensive contextual development beyond what can be achieved in standard journal article length.

Journal Manuscript Structure

Introduction Chapter

Your introduction should provide a brief overview of your research topic and outline the problem or issue your research aims to address. This chapter should include a rationale for using the journal manuscript format, explaining why you chose this approach and discussing benefits such as focused research papers, preparation for academic publishing, or broader accessibility of findings.

For each manuscript in your dissertation, you should provide an overview that includes the manuscript title, core research question, methodology overview, anticipated results, target journals for submission, and how each manuscript integrates with the others to address your overall research objective. The core research question should clearly articulate the specific question each manuscript addresses and explain how it contributes to your broader research goals. Your methodology overview should briefly describe research methods, data collection, and analysis techniques you plan to use. When identifying target journals, justify your choices based on relevance, readership, and impact. Finally, explain how the manuscripts collectively provide a coherent answer to your overall research question.

Journal Manuscript Chapters

Each of these chapters should reflect a standalone piece of research that contributes to the broader objectives of your dissertation. The manuscripts should contain all necessary sections of a typical research article, potentially including the following:

- Introduction
- Literature review
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion

However, the exact content and order may vary based on the standards of your target journal. Some journals might require a combined results and discussion section, while others require them to be separate. Some journals might require an abstract at the start of the article, while others might have specific requirements for data presentation. Note that the only abstract to appear in your dissertation will be the front matter; therefore, if a journal requires an abstract, this should be omitted from the chapter in the dissertation.

Previously published manuscripts or those under review should not be included in your dissertation. You retain the right to submit manuscripts for publication after successful dissertation defense, and any feedback from the dissertation review process should be integrated before journal submission.

Candidates should specify the target journals for each manuscript to allow the program to provide guidance on journal appropriateness and to understand the specific length and formatting requirements that will shape each manuscript. This advance identification of target journals helps ensure that manuscripts are developed with appropriate scope and structure for their intended publications.

While the references and appendices for the journal manuscripts will be included in the respective articles, you may have references and appendices referenced in your introduction and synthesis chapters.

Final Chapter: Synthesis & Conclusion

This chapter should begin with a recap of your overall research problem and dissertation objectives, reminding readers about the purpose and content of each manuscript. You should provide an overview of each manuscript that summarizes main findings, research questions addressed, methods used, and key conclusions drawn from your research.

A crucial component of this chapter is discussing the relationship between manuscripts, explaining how individual manuscripts relate to each other and contribute to your overall objectives while identifying common themes and connections that run through your work. You should integrate findings from individual manuscripts to present a coherent narrative that answers your overall research question, connecting the various components to show how they collectively contribute to addressing your research problem.

The implications of your research should be discussed based on the combined findings from your manuscripts, explaining how your work contributes to existing knowledge in your field and identifying any practical applications. Finally, reflect on the limitations of your overall research and how these might impact interpretation of your findings, then suggest potential directions for future research based on these limitations and any new questions that emerged during your study.

References and Appendices

Include any references and appendices cited in your introduction and synthesis chapters following the final chapter. Note that references and appendices for the journal manuscripts will be included in the respective articles themselves.

Chapter VI. Publication beyond the Dissertation Defense

While the assistance of the dissertation committee and chair may be invaluable to the completion of the body of your traditional work or the journal manuscripts within the scope of the dissertation process, the authorship must be solely that of the candidate prior to the oral defense of the dissertation.

Following the defense, these manuscripts should be submitted for publication as sole-authored works. If manuscripts are subsequently rejected and require substantial revision, such as major reframing of the research question, collection of additional data, reanalysis with different methodologies, or significant restructuring beyond the original dissertation scope, the candidate may then include any collaborating authors they deem appropriate for these substantially revised versions.

Minor revisions, copyediting, or responses to reviewer comments that do not fundamentally alter the work should remain sole-authored. Similarly, if the candidate later chooses to expand the scope of accepted manuscripts into new research directions, they may include collaborators for that expanded work.

Crediting Authors

Crediting authors appropriately when publishing a journal manuscript based on a dissertation involves a few key steps. These are generally accepted guidelines, but the exact process might vary based on the academic field or the journal's requirements. Here are some general tips:

- **Authorship:** The individual who did the primary work for the dissertation should be the first author on any manuscripts that result from it. This would generally be the person who wrote the dissertation.
- **Dissertation Chair's Credit:** The dissertation chair, who guided the research, is typically the second author. If there are multiple advisors or significant contributors, they should also be listed as authors. The order can depend on the extent of their contribution.
- **Contributors' Credit:** Other contributors who may have played a significant role in the research (like other committee members, if they were substantially involved) can be added as additional authors.
- **Order of Authors:** The order of authors can vary from field to field. In some areas, the most senior author (often the chair) is listed last, while in others, the order is strictly based on contribution. You'll need to know the convention in your field.

