



**NORTHWESTERN STATE**  
UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA

**General Guidelines  
for Preparing your  
Final Research Document at  
Northwestern State University**



## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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The purpose of this publication is to assist Graduate candidates at Northwestern State University in the process of writing a scholarly project, doctoral dissertation, thesis, field study, creative research, or research paper-in-lieu-of-thesis. This *General Guidelines for Preparing your Final Research Document*, contains the descriptions, format, and process for completing this degree requirement and serves to uphold a high standard related to advanced study that meets Northwestern State University's emphasis on professional accountability.

The Graduate School has created this document to provide an overview and to identify minimum standards for completion of the research component required by each graduate degree program. In addition, a department providing a graduate degree program outlines additional requirements for the completion of the research activity—thesis, field study, creative research, or research paper-in-lieu-of-thesis. The department specifies a style manual to be used in preparing the written document, provides oversight for the preparation of the document and certifies that the final document meets all University specifications and represents the quality expected of students completing a graduate degree. The Dean of the Graduate School is the final authority in verifying that the document conforms to all University expectations.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Graduate School at Northwestern State University requires the completion of a thesis, field study, creative research, or research paper-in-lieu-of-thesis for a master's degree, and the completion of a thesis or field study for a specialist's degree, and completion of a scholarly project for the doctorate of nursing practice. The Graduate Council and the individual department prescribe the requirements and procedures for the completion of the appropriate research document. Research options vary among degree programs. Working with an advisory committee, the student is responsible for meeting the research requirements leading to a specific degree. Students planning to complete a thesis, field study, or creative research (including a performance document) must submit a formal written proposal to the advisory committee outlining the projected study; the final document must be consistent with the approved proposal.

The research component provides graduate students an opportunity to design and implement research, explore historical and current trends, create new designs and products, and engage in problem solving. During this culminating project, students strengthen organizational, communication, and research skills and make valuable contributions to their fields as they share their work with others. This scholarly work reflects Northwestern State University's emphasis on development of skills and competencies in problem solving, writing, critical and creative thinking, decision making, and professional responsibility. Further, it aligns with various national accreditation standards as students (a) develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for success in a chosen field; (b) participate in various research and data collection and analysis activities; and (c) explore areas of diversity relevant to their fields of study.

Students completing a paper-in-lieu-of-thesis gain both an understanding of and an appreciation for research. Students will produce a research document which will conform to the appropriate format with the ultimate goal of creating a product suitable for publication.

The student and the major professor will mutually agree upon the topic for the document.

Although each program uses a standardized rubric for assessing the final document, each manuscript should document the student's:

- Skills in organizing and producing original scholarly work written in standard English
- Knowledge and application of ethical principles
- Mastery of relevant theory and research
- Skills in identifying and using professional resources
- Use and knowledge of research methods, and collection and analysis of data
- Problem solving capability
- Ability to make valuable contributions to his or her particular field.

A student should be enrolled in the appropriate research course for the degree program to receive advice and assistance from a member of the faculty. After the first enrollment, the student is required to maintain continuous enrollment until the final document is submitted. The department and major professor determine if summer enrollment is necessary.

The research document must be completed during the semester of enrollment for the associated course or a grade of "In Progress" may be allowed. Students must re-enroll in the designated course if items are not completed within the semester.

**All research activities must comply with policies and procedures established by the Office of Sponsored Programs, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB). Please read the information located on the IRB's Web site (<http://graduateschool.nsula.edu/human-subjects-institutional-review-board-irb/>), and then confer with the major professor.**

## SCHOLARLY PROJECT, DOCTORAL DISSERTATION, THESIS, FIELD STUDY, CREATIVE RESEARCH, OR RESEARCH PAPER-IN-LIEU-OF-THESIS

The following information provides an overview of each type of research project. The department designates requirements specific to the degree and specifies the appropriate style manual to be used in preparing a formal document. The Graduate School provides the general expectations for the research document, and the department provides additional specific requirements. The major professor provides assistance with the preparation of a proposal that stipulates the project to be undertaken, addresses questions and concerns about the preparation of the document, and supervises the development and writing of the final project. **However, the student is responsible for meeting the minimum standards established by the Graduate School and the specific requirements of the department.**

### SCHOLARLY PROJECT

#### Scholarly Project: Definition

The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Scholarly Project prepares the student to translate and integrate theory and scientific evidence into practice utilizing enhanced clinical decision making skills and diagnostic reasoning in complex healthcare delivery systems. A hallmark of the DNP Scholarly Project is quality improvement as evidenced by improved outcomes. Students use advanced leadership and clinical decision making skills, diagnostic reasoning, and inter-collaborative practice within macro, meso, and micro systems to identify and solve pertinent problems, improve processes and patient outcomes, or reduce waste and errors. Thus the DNP Scholarly Project is undertaken with the goal of increasing clinical competency, improving systems leadership and inter-professional collaboration skills, and/or utilizing information systems technology to improve healthcare quality and population health in an identified area or system.

