

Avoiding Format Problems in Thesis & Dissertation Document

The NJIT approved format for Master's Thesis and Doctoral Dissertations is given in the second edition (1992 printing with the purple, gold, and white cover) of Guidelines for Writing Thesis and Dissertations by Herman A. Estrin and Timothy E. Roche. This document is out of print, and is on reserve in the NJIT Library.

Most problems that have occurred in having final documents approved by the Office of Graduate Studies can be traced to the failure to follow the official format guidelines. This information is intended to assist graduate students and faculty advisors by listing the most critical problems we have noted in the final review of documents by the Office of Graduate Studies.

GENERAL PROBLEMS

- Copying a format used in a document submitted to NJIT prior to 2001.
- Failure to use a “spell-check” throughout the document and failure to *check spelling* on figures and tables.
- Using a software to set up the document that does not conform to NJIT format; failure to understand both the limitations and capabilities of software.
- Failure to have *grammar and syntax* reviewed prior to approval page sign-off by the advisor and committee. Help is available through the HSS Department's Dr. Janet Bodner, Associate Director, ESL Program.
- Inconsistency in capitalization (or inconsistent use of upper case) in titles, headings, figures and tables.
- Inconsistency in the title of the document from the abstract to other pages.
- Incorrect order of sections and front matter.

PAPER QUALITY

- The original document must be printed on 100% cotton fiber paper, minimum 24 lb. The copies may be on 25% cotton paper, minimum 24 lb paper. The paper must be bright white. Regardless of the percent of the cotton fiber, paper thin enough to read the next page through it is unacceptable.
- The NJIT Bookstore has been contacted by the Office of Graduate Studies and has acceptable white paper in stock.
- Also be careful of “off-white” paper boxed as white by off-campus discount vendors.

ABSTRACT

- The format and font size of the title should be the same as on the abstract page, title page and the approval page.
- The description should be in third person and describe what was actually done in the research. The importance of the topic, if it must be described, should be limited to one or two sentences.

TITLE PAGE

- Failure to properly indicate the month and year - For: August degree, use August January degrees, use January (not December) May degrees, use May (not April, not June).
- Failure to properly identify the degree or the department. A list of correct combinations of graduate degrees and departments or interdisciplinary committees at NJIT can be found here:
- <http://www.njit.edu/graduatestudies/Titles.php>.

APPROVAL PAGE

- Do not place a single date below the author’s name. Instead, have each person approving also indicate the date of approval next to the signatures. At least *three* approvals are required for a Master’s Thesis. At least *five* approvals are required for a Doctoral Dissertation.

- Incorrect spelling of names; incorrect academic titles of faculty members. Refer to the Directory in the latest Graduate Catalog for correct spelling of names and faculty ranks and titles. If you have any doubts check with the department secretary.
- Poor paper quality on approval pages.
- Inconsistent spacing between signature line and name below the signature line.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

- Incorrect title or date of degree(s).
- Incorrect spacing of lines Undergraduate or Graduate Education.
- It is preferable to have “New Jersey Institute of Technology” or any other institutional name on a single line and not broken into parts on two lines.
- Under undergraduate and graduate education, include the most recent degree (including the one being received).
- Incorrect number of tabs.

DEDICATION PAGE

- Incorrect spelling of names;
- Incorrect grammar, particularly tense or person.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT PAGE

- Incorrect spelling of names; incorrect or inconsistent capitalization.
- Spelling of “acknowledgment” (no “e” between “g” and “m”); although the alternative spelling is becoming acceptable.

TABLE OF CONTENTS, LIST OF TABLES and LIST OF FIGURES

- Inconsistency between the chapter, figure, or table titles identified in either the Table of Contents, the List of Tables or the List of Figures. These must be identical both in wording and capitalization.
- Omission of “Chapter”, “Table”, or “Page” in column headings.
- Failures to right-justify and properly align the page numbers.

- Failure to include or inconsistency in the use of dots leading from the title to the page number. Most problems here are the result of inadequate knowledge of word processor capabilities.
- Failure to use the word “(Continued)” in parentheses single-spaced and boldfaced in the heading for second and following pages.
- Failure to use all caps in CHAPTER TITLES.

TEXT

- Inconsistency in format of chapter, section, and subsection heading from one chapter to another.
- Inconsistent or inappropriate fonts and font sizes. Exceptionally large headings because of use of certain types of software that do not match approved form; chapter headings that appear in the middle of the page rather than at the top; skewed (rather than centered) chapter headings. The font size for headings should be the same as for the text (Arial or Times New Roman 12 point).
- Unusual or inconsistent indentation or page numbering.
- Smaller tables broken to appear on two pages, or figures turned around the wrong way or missing.
- Inadequate margins (required are: left 1.5 inches; right/top/bottom, 1 inch except that page numbers appear in the footer at 0.5 inches from bottom and top margins).
- Widows and Orphans. Sometimes these cannot be avoided. Acceptability will be based on the professional appearance of the thesis with or without the pages modified to avoid these.
- Facing pages and photographs not consistent with instructions in the Estrin/Roche manuals. Facing page numbering should be noted as “facing page 45” (for example) at the upper left.
- Insufficient room for equations. Numbering equations by sections instead of by chapters.
- Page numbers not in bold or not located properly. They should be centered on the bottom of the first page of each chapter and in the upper right hand corner of subsequent pages and located within the margins. Appendix pages and Reference pages should also be numbered just like chapters. The font size for the page numbers should be the same as for the text but must be bold.
- Section headings not handled properly at various levels. Subsections with 2 digits occur on the 4th line from the previous text. Subsections with 3 digits appear on the 3rd line from the previous text.

APPENDICES

- Failure to provide a title and brief introductory description of what is contained in each Appendix. Note the title of each Appendix should be in all caps.
- Appendices are identified by letters (e.g., APPENDIX A, APPENDIX B, etc.). If your document has only one appendix there is no need to apply a letter (e.g., APPENDIX).

FIGURES, TABLES, and EQUATIONS

- The figure may be portrait (vertical) or landscape (sideways). If landscape is used the bottom of the figure should face out (except on the facing page). The page number will still appear in portrait layout.
- Numbering follows the chapter (e.g., Figure 1.1. Chapters 1, figure 1).
- Samples of appropriate format are available in the sample document and on the graduate studies web site.

REFERENCES, WORK CITED

- Improper use of quotation marks, italics, or underlines. Book titles should be italicized or underlined but should not be in quotation marks. Each word should be underlined individually.
- Inconsistency in capitalization or punctuation, or format. Be consistent. There are a number of acceptable formats; some may be determined by the conventional practice of particular disciplines. Be sure to end each line with a period.
- EndNote software is used for organizing references. If you use EndNote to organize your references you can import the references from a database or add your own refernece and select the specific style and insert the references in to the word document. You can download the EndNote software from
<http://ist.njit.edu/software/display.php?id=338>
- For the APA style, you may view:
<http://www.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/workshop/citapa.htm>