- **Acknowledgements:** If there were people who made a lesser but still noteworthy contribution, such as providing feedback or technical assistance, they can be acknowledged in a separate section of the manuscript.
- **Cite Your Dissertation:** Since your manuscript is based on your dissertation, you should cite it appropriately in your work.
- **Honesty and Transparency:** Ensure you are honest and transparent about all contributions to your work. Any perceived misrepresentation can result in accusations of academic dishonesty.

Lastly, always check the specific authorship guidelines for the journal to which you are submitting. Different journals may have their own rules about order of authors, acknowledgments, etc.

Program Requirements for Publication Integrity

All graduate programs must implement mechanisms to ensure students understand and avoid predatory publishing practices. Before defending their thesis or dissertation, students must acknowledge in writing that they have reviewed information about predatory journals and understand the importance of publishing in legitimate publications. Programs should maintain documentation of this acknowledgment as part of the student's academic record.

All students, regardless of dissertation format, who plan to publish their research must attest that they will make every reasonable effort to avoid predatory journals and will consult with their advisor and committee when selecting publications. This commitment extends beyond graduation, as the university's reputation is affected by where alumni publish their research.

Programs are encouraged to provide ongoing education about publication ethics and journal selection through workshops, seminars, or course modules. By fostering a culture of publication integrity, we ensure that the valuable research conducted at our university reaches appropriate audiences and maintains the highest standards of scholarly communication.

Avoiding Predatory Journals: Protecting Your Research and Reputation

As you prepare to share your research with the broader academic community, whether through the journal manuscript format or by publishing your work after graduation, understanding how to identify and avoid predatory journals is essential for protecting both your scholarly reputation and the integrity of your research.

Predatory journals exploit the open-access publishing model often by charging authors fees without providing legitimate peer review, editorial services, or proper indexing. These publications can seriously damage your academic career, as work published in predatory journals is often dismissed by hiring committees, tenure reviewers, and grant agencies. Furthermore, once published in a predatory journal, your work may be difficult or impossible to republish in a legitimate venue.

Identifying Legitimate Journals

The most effective approach to identifying predatory journals combines multiple evaluation strategies. No single method is foolproof, but using several approaches together significantly reduces your risk.

Start by consulting with your advisor and committee members about appropriate journals in your field. Experienced researchers often have deep knowledge of reputable publication venues and can guide you toward journals that will enhance rather than diminish your scholarly profile. Your university library also provides valuable resources, including journal databases, impact metrics, and consultation services to help you evaluate potential publication venues.

When evaluating a journal independently, examine several key characteristics. Legitimate journals provide transparent information about their peer review process, including typical review timelines and acceptance rates. They have editorial boards composed of recognized scholars whose affiliations can be verified. Reputable journals also clearly state their publication fees upfront and explain what services these fees cover.

Warning Signs of Predatory Journals

Be cautious of journals that send unsolicited emails with excessive flattery about your work or promises of rapid publication. Watch for poor grammar, spelling errors, irregular fonts, or unprofessional communication in journal correspondence. Be skeptical of journals claiming unusually fast peer review times (often less than two weeks) or guaranteeing publication. Question journals with names that closely mimic established publications but with slight variations. Be wary of journals that claim false or misleading indexing, have editorial boards that cannot be verified, or list academics without their knowledge or consent.

Verification Tools and Resources

Several tools can help you verify journal legitimacy, though each has limitations and should be used in combination.

- [DOAJ](#) (The Directory of Open Access Journals) provides a whitelist of legitimate open-access journals that meet specific quality criteria.
- [Think Check Submit](#) offers a [checklist](#) to evaluate journals before submission.
- [Cabells Scholarly Analytics](#) maintains both a whitelist of quality journals and a blacklist of predatory publications, though access requires a subscription.
- [Beall's List](#) provides a controversial but widely-referenced list of potentially predatory publishers and journals, though it should be used cautiously as inclusion criteria have been debated.
- Professional societies in your field often maintain lists of recognized journals in your discipline.

While some services maintain blacklists of suspected predatory journals, use these cautiously as they may contain errors or become outdated. Similarly, journal impact factors and other metrics, while useful, should not be your only criterion, as new legitimate journals may not yet have established metrics, and some predatory journals manipulate or falsify their metrics.

