

# **Thesis and Major Paper Style Guidelines**



## **GRADUATE SCHOOL**

Minot State University

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## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	ii
Foreword .....	iv
Chapter	
I.	
Responsibilities .....	1
The Graduate Committee .....	1
The Student .....	2
The Graduate Committee Chairperson .....	3
The Graduate Committee Member Responsibilities .....	4
II.	
Procedures .....	5
Proposal .....	5
IRB Review .....	5
Defense .....	6
III.	
Format .....	8
Organization .....	8
Style and Usage .....	9
Final Copy .....	10
The Print .....	11
Paper .....	11
Typeface .....	11
Pagination .....	12
Preliminaries .....	12
Plagiarism .....	13

IV.	Dissemination of Theses or Major Papers .....	14
	Acknowledgements.....	14
	Publication .....	14
	Conference Presentation .....	15
	Electronic Distribution.....	15
	Copyright .....	16
	References.....	17

#### Appendices

- A. Notice of IRB Approval
- B. Page Layout for Thesis
- C. Page Layout for two papers
- D. Sample Title Page
- E. Sample Signature Page
- F. Example of Table
- G. Sample Figure 3
- H. Manuscript Proofing Checklist

## Foreword

This manual contains instructions for the preparation of theses\* and other similar papers for the Minot State University (MSU) Graduate School. This information is intended as a supplemental guide to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA Manual), 5<sup>th</sup> edition. The manual describes the responsibilities of students and committee members. In addition, timelines, content, and format information are presented. Dissemination and copyright information are also provided for interested students. The manual ends with sample model pages, tables, and figures which may be used as a guide by student writers. Also, a thesis and major paper proofing checklist is provided. This checklist should be used by students to review papers prior to submission.

Students are to use the APA Manual as the principal reference for completing their papers. Variations to these printed guidelines or to the APA Manual require the approval of the Graduate School. Students should not refer to theses on file in the Olson Library or the Graduate School as a guide for their current papers. Those documents may have used previous editions of APA format or another style format entirely. Also, the format of this manual follows some, but not all, of the APA guidelines.

\* Throughout this document the word “thesis” is used, but all indicated procedures apply to the preparation and writing of project papers, as well.

The Graduate School recognizes that some academic disciplines vary in their thesis and project paper requirements in regard to format. Questions about such variations to these guidelines or to the APA style should be addressed to the Graduate School Staff.

Students who complete theses or written projects which will be bound and placed in the MSU library as part of degree requirements will submit them to the Graduate School for review. Multiple-authorship will not be accepted. Theses and other culminating project papers must demonstrate student's ability to define a worthwhile problem clearly, to conduct an appropriate investigation, to organize and present the information logically, and to draw defensible conclusions. The number of credit hours earned for theses or project papers varies from department to department. Students should consult department faculty for clarification prior to completing their papers.

*Program Requirements for Papers*

Education Specialist in School Psychology.....	Thesis (optional)
MAT: Mathematics.....	Formal Writing Project, Two-Paper Project, or Thesis
MAT: Science.....	Thesis
Master of Music Education.....	Thesis or Independent Project
MS in Communication Disorders.....	Thesis
MED.....	Project Paper, Two-Paper Project, or Thesis
MS in Criminal Justice.....	Thesis

MSIS.....Capstone Course  
MSM.....Capstone Experience  
MS-SPED.....Thesis

## Chapter I

### Responsibilities

#### *The Graduate Committee*

As early as possible in a student's program, he or she should formulate a graduate committee. This four-member committee possesses both advisory and judgmental responsibilities regarding the thesis. The student usually selects the chairperson first. The selection should be based on technical expertise and on personal compatibility. In some cases, your department chair or program coordinator may assign a graduate committee chairperson and committee members. Chairpersons may be changed in the event that the student's research interests change, or if the chairperson and student find themselves incompatible for any reason. Contact your program advisor for specific information on choosing a chairperson.

Two other faculty members from within the discipline or related area of study and one faculty member from outside the student's discipline complete the graduate committee. These committee members are typically selected by the student and the graduate committee chairperson and must be approved by the department chairperson.