The DNP Scholarly Project provides the student an opportunity to explore phenomenon of interest with the intent of improving practice and contributing to the body of nursing knowledge.

It is the final deliverable for the DNP student seeking the Doctor of Nursing Practice. In carrying out the project, the student is exposed to the rigor of scholarship, including investigating a problem, searching the literature, implementing quality improvement strategies, and finally, disseminating of findings through publication and/or presentation. Some projects may involve the creation of new or revised policies, processes, practices, and/or procedures.

#### Scholarly Project: Proposal

Please contact your Major Professor for specific requirements.

#### Scholarly Project: Defense

Please contact your Major Professor for specific requirements.

#### Scholarly Project: Components\*

##### PREFACE

- Title Page
- Signature Page
- Copyright Page
- Abstract
- Acknowledgments
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables
- List of Figures

##### CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

- Background
- Statement of the Problem
- Clinical Question(s)
- Purpose & Rationale for the Study
- Significance (Needs Assessment; Description of Vulnerable Population/ System Impact)
- Variables (if appropriate)
- Theoretical / Conceptual Framework
- Definition of Concepts/Terms
- Limitations of the Study
- Delimitations of the Study
- Assumptions of the Study

**CHAPTER TWO: SYNTHESIS OF EVIDENCE**

\*\*Chapter should clearly demonstrate Why the Particular Planned Change was Selected for Implementation) (Sections dependent upon variables/topics studied)

- Variables
  - Variable/Topic 1
  - Variable/Topic 2
  - Variable/Topic 3 (etc.)
- Summary of Synthesis of Evidence

**CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

- Design & Process for Implementing Change
- Setting
- Population
- Participants
- Sample and Sampling Method (if applicable)
- Protection of Human Subjects (should cover all precautions, issues, IRB approval, etc.)
- Data Collection & Analysis
  - What Data Will be Collected and Analyzed to Evaluate Change
  - Demographic Data
  - Instruments used to collect data (section for discussion of each)
- Resources, Budgetary Considerations, SWOT Assessment (if applicable)
- Summary

**CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS**

- Data (Outcome) Analysis
- Presentation of Findings (section for each clinical question/hypothesis)
- Summary

**CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Summary & Discussion
  - Results
    - » Impact on Practice/System
    - » Relation to Clinical Question/Objectives
    - » Linkage to Theoretical/Conceptual Framework
  - Strengths
  - Limitations
  - Additional findings
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
  - Future Study (described as future

clinical questions)

- Feasibility of Continuing Change

**REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY****APPENDICES**

\* Components may differ based on type of project with consent of Major Professor

**DOCTORAL DISSERTATION****Doctoral Dissertation: Definition**

Please contact your Major Professor for more information.

**Doctoral Dissertation: Proposal**

Please contact your Major Professor for specific requirements.

**Doctoral Dissertation: Defense**

Please contact your Major Professor for specific requirements.

**Doctoral Dissertation: Components****PRELIMINARY PAGES**

- Title Page
- Committee Page
- Copyright– optional
- Dedication and/or Acknowledgements - optional
- Abstract
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables and/or Figures

**CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

- Background
- Statement of the Problem
- Conceptual/Theoretical Basis for the Study
- Purpose of the Study
  - Research Questions (1...2...3...n)
  - Hypotheses (1...2...3...n)
- Significance of the Study
- Definition of Key Terms
- Summary

**CHAPTER TWO – REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

- Introduction
- Major literature topic sections
  - Sub-topics for each section
- Summary

**CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

- Introduction
- Problem Statement and Purpose(s) of Study
  - Research Questions (1...2...3...n)
  - Hypotheses (1...2...3...n)
- Design of the Study
- Limitations, Delimitations, Assumptions, and Design Controls
- Ethical Considerations
- Population and Sample Description
- Data Collection and Instrumentation
- Data Analysis
- Role of the Researcher
- Summary

**CHAPTER FOUR – ANALYSIS OF DATA**

- Introduction
- Characteristics of Respondents
- Data Analysis and Presentation of Data
- Summary

**CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSION**

- Introduction
- Summary of the Study
- Findings
- Implications
- Future Research
- Conclusions

**REFERENCES****APPENDICES****VITA**

*\* The precise format of each dissertation may vary with topic and/or method and the final format is subject to the approval of the major professor and advisory committee.*

**THESIS****Thesis: Definition**

A thesis is a scholarly manuscript that reports on a significant in-depth investigation. The thesis includes, but is not limited to, a statement of the study; a description of the significance of the study; a review of scholarly literature; the methodology for collecting, analyzing, and reporting research; a description of the results; and implications for further research. The manuscript documents the student's ability to think critically and creatively, to communicate in a clear and coherent manner, to organize thoughts, and to document research. Many options are available for the thesis project, and these are described in required research courses and identified and discussed with the major professor as the student selects a topic and plans the study.

