

# Standards for Graduate Theses



**Queen's**  
UNIVERSITY

**GRADUATE STUDIES AND  
POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS**

Updated July 2025

## 1.0 Introduction

The School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (SGSPA) sets minimum submission and formatting standards for all theses and standards to which Queen's theses must adhere. This document outlines these standards. Graduate students should consult this document prior to beginning their thesis research and when preparing their thesis for final examination and submission.

A thesis may adhere to one of the following formats:

- a. **Traditional:** a thesis that documents a program of research conducted by the student as part of their degree requirements
- b. **Manuscript, Project, Portfolio, & Research Creation:** a thesis that is comprised of a minimum of two stand-alone components (i.e., manuscripts, entries) or that describes a research creation project (i.e., research that combines creative and academic research practices, and that supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation).

Decisions on the form of a graduate student's thesis must be made in consultation with their supervisor and/or committee. Graduate theses must follow the standards as outlined in this document. Significant departures from the standards as outlined in this document must receive approval by the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs. Students may view sample theses from the range of formats available on the **SGSPA Thesis Showcase website**.

## 2.0 General Guidelines and Regulations

**2.1 General:** The thesis must be expressed in a satisfactory literary form consistent with the discipline concerned and must display a scholarly approach to the subject and a thorough knowledge of it. Parts of the thesis may be prepared in a form suitable for separate publication or dissemination, but the thesis must comprise a coherent account of a unified research project rather than a collection of loosely connected studies. A critical review of previous work related to the subject and a concluding summation of the contribution made in the thesis to scholarship in the chosen field must be included in the thesis. Theses can conform to either the "Traditional" or "Manuscript, Project, Portfolio, & Research Creation" format, though units may limit the format options. Check with your Graduate Assistant or Coordinator about thesis formats acceptable in your unit.

**2.2 Academic Integrity, Artificial Intelligence, and Citations:** The thesis must demonstrate academic integrity by following citation practices in your discipline, acknowledging ideas and words from other authors, and avoids breaches of academic integrity, which is the failure to cite the ideas or work of others or the unauthorized or unacknowledged use of generative artificial intelligence tools. Any copyrighted material including photos, pictures, charts, graphs, maps, etc., must receive full citation within your thesis, on the page of the thesis on which the material appears, and/or in a footnote or reference section. Further, use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) must be declared in the “Statement of Originality and Disclosure of Use of Artificial Intelligence” section of the thesis document (new in 2025). The following guidelines should be consulted when preparing your thesis:

- **Guidelines for AI Use in Graduate Research**
- **Academic Integrity at Queen’s**
- **Queen’s Library Citing and Citation Manager**
- **Copyright Information for Students eBook**

Graduate students also have access to Turnitin, a citation checking software. You can access Turnitin on the **SGSPA Research Resources** webpage.

**2.3 Research Ethics Board (GREB) Approvals:** Any research project that involves human subjects must receive ethics approval from one of the university’s Ethics Boards prior to the start of the project. Health Sciences students receive ethics approval from the Health Sciences Research Ethics Board (HSREB). Non-health sciences students receive ethics approval from the General Research Ethics Board (GREB). If an ethics board submission was required for your research, a copy of the HSREB or GREB approval letter must be included as an appendix in your thesis. For more information on Queen’s Research Ethics Board approval, go to the **Office of Research Services** website.

**2.4 Co-authorship and Collaboration in Thesis Research:** Any collaborative component of a thesis (i.e., co-authorship on manuscripts/entries) should be determined prior to undertaking the research and ideally agreed upon at the proposal stage of the research. If collaborations emerge after the proposal stage, then these should be brought forward to the supervisor (and advisory committee) for consideration prior to advancing with the thesis. If a thesis component involves co-authorship or collaboration, this must be declared in the Co-authorship & Statement of Collaboration section within the thesis (see section 4.0 below).

While manuscripts/entries of a thesis can be collaboratively written by two or more students, two or more students can not submit the same thesis in its entirety. Accordingly, only manuscripts/entries in which a student is a primary or lead

contributor should be included in their thesis. In cases of equal work distribution across two students (i.e., both students equally share first authorship), both students can include up to one manuscript/entry in their thesis but must also include additional manuscripts/entries that reflect their own scholarship within their theses. A student may include manuscripts in their thesis in which faculty members and others are co-authors. The Abstract, General Introduction (or Equivalent), and Final Section/Chapter of a student's thesis should be wholly original and individually written.