In some areas of graduate study, two committee members are chosen from the student's field and two from a related area. In the MSIS graduate program, three people are chosen to comprise the student's committee.

### *The Student*

A student's thesis or project paper is the written record of the research conducted. It should provide evidence of the student's ability to perform original research independently. As such, the student assumes responsibility for the thesis.

These responsibilities include:

- 1) Consulting frequently with the Graduate Committee Chairperson during all phases of the thesis, including planning and preliminary activities.
- 2) Meeting with Graduate Committee members and soliciting input from them.
- 3) Preparing the document in a scholarly manner as outlined in this manual and the APA Manual.
- 4) Meeting thesis deadlines as printed in the MSU Graduate Catalog.
- 5) Submitting the proposal to Graduate Committee members at least one week prior to the proposal meeting.
- 6) Obtaining a format review from the Graduate School prior to printing the final document. The Graduate School will accept papers written only in the form set forth in this manual.
- 7) Distributing the entire document to Graduate Committee members at least one week prior to the defense meeting.
- 8) Paying binding fees and mailing costs for the thesis at the MSU Business Office and submitting the receipt and at least five copies of the thesis or

major paper to the Graduate School Office within the deadlines given in the Graduate Catalog.

- 9) Complying with MSU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies and procedures governing research with human subjects. Permission or waivers for the research must be obtained prior to the collection of data.

#### *The Graduate Committee Chairperson*

The Graduate Committee Chairperson shares the responsibility with the student for the quality of the thesis. The chairperson will:

- 1) Guide the student in the identification of a relevant research topic.
- 2) Aid the student in the selection of appropriate design and methodology.
- 3) Ensure that proper forms are filed with the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Forms may be obtained from the IRB website which maybe accessed from the Graduate School website.
- 4) Supervise the student in the review of literature, collection of data, and analysis or interpretation of results.
- 5) Serve as chairperson for proposal and defense meetings. During these meetings the chairperson should maintain a reasonable flow of questioning and conduct the proceedings in an atmosphere of professional integrity.
- 6) Review the student's final paper for completeness, grammatical correctness, and APA formatting accuracy before the student submits the paper to the Graduate Office for the formatting check.

- 7) File proposal and defense forms in the Graduate School Office in a timely fashion.
- 8) Grade the thesis at the conclusion of the term. If the student has not successfully completed the document, including the defense, the graduate committee chairperson shall award an “X” (in progress) grade. The chairperson will replace all “X” grades with an appropriate letter grade upon completion of the project. These grades are entered online through Campus Connection and recorded by the Registrar’s Office.

#### *Graduate Committee Member Responsibilities*

Other faculty members serving on the Graduate Committee are usually selected for their expertise in the particular content area, in research, in design, in data analysis, or in editing. Therefore, responsibilities of the remaining committee members may vary considerably. Over all, these committee members offer to:

1. Aid the student and the graduate committee chairperson by assisting in their areas of expertise.
2. Meet with the student as needed and offer advice as appropriate.
3. Prepare for and attend all scheduled proposal and defense meetings.

## Chapter II

### Procedures

#### *Proposal*

Prior to conducting research for a thesis or major paper, a graduate student must submit a proposal to the thesis committee for approval. The proposal is a draft, and typically contains a statement of the problem, a literature review, and a suggested method for examining the problem. The committee meets with the student to discuss the student's proposed research, make revisions or suggestions to the plan, and approve or disapprove the research proposal. Most of the discussion will focus on the feasibility of the proposed design. In addition, the student should demonstrate familiarity with relevant literature. Committee members should assure that the problem is of reasonable scope for a graduate thesis. Finally, the committee should discuss ethical implications, the availability of resources, and timelines as they pertain to the study. The student will schedule the proposal meeting according to the timelines set forth in the Graduate Catalog. All committee members must approve the student's proposal.