Best Practices for Publication Decisions

Protect your research by taking time to thoroughly investigate any journal before submission. Consult multiple sources and trusted colleagues before making publication decisions. Be especially careful with new or unfamiliar journals, even if they appear legitimate at first glance. Document your journal evaluation process, keeping records of why you selected particular venues for your work.


Remember that publishing your dissertation research is an important step in your academic career. Taking time to select appropriate, reputable journals ensures that your work reaches its intended audience and contributes meaningfully to your field's knowledge base. When in doubt, err on the side of caution and seek guidance from mentors and library resources.

Chapter VII: *MFA in Film: Thesis Requirements*

The MFA in Film program maintains a detailed guide for each entering class

The programs updates the guide each year, labeling the guidelines Class Entering 2025, Class Entering 2024, etc. so that the guidelines remain consistent for each cohort.

Below is a Google Drive link to the folder with those guidelines.

 Thesis and Comprehensive Exam Guidelines Graduate School

Chapter VIII: MFA in Creative Writing: Thesis Requirements

The MFA in Creative Writing thesis differs significantly from traditional academic theses, consisting of original creative work accompanied by a critical introduction. All Creative Writing MFA candidates must submit a thesis that demonstrates growth and proficiency in the core areas of Creative Writing: forms, theory, and practice.

Thesis Components

Your MFA thesis consists of two essential parts that work together to demonstrate both your creative abilities and your understanding of your craft within the literary tradition.

The Introduction

You must include one of the following two options for your introduction:

Option 1: Transformative Experience Introduction (5-10 pages) An introduction that explores how your experience as a creative writing major has transformed you as a literary and/or mixed-media artist. This personal and reflective essay should trace your development through the program, highlighting key moments of growth and discovery.

Option 2: Critical Introduction (5-10 pages) A critical introduction to your work that addresses relevant theory, artistic influences, and/or historical context. This more scholarly approach contextualizes your creative work within the broader literary tradition.

Both introduction options require endnotes and, if appropriate, a bibliography. The introduction should demonstrate your ability to think critically about your own work and its place in contemporary literature.

The Creative Manuscript

Following the introduction, your thesis must include one of the following:

- **Poetry:** At least 50 pages of original poetry. The collection should demonstrate your range and development as a poet while maintaining thematic or stylistic coherence that justifies presentation as a unified manuscript.
- **Prose:** At least 100 pages of original prose (fiction, creative nonfiction, or a combination). This may be a collection of shorter works or excerpts from a longer work that can stand alone. The work should demonstrate range in technique, voice, or subject matter while maintaining overall coherence.

Note: These page counts do not include the introduction, endnotes, and/or bibliography. All materials must be formatted according to UCA Graduate School expectations.

Manuscript Preparation and Formatting

Creative Manuscript Guidelines

Format your creative work according to standard manuscript guidelines for your genre:

Prose (Fiction and Creative Nonfiction):

- Double-spaced throughout
- 12-point Times New Roman or equivalent serif font
- 1-inch margins on all sides (1.5 inches on left for binding)
- Numbered pages with your last name in header
- New chapters or essays begin on new pages
- First pages of chapters/essays have title centered, then drop 4 lines to begin text
- Scene breaks indicated by centered "#" or "****"
- Indent first line of paragraphs 0.5 inches (no indent after scene breaks)

Poetry:

- Single-spaced within poems, double-spaced between stanzas
- One poem per page unless discussing a sequence
- 12-point Times New Roman or equivalent font
- 1-inch margins (may adjust for longer lines if necessary) (1.5 inches on left for binding)
- Title of each poem centered above text
- Page numbers continuous throughout collection

Introduction Formatting

The introduction should follow standard academic formatting:

- Double-spaced throughout
- 12-point Times New Roman font
- 1-inch margins (1.5 inches on left for binding)
- MLA citation style (unless your program specifies otherwise)
- Endnotes as required
- Bibliography if appropriate
- Page numbers in upper right corner

Committee Formation and Workshop Process

Your thesis committee for the MFA typically consists of three members, including your thesis director who must be a member of the creative writing faculty in your genre. Select a second reader from the creative writing faculty (may be from a different genre), and a third reader who may be from outside creative writing but should have relevant expertise.

Unlike traditional academic theses, your creative work will likely undergo substantial revision through workshop and individual conferences with your thesis director. This developmental process is integral to the MFA experience. Document this revision process, as you may want to discuss it in your critical introduction. Keep drafts showing significant revisions, as these demonstrate your growth and ability to respond to feedback.

