

# **Graduate School Thesis & Dissertation Manual**

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### Overview

Electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) are digital representations of the traditional work by a graduate student in fulfillment of requirements for a graduate degree. An ETD can be a simple textual document converted to a standard electronic format, such as Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF), or a complex combination of images and formats. Electronic theses and dissertations make VCU graduate student research, scholarly pursuits, and creativity available online as full-text documents and multimedia presentations for use by the university community and others involved in research. Students are required to submit their theses or dissertations electronically to the Graduate School.

The VCU Graduate School Electronic Thesis and Dissertation manual provides a general set of guidelines approved by the University Graduate Council. However, the student's thesis/dissertation committee is the final arbiter concerning the thesis/dissertation's final acceptability. The committee's responsibility includes approving style and format and technical and professional competency.

The Graduate School does not issue specific format requirements for Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD). Thesis or dissertation requirements may differ for individual schools and departments. Graduate students must check with the appropriate individuals in their schools to determine specific requirements and to review the degree requirements as listed in the [VCU Bulletin](#). Students should follow the guidelines of the school or college's ETD manual if there is one. If not, students should use the Graduate School ETD manual as their guide.

### Preparation of Thesis and Dissertation

#### **Formats**

ETDs are created for submission to the [VCU Scholars Compass](#). There is a 2GB limit for the upload. Word documents are not accepted. PDF is the preferred format, and Word files are accepted but are converted to PDF. Other recommended formats include:

#### **Text**

- PDF or PDF/A (.pdf)

#### **Image**

- TIFF (.tif)
- JPEG (.jpg)
- JPEG2000 (.jp2)
- GIF (.gif)

#### **Video**

- MPEG-4 (.mp4)

#### **Audio**

- WAV (.wav)
- AIF (.aif)
- MPEG-3 (.mp3)

Recommended formats are most likely to remain viable in the future. They meet the highest preservation standards and are most likely to be sustainable in the future. The [VCU Scholars Compass](#), maintained by the VCU Libraries, will accept other formats but cannot guarantee that files in every format, particularly proprietary ones, will be able to be accessed in the future. VCU Libraries commits to bit preservation for all file formats. This means that the actual bits of each file will be preserved. There is no guarantee, however, that those bits will continue to be functional over time.

Students are encouraged to view ETDs in [VCU Scholars Compass](#) or [sample templates](#) for formatting designs. Students should also provide a sample of their theses or dissertations to their advisors, and graduate program directors, to ensure that the program's ETD requirements are met.

When naming your file, please use your last name, an underscore, your first name, an underscore, and your degree. For example, Smith\_John\_MS.pdf

VCU is committed to providing equal access to programs, online content, services, and activities. All submissions must be accessible.

### **Mandatory Components**

#### **Title page**

The title should use descriptive words that will ensure electronic retrieval. The title page includes the student's name, the date the advisory committee approved the thesis/dissertation, and the partial fulfillment statement.

#### **Partial fulfillment statement:**

A thesis/dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of (list degree, for example, Master of Science, Doctor of Philosophy) at Virginia Commonwealth University.

#### **Copyright**

Copyright is vested upon creation of any original work. Although it is not required, students may indicate copyright. A copyright signals to readers that you acknowledge your legal rights and that you are the copyright owner. It also tells the year you first published the project. For an overview of copyright issues pertaining to research, refer to "Copyright Law & Graduate Research: New Media, New Rights, and Your New Dissertation" by Kenneth D. Crews of Indiana State University.

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#### **Abstract**

The abstract is a summary of the thesis or dissertation — a statement of the experiment or problem, the procedure followed, the results, and the conclusions. It should be a succinct account, allowing others to make an accurate decision as to whether the full contents will aid their review. An abstract page is a mandatory item for all theses and dissertations.

#### **Vita**

The vita is a brief biographical sketch of the student, giving education (institutions attended), degrees and honors, accomplishments, titles of publications, teaching or professional experiences, and other relevant data.

### Optional Components

#### **Reference Material or Bibliography**

Because the thesis and dissertation are considered professional contributions, students should follow the method of annotation used in their disciplines. Most scientific journals publish instructions to authors on required manuscript style and format. **Students must first check with their school/college or program to confirm that a reference section is required for their work.**

The three style manuals listed below are commonly used and can be helpful references. When contradictions arise, however, the style manual approved by the school usually takes precedence.