The thesis provides graduate students an alternative opportunity to engage in a field-based project for a community, agency or organization. It requires the application of theoretical knowledge or methods to a practical problem and allows the student to produce valuable tangible contributions to their fields.

Each program has specific guidelines for addressing the thesis component. Contact the Major Professor for details.

**Thesis: Proposal**

A thesis proposal must be submitted to the major professor and committee for approval before the student begins the actual study. A copy of the proposal, including the cover sheet with signatures from the student's advisory committee, must be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School at least one semester prior to the semester in which the student plans to graduate. The student's committee must approve any changes made to the proposal subsequent to its approval by the Dean of the Graduate School. The format for the proposal is located in the Appendix B of this document and is available on the Graduate School's Web site.

The proposal must be submitted, with approving signatures from all committee members, at least

**ONE SEMESTER PRIOR TO GRADUATION.** For example, a spring 2017 candidate completing a thesis, field study, creative research, or research paper-in-lieu-of-thesis must submit the proposal to the Graduate School no later than the last day of the fall 2016 semester. A proposal alone is not acceptable as the final document. A research component that is not reported primarily as a written work must be accompanied by a summary document addressing components, as well as any artifacts that are specified by the department that demonstrate its completion.

### Thesis: Defense

A student must defend the completed thesis. This oral defense is conducted by the student's Major Professor and committee members and must be scheduled by the date stipulated by the Graduate School and the appropriate department.

### Thesis: Components\*

This outline is intended as a general guide only. Not all disciplines will construct a thesis in the same way. Please consult your Major Professor for information.

#### **PREFACE**

- Title Page
- Signature Page
- Copyright Page
- Abstract
- Acknowledgments
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables
- List of Figures

#### **INTRODUCTION**

- Background
- Theoretical Framework
  - Statement of the Problem
  - Research Questions
  - Rationale (purpose) for the Study
- Significance
- Definition of Terms
- Limitations of the Study
- Delimitations of the Study
- Assumptions of the Study

#### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **METHODOLOGY (METHODS)**

- Design
- Setting and Participants (include sampling methods)
- Data Collection
- Treatment of the Data

#### **RESULTS**

- Data Analysis
- Presentation of Findings

#### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY**

#### **APPENDICES**

## FIELD STUDY

### Field Study: Definition

The field study is specific to the Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development's Graduate programs. It is commonly referred to as action research, involves the origination, development, field-testing, and evaluation of a project designed to investigate a problem. Action research is the process by which practitioners attempt to scientifically study a problem in order to guide, correct, and evaluate decisions and actions. A field study provides an opportunity to reflect and assess; identify and test new ideas or methods; and make decisions about the appropriateness of existing and new approaches. Some projects may involve the creation of new or revised policies and procedures.

Curriculum projects contribute to a field of teaching by enhancing the knowledge bases related to such topics as pedagogy, curriculum and instruction, leadership, and/or improvement of P-12 schools. Examples include a course of study, a detailed teaching guide focused on a body of skills and knowledge, an instructional manual, the development of new teaching methods, or development of curricular materials.

Investigative or research projects provide additions or enhancements to the existing knowledge about a field of study. This project might take the form of a study that focuses on survey data; data collection related to new or experimental teaching methods; observation and analysis of student behavior; case



studies; and development, implementation, and analysis of curricular materials.

Because of the uniqueness of projects, formats may differ. However, the Graduate School identifies minimum criteria for completion of the field study.

### **Field Study: Proposal**

A field study proposal must be submitted to the major professor and committee for approval before the student begins the actual study.

**A copy of the proposal, including the cover sheet with signatures from the student's advisory committee, must be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School at least one semester prior to the semester in which the student plans to graduate.** For example, a spring 2017 candidate completing a field study must submit the proposal to the Graduate School no later than the last day of the fall 2016 semester. The student's committee must approve any changes made to the proposal subsequent to its approval by the Dean. The format for the proposal is located in the Appendix B of this document and is available on the Graduate School's Web site.

### **Field Study: Defense**

A student must defend the completed field study. This defense is conducted by the student's major professor and committee members and must be scheduled by the date stipulated by the Graduate School and the appropriate department.