Final Submission Requirements

After successful defense and completion of any requested revisions, refer to the Formatting Your Thesis and Final Submission chapters later in this guide for specific requirements to complete this aspect of your degree requirements.

Note that the MFA program may require that you provide your program with bound copies.

Assessment and Evaluation

Upon successful completion of the thesis and defense, students will receive a grade of CR (credit) in the thesis course, indicating that credit for thesis hours has been awarded. In addition to the CR grade, the thesis will be evaluated according to specific assessment criteria to ensure all MFA graduates achieve at least the Acceptable level for all criteria.

Assessment Levels

Your thesis will be evaluated at one of three levels:

- E (Exceptional): Demonstrates exceptional ability in breadth and depth
- A (Acceptable): Demonstrates competent ability meeting program standards
- U (Unacceptable): Does not meet minimum program requirements

The program target is for 30% of all Creative Writing MFAs to achieve the Exceptional level.

Assessment Criteria

Your thesis will be evaluated on three core competencies:

1. **Proficiency as Critical Readers.** You must demonstrate the ability to employ appropriate vocabulary to describe features of passages in poetic, prose, dramatic, nonfiction, and mixed-media texts, and to use such observations to formulate and support interpretive positions. This is primarily demonstrated through your introduction's engagement with literary traditions and influences.
2. **Competency in Creative Forms.** You must demonstrate the ability to write original works including poetry, fiction, nonfiction, dramatic scripts, or mixed-media material. Your creative manuscript should show not just technical competence but artistic vision and voice.
3. **Professional and Cultural Awareness.** You must demonstrate understanding of professional expectations pertaining to literary submissions, publishing markets, manuscript formatting, performance possibilities, technological innovations, and pedagogical theories. This may be evident in both your introduction's discussion of contemporary literary culture and the professional presentation of your manuscript.

These assessment criteria ensure that all graduates are prepared not only as writers but as literary professionals capable of contributing to the broader creative writing community.

Chapter IX: Formatting Your Thesis or Dissertation

This chapter provides everything you should need to know about the technical requirements for your thesis or dissertation. Follow these guidelines to ensure your document meets all university standards.

Before You Start: Choose Your Style Guide

First things first: Check with your department to find out which style manual you should use. Common options include the following:

- [APA Style](#) (American Psychological Association) - used in psychology, education, and social sciences
- [MLA Style](#) (Modern Language Association) - used in literature, languages, and humanities
- [Chicago Manual of Style](#) - used in history and some humanities disciplines

Important: Never use previous theses or dissertations as your formatting guide. They may contain errors or outdated requirements.

Tense Use in Thesis and Dissertation Writing

Proposal Stage: Planning Your Research

In your thesis or dissertation proposal, you will naturally use future tense when describing your intended methodology and planned research activities. This forward-looking language reflects that you are outlining what you "will do" and how you "plan to analyze" your data. You may find yourself using mixed tenses throughout the proposal, future tense for planned work, present tense for literature reviews ("Smith argues that..."), and past tense for any preliminary work already completed. This variation in tense is appropriate and expected during the proposal stage.

Final Manuscript: Reporting Completed Work

Once you move from proposal to final manuscript, all methodology sections must be written in past tense. You will revise your methodology chapter to describe what you "did," how you "collected" data, and what analytical methods you "used." This shift to past tense reflects that your research is now complete and you are reporting on finished work rather than planning future activities.

Key Reminder

Mixed tenses are acceptable in proposals as you plan and begin your research. Past tense is required in final manuscripts when reporting completed research.

Basic Document Requirements

Paper and Printing

- Paper: 20-pound weight, acid-free bond (at least 25% cotton), 8½ × 11 inches
- Copies: Submit one unbound copy to the Graduate School
- Printing: One-sided only, using letter-quality printer
- Ink: Black ink only (colored ink allowed for graphs/illustrations but not recommended due to fading)

Typeface and Font

- Font size: 10-12 point
- Style: Clear, non-distracting, and consistent throughout (exception: different fonts are allowed for graphs, illustrations, and appendix materials)
- Note that sans serif, monospaced, and roman fonts are generally more accessible than serif, proportional, or italic fonts
- What's not allowed: Script, Old English, or decorative fonts; certainly not Comic Sans