#### *IRB Review*

After approval of the thesis proposal, the student must obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for any research involving human subjects. The appropriate IRB review forms are available from the Graduate

School website. The IRB has a two-week time-frame for review of protocols. Students should submit protocols in a timely fashion. Data collection may not begin prior to approval from the IRB. The MSU Graduate School will not accept any thesis involving human subjects without the appropriate IRB approval and documentation.

### *Defense*

At the conclusion of the research and writing process, the student will schedule a defense in compliance with Graduate School timelines. The defense is a formal process structured so that the student presents a summary of his or her research. The student also describes major findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research. Committee members pose questions to the student about the research, focusing on findings, the research process, and conclusions of the study. Editorial issues should be dealt with at the conclusion of the defense.

After sufficient discussion of the study, the committee members will evaluate the student's defense in the absence of the student and other audience members. The committee may approve or reject the thesis, and the decision is recorded on the thesis defense form. At least three of the four committee members must grant approval for the student to pass the defense. If a committee member casts a dissenting vote, he or she must sign the appropriate line on the defense form. The student is notified immediately of the committee's decision.

After passing the defense, the student will make corrections required by the committee and submit the thesis to the Graduate School for final approval of format. When the format has been approved by the Graduate School, the student will print the thesis on 25% cotton rag bond content, at least 20 pound weight, and 8 ½ x 11 size must be used for the final copies. All committee members will sign the 5 or more signature pages of the original copies of the paper. The student may have the signature pages printed on 25% cotton rag bond paper and available for signing at the thesis defense.

The student then submits five copies of the paper to the Graduate School Office. In accordance with MSU procedures, the student will pay the appropriate fees for binding the paper prior to submission of the copies to the Graduate School and include the receipt for binding with the five copies. Once bound, the original and one copy are placed in the Olson Library, one copy is presented to the committee chair, one copy is placed in the Graduate School Office, and one copy is sent to the student. Students may have more copies bound for personal use by paying extra fees.

## Chapter III

### Format

#### *Organization*

The three segments of a thesis document are the preliminaries, the thesis itself, and the reference section. The sequencing of the sections (see Appendix A and B of this document) generally appears as follows (some modifications to accommodate individual program needs may be permitted).

1. The Preliminaries
  - a) Title page (see Appendix C)
  - b) Blank page or copyright page
  - c) Signature approval page (see Appendix D)
  - d) Preface material, including acknowledgments
  - e) Abstract
  - f) Table of Contents
  - g) List of Tables
  - h) List of Figures
2. Thesis Chapters
  - a) Introduction
  - b) Review of literature
  - c) Methodology or design of study
  - d) Results

e) Summary, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations

3. Project Paper Chapters

a) Introduction

b) Review of literature

c) Methodology or design of study

d) Project evaluation and dissemination plan

e) Project implementation

f) Project results

g) Discussion and recommendations

4. Reference section

a) Reference list (All references cited in the text and in the appendices appear in this section. Any reference listed MUST have a citation in the text.)

b) Appendices

*Style and Usage*

The style and form of scholarly usage and technical detail in the most recent *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* (2001) apply in all instances not covered by these guidelines. The fifth edition, 2001, is the current edition used by the Graduate School

Questions of style and form may occasionally arise which are not covered by these guidelines or by APA. When this happens, the style of a leading journal

or other publication in the discipline may be acceptable. However, all exceptions to the APA manual, or to these guidelines, require the approval of the Graduate School.

### *Final Copy*

The final thesis or research report must be prepared on a laser-quality printer using high quality cotton bond paper. If the student has a question as to the acceptability of output from a printer, a sample from the printer should be submitted to the Graduate School office for approval. The format should remain the same throughout the document. If format changes are made after approval is obtained, new approval is required.

Five quality copies of the thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School office for binding. Theses should be printed on white paper with 25% cotton rag bond content. Type size and font should be of readable quality. Font styles such as Times New Roman, Courier, or Arial are acceptable to the Graduate School. Font size 12 is preferred, and the font should have approximately 10 characters to the inch. Margins of 1 ½ inches (4 cm) are required at the top, bottom, right and left of every page. Margins of all pages, including photographs, tables, figures, charts, graphs, or appendices are the same. Type the paper using left-hand justification, not full justification. Be certain all pages of the final copies are right-side up and in the correct order.