### **Field Study: Components\***

Components of the field study are similar to those of a thesis but may be focused on a limited population or sample. Because of the uniqueness of projects, formats may differ. However, each field study submitted for approval to the Graduate School should include, at a minimum, the following information:

#### **PREFACE**

- Title Page
- Signature Page
- Copyright Page
- Abstract
- Acknowledgments
- Table of Contents

- List of Tables
- List of Figures

#### **INTRODUCTION**

- Background
- Theoretical Framework
  - Statement of the Problem
  - Research Questions
  - Rationale (purpose) for the Study
- Significance
- Definition of Terms
- Limitations of the Study
- Delimitations of the Study
- Assumptions of the Study

#### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **METHODOLOGY (METHODS)**

- Design
- Setting and Participants (include sampling methods)
- Data Collection
- Treatment of the Data

#### **RESULTS**

- Data Analysis
- Presentation of Findings

#### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY**

#### **APPENDICES**

*\* Components may differ based on type of project. Consult with the major professor.*

## **CREATIVE RESEARCH**

### **Creative Research: Definition**

Creative research is specific to the School of Creative and Performing Arts. Studies may involve research or the application of theoretical knowledge to a practical problem and is a significant undertaking appropriate to the fine and applied arts or to professional fields. Projects evidence originality, independent thinking, appropriate form, and organization. The project is described and summarized in a written report

that includes, but is not limited to, a rationale articulating the project's significance, objectives, methodology (methods), and an evaluation describing conclusions and/or recommendations. A project is creative in nature. While requirements for various projects may differ from program to program, certain elements are common to each. All projects must be grounded in a discipline, demonstrate mastery of an identifiable body of literature, an appropriate assessment, and include a bibliography/references.

**Fine and Graphic Arts** requires a Graduate Exhibition and Documentation. The project consists of an exhibition of a series of original contributions to the visual arts and requires documentation of the processes involved and the visual references to which it refers or counters. All work must be approved by the student's graduate committee. All documentation must be submitted prior to exhibition. A rigorous schedule of Graduate Committee project reviews must be established and followed by the student throughout the process.

In **Music**, the performance concentration requires a recital and performance document or lecture recital document. These are both a demonstrated performance and extensive exploration of a method, musician, genre, or musical work(s). The rough draft of the document must be completed by the recital hearing, which must be held no later than two weeks before the recital. The Recital must be approved by the student's graduate committee, and the document is bound and placed in the University library collection.

### **Creative Research: Proposal**

A creative research proposal must be submitted to the major professor and committee for approval before the student begins the actual study. A copy of the proposal, including the cover sheet with signatures from the student's advisory committee, must be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School at least one semester prior to the semester in which the student plans to graduate. The student's committee must approve any changes made to the proposal subsequent to its approval by the Dean. The format for the proposal is located in the Appendix B of this document and is available on the Graduate School's Web site.

### **Creative Research: Defense**

A Fine and Graphic Arts student must orally defend the completed creative research. This defense is conducted by the student's major professor and committee members and must be scheduled by the date stipulated by the Graduate School and the department. In music, the recital serves as the public defense.

### **Creative Research: Components\***

#### **EXHIBITION OR RECITAL\*\* plus DOCUMENTATION**

##### **PREFACE**

- Title Page
- Signature Page
- Copyright Page
- Abstract
- Acknowledgments
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables
- List of Figures

##### **INTRODUCTION**

- Purpose (goals) of the Project
- Definition of Terms
- Scope (description) of the Project
- Significance of the Project
- Limitations of the Project

##### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

##### **METHODOLOGY (METHODS)**

- Processes, Development, or Design of Project
- Setting and Participants (include sampling methods, if appropriate)
- Materials and Procedures
- Project Design Characteristics
- Data Collection or Analysis

##### **RESULTS**

- Written Explanation of the Project
- Project\*\*

##### **SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION**

- Concise Summary
- Evaluation of Purpose/Goals (hypothesis)
- Recommendations

**APPENDICES/ILLUSTRATIONS****REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY**

\* *Components may differ based on type of project. Consult with the major professor.*

\*\* *The entire project is submitted for review by the committee and the Graduate School.*

## RESEARCH PAPER- IN-LIEU-OF-THESIS

### Research Paper-in-lieu-of-Thesis: Definition

Papers-in-lieu (PIL) provide students yet another option for completing their master's level degrees within some departments on campus. The PIL is a document which applies research, data collection, and analysis, but this work is generally shorter than the thesis and does not display the sustained complexity of the thesis. All PIL must be grounded in a discipline, demonstrate mastery of information gained from secondary sources, and must include a bibliography/references. Further, the paper(s) should be developed with guidance from the major professor. PIL requirements will vary by degree program, so students should check with individual departments.

Students must enroll in the appropriate PIL research course and must complete all requirements set forth by the course syllabus. Additionally, students must remain enrolled in this course continually until the PIL is approved by the major professor.

### Research Paper-in-lieu-of-Thesis: Proposal

The Graduate School does not require a formal proposal for the PIL. However, individual departments may have a proposal requirement. Contact your Major Professor for specific information.

