

## **Student Guide to Preparing a Quality Master's Thesis**

The Master's thesis should demonstrate a student has acquired the methodological skills to conduct empirical research, evaluate appropriately the data collected, report the findings in a professionally prescribed manner, and interpret the significance of the research at an appropriate level of generalization.

A major purpose of the Master's thesis is to help students acquire skills for becoming competent scientific researchers. The most common form of writing required of researchers in all settings is the empirical journal article. Because this form of writing differs in significant ways from other forms of prose, developing students' skills in the use of this writing style is an important aspect of graduate training. Therefore, one strongly recommended format for the Master's thesis is one modeled after an empirically-based article submitted to a scholarly journal. However, final decisions on the approach to thesis format is between the student and advisor.

In general, the introduction to the thesis should emphasize the theoretical rationale for the student's particular research (i.e., why this particular study with these particular methods?), rather than a comprehensive review of all the potentially relevant literatures. Even so, students should be familiar with all relevant literatures and will be subject to questions about them during the oral defense. A typical thesis is usually around 30-50 typed, double-spaced pages (depending in part on the number and/or complexity of the reported studies, etc.). The Master's thesis may include a slightly more elaborate review of the relevant literature, more complete report of results, or more comprehensive discussion of results than a traditional empirical journal article. For some studies, it will be important to make available to interested readers supplementary materials, such as copies of scales, extended data tables, etc. Such materials can be placed in appendices, but it should be possible for a reader to understand the thesis without reference to such materials.

Your research and its presentation are a responsibility shared by you, your advisor, and the committee; but, the format must meet the standards of ASU's Graduate Education. The manual provided by ASU Graduate Education specifies certain requirements pertaining to style, organization, format and reproduction applicable to all theses at Arizona State University. However, this manual is not intended to be a style guide; the general style of your thesis, including documentation of reference materials, should conform to the APA style guide and formally approved by your committee. The manuscript you submit must be error-free and ready for publication.

**The Graduate School reviews all theses to ensure that the requirements of this manual and the appropriate style guide have been met. Please contact their office at (480) 965-3521 if you have any questions. Additionally, please look at our MS Program Handbook (ADD LINK), or on the Graduate Education Web page if you need assistance with preparing (<https://graduate.asu.edu/format-manual>) or submitting your thesis manuscript (<https://graduate.asu.edu/sites/default/files/cdpm/how-to-use-online-format-tool.pdf>).**

**Each committee member needs to complete the following form at the defense and return to the Director.**

## THESIS DEFENSE RUBRIC

To be completed by each committee member and returned as a set to the MS Director.

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Member Name \_\_\_\_\_

**ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/CLARIFICATIONS MAY BE WRITTEN ON THE BACK.**

	<b>Below Expectations</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations</b>
<b>WRITTEN DOCUMENT</b>			
Theoretical/empirical rationale (e.g., quality of research problem discussion)			
Adequacy of methods and description of study			
Appropriateness of data analyses			
Adequacy of interpreting results within existing research			
Overall quality of writing			
<b>ORAL DEFENSE</b>			
Understanding of the theoretical context of research question			
Understanding of methodology related to research question			
Understanding of their analyses and results			
Overall quality of response to questions			
Quality of presentation (e.g., Powerpoint slides)			