Margins and Spacing

- Left margin: 1½ inches (for binding)
- All other margins: 1 inch (top, bottom, right)
- Text spacing: Double-spaced
- Special elements: Single-spaced within items like blocked quotations, references, and footnotes; double-spaced between items
- Justification: Left or full justification allowed (be consistent); right-hand justification not allowed
- Hyphenation: Avoid splitting words between lines

Page Organization and Numbering Rules

- Title pages: Don't print page numbers but count them in sequence
 - Roman numerals: Use lowercase (ii, iii, iv) for front matter
 - Arabic numerals: Start with 1 for main text and continue through appendices
 - Landscape pages: Page numbers still go in bottom center when bound
-

Document Structure: What Goes Where

Required Components (in order) - See Appendix A for Expanded Summary

1. Title Page
2. Abstract (100-200 words)
3. Table of Contents
4. Main Text (your actual thesis/dissertation)
5. Bibliography or References

Optional Components

- Copyright page
- Acknowledgments
- Vita
- List of Tables (if you have tables)
- List of Figures (if you have figures)
- List of Symbols/Abbreviations (if needed)
- Appendices

Special Formatting for Visual Elements

Tables and Figures

- Placement: In chapter format, place immediately after the paragraph where first mentioned
- Computer-generated: Must maintain document margins and be clear/distinct
- Titles: Follow your chosen style guide exactly

Photographs and Images

- Digital photos: Must be clear images; not pixelated or stretched
- Copied images: You must get permission to reprint and include permission statement (follow your style guide for permission statements)

Oversized Materials

- Maps, large tables: Photocopy and reduce to fit margins
- Landscape orientation: Allowed when necessary
- Folding: If oversized pages must be used, ensure they fold to no more than 11 inches vertically and don't fold into the binding margin
- Pocket envelopes: May be used for materials that can't be folded appropriately

Writing Your Abstract

Your abstract should be a complete summary in 100-200 words that includes:

- Purpose of your project
- Brief methodology summary
- Concise findings summary
- Main conclusions
- Note: Don't include citations in your abstract

Important Details for Specific Sections

Title Page

- Format: Must match exactly the format shown in Appendix A
- Name: Use the exact name you used to register at the university
- Date: Must be your official graduation month and year (even if you finish earlier)
- Title guidelines: Use keywords that will help people find your work in subject indexes

Table of Contents

- Include all preliminary pages with page numbers
- List all chapters and major sections
- Include page numbers for everything listed
- Don't include an entry for the Table of Contents itself

Appendices

Work with your advisor to determine what appendices you need. Common requirements include the following:

For Research with Animals:

- Digital copy of Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee approval

For Research with Humans:

- Copy of Institutional Review Board approval
- Important: Remove any information that could identify human subjects

Other Common Appendices:

- Letters of permission to collect data (redact confidential information)
- Data collection instruments (may require reprint permission)
- Additional documents required by your discipline

Getting Help

- Style questions: Consult your chosen style manual and work with your advisor
- Technical requirements: This manual provides mandatory requirements
- Discipline-specific needs: Your advisor and committee will guide you
- Permission issues: Your faculty advisor can help with reprint permissions

Remember: You and your thesis advisor are responsible for ensuring your document meets both university standards and your discipline's conventions.

Chapter X: Thesis or Dissertation Defense

Managing Critical Deadlines

Graduate students must maintain vigilant awareness of all program deadlines, as these timelines are critical to successful degree completion. The culmination of your graduate work, whether thesis or dissertation, requires strategic planning and careful coordination with your committee members well in advance of your anticipated graduation date.

Critical to your graduation timeline is the requirement that you must successfully complete your defense at least four weeks prior to your intended graduation date. This deadline is non-negotiable and requires careful backward planning from your desired graduation ceremony. To ensure proper oversight and academic protocol, both the college dean and department chair should receive invitations to attend your examination, along with draft copies of your thesis or dissertation for their review and consideration.

Committee Review Process

Once you have completed your thesis or dissertation, you must provide each committee member with a complete copy, allowing sufficient time for thorough review and substantive feedback. This review period is essential, as committee members need adequate opportunity to evaluate your work comprehensively and provide meaningful input that may enhance the quality of your research. The timing of this distribution should account for committee members' schedules and workloads, particularly during busy academic periods.

The Oral Defense Examination

When all committee members have thoroughly reviewed your work and approved it in substance, you will proceed to the oral examination phase. This examination serves primarily as a defense of your thesis or dissertation, representing a pivotal moment in your academic journey.

The oral defense provides you with a formal platform to present your research findings, methodology, and conclusions to your committee while demonstrating your mastery of the subject matter. Simultaneously, it allows committee members to assess your work's rigor, originality, and contribution to the field, ultimately determining whether your research meets the standards for degree conferral or requires additional development.