### Research Paper-in-lieu-of-Thesis: Defense

The Graduate School does not require a

formal defense for the PIL. However, individual departments may have a defense requirement. Contact your Major Professor for specific information. MSN students are required to present the results of their paper-in-lieu-of-thesis as a podium or poster presentation or submit for publication.

### Research Paper-in-lieu-of-Thesis: Components\*

#### **PREFACE**

- Title Page
- Signature Page
- Abstract (optional)
- Table of Contents

#### **INTRODUCTION**

- Background
- Theoretical Framework
  - Statement of the Problem
  - Research Questions
  - Rationale (purpose) for the Study
- Significance
- Definition of Terms
- Limitations of the Study

#### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **METHODOLOGY (METHODS)**

##### Design

- Setting and Participants (include Sampling Methods, IRB requirements)
- Data Collection (how data will be collected and what kind will be collected)
- Treatment of the Data (what will be done with the data after it is collected; where it will be stored/archived?)
- Implications for Future Research (a summary of the kind of treatment/ outcomes expected depending upon outcome results)

#### **REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY**

#### **APPENDICES**

\* *Components may differ based on type of project. Consult with the major professor.*

## THE STUDENT'S GRADUATE COMMITTEE AND ITS ROLE IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The Master's level graduate committee consists of a minimum of two faculty members depending on the department; the Specialist's level graduate committee consists of four members. The members will ordinarily be from the college in which the student is a degree candidate. However, a cross-disciplinary research document may include a faculty member from an appropriate outside department as a third or fourth committee member. In some cases, an off-campus expert may be appropriate as a third or fourth committee member. Committee members outside the University must secure Limited graduate faculty status before serving on the committee. The major professor must hold Member status.

Responsibilities of the major professor, committee members, the student, and the Dean of the Graduate School are delineated below:

### Major Professor

The student's major professor oversees all activities and provides direction for the selection and completion of the research component. Specific responsibilities include:

- Assisting the student in selecting other committee members;
- Determining the appropriateness of the research topic;
- Ascertaining the adequacy of the research design before the student begins work;
- Approving the research proposal;
- Ensuring that the student has obtained the required approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for research involving human subjects before collecting data;
- Reviewing the scholarly execution of the study;
- Assuring that all of the committee members have reviewed the research document before it is submitted in final form and that all the necessary changes have been made;

- Ensuring that a high standard of writing quality is maintained throughout the research document;
- Making certain that the research document conforms to the style manual of the department;
- Calling all necessary meetings and working effectively with the student to set realistic time lines for completion of the research document;
- Chairing the public defense of the thesis, field study, or creative research (including the performance document), which is a Graduate School requirement.

### Committee Members

Committee members are selected to provide expertise, guidance, and support for the student in the preparation of the research requirement. In addition, they assist in providing a level of quality assurance at the completion of a post-baccalaureate degree. Specifically, they:

- Review and approve the research document;
- Check the adequacy of the research document design before the study is begun;
- Review the scholarly execution of the research study, as appropriate;
- Ensure that a high standard of scholarship and writing quality are maintained in the research document;
- Review the research document before it is submitted in final form;
- Support and participate in the public defense of the research document, which is a Graduate School requirement.

### Student

The major responsibility for completing the research requirement lies with the student.

Specifically, the student must:

- Work with the major professor to form an appropriate committee;
- Decide on an appropriate topic in consultation with the major professor;
- Write a proposal and receive committee approval before beginning a thesis, field study, or creative research, (including the performance document);
- Obtain the approval for research involving human subjects from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before collecting data, if required;
- Collaborate with the major professor to determine appropriate timelines and deadlines;
- Accept that multiple drafts will be written before the final product is approved;
- Obtain editorial help, if necessary, to meet the standards of the University and the program for quality and presentation of the information in the research document. The student is responsible for proofreading and line-editing the document;
- Adhere to the appropriate style manual determined by the relevant department and to the research document guidelines outlined herein;
- Defend the scholarly project, doctoral dissertation, thesis, field study, or creative research, (including the performance document), in an open forum prior to final approval;
- Understand that final acceptance of the research document is determined by the graduate committee and the Dean of the Graduate School.

### **The Dean of the Graduate School**

The Dean of the Graduate School is responsible for certifying that graduate students have met University standards for the production of the specific research document.

Although the review by the Dean focuses on conformity to the definitions, components, and elements of style as outlined herein, the Dean also reviews the quality of the content and analysis in the specific research document. The Dean determines final acceptance in fulfillment of the graduate degree requirements. Graduate School personnel will:

- Identify, in consultation with appropriate colleges and departments, and publish the policies, procedures, and requirements for the research component in appropriate documents, such as the University Catalog;
- Advise students and committee members about the standards for preparing the research document, including formatting and overall quality;
- Announce dates and deadlines for submission of projects to the Graduate School;
- Review each submitted research document to verify conformity with the standards outlined herein;
- Certify that the research document meets the standards of quality identified for graduate studies and that the document is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's, Specialist's, or Doctoral degree;
- Send copies of the appropriate research documents to the library for binding, cataloging, and shelving.
- Return bound research document to student/department when applicable.

