

# Master's Thesis Guidelines

## Culminating Work for Graduate Programs

By SUNY guidelines, all graduate programs culminate in one of these requirements: comprehensive examination, master's project or master's thesis. Departments may require more than one, and they may add other requirements as well.

## General Information on Master's Theses

**Preparing for a thesis:** Students need to think carefully about who will serve as the adviser and readers for this important work. Some departments have a standard process; some do not. Either way, students should think carefully about whom best could support them through the completion of the project or thesis. This work will be intense and time-consuming, and the selection of an appropriate adviser is essential to success.

**Guidelines for selecting a thesis adviser:** Ideally, your thesis adviser should be:

- Someone knowledgeable in the specific subject matter
- Someone who has the time to serve as a mentor
- Someone you have studied with during your graduate program.

You should meet with your approved or potential adviser sometime **prior** to the semester you plan to register for the thesis. Have an idea of the subject you wish to research and a plan for how you plan to complete the thesis. After a faculty member agrees to serve as your adviser, complete all the required paperwork and register for the class.

**Graduate Studies requirements for readers:** Graduate Studies requires two readers per thesis, one of which should be your adviser. However, your department may require more readers; it may also require an oral defense. You are urged to get all this information – as well as all deadlines – BEFORE your register. Be sure you are clear about the requirements of your department or program before you register.

**Faculty from other institutions:** One thesis committee member from outside the college may be recommended to serve on your committee. This person must meet the approval of your department, department chair, and the director of Graduate Studies through the standard approval process for graduate faculty status at Buffalo State. A copy of the non-Buffalo State faculty member's curriculum vitae must accompany the nomination application.

**Registering for a thesis:** Students may register for 3-6 credits for a thesis. Students register either for a course in Banner or by submitting a completed Individual Study Application and thesis proposal to the Registrar's Office by the first Friday of the semester desired to register. The extensiveness of the research should reflect graduate level work and be suitable in depth for the credit hours being awarded. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the style manual and any special requirements of the department.

## **Submission of Thesis to the Academic Department and Graduate Studies Office**

Graduate Studies requires that all theses be electronically submitted through the Digital Commons site (via Butler Library) at Buffalo State at least three weeks before the end of the desired semester.

### **1. Approval from Thesis Adviser and Readers**

The advising/mentoring process for the writing of your thesis is determined by your department. Consult with your adviser closely and be sure you understand all the details of this process. You may be required to give copies of your thesis to your adviser and all your readers. Or, your adviser may share the thesis with the readers. Whatever process is utilized by your department, the first step in the approval process is to assure approval by all your readers and adviser. After, and only after, it has been approved by all readers and adviser you will upload your thesis to the Digital Commons Web site. You obtain the guidelines for uploading from your adviser.

Your thesis will be much more accessible through Digital Commons. Because of this, you may wish to determine an embargo period with your adviser. An embargo will temporarily delay the public release of your thesis and is typically chosen due to a pending patent, research contract requirements, and/or copyright/publisher negotiations. Please discuss this option with your thesis adviser.

**As of fall 2011, Graduate Studies does not require submission of a bound thesis.**

### **2. Approval from Chair and Graduate Director**

After you are given approval and upload your thesis to the Digital Commons site, it will be sent to your department chair. The chair of the department will then approve it and send it to the graduate studies director **OR** return it for revisions. You will be notified via e-mail if revisions are necessary. Once the graduate director receives it from the chair, he/she will review it as well. After approval by the graduate director, the thesis will be published through Digital Commons.

**Only after the thesis is approved by the graduate director will the thesis be accepted by Graduate Studies. At that point, if all the other requirements of your degree program have been met, you will be eligible for graduation. You will be notified via e-mail when you have been cleared for graduation.**

This process of approval can be time consuming. Be aware of adviser, department, and Graduate Studies deadlines. See your adviser for submission guidelines after your thesis has been completed and approved.

### **For those students who receive an 'IP' grade for the thesis:**

**Graduate Thesis/Project Continuation Policy:** Graduate students who do not complete their capstone thesis requirement by the end of the term in which they have registered will receive an IP graduate on their transcript. Once a student has:

1. registered for the maximum number of credits included in their graduate programs' standard curriculum, \*
2. received an IP grade in the required thesis course(s),
3. not completed the thesis requirement after two additional semesters have elapsed (not including summer or J-term),

the student must register for 722 Thesis/Project Extended (non-credit bearing but billable for 1 credit at existing graduate tuition rates) for each fall and spring semester until the thesis has been completed. If the student does not register for the 722 course, he or she will become an inactive student and will have to reapply for admission to the program and pay all other appropriate fees before the capstone thesis can be completed. Reapplication must be made in accordance with the established deadline dates and current admission requirements.

During this two-semester time period, it is strongly encouraged that the student register for the 721 (Thesis/Project Continuation) course. This is a non-credit bearing, non-billable course, that maintains account activity. Students are urged to complete their thesis in a timely manner to avoid additional costs.

## **Thesis Specifications**

Your thesis committee adviser and members determine the required standards for content and writing style according to the discipline in which the thesis is written. The director of Graduate Studies will evaluate the approved manuscript to ensure compliance with disciplinary style and with the specifications found in this manual. Conformity to these requirements is essential as your thesis will be accessible electronically through the Digital Commons at Buffalo State.