Administrative Requirements

Your committee chair plays a crucial administrative role in this process by completing either the Thesis Announcement form or Dissertation Announcement form, depending on your degree program. This documentation serves as official notification to the Graduate School of your upcoming defense and triggers necessary administrative processes for degree completion.

Departmental Protocols and Standards

Each academic department maintains its own established protocols governing the defense process, including specific procedures for your presentation format, the structure and duration of committee questioning, and the voting mechanism by which committee members render their decision.

These departmental guidelines also outline the specific criteria that determine whether you pass or fail your defense, ensuring transparency and consistency in evaluation standards. Should you not meet the passing criteria, your department will have predetermined policies addressing re-examination opportunities, including timelines and any modifications required for subsequent defense attempts.

Planning for Success

Understanding these requirements early in your program allows you to plan effectively, maintain clear communication with your committee, and approach your defense with confidence in both your research and the process itself.

Chapter IX: Final Submission Process

Following the defense, students are expected to make any requested edits, corrections, and additions to the thesis/dissertation. Once the final draft has been approved by the committee, the next steps involve submitting the final draft to ProQuest and making publishing decisions related to copyright.

Extension Requests: If a student requires an extension of the stated deadlines for defense and submission of their manuscript, their committee chair must submit an extension request form. This form requires signatures from the chair, the student, the program coordinator, the Graduate Dean, and the Graduate School Program Coordinator. **Requests must be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the original defense date deadline.**

ProQuest Submission

After all corrections requested by the thesis or dissertation committee have been made, students must upload the final draft to ProQuest for Graduate School review regarding formatting compliance.

Submission Instructions

Submission site: www.etdadmin.com/uca

Technical assistance: 1-877-408-5027

Upload Process:

1. Create an account on www.etdadmin.com/uca
2. Convert your document to PDF format (quality should remain unchanged if converted properly)
3. Agree to the ProQuest publishing agreement
4. Upload the PDF file and any supplemental files
5. Choose whether to have ProQuest file copyright on your behalf (fees apply)

Review and Revision Process: Following Graduate School review, students will receive email notification of any requested revisions. After making revisions, upload a revised draft to ProQuest for final review. Upon completion of necessary corrections, students will receive email confirmation that the submission has been approved.

Dissertation Manuscript Publishing Options

Open Access Publishing

Open access means your work will be freely available for viewing or downloading by anyone with internet access, indefinitely. Dissertations and theses published for Open Access with ProQuest are available at no charge to users.

Traditional Publishing

Traditional publishing follows the model where the author contracts with the publisher to reproduce, distribute, and sell copies of the work.

Understanding Copyright

Copyright provides legal protection to authors of intellectual works. Under federal law, copyright protects "original works of authorship fixed in any tangible medium of expression" including the following:

- Literary works
- Musical works (including accompanying words)
- Dramatic works (including accompanying music)
- Sound recordings • Motion pictures and other audiovisual works
- Pictorial, graphic, and sculptural works
- Pantomimes and choreographic works

Thesis and dissertation authors have created "original works of authorship" and are entitled to rights under copyright law.

Important Note: Copyright protection extends only to the work itself, not to ideas or concepts contained within the work.

Automatic Copyright Protection

Under the Copyright Act of 1976, authors automatically hold copyright protection for their original work without formal notice or registration.

For thesis and dissertation authors:

- Copyright protection begins immediately when work is created
- No publication of copyright notice or registration required
- Authors control rights to print, sell, distribute, perform, display, and revise their work
- Permission must be obtained before others can copy the work
- Copyright protection lasts through the author's lifetime plus 50 years after death (for works created on or after January 1, 1978)

Fair Use Limitations

"Fair use" allows others to use copyrighted material in reasonable ways without consent for purposes such as scholarly criticism, research, teaching, and news reporting

Libraries may also reproduce copyrighted material under certain circumstances without permission.

Copyright Registration Benefits

While not required, formal copyright registration provides significant legal advantages:

Five Primary Benefits:

1. Prima facie evidence of copyright validity and facts stated on registration certificate (when registered before or within five years of first publication)
2. Required for infringement lawsuits - registration is necessary to file suit
3. Attorneys' fees and statutory damages available only for works registered before infringement (or within three months of first publication)
4. Public record of copyright claim established
5. U.S. Customs protection - registration can be recorded to help impound imported infringing copies

Public Notification Requirements

Authors should provide proper copyright notice containing the following:

- The symbol ©
- Year of first publication
- Name of copyright owner

Example: © 2009 Jane L. Doe

Copyright Limitations

Copyright applies only to expression of ideas and the work itself, not to ideas; facts, processes, and discoveries; or methods or procedures described in the work.

