

Graduate Thesis Guidelines

Ouachita Baptist University

**Highlighted segments indicate items that need to be built/developed once the requirements are approved.*

General Requirements

Thesis Option

The graduate thesis is a report of original research and scholarly work that is shared with the academic community and is made available to the public. Upon completion, the thesis and any related addenda become part of the student's official academic record at Ouachita Baptist University. They also become part of the library's university archives and the Ouachita Scholarly Commons, the university's digital institutional repository.

These guidelines apply only to students who have selected the thesis option in their degree programs or whose programs require a thesis. They outline thesis responsibilities and provide thesis format standards. Thesis content standards are set by graduate programs.

The graduate thesis at Ouachita may count for up to nine hours of credit toward the master's degree.

Thesis Committee

The thesis committee shall consist of at least three faculty: (1) the student's major professor, advisor, or program/department chair who serves as chair of the thesis committee; (2) a faculty member from another program/department at Ouachita; and (3) a faculty member in the student's program or from another university. The student's advisor or program/department chair must approve of including faculty from other universities.

Major Professor Responsibilities

The written presentation of the student's research is a reflection on the major professor as well as the student and the university. It is the major professor's responsibility to see that the quality of the written work meets the highest standards. Thesis advisors also serve as editors for content, originality, style, spelling, and grammar. The major professor may enlist a proofreader and/or digital writing tools to assist with reviewing these items.

Dean's Office Responsibilities

The dean's office in the school in which the degree program is housed is responsible for keeping signed copies of students' Thesis Proposal Forms, Thesis Defense Forms, and the Theses Approval Forms on file. In addition, a dean's office official shall meet with students during their

Commented [AM1]: We recommend a webpage be built to house this document, the forms mentioned, deadlines, examples of the different formatting rules, and links to exemplar texts with the different styles (e.g., APA) on Scholarly Commons (or other IRs), as well as any other pertinent information.

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penultimate semester to review the [Thesis Checklist](#) and confirm that the student has addressed or is in the process of addressing items on the checklist.

Library's Responsibilities

Librarians are available to assist students with formatting problems, citation creation, originality issues, copyright questions, and other preparation or submission concerns. To contact a librarian, see <https://obu.edu/library/library-faculty-and-staff.php>.

The Scholarly Commons librarian will process digital copies of theses and post them to the Ouachita Scholarly Commons, the university's online institutional repository. The Periodicals/Electronic Resources librarian will print and bind one copy of the thesis for the library's archives and one copy for the student. [The university will assess a thesis binding fee during a student's final semester of the program.](#)

Student Responsibilities

Preparing the Thesis

Students must successfully complete a research proposal and thesis defense in order to fulfill the thesis requirement. Upon completion of the thesis proposal, students are responsible for obtaining appropriate signatures on the [Thesis Proposal Form](#) and submitting the form to their committee chair.

When the thesis defense has been successfully completed, students are responsible for obtaining appropriate signatures on the [Thesis Defense Form](#) and submitting all related documents and forms to their dean's office and the Graduate and Online Education Office. The [Thesis Proposal Form](#) and the [Thesis Defense Form](#) can be accessed at [web address](#).

Seeking Institutional Review Board Approval

Students who conduct thesis research involving human subjects and/or animal subjects must seek prior approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The appendix of the thesis must include an IRB letter of determination or exemption. To learn more about IRB approval, see <https://obu.edu/committees/institutional-review-board.php>.

Avoiding Plagiarism

To avoid plagiarism, students should attribute and cite sources they use in their thesis research. Properly incorporating sources into the thesis text is also key to preventing plagiarism. For guidance, see Purdue University's Online Writing Lab at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/avoiding_plagiarism/index.html.

Using Copyrighted Material

A thesis often includes materials created by others. In some cases, the Fair Use Exception may allow you to include the materials without permission, but the distinction between fair use and copyright infringement is not clearly defined. Students are required to obtain permission from the author or publisher to quote extensively from copyrighted material or to use a copyrighted work such as an illustration, photograph, a figure, a table, a rubric, or a survey in its entirety.

Permission is usually granted on condition that special acknowledgment is made. If permission has been granted to use a previously published work within your thesis, it should be disclosed as “A Note to Reader” or a footnote to the chapter where the work is utilized. The documents granting permission from the publisher must be included as part of the Appendices. If payment is required, students are responsible for compensating the author or publisher. Whether permission is required or not, you must attribute and cite all sources using your discipline’s style guide. Your advisor and/or the Scholarly Commons librarian can help with further explaining copyright and fair use, along with assisting with obtaining permissions.