**2.5 Manuscripts in Theses:** A manuscript style thesis must include a minimum of two manuscripts; however, the number of manuscripts in a student thesis should be determined in consultation with the student's supervisor and/or supervisory committee. Manuscripts included in a thesis must be complete but do not need to be published or submitted for publication at time of thesis submission.

**2.6 Language of Theses:** All theses must be written in English with the exception of students who wish to represent their thesis in an Indigenous language, in which case an English language translation of the thesis must follow. A thesis may include additional language components (i.e., quotes in additional languages) but these components should be accompanied by an English translation whenever possible. All theses will be examined in English.

**2.7 Multimedia:** In recognition that technology evolves, and new file formats may not be accessible in the future, it is the responsibility of the student to present thesis components in a digitally recognized and accepted format. You may submit multimedia files as part of your e-thesis, as supplementary files. **QSpace** can accept multimedia files, in a variety of standard formats. The multimedia formats currently accepted are:

Audio	Images	Video
AIFF	GIF	AVI & ASF
MPEG Audio	JPEG	MOV
RealAudio	PNG	MPEG
WAV	TIFF	Apple Quicktime Video
	BMP	WMV
	Photo CD	WebM

Currently Library and Archives Canada does not accept multimedia files. However, multimedia files that are part of your thesis will be available on QSpace. For formats not accepted or for components that may be physical art products, external webpages, or other digital platforms, the student should provide sufficient detail and description in the body of the thesis (including through photos of the component) for examiners and readers to understand the context and components without being able to access the original source. Note, solely providing links to external websites containing digital descriptions or thesis components is insufficient for long term access and archiving purposes.

**2.8 Thesis File Naming Convention:** In order to successfully submit your thesis via the E-Thesis submission process, the final version of your thesis must be in PDF format and must be named using the following file naming convention:

**lastname\_firstname\_middleinitial\_finalsubmissionyearmonth\_degree.pdf**

*Example:* Martin\_Alice\_B\_202509\_PhD.pdf

**2.9 Copyright Permission:** Copyright permission is required. If your thesis contains substantial portions of someone else's copyrighted work beyond fair dealing (see Copyright Act Section 29); AND/OR if your thesis contains your own previously published materials (e.g. journal article) where the contract does not contain an exception for use in your thesis, or material (e.g. a chapter, an article) that was co-written with another author. In such cases it is the student's obligation to obtain written permission to reproduce copyright material from the copyright owner (e.g. journal publisher and/or co-authors). For more information about copyright, see the **Queen's Library Copyright Guidelines**.

**2.10 Copyright Symbol:** The international copyright symbol © must appear at the bottom of the title page followed by the candidate's name. The *date* in the copyright notation must be the year the thesis is submitted to QSpace. See section 3.2 for sample.

**2.11 Editing:** Theses must be carefully proofread for typographical errors and mistakes in spelling or grammar before submission for examination. Theses that are difficult to read due to errors are unacceptable for examination and may be returned to the candidate for correction. It is the candidate's responsibility to edit their thesis. Thesis editing resources are available at **SGSPA's Research Resources** and via **Student Academic Success Services**. Errors must be corrected before uploading to QSpace.

**2.12 Final Thesis Review and Upload to QSpace:** Once the defense is scheduled, Ph.D. candidates must also submit their thesis in PDF format to the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs for format review, by email to [thesis@queensu.ca](mailto:thesis@queensu.ca).

One electronic copy of the final thesis, in PDF format revised as recommended by the Thesis Examining Committee and finally approved by the supervisor/committee, must be submitted to fulfill degree requirements to the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs via the E-Thesis Submission process. Steps for finalizing and submitting your thesis can be found on the **Degree Completion – Final Submission**.

**2.13 Thesis Binding:** After your thesis submission has been approved, you may also submit up to two unbound copies of the thesis for final permanent binding. Each paper copy submitted for binding must be in a separate envelope (not campus or padded envelopes) and submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs. Binding of the copy or copies (up to two) as well as mailing costs for your copy, will be arranged and paid for by the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs. Visit the **Degree Completion – Final Submission** webpage for complete procedure for thesis binding.