Example: A psychology dissertation describing a new therapeutic intervention is protected in its written form, but other researchers can freely use the therapeutic methods described within it. However, they cannot reproduce substantial portions of the dissertation text without permission.

For works containing blueprints, software information, medical discoveries, or inventions, authors may want to consider additional intellectual property protection such as patents.

Final Copy Submission

Once the ProQuest document receives final approval by the dean of the Graduate School, submit one unbound original manuscript on 20-pound weight acid-free or equivalent bond paper (at least 25% cotton) to the graduate school. This manuscript will be forwarded to Torreyson Library for binding and archiving.

Additional Copies: Consult with your department regarding additional copy requirements. University library binding is no longer available for additional copies, but copies may be purchased through ProQuest.

You will also need to complete the [Copyright and Permission Form](#).

Chapter XI: Conclusion

The master's thesis is often the student's first display of advanced scholarly writing, representing a crucial milestone in academic development. For doctoral candidates, the dissertation serves as a demonstration that they possess the skills required for acceptance into the select world of advanced scholarship.

Your Achievement and Legacy

As you reach this pivotal moment in your academic journey, take time to recognize the magnitude of what you have accomplished. Completing a thesis or dissertation represents far more than fulfilling a degree requirement; it demonstrates your ability to identify meaningful questions, design rigorous research, persevere through challenges, and contribute original knowledge to your field.

Your research represents a unique contribution that will become part of the permanent scholarly record. Whether your work influences future researchers, informs policy decisions, or simply adds another piece to the complex puzzle of knowledge in your discipline, you have made something that did not exist before. Through your dedicated scholarship, you contribute to the distinguished academic reputation of the University of Central Arkansas, joining a community of researchers whose collective work strengthens our institution's standing in the scholarly world.

Moving Forward with Purpose

The skills you have developed throughout this process, critical thinking, complex problem-solving, clear communication, and resilience, extend far beyond academia and will serve you throughout your career. The confidence that comes from completing such a substantial intellectual undertaking will remain with you as you tackle future challenges.

Our Commitment to Your Success

The Graduate School staff and the Graduate Dean remain available to assist graduate students and faculty in understanding the various policies and procedures that must be followed to complete thesis or dissertation requirements successfully. We are proud to support your scholarly development and celebrate your achievements as you join the ranks of University of Central Arkansas graduate degree recipients.

Your completed thesis or dissertation represents not just the end of your graduate program, but the beginning of your life as a scholar and expert in your field. Congratulations on this remarkable achievement. You have every reason to feel proud of what you have accomplished.

Appendix A: Elements and Pagination for the Thesis or Dissertation

Component of the Thesis/Dissertation	Page Assignment
Title Page	Lowercase Roman numeral
*Copyright	Assigned but not typed
*Acknowledgment	
*Vita	
Abstract	Lower Case Roman Numeral (Typed, Bottom Center)
Table of Contents	
List of Tables (if applicable)	
List of Figures (if applicable)	
List of Symbols and/or Abbreviations	
Main Text of Thesis/Dissertation	Arabic Numerals
Bibliography or References Cited	Starting with 1
Appendices	(Typed, Bottom Center, Suppress page numbers on title pages for appendices)

**Denotes components that are optional. All other components are mandatory.*

Appendix B: Sample Title Page

2 inch top margin	
Title in ALL CAPS Double-Spaced Same font size as main body	
PRIORITIZING EQUITY AS A CORE COMPONENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN HEALTHCARE: A STUDY OF BLACK WOMEN AS TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS	
1.5 inch left margin (for binding)	by LaShannon Spencer
A dissertation presented to the College of Education and the Graduate School of the University of Central Arkansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of	
Doctor of Philosophy in Change Leadership for Equity and Inclusion	
Conway, Arkansas December 2024	Month & Year of Commencement (Not Defense)
2 inch bottom margin	

Appendix C: Sample Copyright Page

**1.5 inch left margin
(for binding)**

© 2024 LaShannon R. Spencer

**copyright notice
centered on page**

Appendix D: Initial Draft Review Checklist

Typeface

- ☐ Font is 10-12 point, clear and non-distracting (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, or equivalent).
 - ☐ Font is consistent throughout the document.
-