Using Creative Commons Licensed Resources

Students who use resources that have a Creative Commons license should review and adhere to the license permissions, which are explained at <https://www.creativecommons.org/licenses>. If you have questions about Creative Commons license agreements, please contact your advisor or the Scholarly Commons librarian (see <https://obu.edu/library/library-faculty-and-staff.php>).

Using Restricted Material

The primary intent of the thesis is to communicate the results of students’ research to the scholarly community. For this reason, students’ thesis research should not include any information that is restricted (i.e., any confidential or personal information protected by law or policy). If you have questions about using restricted materials, please contact your advisor or the University’s legal counsel. Additional resources can be found at somethingabouttheses.obu.edu.

Format Standards

These format standards below ensure a degree of consistency in the written presentation of this research across academic disciplines and allow for binding and digitization requirements. The format standards presented here take precedence over the paper formatting guidelines of your discipline’s style manual (e.g., APA, Chicago, MLA, etc.). The student has the primary responsibility for both the content and the format of the thesis. For assistance with formatting your thesis, contact your advisor or a librarian (see <https://obu.edu/library/library-faculty-and-staff.php>). Also, see [website](#) for examples.

Spacing

Double space throughout, with the exception of the title page, captions, table or figure headings, extensive quotations, footnotes or end notes, entries in the References section, entries in the Table of Contents, and appendices.

Font

Use a 12-point serif font (e.g., Times New Roman, Garamond, etc.) for body text; a sans serif font (e.g., Calibri, Arial, etc.) not larger than 20 points for headings; and the same sans serif font for captions not smaller than 9 points. Use of italics is restricted to foreign words, book or periodical titles, taxonomic names, letters used as statistical symbols or algebraic variables, test scores and scales, and judiciously placed special emphasis.

Margins

For all pages, use a 1.5" left margin to allow for binding and a 1" top, bottom and right margin.

Numbering

Your thesis is comprised of several different sections which require distinct numbering formats. The title page, dedication, and copyright page are counted but no page numbers are printed on them. Preliminary pages, like the abstract, table of contents, list of tables, and list of figures, require lowercase Roman numerals (i.e., i, ii, iii, iv, etc.). Roman numerals should be centered at the bottom of the page, with the bottom of the number at least 1/2" from the edge of the page.

The main body of your thesis, your references, and appendices will have Arabic numbers (1, 2, 3, etc.) and should be placed in the upper, right-hand corner, with at least 1/2" clearance from each edge. The first page of the main text restarts the pagination sequence and is page 1. All subsequent pages, except the multiple volume title pages, are numbered throughout the thesis, including cover pages, tables and figures, references, and appendices. Allow at least one double space between the page number and the first line of text on each page.

Required and Optional Elements

- **Title Page (required)**

The title page is counted but not numbered. The name of the degree that appears on the title page must be on the [list of degrees](#). The month and year of the awarding of your degree (not the defense or thesis submission) are used as the date. The title page also includes a list of thesis committee members, with the advisor listed first. See [website](#) for an example and template.

- **Copyright Page (optional)**

You may be interested in learning more about your copyrights. One key point is that your thesis is protected by copyright law upon creation whether or not a copyright notice appears on your work. Still, you may include a copyright page with your thesis and

choose a Creative Commons license to display on this page. You will also select a Creative Commons license when you submit your thesis to Scholarly Commons. To learn more about copyright or Creative Commons licenses, see:

- US Copyright Office
<https://www.copyright.gov/>
- IUPUI Copyright Management Center
<https://ctl.iupui.edu/Resources/Instructional-Technology/Copyright-and-Fair-Use>
- Library of Congress Copyright Guide
<https://guides.loc.gov/copyright-for-librarians>
- Creative Commons Licensing
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

- **Dedication Page (optional)**

The dedication page is counted but not numbered. This page honors those who inspired or encouraged your completion of your degree. It may include spouses, parents, siblings, professors, and other students. Center the text horizontally on the page. Double-space your text. There is no heading on this page. See [website](#) for an example.

- **Abstract (required)**

The abstract is a succinct summary of the thesis. It contains a brief description of the problem, a brief statement about the method or procedures used, and a concise account of the findings, conclusions, significance and implications of the work to the discipline. Although it may extend beyond one page, the abstract should not exceed 350 words and should be double-spaced. Printed Roman numerals begin with the abstract although the previous pages should have been counted but not have printed numbers. Thus, the abstract should be marked as page ii or iii, depending on whether there is a dedication page. See [website](#) for an example.

- **Table of Contents**

The table of contents lists all sections that follow it. Chapter or section titles and primary and secondary subdivisions should be listed exactly as they appear in the text along with page numbers. Type TABLE OF CONTENTS centered at the top of the page, double space, and begin the entries. Single space within entries, and double space in between entries. Roman numeral pagination is continued on this page. Figures and tables are listed separately. See [website](#) for an example.