Turabian, Kate. [\*A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations\*](#). Latest Edition, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- [\*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association\*](#). Latest Edition.
- [\*MLA Handbook\*](#). Latest Edition.

#### **Appendices**

The appendix provides a place for supplementary material. Tables too detailed for text presentation, technical notes, schedules, forms, case studies, and illustrative material are common appendix materials. Each category of material should be given a separate number or letter following the same consecutive sequence. Appendices can be titled descriptively at the author's discretion; however, if one is titled, all must be.

#### **Acknowledgments**

An acknowledgment expressing the student's recognition of and appreciation for any special assistance is optional but customarily included.

### **Electronic Submission of Theses and Dissertations**

Following general acceptance of a document's readiness for final defense by the advisory committee, the final defense is scheduled. The student's advisory committee distributes the final defense examination schedule to the university community. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with all of the rules and procedures which apply to thesis/ dissertation preparation and final committee approval. Students must follow the regulations of [Thesis and Dissertation examinations](#) as outlined in the VCU Bulletin.

At the time of the defense, a thesis or dissertation must be approved by members of a student's advisory committee with no more than one negative vote. A committee member's approval is given by signing the [approval form for thesis and dissertation and final oral defense \(ETD Approval Form\)](#). All information on this form must be filled out completely when submitted to the Graduate School for the Graduate Dean's signature. It is the student's responsibility to obtain all signatures before submitting the approval form to the Graduate School. **The ETD approval form is not included in submission to VCU Scholars Compass.** The function of the [ETD approval form](#) is to enable the student's director, committee, and the dean of the school, or the dean's representative, to indicate that the work satisfies the thesis or dissertation requirement for the particular degree.

### **Research Approval**

When filling out your ETD approval form, you must also check the approval number box. Your options are IRB, IACUC, Exempt, and Not Applicable.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at VCU is charged with reviewing all research protocols involving humans to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local regulations. The IRB must review and approve all activities that meet the definition of both 'human subjects' and 'research' before work may begin. Specialized training is required for individuals conducting research involving human subjects. The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) is a self-regulating entity that, according to U.S. federal law, must be established by institutions that use laboratory animals for research or instructional purposes to oversee and evaluate all aspects of the institution's animal care and use program.

Consult your thesis/dissertation chair or contact the [Office of Research](#) if you have questions about which option applies to you.

## Embargoes

When filling out your ETD approval form, you must also check the release option of your ETD to the Web. The choices for embargo are:

- Immediate release
- One-year embargo
- Two-year embargo
- Five-year embargo
- "Do not release until copyright has expired"

Typical reasons for selecting a delayed release of the ETD include proprietary work and future publishing rights. The Graduate School reserves the right not to accept the embargo terms. The release option you select on your ETD approval form must match up with the release option you select when you upload your thesis/dissertation to the VCU Scholars Compass.

The ETD approval form must be submitted to the Graduate School no later than the deadline listed on the [academic calendar](#) for the semester in which the student is graduating.

## Uploading ETD Materials

When planning to meet the Graduate School deadline, keep in mind that it can take several days for the ETD approval form to be signed by your school/college dean and reach the Graduate School.

Once the student's committee has approved the student's ETD, the student must upload the approved submission to the [VCU Scholars Compass](#). The thesis/dissertation title on the ETD approval form must be the title that is approved at the thesis/dissertation defense. **The title on the approval form must be the same title that is submitted to the VCU Scholars Compass.** Once the [ETD approval form](#) is received in the Graduate School, the Graduate School is then able to review and accept the thesis/dissertation submission to the [VCU Scholars Compass](#). The review by the Graduate School is strictly to ensure that the document has been uploaded properly.

Once you upload your file to the VCU Scholars Compass and submit the signed [ETD approval form](#) to the Graduate School, you will receive a confirmation e-mail via your VCU e-mail account. Your e-mail will either confirm that the submission has been accepted or rejected. If the submission is rejected, the e-mail will alert you to the reason for the rejection and provide you with instructions for resubmission. The uploaded electronic submission cannot be accepted into the Scholars Compass until the Graduate School receives the signed [ETD approval form](#) with the proper signatures and information filled out on the form.

An online video tutorial on submitting an ETD can be found on the VCU Libraries website. <http://guides.library.vcu.edu/content.php?pid=160670&sid=1358707>.