Margins and Justification

- ☐ Left margin is 1.5 inches.
 - ☐ Top, Bottom, and Right margins are 1 inch.
 - ☐ Exception: The first page (i.e., Title Page) has top and bottom margins of 2 inches.
 - ☐ Full or left justification is consistent throughout the document and follows the selected style guide.
-

Components and Pagination

Required Components

- ☐ The first page is the title page, counted but not numbered.
- ☐ The Abstract is included with lowercase Roman numeral pagination.
- ☐ The Table of Contents is included with lowercase Roman numeral pagination.
- ☐ Beginning with the first page of the main text of the document, the pages are numbered with Arabic numerals, beginning with 1.
- ☐ The Bibliography or Literature Cited follows the main text.

Optional Components (if included)

- ☐ Copyright page (if used) follows the title page and is counted but not numbered.
- ☐ Acknowledgments (if included) are numbered with lowercase Roman numerals.
- ☐ Vita (if included) is numbered with lowercase Roman numerals.
- ☐ List of Tables (if applicable) is numbered with lowercase Roman numerals.
- ☐ List of Figures (if applicable) is numbered with lowercase Roman numerals.
- ☐ List of Symbols and/or Abbreviations (if applicable) is numbered with lowercase Roman numerals.

Appendices

- ☐ Appendices follow the Bibliography or Literature Cited.
 - ☐ Title pages for appendices (if applicable) are counted but not numbered.
 - ☐ If the research involved any live vertebrate or warm-blooded animals, a copy of the IACUC approval letter is included as an appendix.
 - ☐ If the research involved human subjects, verification of IRB approval is available.
 - ☐ Any figures or images are reprinted with permission and properly cited.
-

Line Spacing

- ☐ The body of the text is double spaced.
 - ☐ Components that are not double spaced (e.g., blocked quotations, references, footnotes) are formatted correctly according to the style guide.
-

Page Numbers

- ☐ If a page is numbered, the number appears centered at the bottom.
 - ☐ The font for page numbers matches the font in the main text of the document.
-

Plagiarism Inspection

- ☐ The document was inspected using the SafeAssign feature in Blackboard. No issues were detected. (Plagiarism check must be completed by the committee chair and submitted to the Graduate School.)
-

Writing and Style

- ☐ The document is written in the past tense (for final manuscripts).
- ☐ Few, if any, grammatical/spelling errors are noted.
- ☐ The formatting of headings, quotes, references, etc. appear to follow the appropriate style guide.
- ☐ Hyphenation of words between lines is avoided where possible

Appendix E: MFA in Creative Writing Assessment Rubric

Criteria	Rating		
	U	A	E
Demonstrate proficiency as critical readers of Creative Writing texts	Student exhibits an inability to employ appropriate vocabulary to describe the features of passages in poetic, prose, dramatic, nonfiction, and mixed-media texts; and to use such observations to formulate and support interpretive positions and offer suggestions for revision where appropriate.	Student exhibits an ability to employ appropriate vocabulary to describe the features of passages in poetic, prose, dramatic, nonfiction, and mixed-media texts; and to use such observations to formulate and support interpretive positions and offer suggestions for revision where appropriate.	Student exhibits an exceptional ability in breadth and depth to employ appropriate vocabulary to describe the features of passages in poetic, prose, dramatic, nonfiction, and mixed-media texts; and exceptional ability in breadth and depth to use such observations to formulate and support interpretive positions and offer suggestions for revision where appropriate.
Demonstrate competency in forms of poetry, fiction, nonfiction, scriptwriting, or mixed-media	Student exhibits an inability to write original works including poetry, fiction, nonfiction, dramatic scripts, or mixed-media material.	Student exhibits an ability to write original works including poetry, fiction, nonfiction, dramatic scripts, or mixed-media material.	Student exhibits an exceptional ability in breadth and depth to write original works including poetry, fiction, nonfiction, dramatic scripts, or mixed-media material.
Demonstrate competency in being acquainted with the culture of several specific forms outside the classroom	Student exhibits an inability to grasp professional expectations of several forms pertaining to literary submissions, publishing markets, manuscript formatting, performance possibilities, technological innovations, and pedagogical theories	Student exhibits an ability to grasp professional expectations of several forms pertaining to literary submissions, publishing markets, manuscript formatting, performance possibilities, technological innovations, and pedagogical theories.	Student exhibits exceptional ability in breadth and depth to grasp professional expectations of several forms pertaining to literary submissions, publishing markets, manuscript formatting, performance possibilities, technological innovations, and pedagogical theories.