## GENERAL ORGANIZATION AND FORMAT SPECIFICATIONS

### Rationale

The guidelines/standards for organizing, formatting, and preparing the research document help ensure a University-wide standard. Each research document is expected to conform to the policies and procedures illustrated within this document.

Each scholarly project, doctoral dissertation, thesis, field study, or creative research (including the performance document) submitted to and accepted by the Graduate School is bound and made available to the public through the University Libraries. Northwestern State University requires that each research document meets professional and academic standards and is a quality representation of the University.

### Academic Honesty

The student's work must be their own and use of any other person's intellectual property should be carefully cited. All quoted, summarized, or paraphrased material should be referenced according to the handbook appropriate to the particular field, and the student should be aware of the consequences for engaging in academic dishonesty, and specifically, committing plagiarism. Plagiarism is defined in the *University Catalog* as "the use of another person's work and the unacknowledged incorporations of that work in one's own work that is offered for credit." The Code of Conduct in the *Student Handbook* defines academic infractions, including plagiarism. Some degree programs require students to affirm their academic honesty by the inclusion of a signed statement attached to their research document (see Appendix B).

In conducting the research, the student should observe the practices and standards of their particular discipline. The students' work must be their own, and any sources utilized in the document must be accurately acknowledged. All quoted or paraphrased materials should be referenced according to the style manual of the student's

program and/or discipline. Extracts and quotations may be used to a limited extent for purposes of illustration and criticism.

Follow the appropriate style manual in referencing and citing sources, including web-based resources. Also, many web-based sites provide comprehensive information defining and describing plagiarism. The University library holds valuable resources to assist students in avoiding plagiarism.

### Style

An authoritative style manual, such as the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, the *Chicago Manual of Style*, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, and the *Turabian Style Guide*, designated by the student's department, is to be followed with consistency in the preparation of the document. In no instance should another research document be used as an authority for style. Current style manuals are located in the reference departments of the three University libraries. Most publishers of style manuals maintain a web-based site that contains examples and addresses changes and new formats. In addition, many academic libraries provide web-based instructional units related to various style manuals. The student should consult with the major professor about the appropriate style manual and any additional resources.

### General Guidelines

**Fonts and font size.** A standard font size of 12 point should be used. Script type is not acceptable except for the appropriate use of italics. A consistent font and size must be observed throughout all sections of the research document. Left align text. Do not use right or full justification in the document. All print must be of letter quality with no irregular spacing of words or letters within the text. To ensure consistency, all pages of each copy should be prepared on the same printer. All text should be in black.



**Line spacing.** The entire document, excluding appendices and appropriate charts, tables, and graphs, must be **double-spaced** and printed on one side of the paper only.

**Charts, graphs, or photographs.** If charts, graphs, or photographs are used, caption accordingly. The student is responsible for procuring reprint permission for photographs or other works of art. If charts or figures are not original, there sources must be cited.

**Margins.** For binding purposes and copying, each page of the document must meet these standards:

- Top: 1 inch
- Bottom: 1 inch
- Left: 1 ½ inch
- Right: 1 inch

**Pagination.** Follow the appropriate style manual in numbering pages.

**Section headings.** Follow the appropriate style manual or departmental instructions.

**Citations.** Follow the appropriate style manual and/or departmental instructions.

**Arrangement of Pages.** Arrange materials in the research document as follows:

- Blank Sheet
- Title Page
- Signature Page
- Copyright Page (if applicable)
- Abstract
- Acknowledgments (if applicable)
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables (if applicable)
- List of Figures (if applicable)
- Body
- Bibliography or References
- Appendices (if applicable)
- Vita (if applicable)
- Blank Sheet

**Title page.** The title page includes the title of the research document, centered in all capital letters between the left and right margins (succeeding lines of title must be shorter than the preceding line and double spaced), one and a half inches from the top; the author byline, three inches from the top;

the type of research document; university name; name of degree, four and a half inches from the top; and the date, six inches from the top (see Appendix B for an example).

**Signature page.** The signature page of the research document must adhere to the model approved by the Graduate Council. It should include the title of the research document, centered in all capital letters between the left and right margins (succeeding lines of title must be shorter than the preceding line and double spaced), one and a half inches from the top; the author byline, three inches from the top; the type of research document; university name; name of degree, four and a half inches from the top; signature lines for major professor, committee members, and Dean of the Graduate School for thesis, field study, or creative research, (including the performance document) six inches from the top.