Corrections stipulated by the candidate's Graduate committee must be made on the original and all copies. Approval pages should be signed by members of the student's Graduate Committee and Dean of the Graduate School after appropriate corrections have been made and the format has been approved by the Graduate School staff.

#### *The Print*

The final copy must be clean and suitable for microfilming, with uniform darkness and a sharp, consistent imprint. All letters and symbols must be completely legible. The final copy may be the original laser printer copy or a photocopy. Dot matrix print is not acceptable. A thesis which does not meet these standards will not be accepted by the Graduate School.

#### *Paper*

Paper of at least 25% cotton rag bond content, at least 20 pound weight, and 8 ½ x 11 size must be used for the final copy. Erasable bond is not acceptable. The weight and color (preferably true white) must be uniform throughout, the only exception being for full-sized photographs and paper used for drawings.

#### *Typeface*

Courier, Times New Roman, or Arial are acceptable fonts to use for theses. The same typeface must be used throughout except in the case of appendix material or illustrations which may be written using a different font. Bold face

print is not acceptable anywhere in the paper except when approved by the Graduate School.

Ten or 12-point print size is acceptable, although 12-point is preferred. Any additions to the text such as foreign alphabets, scientific formulae, or other signs impossible to make on the keyboard must be made in permanent black ink. Do not use ball point or felt tip pens.

### *Pagination*

Every page, except for the blank page or copyright page following the title page is counted in the numbering, even though a number may not appear on the page. All numbers should appear in the upper right corner of each page, one inch from the top of the page, except for the first page of each chapter, on which no number should appear.

Running heads should not be used on theses and other research reports. With approval from the Graduate School, numbers may be centered at the bottom of each page except for the first page of each chapter.

The following number system should be used:

- a. Lower-case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, iv, etc.) are used for preliminary pages. The numbers begin with ii. Although the title page counts as page i, the number does not appear.
- b. Arabic numerals are used for the body of the thesis and for numbering all tables and figures.

*Preliminaries*

The blank page or copyright page is not counted or numbered. Text, illustrations, references, and appendices use Arabic numerals on all pages following the preliminaries, except for pages with chapter titles. Title pages should be counted but not numbered. A page carrying the word “Appendix” or “Appendices” is counted but not numbered.

*Plagiarism*

All material cited by the author of the thesis must be properly referenced. This includes direct quotations of less than 40 words (in quotation marks with appropriate citation and page number) and those of more than 40 words (indented on the left and cited with author, date, and page number). In addition, any paraphrased material must also be referenced. If an author is paraphrased for an extended portion of the text, more than one citation may be necessary to keep the reader informed as to whose thoughts are being presented.

## Chapter IV

### Dissemination of Theses or Major Papers

#### *Acknowledgments*

Students are encouraged to disseminate scholarly information obtained during the writing of a thesis or major document. This is often done by publishing it in a professional journal, in a book, on the Internet, or through a presentation at a professional conference. An acknowledgment should be afforded committee members who helped mentor the student during the research process and/or writing of the paper. Cooperating facilities and/or research subjects should be acknowledged without divulging confidential information.

When research has been conducted using funds from a grant, the granting agency, grant number, and title shall be documented. Funds for research or project development obtained from private agencies or other resources should also be acknowledged within the publication or presentation. Minot State University should also be given credit as the institution providing opportunity and support for the scholarly activity.

#### *Publication*

Minot State University does not publish documents submitted for degree requirements. Students who have publishable materials are encouraged to seek publication through professional journals and other formal channels appropriate to their disciplines. Most scholarly work will have to be written in the style of the

selected journal(s). Previously copyrighted information may not be included in a journal submission without proof of permission from the copyright holder. Proper acknowledgement to committee and advisor should be incorporated in the article submission.

#### *Conference Presentation*

Students are encouraged to submit scholarly work for presentation at local, state, regional, and national professional conferences. Most major professional organizations publish a “Call for Papers” giving a deadline date for submission. Proper acknowledgments should be included with the submission and given again during the presentation.