**2.14 Commitment to Public Knowledge:** Facilitating public access to Queen's theses is central to the institution's commitment to public knowledge dissemination and mobilization. When the final thesis is submitted electronically and approved by the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs, and if the option to "*restrict from publication*" has not been selected, the thesis will be available on [QSpace](#) and worldwide immediately. At the end of the E-Thesis submission process, unless restricted, the archival copy of your thesis is:

- a. Uploaded to QSpace<sup>1</sup>, Queen's institutional digital repository for public access.
- b. Catalogued in the library catalogue.
- c. Transmitted by Queen's Library to Theses Canada.

---

<sup>1</sup> Queen's digital repository, QSpace, is a partnership among Queen's communities, Library and IT Services. QSpace content consists of collection produced by Queen's communities. The collections are managed, preserved and made accessible by Queen's Library and IT Services through QSpace.

**2.15 Restriction of Thesis:** The student may, at the time of submitting the thesis for completion of degree requirements, request that the thesis be restricted. If the restriction request is granted then the archival copy of the thesis will not be submitted to QSpace, Library and Archives Canada, or Proquest, and copies of the thesis held by the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs will not be bound, microfilmed, or deposited in any library. A restriction request will be granted where:

- a. the student provides justifiable reasons for the request (e.g., protect rights to commercial publication, to apply for a patent arising from the research, to honour contractual obligations owed to third parties, for consideration of Indigenous knowledges and at the request of Indigenous communities or members, for political protection, and for personal safety); and
- b. the student's supervisor confirms in writing that they assent to the restriction of the thesis.

In the event that the supervisor does not assent to the restriction of the thesis the restriction request may nonetheless be granted, unless the supervisor provides justifiable reasons for withholding their assent.

The decision to grant or deny the restriction request shall be made by the Associate Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs. Additional information on restricting your thesis can be found on the **SGSPA Final Submission**.

The duration of the restriction shall be five (5) years, with immediate and automatic release to QSpace, Library and Archives Canada, and Proquest, at the end of the restriction period. Students may release their thesis from restriction earlier than 5 years by informing the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs that the restriction may be lifted.

NOTE: The author's name, thesis title and thesis abstract (also known as the thesis metadata) shall be available for all restricted theses through the usual online databases throughout the duration of the restriction. Under extraordinary circumstances, a student may contact the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs to request restriction of the metadata information for the duration of the thesis restriction.

## 3.0 Thesis Formatting Requirements

### 3.1 General Formatting Requirements:

- a. **Sheet Size:** Letter size - 21.5 x 28 cm. (8.5" x 11" inches)
- b. **Margins:** At least 2.5 cm or 1 inch.
- c. **Font size:** A standard font 10–12-point paper size standard is required, but a smaller type size may be used for graphs, formulae and appendices.
- d. **Spacing:** The introductory pages, main text, and bibliography must be double-spaced, except for footnotes, figure captions, and quotations of five lines or more, which may be single-spaced.
- e. **Pagination:** Introductory material before chapter 1: Introduction is to be separately numbered by lower case Roman numerals (i,ii,iii). The main body of the thesis, including the text, bibliography and appendices, must be numbered continuously using Western Arabic numbers (1,2,3). The main body of the thesis starts with the first page (page 1) of the first chapter (or equivalent) and should be numbered accordingly. Page numbers should be positioned on the bottom centre of each page.

**Helpful hints for WORD users:** To ensure page numbers do not appear on the title page, click on the footer and select different 1st page. Use lower case Roman Numerals for the Title Page through to the Nomenclature and/or Glossary Page then insert a section break so that you can change the pagination from Roman Numerals to Arabic numbers page 1 starting with Chapter 1 (or equivalent).

- f. **Tables, Figures and Maps:** These must appear soon after they are first mentioned in the text, or at the end of the chapter in which they are first mentioned and must be labeled appropriately. Wherever possible, the captions should be on the same page as the table/figure.
- g. **Footnotes and References:** Several footnote citation forms are acceptable. Space should be left on the page for any footnotes. There should be a line separating the text from the footnotes. Footnotes may also be collected separately at the end of each chapter. References may appear at the end of each chapter or at the end of the thesis. Notation, referencing and formatting must be consistent throughout the thesis unless agreed upon by supervisory committee.