Signature lines for only the major professor and Dean of the Graduate School are required for the PIL and should be six inches from the top (see Appendix B for an example).

**Copyright page.** The copyright page (if applicable) will be p. iii. Center the date for the “Copyright year” on line 56 (one and three-fourths inches from the bottom); the student’s name should appear on line 58 (one and one-half inches from the bottom). See Appendix B for an example.

**Abstract page.** Abstracts are required for all research documents except the PIL and must be approved by the student’s committee. The abstract is double-spaced and must contain no more than 350 words in the body, excluding the general heading. It should include the purpose, procedure, results, and conclusions. Type the word ABSTRACT in all capital letters, two inches from the top of the page. Then type the title in all capital letters, two and a half inches from the top of the page. The general heading should be single-spaced and centered three to three and one half inches from the top of the page and contain the following information: the student’s name, undergraduate degree, granting university, year; the graduate degree, Northwestern State University, semester and year of commencement; major; title of research document, director (major professor); number of pages and number of words in abstract. The body

of the abstract follows (see Appendix B for an example).

### Accompanying Materials

Appendices that cannot be bound with the text (e.g., magnetic tapes, art works, films, or materials to be put in cover board pockets) must be included in the Table of Contents. Maps or plates to be bound with the research document text must be submitted rolled, not folded, and in mailing tubes marked with the student's name. Graphs, tables, and illustrations should be in a form suitable for reproduction within the text of the document. In cases where a product is Web-based, an URL should be indicated.

### Paper Type

All final documents should be on white bond paper of 20-pound substance and 25 percent cotton fiber content. All pages of each copy must be prepared on the same brand and quality of paper.

### Reproduction

Copies may be printed—offset or lithoprint, electronically reproduced by Xerography, laser printer, or other process of equal quality. Proof of quality of reproduction of all pages of each copy is the student's responsibility. **All approving signatures must be originals and not copies.**

### Binding Fees

When final copies of the scholarly project, thesis, field study, or creative research (including the performance document) are filed, the student should pay to the cashier an amount sufficient to cover binding expense. The receipt for the fees should be submitted to the Graduate School along with the completed copies. Binding fees include the cost of each copy bound as well as any additional fees for special treatment. Research documents of more than 400 pages will be bound in more than one volume, and multiple binding fees will be charged. In such cases, the writer must provide a title page for each volume, display the volume number directly under the title, and indicate the volume division in the Table of Contents, which must be placed at the beginning of the first volume.

### Number of Final Copies

The Graduate School requires two copies of a scholarly project, doctoral dissertation, thesis, field study, or creative research, (including the performance document) and one copy of the PIL. Both copies are held in Watson Library. The student may order additional copies for personal use.

**The student's major department may require additional copies.** Each copy of the completed and approved research document must be submitted to the Graduate School in a separate filing envelope and arranged in exact page order for binding. Each envelope shall have attached to it a copy of the title page. The student is solely responsible for the correctness of all documents submitted to the Graduate School.

### Deadlines

**The final research document must be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School by the dates specified in the Academic Calendar, which is available on the Graduate School's Web page ([www.nsula.edu/graduateschool/](http://www.nsula.edu/graduateschool/)).**

### Preliminary Drafts and Final Copies of the Theses, Field Studies, Creative Research, or Research Papers-in-lieu-of-Thesis

The student should submit a preliminary draft of the research document to the major professor for suggestions and corrections; the draft must also be submitted to the other members of the committee for their suggestions, comments, corrections, and approval. Multiple drafts will be submitted to incorporate revisions suggested by the committee. The student is responsible for preparation of a manuscript that meets the standards of the committee. Committee members should not be expected to make extensive corrections or revisions, and the committee may recommend that the student use the services of an editor or typist. The selection of a competent editor/typist is up to the student. After the research document is prepared in its final form and prior to submission to the Graduate School, it should be resubmitted to the student's committee for signatures on the title page (except the PIL). The signatures of the committee members indicate their approval and



the approval of the department, and certify that the research document conforms to the appropriate style and reference format, methodology, spelling, punctuation, proofreading, grammar, and standards of content.

A public defense of the thesis, field study, or creative research (including the performance document), must then be held.

### **Final Approval of the Research Document**

The original, final copy of the student's research document, signed by appropriate members of the student's committee, must be submitted to the Graduate School on or before the established deadline date. Research documents will not be accepted after the deadline or without necessary signatures on the title page.

The research document will then be reviewed by the Graduate School. Students should allow several days for the review process to be completed. In order to ensure the quality and uniformity of theses

or projects, the following will be checked before clearance:

- All preliminary pages
- Paper quality and reproduction quality
- Writing quality (accuracy, consistency, neatness, clarity, etc.)
- Tables, figures and illustrative materials
- Margins
- Text (format, heading levels, writing quality)
- Notes, references, bibliography (conforming to the approved departmental style manual)
- Appendices

Final approval of all research documents rests with the Dean of the Graduate School. If problems arise, the document will be returned to the student's major professor.

