



Western Kentucky University

**School of Engineering and Applied Sciences
Master of Science in Engineering Management
Thesis Procedure**

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Introduction

Within this manual, you will find procedures and recommendations for developing a thesis. Read and follow this document carefully to avoid time delays in the completion of your thesis. The final manuscript that you submit must be in publishable condition. This means your paper should be without error—no spelling, grammatical, or formatting errors. The content of the manuscript should be written following the MSEM writing guides for theses, the Graduate School Guidelines, and the American Psychological Association (APA) writing style manual. Consult with your thesis committee chair frequently to ensure your thesis the completion requirements. If you have questions about the information contained within this document, contact the program coordinator.

Purpose of the Thesis

A thesis is an essential part of graduate education. Graduate students must become knowledgeable about scholarship and engage in the process of conducting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting research.

A thesis is the result of scholarly or creative activity that gives evidence of independent, critical, and creative investigation. The thesis experience demonstrates the ability to define and develop a problem/project; to understand and synthesize relevant literature; to use appropriate methodology; to analyze and interpret data; and to draw reasonable conclusions based on the investigation/activity.

Graduate students should review the following.

- Thesis Writing Guide
- WKU Thesis, Specialist Project, and Dissertation Guidelines Document

Students who write a thesis should review the WKU Thesis, Specialist Project, and Dissertation Guidelines Document. This document is on the WKU Graduate School website under Current Students, Thesis/Specialist/Project/Dissertation

Graduate Student Responsibility

Requirements will not be waived, or exceptions granted because of ignorance of policies, requirements, or procedures. The responsibility to adhere to the policies and procedures as stated in the Graduate Catalog, these guidelines, and college and departmental regulations lies with the student.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Academic honesty is a prerequisite for academic achievement; all members of the academic community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. The University recognizes plagiarism as a serious academic offense. Please consult the WKU Student Code of Conduct regarding academic offenses and work with your thesis committee chair regarding any questions related to academic and research conduct. Students who fail to follow appropriate academic and research procedures will be subject to failure and other sanctions, up to and including dismissal from the university, or civil charges.

Appointment of the Graduate Committee

The thesis committee chair plays a very significant role in the graduate career of all students. A close, cordial, and professional relationship is therefore of the utmost importance. Both student and the chair should work at achieving mutual understanding and respect. If any difficulty is experienced in this relationship, the department head/graduate coordinator should be consulted.

A committee consists of a minimum of three graduate faculty members. Your graduate advisor will work with you to select your committee. The chair of your thesis committee is the first reader. The first reader must be a full-time faculty member of the school and be a designated graduate faculty member. In addition to the first reader, at least one additional graduate faculty member from the school is selected as a second reader. The third member of the committee may be graduate faculty from the school or another department. Additional committee members may be chosen but must be approved by the WKU Graduate Council.

The student should contact specific potential committee members to ensure their time, interest, and availability to serve. Upon mutual agreement, each member of the committee should approve the Committee Selection. This form should on file with the Graduate School and listed in the student's electronic forms.

It is the responsibility of the thesis committee to advise and assist in planning the major elements of the thesis. The committee is not responsible for reminding students of published deadlines or for monitoring procedural details. The student must manage such affairs independently.

Steps in Completing a Thesis

1. The student should arrange for the appointment of a Graduate Committee. The members of the committee should be chosen based on the student interests, the student's experience with faculty members, and the adviser's knowledge and expertise. The committee members and student must agree on the makeup of a thesis committee. The school director may reassign with mutual agreement based on workloads or other extenuating circumstances. It is advisable for the student to assume the responsibility of securing these approvals and getting signed agreements.
2. The student submits a thesis proposal to their thesis committee chair. The proposal for a thesis should include the first three chapters as specified by the committee. The student may NOT proceed with the development of the thesis or engage in the execution of the research until the proposal is approved by all committee members. Revisions to the proposal may be required. The committee chair typically coordinates this process. The committee must agree in writing that the proposal is acceptable.
3. Once the proposal is approved by the thesis committee, the student can then begin data collection/analysis and/or project execution.
4. Completed thesis drafts should be submitted to the thesis committee chair. With committee chair may choose to distribute multiple drafts to committee members for review. Once all committee members review the final thesis for content, mechanics, and format, the student in collaboration with the thesis committee chair, may schedule a thesis defense.
5. The thesis defense also serves as the comprehensive examination for the MSEM program. The format for a defense is that of a professional presentation followed by discussion with the thesis committee and invited guests. The thesis committee then convenes at a designated time or immediately thereafter to discuss and approve/reject the results of the examination. Further revisions to the thesis may be required.
6. Upon acceptance of the comprehensive examination, the thesis committee chair approves the Comprehensive Exam/Capstone Completion in TopNet.

7. Students who complete the thesis must then submit the final copy of the approved thesis to the Graduate School by the posted deadlines. **Students must strictly follow the WKU formatting guidelines for theses.** The Graduate School may reject the thesis if it is not formatted correctly. If the thesis is not approved by the third reading, the student must postpone their graduation date. The committee signs the required signature pages (see the WKU Thesis, Specialist Project, and Dissertation Guidelines Document for the exact instructions) after *all* required corrections.
8. Once the Graduate School reviews and approves, the student submits the proper forms to the Graduate School, submits a form for digital upload to Top Scholar t. See the WKU Thesis Guidelines for this process.