### 3.2 Title Page Formatting

**Title Page:** Is to be double-spaced and to include the following:

THESIS TITLE

by

Your Full Name

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Program in \* in conformity with the requirements for  
the Degree of \*\*

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Month, year

*(must be the final QSpace submission month and year)*

Copyright © Your Full Name, Year

<b>*Program Names</b>	<b>**Degree Names</b>
Aging and Health	Doctor of Philosophy
Art Conservation	Doctor of Science
Art History	Master of Arts
Biology	Master of Art Conservation
Biomedical and Molecular Sciences	Master of Education
Chemical Engineering	Master of Environmental Studies
Chemistry	Master of Laws
Civil Engineering	Master of Science
Classics	Master of Applied Science
Computing	Master of Urban and Regional Planning
Cultural Studies	
Economics	
Education	
Electrical and Computer Engineering	
English Literature and Creative Writing	
Environmental Studies	
Film and Media (Screen Cultures and Curatorial Studies)	
French Studies	
Gender Studies	
Geography and Planning	
Geological Sciences & Geological Engineering	
Global Development Studies	
Health Quality	
History	
Kinesiology and Health Studies	
Law	
Management - Smith School of Business	
Mathematics and Statistics	
Mechanical and Materials Engineering	
Mining Engineering	
Neuroscience	
Nursing	
Pathology and Molecular Medicine	
Philosophy	
Physics, Engineering Physics and Astronomy	
Political Studies	
Psychology	
Public Health Sciences	
Rehabilitation and Health Leadership	
Rehabilitation Science	
Sociology	
Translational Medicine	
Urban and Regional Planning	

**For the thesis file name, degrees in short are:**

PHD

DSC

MA

MAC

MED

MES

LLM

MSC

MASC

MPL

### 3.3 Traditional Thesis Format

The thesis shall consist of the following sections, in the order specified.

Elements (brief description)	Required or Optional
<b>Title page</b>	Required
<b>Abstract</b> (350 word maximum) Page i	Required
<b>Lay abstract</b> Suited for non-specialist audience ( <b>350 word maximum</b> )	Optional
<b>United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Connections</b> This optional section invites students to detail connections between the thesis and specific UN sustainable development goals.	Optional
<b>Co-authorship &amp; Statement of Collaboration</b> (if applicable) If any work presented in the thesis has been published, submitted, or is part of a collaborative work, the co-authors/co-contributors must be named, and the relative contributions of each stated. Note that co-authors may be other students	Required
<b>Disclosure of Sources of Funding and Conflicts of Interest</b> (if applicable) If the research received any external funding (e.g., Tri-agency, private sector, additional awards), list these sources of funds. Further, disclose any financial conflicts of interests that may have influenced the research or its interpretation.	Required
<b>Statement of Originality and Disclosure of Use of Artificial Intelligence</b> To provide transparency regarding the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in their thesis research, students must declare how AI was used in the research and writing process, including the specific tools used, the reasons for their use, and how the generated content was reviewed. If no AI was used, students can declare, <i>"In the preparation of this thesis/dissertation, no Artificial Intelligence tools were used."</i>	Required
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	Optional
<b>Table of Contents</b> (Include section titles/chapters, major headings and sub-headings with page references)	Required
<b>List of Tables</b> (if applicable)	Required
<b>List of Figures</b> (if applicable)	Required
<b>List of Abbreviations and symbols</b> (if applicable)	Required
<b>Nomenclature and/or Glossary</b> (if applicable)	Required
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b> States the theme, aims, goals, hypotheses or research questions and the purpose in addressing them	Page1 Required

<b>Chapter 2 Literature review/review of scholarly and creative works</b> Description, summary and evaluation of relevant literature and works that form the basis or underpinnings for the research/scholarly work presented in the thesis. This can be a separate section/chapter or contained within the introduction.	Required
<b>Chapter 3 to n: Body of thesis</b> A complete, systematic, and detailed account of the research or scholarly work presented in a manner suitable for the discipline or area of study	Required
<b>Chapter n + 1: Summary and/or conclusions and/or recommendations</b>	Required
<b>Significance, and/or implication(s) and/or application(s)</b> Outlines significance, implications, and/or application of the research to the discipline and beyond	Optional
<b>Reflections on the process</b> A reflection on the process and an articulation the transferable skills and knowledge acquired	Optional
<b>Reference list/bibliography</b>	Required
<b>Appendices:</b> Research Ethics Approval (if applicable). Supplemental materials, information and/or data (e.g. details on methods, techniques, code, design diagrams, process maps, etc.). Each appendix in the Table of Contents should include a short descriptive title (e.g., Appendix A: Survey Questions).	Required

### 3.4 Manuscript, Project, Portfolio, & Research Creation Format

The following sections guide students on requirements for a manuscript, project, portfolio, and research creation thesis, and provide a suggested order. Students should discuss and agree upon the organization of their thesis with their supervisory committee, ensuring the below requirements are reflected in the body of the work.