The Graduate School will send copies of the research document for binding to the Library where they are permanently housed.

## **PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS**

Students should check with their major professor or on their department Web page to identify other requirements, including the appropriate style manual. These sites may be accessed from the menu at <http://www.nsula.edu/academics/>.

## APPENDICES

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### **Appendix A.** Human Subjects Protection

Students selecting a topic employing human subjects must follow the procedures outlined by the University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB). Approval from the Board must be obtained prior to any collection of data.

Please see IRB's Web site for specifics: <http://graduateschool.nsula.edu/human-subjects-institutional-review-board-irb/>.

### **Appendix B.** Title Page, Signature Page, Copyright Page, Abstract Page, and Affirmation of Academic Honesty Page

Printable, full-sized templates are located on the Graduate School's Web site.

**TEMPLATE FOR TITLE PAGE  
(Required)**

TITLE TITLE TITLE TITLE TITLE TITLE

TITLE TITLE TITLE TITLE TITLE

(Center title in all capital letters between the left and right margins. Succeeding lines of title must be shorter than the preceding line and double spaced.)

by

Full Name of Student

A Thesis *or* Paper-in-Lieu of Thesis *or* Project  
Submitted to the Graduate School of  
Northwestern State University of Louisiana  
In partial fulfillment of requirements for the  
Name of Degree here

Month Year

**TEMPLATE FOR SIGNATURE PAGE (THESIS/RESEARCH PROJECT/FIELD STUDY)**

TITLE TITLE TITLE TITLE TITLE TITLE

TITLE TITLE TITLE TITLE TITLE

(Center title in all capital letters between the left and right margins. Succeeding lines of title must be shorter than the preceding line and double spaced.)

by  
Full Name of Student

A Thesis (*or* Research Project or Field Study)  
Submitted to the Graduate School of  
Northwestern State University of Louisiana  
In partial fulfillment of requirements for the  
Name of Degree here

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Major Professor here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Committee Member here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Committee Member here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Committee Member here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Greg Handel, D.M.A.                      date  
Dean, The Graduate School

**TEMPLATE FOR SIGNATURE PAGE (Paper in Lieu-Required)**

TITLE TITLE TITLE TITLE TITLE TITLE

TITLE TITLE TITLE TITLE TITLE

(Center title in all capital letters between the left and right margins. Succeeding lines of title must be shorter than the preceding line and double spaced.)

by  
Full Name of Student

A Paper-in-Lieu of Thesis  
Submitted to the Graduate School of  
Northwestern State University of Louisiana  
In partial fulfillment of requirements for the  
Name of Degree here

Approved by:

---

Name of Major Professor here      date

---

Greg Handel, D.M.A                      date  
Dean, The Graduate School

**TEMPLATE FOR COPYRIGHT PAGE (Optional)**

Copyright XXX (Year)

First Name, Middle Initial, Last Name

**TEMPLATE FOR ABSTRACT PAGE (Required)**

ABSTRACT (*2 inches from top*)

TITLE (*2 ½ inches from top*)

Jones, James William, B.S., Atlantis University, 1985 (*3 to 3 ½ inches from top*)  
Master of Science, Northwestern State University, Fall (or Spring) Commencement 1998  
Major: Government; Minor: Economics  
*The Functions of the Equalization Fund in Six Southern States*  
Thesis directed by Professor John I. Blank  
Pages, 194. Words in abstract, 231.

*DOUBLE SPACE*

(Begin abstract. The abstract should be 350 words only and include the purpose, procedure, results and conclusions. The body of the abstract is DOUBLE SPACED)

(The word ABSTRACT should be centered and positioned two inches from the top of the page. The title is single-spaced; each line shorter than the preceding line. The general heading should be single-spaced and conform to the example above.)

## AFFIRMATION OF ACADEMIC HONESTY

I, \_\_\_\_\_, swear and affirm that the writing and ideas included in this document are original and is my work. All statements made herein have been authored by me. I have given credit to those whose work I have used to support assertions or to build arguments within the document.

Student Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witnessed by:

Major Professor Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



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**NORTHWESTERN STATE**  
UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA

Policies, procedures, and statements of criteria contained in this document shall supersede all previously existing policies, procedures, and statements of criteria related to membership on the Graduate Faculty of Northwestern State University effective with the Fall 2016 Semester.

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Graduate School Web site:  
<https://graduateschool.nsula.edu/>

Institutional Review Board Web site:  
<http://graduateschool.nsula.edu/human-subjects-institutional-review-board-irb/>