## **Manuscript Preparation**

### **Style**

The content, format and style of all elements of your thesis must conform to the standard style manuals appropriate to your discipline as approved by your committee adviser. Listed below are several recognized style manuals.

### **Style Manuals**

American Psychological Association (2009). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed., second printing). Washington, DC: The American Psychological Association.

Gibaldi, J. (2009). MLA handbook for writers of research papers (7th ed.). New York, NY: Modern Language Association of America.

Strunk Jr., W., & White, E. B. (2000). The elements of style (4th ed.). New York, NY: Longman.

Turabian, K. L. (2007). *A manual for writers of term papers, theses and dissertations* (7th ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

University of Chicago Press. (2010). *The Chicago manual of style* (16th ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

**Type-Face and Size:** Select 12-point fonts

- The following fonts are acceptable:
  - Times New Roman (12 pt.)
  - Arial (12 pt.)
- Use the same type-face and size throughout the document; tables, figures and appendices may use a different type-face and size

**Margins:** All margins should be 1 inch

- Left margin – leave 1 ½ inches if you are interested in binding your thesis
- Indentations - five spaces in from the left margin
- Left justify all text

**Digital Commons Formatting:** Use 8 ½” x 11” paper size with standard 1” margins unless otherwise specified. (If you are considering binding your thesis, the left margin must be 1 ½” to allow for binding.)

**Pagination:** Follow the guidelines in your discipline’s style manual regarding pagination.

If your manual does not provide specific guidance regarding pagination, paginate as follows:

- The preliminary pages (pages up to the first page of the text) are numbered with lower-case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, etc.); are placed at the top of the page, at the right margin (1” down from the top edge and 1” from the right edge).
- Beginning with the first page of the text and continuing to the end of the manuscript, number pages in sequence in Arabic numbers (1, 2, 3, etc.); are placed at the top of the page, at the right margin (1” down from the top edge and 1” from the right edge) or may be placed at the bottom of the page (centered and 1” from the bottom edge).

**Spacing:** Follow the guidelines in your discipline’s style manual regarding spacing.

If your manual does not provide specific guidance regarding spacing, space as follows:

- Double-space the main body of the thesis
- Single-space long quotations, tables, footnotes, endnotes, bibliography entries
- Double-space between entries

**Photographs and Drawings (inclusion of artwork):** For theses completed in the design or fine arts studio disciplines, photographs or digital images of at least 12 artworks must be included in the manuscript. You will have the opportunity to electronically add additional files when

submitting your thesis to Digital Commons. Scanned or digital documents can be included in these files. Below are the guidelines if artwork is included within the thesis.

**Photographs and Drawings (inclusion within document):** Photographs, drawings such as charts, maps, graphs and diagrams should appear on 8 ½” x 11” pages, with standard margins. Photographs should be large enough for details to be easily discernible. Photos may appear within the text of the manuscript or may be presented in an Appendix. Captions must be within the standard margins or on a page immediately preceding the photographs.

**Required format for all theses – in this order**

- Abstract Title Page (optional)
- Abstract of Thesis
- Title Page (see page 6 or 7)
- Dedication and/or Acknowledgment Pages (optional)
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables, Illustrations, Charts, or Graphs (must fit inside regular margins) – if necessary
- Text and footnotes if required by style manual
- Endnotes if required by style manual
- Bibliography or Works Cited
- Appendix (if applicable)
- Glossary (if applicable)
- Vita (optional – not numbered and not to exceed one typed page)

**Binding Your Thesis:** Beginning in fall 2011, students are not required to submit a bound copy of their thesis to the Graduate Studies. Theses are uploaded to the Digital Commons at Buffalo State for review and preservation. Should you or your department wish for you to bind your thesis, you may obtain suggested formatting instructions from Graduate Studies.

State University of New York  
College at Buffalo  
Department of Biology

Behavioral Thermoregulation of the  
Largemouth Bass, *Micropterus salmoides*

A Thesis in  
Biology

by

Claire J. Student

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

August 2001 (thesis completion – May, August or December and year of thesis completion)

Approved by:

Christopher M. Pennuto, Ph.D. (Name of Thesis Adviser)  
Professor of Biology (Academic Title)  
Chairperson of the Committee/Thesis Adviser

Gregory J. Wadsworth, Ph.D. (Name of Chairperson)  
Chair and Associate Professor of Biology (Academic Title)

*SAMPLE A2 – Title Page, Multidisciplinary Studies Majors*

Buffalo State College  
State University of New York

State University of New York  
College at Buffalo

Behavioral Thermoregulation of the  
Largemouth Bass, *Micropterus salmoides*

A Thesis in  
Multidisciplinary Studies

by

Claire J. Student

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Arts (or Science)

August 2001 (thesis completion – May, August or December and year of thesis completion)

Approved by:

Christopher M. Pennuto, Ph.D. (Name of Thesis Adviser)  
Professor of Biology (Academic Title)  
Chairperson of the Committee/Thesis Adviser