OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Thesis/Dissertation/Book(s)/Journal Article(s) Guidelines

Updated Fall 2026

*All students and committee chairs are strongly encouraged to attend one of the **Thesis/Dissertation Workshops** held each semester. The Workshop slides and a link to the recording are on the OGS website: https://www.cmich.edu/academics/graduate-studies/student-services/thesis-dissertation

Theses/Dissertations/Book(s)/Journal Article(s) are capstone experiences for graduate students at CMU. Graduate students at CMU who must submit a thesis/dissertation/book(s)/ journal article(s) as part of their degree requirements must comply with the formatting guidelines established by the Graduate Committee and Graduate Studies. The Graduate Studies guidelines here take precedence over previous publications issued by Graduate Studies, and any program-specific instructions that do not comply with these policies.

I. When should I Apply for Graduation?

Students should apply to graduate through the Degree Progress System at least one semester prior to graduation. Students must apply to graduate, even if they do not plan to participate in commencement. Applying for graduation generates an audit of the student's academic file and notifies the university the student intends to graduate. It is better to apply even if you are not sure you will meet the deadline; you can always re-apply for the next graduation deadline.

II. Journal Article and Book-style documents

A. When can I submit a Journal Article or Book-style thesis or dissertation?

- Check with your Program/Department to see is this option is allowed, or if you must use the traditional format
- Each journal article/chapter needs to be content that has either been published, or you intend to submit the work for publication AND the student is lead author, or student is second author with the faculty member as the lead author. See NOTE in IIB for co-authored articles.

- You may use the (intended) journal's formatting requirements in each journal article/chapter. Graduate Studies tries to be flexible; students should let the Graduate Studies reviewer know if revisions are requested that are contrary to the requirements of their publisher or journal(s).
- See IIIB for Required Format of Preliminary pages.

B. How many 'journal articles' are needed?
   - One or more journal articles written by the student can replace a traditional thesis.
   - Two or more journal articles written by the student can replace a traditional dissertation.
   - NOTE: Co-authored articles that contain a significant contribution by the student, but were not written by the student, may be included in an Appendix.

C. An introduction and/or discussion section can be included in addition to the journal article(s), depending on your program requirements.

III. Format for Traditional Theses/Dissertations and for Preliminary Pages of Journal article compilation and Traditional theses/dissertations – see helpful examples in Workshop slides!

A. What is the format for Traditional theses/Dissertations?
   - APA format: most current edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. See APA Resources in IIIC.
   - Exceptions to APA style requirement include references, footnotes and endnotes where students can use disciple-appropriate styles.

B. What is the format of Preliminary Pages for ALL theses/dissertations/journal articles/books?
   - Use APA style for the Preliminary pages, e.g. title page, abstract, table of contents. See part IV below for details.

C. APA Formatting Resources
   - APA Style Website (https://apastyle.apa.org/)
   - Style and grammar guidelines: https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/
   - Handouts and guides: https://apastyle.apa.org/instructional-aids/handouts-guides
   - Tutorials: https://apastyle.apa.org/instructional-aids/tutorials-webinars
   - Purdue OWL Website (https://owl.purdue.edu/)

- APA Style Introduction: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html
- APA Style Overview and Workshop: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_overview_and_workshop.html

- YouTube Videos- APA Style-Professional Paper Formatting: https://youtu.be/jDd_tiDaY4E

IV. Preliminary Pages Requirements

A. Every thesis/dissertation/book(s)/journal article(s) must include: title page, abstract, table of contents, list of tables/figures (if they appear within the chapters), and bibliography. Use APA format as described above.

B. The title page must include the title, student name, document type, program, and month and year of oral defense.

C. The following pages are optional and may be included: copyright, dedication, acknowledgments, list of tables/figures (if they appear after the chapters at the end of your document), and appendix.

D. Please review the example/template paper available on the Graduate Studies website for a visual on how these requirements should appear.

V. Policy on the use of AI; Review of iThenticate/Plagiarism and Copyright Permissions – please attend a Workshop and/or see helpful Workshop slides!

A. The CMU Academic Integrity policy states: "Written or other work which students submit must be the product of their own efforts and must be consistent with appropriate standards of professional ethics."

- The work in a thesis or dissertation is understood to be original, independent, and ethically conducted. CMU considers GenAI tools to be useful in some situations (e.g. editing) but not appropriate as a replacement for original thought.
- Before using GenAI tools, students are expected to obtain permission from their committee chair. If the chair agrees any usage is appropriate, the specific GenAI tool(s) should be defined (e.g. MS Copilot).

- Citation of AI: Students are required to cite the use of GenAI tools for all sections of the thesis or dissertation where the tool was used (https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt).
- Acknowledgement of AI in the Appendix: In the Appendix of the Thesis or Dissertation, students must write an AI Acknowledgement following the guidelines at CMU Libraries Research Guides, https://libguides.cmich.edu/ai_libraries/citation. Details on when and how specific AI tools were used in the research and writing process needs to be described. If a student has not used an GenAI tools to complete their thesis/dissertation, they need to explicitly make this assertion.
- An additional consideration before using generative AI is the risk of uploading sensitive or confidential scholarly data that are subject to ethical or legal requirements. Students are subject to all guidelines and policies from CMU OIT including but not limited to policy 3-30 Data Stewardship that outlines three classifications of data that require varying levels of protection.

