

Graduate Handbooks Updates and Information 2014 (May 5, 2014)

Changes:

A lot of the changes and suggestions this year stem from the approved recommendations of the University Committee on Graduate Studies that undertook the discussion of Theses and Dissertations in the 21st Century. The revised formatting guidelines are available from <http://grad.msu.edu/etd/>

These are changes that should be incorporated to Graduate Handbooks.

- The review of formatting of theses and dissertations by the Graduate School no longer uses microfilming as the archival tool for the preservation of the documents; only electronic versions of the documents will be kept by the MSU Library and by ProQuest. **Thus, any reference to microfilming or microfilming fees should be removed from the section of the handbooks that describes the process of submitting documents for review by the Graduate School and acceptance by ProQuest.** This change is already reflected in the appropriate sections of the Academic Programs Catalog. This policy change should expedite the review of documents and saves the students the microfilming fee.
- In addition to the main body of a thesis or dissertation, **the Graduate School now permits the submission of supplementary materials to ProQuest.** These supplemental materials will not be reviewed by the Graduate School for formatting requirements, but they must be acceptable by ProQuest and comply with ProQuest's criteria and storage limits. All supplementary materials need the written approval of the thesis/dissertation committee chair.
- **The MSU library may accept supplementary materials approved by the thesis/dissertation committee chair per their collection criteria.** The Graduate School does not review these materials for formatting requirements. Questions about submission of these materials to the MSU library should be directed to the Assistant Director for Digital Information, currently Shawn Nicholson (nicho147@mail.lib.msu.edu).
- A public or lay audience Abstract to precede the conventional disciplinary/technical one is strongly recommended. **If that practice is adopted by the department, then this must be described in the Graduate Handbook.** The formatting requirements for this additional abstract are identical to those for the conventional abstract. The posting of these public abstracts on the department/program/school website is optional, but strongly recommended.

- **Each department/program/school is now required to define in the Graduate Handbooks what constitutes an acceptable thesis or dissertation for the discipline represented by each unit.** The Academic Programs Catalog (<http://www.reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.asp?Section=111#s399>) defines a doctoral dissertation as “original research upon which a dissertation, which makes a significant contribution to knowledge is to be prepared and publish”.

Departments/programs/schools are encouraged to take this requirement seriously and to use this opportunity to identify and reflect upon what a thesis/dissertation should encompass for their particular discipline. This requirement may include expectations about submission of chapters for publication or previous acceptance for publication of one or more chapters.
- In many disciplines the content of one or more chapters of a thesis /dissertation comes directly from papers already published, often with multiple authors in addition to the author of the thesis/dissertation. In this context, graduate program faculty and thesis/dissertation committees and their chairs are urged to consider the appropriateness of including a chapter in a thesis/dissertation that is a multi-authored published paper not written by the author of record of the thesis/dissertation. **If this is deemed appropriate, that practice must be described in the Graduate Handbook. Similarly, if not seen as an acceptable practice, that position must be part of the definition of what is acceptable or not as a thesis/dissertation by the department/program/school.**
- For a thesis or dissertation that consists of one or more chapters that are already published papers: **(a) These chapters must be introduced with the list of all authors, citation for the publication, and include a copy or notation of the written permission from the publisher (who generally holds the copyright) to reprint the article. (b) If multiple articles make up the document, these must be “tied together” with a required general introduction and summary/discussion.** The dissertation/guidance committee chair will decide any further requirements.
- **For dissertations, the final oral defense/examination must consist of two parts described in the Graduate Handbook.** The first is a presentation that must be open to faculty members and members of the public without a vote. Only dissertation committee members may attend the second part, which is the examination portion of the defense per individual department/program/school’s guidelines (see <http://www.reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.asp?Section=111#s401>).

Other Reminders/Suggestions/Announcements:

- 1) The Academic Programs Catalog has been updated to reflect a change in policy about the limit for 999s, the policy now reads: All doctoral students must register for and

successfully complete a minimum of 24 credits and **no more than 36 credits** of doctoral dissertation research (course number 999).

- 2) **GradPlan** was developed for Ph.D. students to lay out their Ph.D. program of study, record faculty approval, and make notes on all the requirements as they are completed. **GradPlan is also the only way final degree certification/degree audit will be conducted beginning in Fall 2016.** The Graduate School will certify the acceptance of each dissertation final format using GradPlan. The Office of the Registrar will access GradPlan to complete degree certification once a student completes an application for graduation. <http://grad.msu.edu/gradplan/Default.aspx> Departments and graduate programs can lay out their own detailed instructions as part of the Guidebooks (a version is available in Word so they can add program specific information).
- 3) The Graduate School endorses the practice of generating **individual development plans (IDPs)** for graduate students and postdocs. If IDPs are endorsed by your unit, then the description of that practice should be part of the content of your Graduate Handbook. In addition to those mentioned above, the Graduate School provides additional tools and strategies for generating IDPs(<http://grad.msu.edu/docs/Individual%20Development%20Plans%20for%20Graduate%20Students.pdf>)
- 4) Substantial revisions were made to the Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities document. The Graduate School will post very soon on its website the final version, once it is approved by the Board of Trustees. If your handbook points to a cached version on your departmental site, please remove it and point to the newest version.
- 5) Faculty with National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) grants from the U.S.D.A. need to be aware that education in the responsible conduct of research is now **required** for program directors, research faculty, postdocs, graduate and undergraduate students, and staff. The pertinent information will be posted this summer on the Graduate School Research and Scholarly Integrity page. <http://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity/>
- 6) Chittenden Hall (the old Forestry Building on the east end of Circle Drive across from Linton Hall) will be the new home of the Graduate School in early Fall 2014. You can look at both, our GS website <http://grad.msu.edu/> or the Chittenden update blog <http://chittendenhall.grd.msu.edu/> for more information. All of the current services/staff will move from Linton to Chittenden. In addition, the TA program staff will move from the International Center and the Ph.D. Career Services and Graduate Life and Wellness will move from Student Services Building. The Council of Graduate Students (COGS) will also move their office from Student Services to Chittenden. Please feel welcome to visit and see what the Graduate School can offer to students and faculty on a wide variety of activities related to graduate education. Chittenden Hall will be the graduate education “neighborhood”.