#### *Electronic Distribution*

Students wishing to make their theses, research, or other scholarly findings available on the Internet, commercial online systems, or other electronic postings should keep the following information in mind.

- a) Persons who helped with the document or research should be consulted before the information goes online. They may have valuable advice or concerns about what should or should not be shared.
- b) The student and/or faculty members involved may wish to retain ownership of information original to the document or research. The procedure to obtain a copyright should be underway before such information is put online.

- c) Proper acknowledgments must be posted.

### *Copyright*

Under the Copyright Act of 1976, original work is copyrighted as soon as it is typed on a page. Copyright protection is “an incident of the process of authorship” (U.S. Copyright Office, 1981, p. 3). An author owns the copyright on an unpublished manuscript until it is formally transferred. According to the *APA Manual*,

All exclusive rights due the owner of the copyright of a published work are also due the author of an unpublished work. Registration of copyright provides a public record and is usually a prerequisite for legal action. (APA, 1995, p. 299)

## References

- American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association, Fifth Edition*. Washington, DC: APA.
- U.S. Copyright Office. (1981). *Circular R1: Copyright basics (Publication No. 341-279/106)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

## Appendices

## Appendix A

## Notice of IRB Approval

Name of Principal Investigator \_\_\_\_\_

University Address \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Project \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The above project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of Minot State University under the provisions of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46.

This approval is based on the following conditions:

1. The materials you submitted to the IRB (through the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs) provide a complete and accurate account of how human subjects are involved in your project.
2. You will carry on your research strictly according to the procedures as described in materials presented to the IRB.
3. You will report to the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs any changes in procedures that may have a bearing on this approval and require another IRB review.
4. If any changes are made, you will submit the modified project for IRB review.
5. You will immediately report to the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs any problems that you encounter while using human subjects.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Brent Askvig, Ph.D.  
Chair, Minot State University IRB

