

Instructions for the Preparation of Master's Thesis

A master's thesis or applied project is a substantial piece of work devoted to a topic chosen by the student. In choosing the topic and developing it, the student works closely with a thesis advisor. The requirements for a master's thesis or applied project are similar to those of a good graduate research paper, with differences of scale.

Generally speaking, a master's thesis will fall into one of two categories: it will report a piece of original research or it will analyze a substantial amount of work already published in order to arrive at new conclusions. Both types of theses begin with a question or hypothesis and both involve reading of sources to show that the question or hypothesis has not already been satisfactorily answered or proved. Both also require a definition of variables or factors that must be considered in answering the questions or proving the hypothesis, and here again, reading will supply definitions of these variables and reasons to suppose that they are indeed the ones to be considered.

Applied projects are also substantial pieces of work that require project management skills as well as complex and sophisticated disciplinary knowledge to resolve problems and to present findings. They frequently require working outside of the classroom in a real world setting where the project demonstrates mastery of topic and demonstrable success through application to the work place. Such projects must define variables or factors that need solutions and require careful definition of needs, costs and applications.

Each type of project or thesis concludes with a statement and discussion of results or conclusions. Clearly the relation of the evidence or analysis to the conclusions must withstand rigorous scrutiny based on principles of correct argument, appropriate statistical methods, or the like. The responsible use of sources will be evident in the notes acknowledging quotations and references throughout the thesis, and in a proper bibliography of works consulted. Details about required reference style, title page, and typing conventions are attached, as is information about submission dates and the process of approval. Every department has disciplinary standards that apply to their master's candidate, and the student must discuss these conventions with his/her advisor. This can include, but may not require, oral defenses and presentations of final thesis or project.

Preparation of Master's Thesis: Format and Mechanics

1. The standards of style are those acceptable to the department in which the thesis is written. Students preparing theses should secure a statement of departmental style variations from the department office or from the thesis advisor.
2. Students should expect to create (3) three copies of their final thesis or project. One copy will be available in the Reed Library Special Collections, one copy for their department, and one for their advisor. In the future, we hope to publish master's theses online and will amend policy at that time. Students must sign copyright permissions before their thesis can be placed online.
3. Theses will be printed on standard size bond paper. An original and two paper copies, unbound, will be submitted to the Graduate Studies Office who will insure that a bound copy is kept in the library and distribute the remainder. Legible photocopies will be accepted.
4. Three title pages with original signatures as follows are required. The title page will bear the statement: "A Thesis (or Project) Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of _____, Department of _____, at the State University of New York University at Fredonia, New York." The title page will also bear the typed names of the thesis advisor; the chairperson of the department, the Dean of the College of Education (Education majors only), and the Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies & Research, each of whom will sign the original and each official copy of the thesis. A sample title page is attached.
5. The deadline for submission of theses in final form to the department is **three** weeks before the date of the expected award of the degree. All three copies will be forwarded within **two weeks** thereafter to the office of the Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies & Research where it will be reviewed to insure that it meets the university requirements as to format and style. A thesis is not considered acceptable until the student's advisor and the committee, the department chairperson, and the Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies & Research have approved it. Copies of bound theses will be returned to the appropriate offices.
6. Photographs or other illustrations including charts, graphs, diagrams, etc., must be appended to the thesis. Exact reproductions must be included in each of the copies intended for the permanent file. This instruction is in reference to the bound library. If the department desires to waive inclusion of these illustrations in its copy, it should inform the student. Relevant permissions must be sought so that publication of the final product is possible.

7. All copies of the thesis submitted to the Graduate Studies Office should be suitable for binding, in loose leaf format (please do not spiral bind or submit punched-hole copies in notebooks, for example).
8. The title page of each copy should bear original signatures, not photocopies, of the thesis advisor, the chairperson of the department, the Dean of the College of Education (Education majors only), and the Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies & Research .
9. No dedications or separate dedication pages will be permitted in the thesis. The format for acknowledgements should be that which is consistent with the approved department style.
10. Sources used in the thesis should be referenced within the thesis, and at the end of the thesis, in a manner consistent with the approved departmental style.

(Thesis Sample Title Page)

Full Title of the Thesis Project

By

Candidate's Full Name as it will appear on diploma

A Thesis or Project
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science or Arts or Education
Department of -----
At the State University of New York University at Fredonia
Fredonia, New York

August 2006

(Name)
Thesis Advisor
Department of _____

(Name)
Discipline Chairperson
Department of _____

Kevin P. Kearns, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies & Research