- **List of Tables (required if tables appear in the thesis)**

List the number, caption, and page number of each table, including any found in the appendices. Tables should be numbered consecutively throughout. All table captions (titles) must match verbatim (word-for-word) to those used in the body of the manuscript. (Include only the first sentence of each table caption.) Roman numeral pagination is continued on this page. See [website](#) for an example.

- **List of Figures (required if figures appear in the thesis)**

Include a list of charts, graphs, illustrations, diagrams, maps, pictures, photographs, and other similar non-text items. All figure captions (titles) must match verbatim (word-for-word) to those used in the body of the manuscript. (Include only the first sentence of each figure caption.) List the number, caption, and page number of each figure, including any found in the appendices. Figures should be numbered consecutively throughout and placed in the figure title. Roman numeral pagination is continued on this page. See [website](#) for an example.

- **List of Abbreviations, Symbols, or Nomenclature (optional)**

Include as necessary. Roman numeral pagination is continued on this page. See [website](#) for an example.

- **Acknowledgments (required if permission to reproduce copyrighted material is necessary)**

Center the heading ACKNOWLEDGMENTS at the top of the page, double space, and begin the remarks. Roman numeral pagination is continued on this page. See [website](#) for an example.

- **Body of Thesis (required)**

When documenting sources, each thesis should follow the organization and style designated by the program (i.e., APA, Chicago, MLA, etc.). A heading or subheading should never appear at the bottom of a page without at least two lines of text under it. For all pages, use a 1.5" left margin to allow for binding and a 1" top, bottom and right margin.

- **Tables and Figures (optional)**

- All illustrative materials must maintain the same margins as the rest of the thesis (1.5" left margin and 1" top, bottom, and right margins).
- All illustrative material must be large enough to be easily read, including printouts from statistical programs and spreadsheets. It may be necessary to

enlarge a series of tables or figures and place them on separate pages. Minimum font size is 9.

- Figures and tables should be placed close to their reference within the text, preferably on the same page. Alternatively, they may be placed at the end of each chapter. Whatever method is chosen, it should be followed consistently throughout. Since no further editing is done once the thesis is submitted, the instruction “Insert Table/Figure X About Here” is not acceptable.
 - Refer to all tables and figures by number, not by “the following table.”
 - In order to maintain the required page margins for tables or figures, it may be necessary to put them in landscape orientation. The top margin will now be 1.5” and will be the edge that is bound. However, the page number must be placed as though the page was in portrait format and appear in the same location as other pages. For assistance with this special formatting, contact your advisor or a librarian (see <https://obu.edu/library/library-faculty-and-staff.php>).
 - In order to maintain the legibility of a group of tables and figures, it may be necessary to place them on an oversize 11” x 17” page. The 11” left edge must have at least a 1.5” margin. Fold the page so that the left and right edges are aligned with the other pages of the thesis. Folds should be at 1.5” from the left side or 1” from the right side to avoid damage to the oversize page in the trimming and binding process. The page number must appear in the same location as other pages.
 - If space permits, the caption should appear on the same page as the figure.
 - You may use color in illustrations. Please use labels, patterns, or symbols as keys to graphs, maps, etc., rather than color.
 - Scanning is the preferred method for including photographic illustrations in the thesis. Captions and page numbers may be typed directly on the scanned image. Photographs often are copyrighted; check copyrights before adding such material. For assistance on checking copyrights, contact your advisor or a librarian (see <https://obu.edu/library/library-faculty-and-staff.php>).
- **References and Bibliography (required)**

Place references at the end of the main text. Information sources that are not cited in the thesis, but provide additional background for the topic, may be listed as a bibliography.

Consult your discipline's style manual for specific style guidelines for reference lists, bibliographies, works cited pages, footnotes, endnotes, etc. For assistance with creating these pages and appropriate citations, contact your advisor or a librarian (see <https://obu.edu/library/library-faculty-and-staff.php>).

- **Appendices (optional)**

Material that supports the research, but is not essential to an understanding of the text, is placed in the appendices. Examples include raw data, extensive quotations, and survey or test instruments. Appendices should be designated A, B, C, etc. If there is only one appendix, it is simply called Appendix, not Appendix A. Each appendix and its title (for example, Appendix A, Raw Data for Time-to-Degree) are listed in the Table of Contents. A separate display page, giving the appendix designation and title, may precede each appendix. If used, the page number of the display page is the one listed in the table of contents. All material included in the appendices must meet minimum font and margin requirements.

Submitting Your Thesis

Upon successful defense of the thesis, the student is responsible for submitting an electronic copy of the thesis and **related forms** to the Scholarly Commons librarian before **the due date**. Students must submit the following forms and a digital copy of their theses through the Scholarly Commons website, following the instructions found on **website**.