Course Credit

The six required credit hours for thesis may be taken over multiple semesters by mutual agreement by the student and the thesis committee chair. The thesis hours may not be scheduled until the committee and is identified. The thesis is graded on a pass/fail basis.

An *in-progress* (IP) grade must be reported for each semester of active enrollment if the work was not completed. The *in-progress* grade may be changed after the thesis is successfully defended and the student has completed at least 6 credit hours. If the thesis is not completed after six credit hours, the student must maintain enrollment or matriculate until the thesis is approved.

Writing the Thesis

The student should be in frequent contact with the thesis committee chair. Typically, many drafts are required, and the student should provide committee members plenty of time to read the work and provide feedback. Students should be open-minded about accepting constructive criticism. The goal is to complete an excellent thesis with a minimum amount of stress. The committee is the resource for a successful completion of the thesis.

The Writing Center at WKU may be of assistance. The Writing Center staff will not write the thesis, but they can help students learn how to write more effectively and how to produce a paper that is formatted correctly. Students who have trouble with thesis writing may be directed to take additional courses.

Library staff can help locate relevant resources for the thesis. Consider ordering items through Interlibrary Loan if they are not on-site. Allow time for these materials to arrive.

The Thesis Proposal

The department requires the submission a thesis proposal approved by the thesis committee before proceeding with the collection of data and/or project execution.

Research Based Thesis: The proposal should consist of three chapters. The first chapter, INTRODUCTION, consists of a problem statement, significance of the research, limitations, assumptions, hypothesis, and definition of terms. The second chapter, REVIEW OF LITERATURE, should include a thorough synthesis and analysis of literature related to the study. The third chapter, METHODOLOGY, should describe the plan for conducting the study. This includes clear explanations of each step with justification. Upon committee approval, data collection and analysis for the development of the final chapters may begin.

Project Based Thesis: The proposal should include all the planning documentation typically associated with a project plan. Project plans typically include the definition of the problem, the development of a scope of work, a work breakdown structure (WBS), preliminary project schedule, estimated resource allocation, planned project controls, project evaluation strategy, and project performance measures. Upon committee approval, execution of the project as planned may begin. Deviations from the plan should be reported and documented in the final thesis draft.

Graduate Student Research Grants

Depending on the scope of work and level of effort required, grants are available for graduate research and travel funding. Application forms are available at the Graduate School website under Financial Resources.

Research Involving Human Subjects

Federal law requires that all research involving human subjects in any location, regardless of the source of funding, must be approved in advance by the WKU compliance office. To comply with governmental directives, you must complete the appropriate human subjects training and submit forms to the Human Subjects Compliance Coordinator. Forms and training instructions can be viewed at <https://www.wku.edu/compliance/>. The forms must also be signed by the thesis committee chair.

A copy of the approved form must be submitted with the final thesis/project in the appendix of the manuscript. Failure to follow the Human Subjects Review procedure will result in rejection of the thesis.

Copyright Issues

According to the 1976 Copyright Act, the thesis manuscript is automatically copyrighted. Until formal transfer of the copyright, you are the owner. You do not need to register the copyright (fee required) unless you desire a public record of the copyright. The manuscript need not display the copyright symbol; however, the best way to protect an unpublished work is to place a copyright notice on every page of every copy. A second copyright issue involves the use of copyrighted materials in the thesis. If you use copyrighted materials in your thesis, you must receive permission from the copyright holder first.

Approval by the Graduate School

One electronic copy of the thesis and the original signature page should be submitted to the Graduate School by the posted dates for each semester. See the WKU Thesis Guidelines

Note: It is the responsibility of the student under the direction of the thesis committee to submit an error-free paper. Papers rejected by the reader three times will have to delay their graduation by one semester. Because errors do occur, it is a good idea to submit the thesis to the reader and Graduate School well before the posted deadlines.

These procedures are regularly updated. Other students' papers may not have current, accurate formatting or style. For this reason, please refer to the present procedures, the thesis writing guide, APA style manual, and your committee chair. **DO NOT USE OTHER STUDENT PAPERS AS A GUIDELINE!**

Format/Style Manual

The content of the manuscript should follow the program guidelines for master's thesis, the Graduate School guidelines, and the format published by the American Psychological Association (APA).

Body of Thesis

The format of the body of the thesis is APA format. The number of chapters, chapter titles, headings, and subheadings within chapters should be chosen to present the material in a logical and comprehensible manner. For a research-based thesis, the chapters should include the following:

Introduction: Within the introduction, the major headings should include the following:

problem statement, significance, limitations and delimitations, assumptions, hypothesis, and definition of terms.

- Review of Literature
- Methodology
- Findings/Results
- Conclusion

Project-based thesis chapters can be tailored to present the information using the best logical order. Students should work with their thesis committee chair on the preferred format.

References

The thesis project must contain documentation for all sources cited. This documentation takes the form of the References page(s). Each source that is cited in the narrative of the thesis must be documented in the References section.

Appendices

Appendices may be included for material that would detract from the flow of the manuscript but is relevant to the thesis. Examples might include large data sets, computer code, or ancillary materials. The appendices should have a cover sheet and each appendix should be labeled alphabetically on a separate sheet.