Elements (brief description)	Required or Optional
<b>Title page</b> (must be in written form)	Required
<b>Abstract (350 word maximum.</b> Must be in written form) Page: i	Required
<b>Lay abstract</b> Suited for non-specialist audience (350 word maximum)	Optional
<b>United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Connections</b> This optional section invites students to detail connections between the thesis and specific UN sustainable development goals.	Optional
<b>Co-authorship &amp; Statement of Collaboration</b> (if applicable) (If any work presented in the thesis has been published, submitted, or is part of a collaborative work, the co-authors/co-contributors must be named, and the relative contributions of each stated. Note that co-authors may be other students)	Required
<b>Disclosure of Sources of Funding and Conflicts of Interest</b> (if applicable) If the research received any external funding (e.g., Tri-agency, private sector, additional awards), list these sources of funds. Further, disclose any financial conflicts of interests that may have influenced the research or its interpretation.	Required
<b>Statement of Originality and Disclosure of Use of Artificial Intelligence</b> To provide transparency regarding the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in their thesis research, students must declare how AI was used in the research and writing process, including the specific tools used, the reasons for their use, and how the generated content was reviewed. If no AI was used, students can declare, <i>"In the preparation of this thesis/dissertation, no Artificial Intelligence tools were used."</i>	Required
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	Optional

<b>Table of Contents</b> Include section or chapter titles, major headings and sub- headings with page references (must be in written form).	Required
<b>List of Tables</b> (if applicable)	Required
<b>List of Figures</b> (if applicable)	Required
<b>List of Abbreviations and symbols</b> (if applicable)	Required
<b>List of Abbreviations and symbols</b> (if applicable)	Required
<b>Nomenclature and/or Glossary</b> (if applicable)	Required
<b>Preamble/Additional Content</b> This optional section can be included when there is preamble content to the thesis (e.g., opening narrative, novella, graphics).	Optional
<b>Chapter 1 General Introduction (or Equivalent Title)</b> Must include the theme, aims, goals, hypotheses, or research questions. May include a description of the form and tradition of knowledge, and a description of the methodology/approach taken. Outline the structure of the thesis and how the various sections combine to address the main goals of the thesis. (Must be in written form).	Page: 1 Required
<b>Chapter 2 Engagement with Literature, Previous Knowledge, and/or Creative Works</b> Forms the basis or underpinnings for the entire body research/scholarly work presented in the thesis that may appear as a separate section, appended to the general introduction, or integrated into and throughout each subsequent section or piece of work. Candidate must demonstrate engagement with and links between their work and previous literature, knowledge, and/or creative works.	Optional
<b>Chapter 3 to n: Entries (Including manuscripts, portfolio entries, research creation artifacts, etc.)</b> A series of main sections, each of which stands alone and could be suitable for dissemination through appropriate means to target relevant audiences. If not described earlier in the thesis, entries should establish engagement with literature, previous knowledge, and/or creative works, and include a description of the methodological decisions and inquiry or research creation process followed. *A given section could be a paper prepared for an academic journal, position paper, policy paper, technical report, popular article, evidence-based business case or other output relevant to research purpose including media-output, creative work, oral-recorded artifact.	Required

<b>Final Section or Chapter: General Discussion, Summary and/or Reflection.</b> Relevant to the comprehensive body of work of the thesis including its potential impact, application, and significance. May include (a) recommendations, implication(s), and/or application(s) to the discipline and beyond; or (b) reflections on the process and an articulation of the transferable skills and knowledge acquired through the inquiry. (Must be in written form.)	Required
<b>Reference list/bibliography</b> (Must be in written form.)	Required
<b>Appendices:</b> Research Ethics Approval (if applicable). Supplemental materials, information and/or data (e.g. details on methods, techniques, code, design diagrams, process maps, etc.). Each appendix in the Table of Contents should include a descriptive title (e.g., Appendix A: Survey Questions).	Required