Appendix B

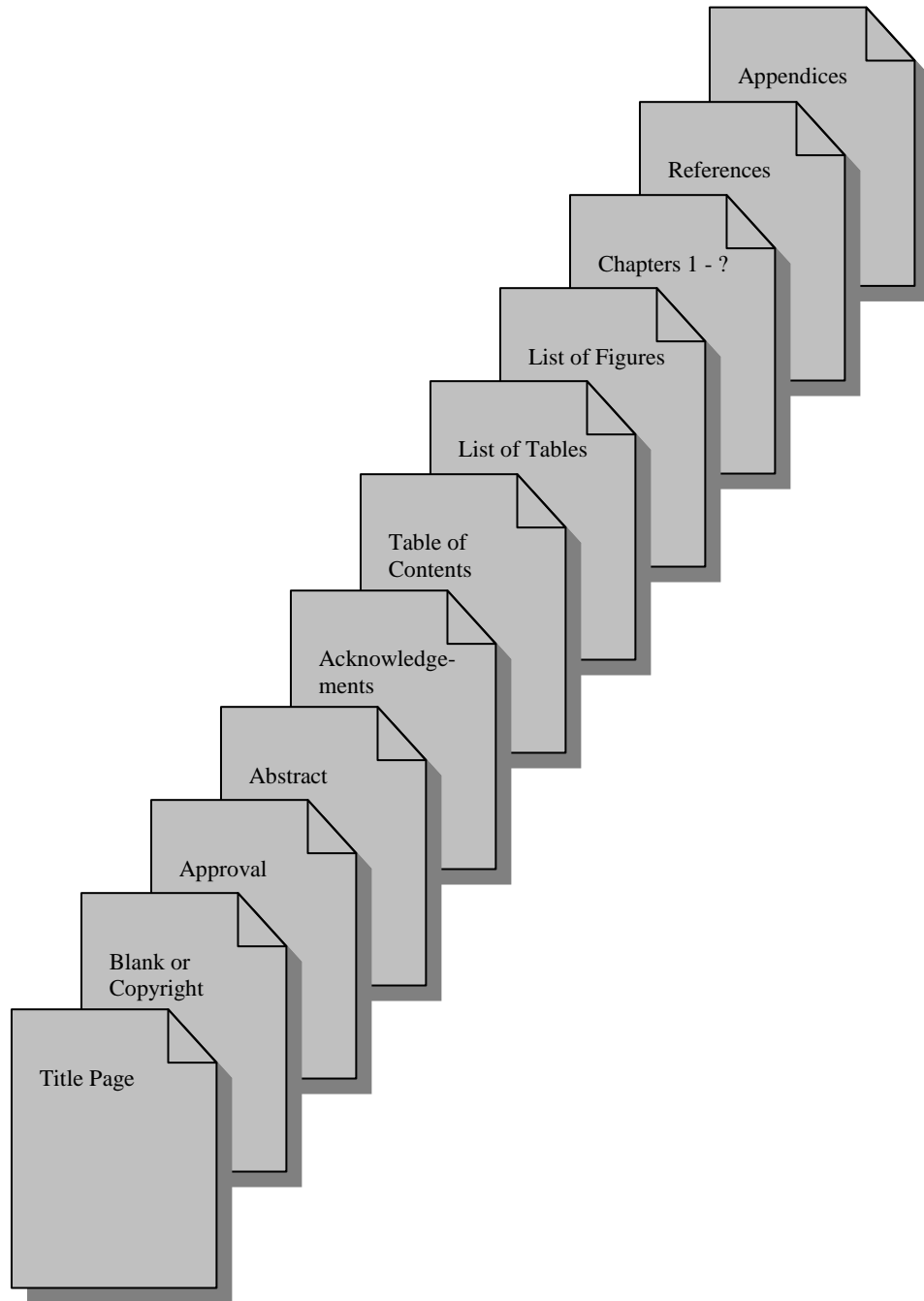


Figure 1: Page Layout for Thesis

### Appendix C

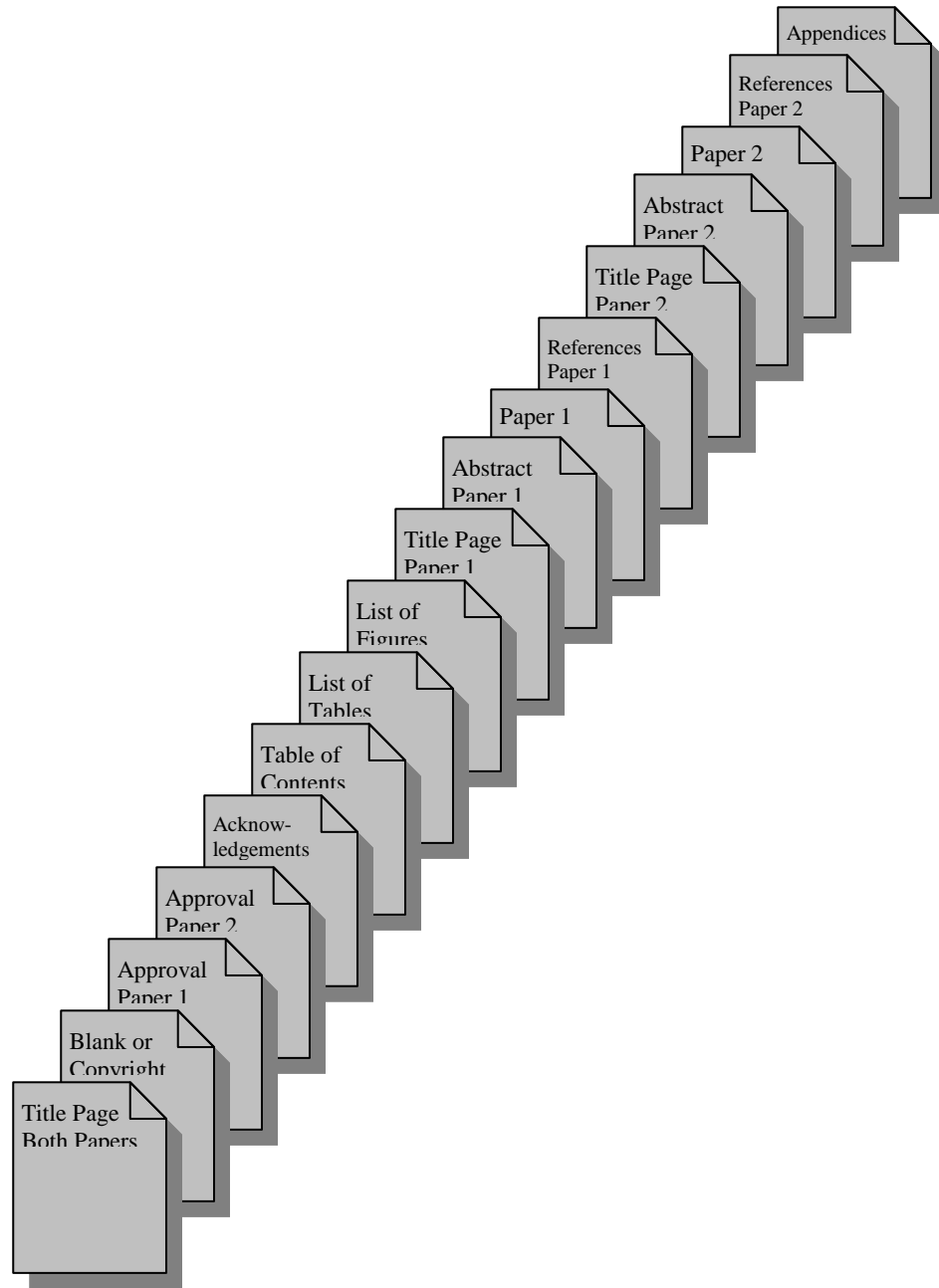


Figure 2: Page layout for two papers.

Appendix D

Sample Title Page

The Title of the Thesis Should be here

A Thesis  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
of....

Student Name

Department of....  
College in which the Degree is granted

Graduate School  
Minot State University  
Minot, ND

Fall 2006

Appendix E

Sample Signature Page

This thesis was submitted by

Jane R. Scholar

Graduate Committee:

---

Dr. Brent A. Askvig, Chairperson

---

Dr. Marita Hoffart

---

Ms. Lori Garnes

---

Ms. LeeAnn Miller

Dean of Graduate School

---

Dr. Linda Cresap

Date of Defense: May 4, 2009

Appendix F  
Example of Table

Table 4  
Habitat Types, Availability<sup>a</sup> (avail) of Habitats, Seasonal Use (o/o Loc) by Cow  
Elk, and Habitat Selection<sup>c</sup> on the Badlands Unit.

Habitat	Summer (n=272)			Fall (n=222)	
	% Avail	% Loc	Habitat Selection <sup>b</sup>	% Loc	Habitat Selection <sup>b</sup>
Grass	30	8	-	6	-
Nonveg	10	0	-	0	-
Agriculture	5	1	-	13	+
Oak/Ash	18	78	+	36	+
Cottonwood	2	0	-	35	+
Deciduous Juniper/Shrub	4	4		0	-
Grass/ deciduous	12	5	-	9	
Grass/Shrub	12	0	-	1	-
Grass/nonveg/ Shrub	6	3		0	-

<sup>a</sup> Approximately 450 km<sup>2</sup> available

<sup>b</sup> Habitat used more than available (+); less than available (-)