Submission Process

Do not wait until the last minute to submit your thesis. As with many things (such as writing your thesis), the process might take longer than you think, especially as there may be heavy traffic on the submission website near submission deadlines. To expedite the submission process, have your thesis in Word or PDF format, gather all the appropriate documentation, and review the Submission Agreement and the steps below.

1. **Create** an account on <https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/> by visiting the "My Account" tab. To receive information related to your thesis after graduation, make sure you use a non-OBU email address.
2. Go to https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/grad_theses/ and select the **"Submit Thesis"** link under the Author Corner heading.
3. Read and accept the **Submission Agreement**.
4. Provide information about yourself, including your name as it is listed on the Title page and non-OBU email address.

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5. Provide information about your degree program, your date of graduation, and your committee members, including the exact names of your adviser/committee chair and each reader.
6. Provide information about your thesis, including a title that exactly matches your Title page, keywords, [disciplines](#) or subject headings, submission date, and an abstract of up to 250 words.
7. Select permissions for your work, including a [Creative Commons License](#) and whether and for how long to embargo your work.
8. Upload your thesis.
9. Select the “Submit Additional Files” to submit the [Thesis Defense and plagiarism check forms](#), and click the “Submit” button.
10. Upload and appropriately label each form as Supplemental Content. Deselect the “Show” checkbox next to each form before saving. (You may also submit supplemental files, such as video and audio files, related to your thesis. Make sure the “Show” checkbox remains checked for these files.)
11. Select the “Continue” button to finalize your submission.
12. Your submission will then be processed. You will receive an email notification when your thesis and documentation has been accepted and becomes visible or if it is not accepted. You may resubmit your thesis and documentation after you have made changes.

Scholarly Commons

Scholarly Commons is the digital repository or archive of OBU’s research, intellectual and scholarly works, and creative material from her students, faculty, and staff. Scholarly Commons is the tool the OBU Library uses to make the full-text of all theses available online. You will submit your thesis directly to [Scholarly Commons](#) Graduate Theses page following the steps above.

Your Copyrights and Usage Rights

You retain copyright ownership of your thesis and all rights granted under U.S. Copyright Law, including the right to copy and distribute the work. However, some scholars may allow other permissions. You may choose the [Creative Commons](#) license to specify the particular permissions for your work during the submission process. To learn more about your copyrights, contact your advisor the Scholarly Commons librarian (see <https://obu.edu/library/library-faculty-and-staff.php>).

OBU does not claim copyright ownership of your submitted thesis. All material in Scholarly Commons, unless stated otherwise, is freely available for users around the world to view, download, and print for educational and research purposes, as allowed by fair use. By accepting the Submission Agreement and submitting your thesis, you grant OBU the non-exclusive,

perpetual, world-wide, royalty-free distribution rights. You also grant permission to OBU to create back-up copies of your thesis for security and preservation purposes; to convert the work, without changing the content, for preservation, storage, and use of your work; to post a citation of the work and provide a link, if possible to your work; and to state your name as copyright holder and the usage rights along with contact information for those that seek permissions.

Embargos or Delayed Release

An embargo limits who can view your thesis for a specified and limited amount of time. Unless you impose an embargo, your thesis will become available in OBU's digital repository Scholarly Commons, where it will be directly available to anyone, anywhere with an internet connection. If you do impose an embargo, only the metadata (i.e., title, author, abstract) is visible in the repository.

There is no option to request a permanent embargo; you can embargo your thesis for **six months, one year, or two years**. For some disciplines, a longer embargo period is needed. Additionally, some students may want to publish a version of their theses; for others, their theses are unique creative works, like artwork, scores, or scripts. Consult your advisor to discuss the embargo options. If a longer period is needed, contact the Scholarly Commons librarian (see <https://obu.edu/library/library-faculty-and-staff.php>).

The thesis automatically becomes fully visible when the embargo expires, unless the author requests an extension. If you want to extend your embargo, contact the Scholarly Commons librarian (see <https://obu.edu/library/library-faculty-and-staff.php>). Students are responsible for extending any embargo.

Removing a Thesis from Scholarly Commons

The purpose of OBU's Scholarly Commons is to digitally archive the scholarly and creative works of Ouachita Baptist University students, faculty, staff, and affiliates, and to make these works freely and permanently accessible around the world via the internet. Once you deposit your thesis, it is our hope that it will remain in perpetuity. However, if an author wishes to have an item withdrawn, a written request for its removal must be sent to the Scholarly Commons librarian. The metadata (i.e., author, title, abstract) will still remain visible after the document file has been removed.

OBU reserves the right to remove a thesis for reasons including, but not limited to, plagiarism and falsification of data. The Scholarly Commons librarian will make reasonable efforts to notify the author of such removal.