B. Ask your committee chair to run your document through iThenticate 2.0 to generate a plagiarism report and an AI report well before your oral defense. A user guide for iThenticate 2.0 is posted on our website: https://www.cmich.edu/academics/graduate-studies/student-services/thesis-dissertation

- The iThenticate report must be generated without using any Filters beyond: bibliography, quoted text, cited text, OR any Exclusions except Submitted works that are prior drafts of the same document. If the report was not run correctly, you will be asked to resubmit the completion form with a correctly-run report.
- OGS expects committee chairs to discuss both reports with students. Note the AI report has limitations and is available to facilitate discussions between chairs and students but is not reviewed by OGS.
- The committee chair is required to attach the iThenticate similarity report of the final copy of the document (without any track changes) to the completion form in DocuSign.
  - If your committee chair needs an iThenticate 2.0 account, they should contact Graduate Studies at cgsthesis@cmich.edu or 989-774-1318.
  - How to interpret iThenticate reports:

- The overall Similarity percentage is not helpful nor used by OGS to determine plagiarism. You need to read the detailed report and scroll through the entire report of the entire document.
- Of highest concern are two or more sentences in a row that are identical/nearly identical to a source or multiple sources (patchwork plagiarism). Multiple, scattered sentences that are identical/nearly identical to a source are also a problem. To avoid plagiarizing, significant changes in wording and sentence structure are required, i.e. sufficient paraphrasing is needed.
- Use quotation marks when reproducing an exact definition, https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/citations/quotations

C. Ask your committee chair to review your document for Copyright issues.
   - If you include any image(s), figures, or tables from any publications, including your own, you must reference the author AND include in the Appendix of the document either the copyright permission to use the image(s) from the publisher or the creative commons statement. Don't forget that Open Access is not the same as a Creative Commons license.
   - Include all permission emails or memos as an appendix in your document.

VI. Service of a Typist

A. A typist is allowed to produce the final draft of a thesis/dissertation/book(s)/journal article(s) for formatting purposes only.
B. All arrangements, including the financial aspect, are handled directly between the typist and the student.
C. Revisions required by Graduate Studies are sent directly to the typist. The student and the typist will receive confirmation when the thesis/dissertation/book(s)/journal article(s) is finalized. Any possibility of using an editor is a decision to be made by the program or department. A list of available typists is available on the Graduate Studies website.

VII. Planning the Oral Defense

A. Does Graduate Studies have a specific deadline for the oral defense? No, however, some programs have oral defense deadlines.
B. Students should work with their committee to identify an oral defense date. Students should present a polished document to their committee with ample time for the committee to thoroughly review before the defense.

C. Graduate Studies does not need to be notified of your oral defense.

VIII. Submission of Thesis/Dissertation/Book(s)/Journal Article(s)

A. Submit document after successful Oral Defense and Committee Approval.
    - Before submission to OGS, students need to resolve any issues or document modifications requested by the committee and remove all track changes edits.
    - Before submission, students must ensure the document is accurate regarding content and has been proofread and edited carefully for correct grammar.

B. The iThenticate report corresponding to the final version of the thesis/dissertation must be attached to the Completion Sign-Off form (no track changes comments should remain).

C. Submit the following by the Deadlines for each Graduation Date, posted on the Graduate Studies website.
    - Completion Sign-Off Form (Plan A for Masters, Dissertation for Doctoral) using DocuSign (link available on the Graduate Studies website)
    - Final, defended, committee-approved thesis/dissertation/book(s)/journal article(s) as a Word document (preferred) or pdf unless document was created in LaTeX. emailed to cgsthesis@cmich.edu

IX. Graduate Studies Final Steps

A. Graduate Studies will review the iThenticate report and review it for formatting requirements and will email the student with any necessary revisions within 10 business days.

B. Students have approximately one month to finalize their document with Graduate Studies, see deadlines on Graduate Studies website.

C. Once the thesis/dissertation/book(s)/journal article(s) has been approved by Graduate Studies, the document will be saved as a PDF and forwarded to the Park Library for uploading into the University's Digital Collections. At that time, the thesis/dissertation/book(s)/journal article(s) requirement will be removed from the student's graduation audit.
    - The Park Library will only accept items for Digital Collections uploading from Graduate Studies. Documents submitted to the Park Library by students or committee chairs will not be accepted.

- The Digital Collections is a publicly available repository. This means your thesis/dissertation/book(s)/journal article(s) will be available to people within CMU as well as outside of CMU and will be visible through search engines such as Google.
- If you would like to delay the uploading of your document to the Digital Collections for 12 months because of conflict with a potential patent or publishing, please check that box on your sign-off form.

X. Program/Department Last Steps

It is the responsibility of the graduate student to check with their program/department to ask if a bound copy, microfilming, or uploading to ProQuest is required. Students should follow their department's directions. Students are responsible for keeping a copy of their final thesis/dissertation/book(s)/journal article(s). Graduate Studies does not retain copies.

Congratulations on completing your Graduate Degree!

Important Links

Degree Progress System (https://apps.cmich.edu/tools/studentcenter/student/progress/)

Forms: Prospectus, Plan A Sign-off, Dissertation Sign-off (https://www.cmich.edu/academics/graduate-studies/student-services/thesis-dissertation)

Graduate Studies Deadlines (https://www.cmich.edu/academics/graduate-studies/student-services/graduate-student-deadlines)

Graduate Faculty Status Info and Forms (https://www.cmich.edu/academics/graduate-studies/faculty-and-staff-resources-for-graduate-studies/graduate-faculty-status)