<sup>c</sup> Z-score, P < 0.01

## Appendix G

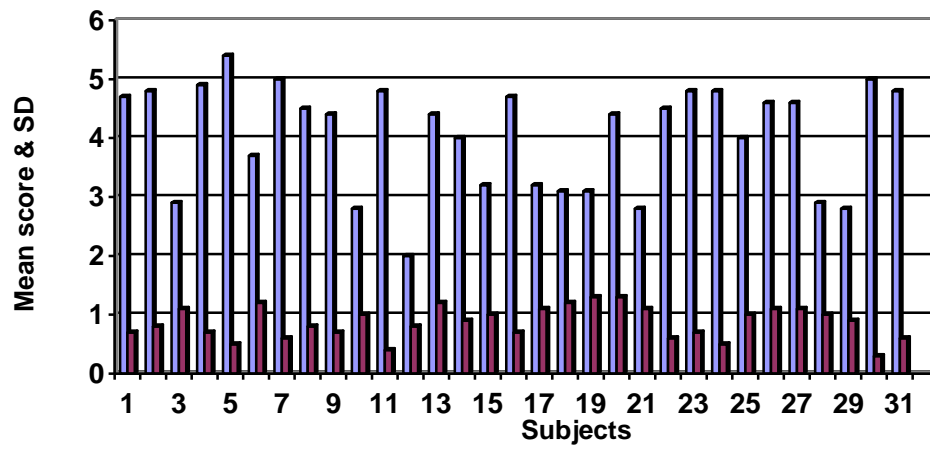


Figure 3: Mean scores and standards deviations of subjects on the Teacher Efficacy Scale – Revised

## Appendix H

### Manuscript Proofing Checklist



## Thesis and Major Paper Proofing Checklist

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Program \_\_\_\_\_ Date Reviewed \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis/Paper Title \_\_\_\_\_

*Listed below are questions concerning the most common over-sights in manuscript preparation. Please review these items carefully before submitting the thesis to the Graduate School. Graduate School Staff will use this list and the most recent copy of the APA manual to review your document. Numbers in parenthesis refer to pages in the APA manual, 5<sup>th</sup> edition.*

<b><u>Format and Pagation</u></b>	<b><u>OK?</u></b>		<b><u>Correction Needed</u></b>
Is the entire manuscript, including quotations, references, figure captions, and all parts of tables double-spaced? (286)	Y	N	
Are the margins 1.5 inches on all sides? (286)	Y	N	
Are the quotations, references, figure captions, and figures ordered in the stated sequence with the text pages between the abstract and the references? (287)	Y	N	
Are the pages numbered in sequence, with preliminary pages in non-capitalized Roman numerals and the following pages in Arabic Numerals? (326)	Y	N	

Are the page numbers removed from the first page of each chapter? (273)      Y      N

Is past tense used when discussing another researcher's work in the literature review? (42)      Y      N

**Title Page and Abstract**

**OK?**

**Correction Needed**

Is the title not more than 10 to 12 words? (296)      Y      N

Does the byline reflect the institution and department where the work was conducted? (296)      Y      N

Is the abstract about one page (Approximately 300 words)? (298)      Y      N

**Headings and Subheadings**

**OK?**

**Correction Needed**

Are the appropriate levels of headings and subheadings used? (113)      Y      N

**Copyright and Quotations**

**OK?**

**Correction Needed**

Is written permission to use previously published materials, tables, or figures included in the appendices? (333)      Y      N

Are page numbers provided in the text for all quotations? (292)      Y      N

**Tables and Figures**

**OK?**

**Correction Needed**

Does every table column have a heading? (156)      Y      N

Have all vertical table rules been omitted? (173)      Y      N

Are all figures and tables mentioned in the text? (154)            Y     N

Are all figure and table headings brief, but clear and explanatory? (155)            Y     N

Are the elements in the figures large enough to remain legible even after the Figure has been reduced to margin limits? (177)            Y     N

Are all figures numbered with Arabic numerals in the order in which they are first mentioned in the text? (198)            Y     N

**References and Reference List**

**OK?**

**Correction Needed**

Are the references (both in parenthetical text citations and in the reference list) ordered alphabetically by the authors' surnames? (207)            Y     N

Are inclusive page numbers for all articles or chapters in books provided in the reference list? (216)            Y     N

Are the citations in the reference list formatted according to APA style? (216)            Y     N

Are all references complete? (216)            Y     N

**Comments:**

- ✓ Make sure the original is printed on 8 ½ x 11 inch (22 x 28 cm) white 25% rag bond paper that is at least 20 pound weight.
- ✓ Please check your final copies for pagination, orientation and other errors. These must be corrected before the publisher binds them.