A graduation checklist is provided in [Appendix 1](#) to ensure that all thesis/dissertation procedures have been completed.



**Survey of Earned Doctorates (For doctoral students only)**

The Survey of Earned Doctorates (<https://sed-ncses.org>) must be completed no later than the submission of the ETD approval form to the Graduate School. You will be asked to provide your name, institution, department, graduation month and year, and e-mail address. An e-mail with login information to access the online SED will be sent to the address provided after you complete the registration, enabling you to stop and return to the survey without losing your previous responses.

More information about the SED can be found at

[http://www.norc.org/Research/Projects/Pages/survey-of-earned-doctorates-\(sed\).aspx](http://www.norc.org/Research/Projects/Pages/survey-of-earned-doctorates-(sed).aspx)

**Displaying Student Work**

In addition to Scholar's Compass, students can also display their work in the following areas:

- ProQuest
- Publications in journals
- Exhibitions

Students are encouraged to check with their school/college or department about where they can display their work.

An ORCID is a universal ID for your research. Increasingly used by funding agencies and publishers, your ORCID will ensure you get full credit for your research. It only takes 5-10 minutes:

1. Go to: [orcid.org](http://orcid.org)
2. Register for an ORCID
3. Connect your new ID to your work as part of your dissertation or thesis submission and on your CV, publications, new grants, and more

You can read more about getting your ORCID and how it will benefit you at

[guides.library.vcu.edu/orcid](http://guides.library.vcu.edu/orcid).

**Binding Hard Copies of Theses and Dissertations**

Since VCU requires electronic submissions, students who desire personal bound print copies of their work will select a binder for the work and pay for the binding themselves. The library does not provide binding services. Commercial binders for binding personal copies of theses and dissertations are listed below. The list includes establishments that can bind copies for students, but it is not an endorsement of the sources.

PhD Book Binding  
<https://phdbookbinding.com>

Uptown Color  
[www.uptowncolor.com](http://www.uptowncolor.com)

Cat Tail Run Bindery  
[www.CatTailRun.com](http://www.CatTailRun.com)

Long's-Roullet Bookbinders,  
Inc.  
<http://longs-roullet.com/thesedisser.htm>

Wythken Printing  
<http://www.wythken.com/>

Thesis on demand  
[www.thesisondemand.com](http://www.thesisondemand.com)

Note: ProQuest provides publishing and preservation services for theses and dissertations worldwide. The company's thesis and dissertation databases have been designated a Library of Record by the U.S. Library of Congress and will be kept in perpetuity. ProQuest also offers binding services as part of its submission process. ProQuest does not charge a fee for dissertations using its Traditional Publishing option. Dissertations are submitted directly by the student through [UMI/ProQuest's ETD Administrator site](#) for VCU. Submission of a VCU thesis or dissertation to ProQuest is not required.

### **Use of Copyrighted Material**

The Fair Use Statute is in the United States Code, Title 17, Section 107. It states that the fair use of a copyrighted work, including reproduction of it, for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, is not an infringement of copyright. In determining whether the use made of a work is fair use, the factors to be considered include 1) the purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes; 2) the nature of the copyrighted work; 3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and 4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. The fact that a work is unpublished does not limit fair use.

### **Intellectual Property Policy**

This Policy shall apply to all University Members, and all University Members should read this Policy. <http://www.research.vcu.edu>

**APPENDIX 1****VCU Graduate School****THESIS/DISSERTATION CHECKLIST**

- \_\_\_ Dissertation/Thesis defended by the last day of classes or by a date set by the department or school.
- \_\_\_ Corrections completed and final copy prepared.
- \_\_\_ Submission of Thesis/Dissertation to the VCU Scholars Compass
  - Naming your file: Please use your last name, an underscore, your first name, an underscore, and your degree. For example, *Smith\_John\_MS.pdf*.
  - Ensure that your submission's title and embargo period match your ETD approval form.
  - Have your abstract and keywords ready.
  - If you have more than one file, please click on the "add another file button" instead of repeating this process more than once.
  - All documents are accessible
- \_\_\_ [ETD Approval form](#) signed by all committee members, graduate program director/department chair, school dean or designee and turned into Graduate School for Graduate Dean's signature. Ensure all information on both pages, including approval numbers and release option (embargo), are completed.

For doctoral students only:

- \_\_\_ [Complete the Survey of Earned Doctorates \(SED\)](#)