BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY
1865

THE Graduate School @ Bowie State University

THESIS & DISSERTATION
HANDBOOK

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Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to provide students, faculty, and staff with clear guidance regarding the requirements for the process of completing a master's thesis and a doctoral dissertation. Students, faculty, and staff are responsible for understanding and adhering to these requirements.

1. Graduate Student Support Services

Graduate Research Center

The purpose of the Graduate Research Center is to transform the graduate student experience. Located on the first floor of the Center for Business and Graduate Studies, THE GRC provides the following for graduate students:

- Advising services such as help with navigating program requirements and registration;
- Writing and research consultations;
- Academic support opportunities tailored to student needs;
- Printing services;
- Professional development and trainings; and
- A graduate student lounge with presentation practice rooms, collaborative work areas, and individual study spaces (Thurgood Marshall Library, Room 1185)

Visit THE GRC webpage to book writing consultations, access support services, and find other information.

Graduate Library Services

The Thurgood Marshall Library enhances the mission of Bowie State University by developing, selecting, acquiring, and organizing print, electronic, and audio-visual resources, as well as equipment appropriate to the University's academic programs.

Reference Services helps graduate students with the following:

- Navigating the BSU Discovery Search;
- Borrowing books from other University System of Maryland schools;
- Facilitating the Interlibrary Loan process for articles and book chapters;
- Utilizing Library Chat to answer questions; and
- Recommending databases as well as search strategies.

Contact reference services at 301-851-2037 or through Library Chat.

Circulation Services

- Pick-up and return books including those from other libraries.
- If you want to pick up books at another University System of Maryland school, talk with the circulation manager about how to do so. Circulation managers may be contacted at 410-373-8573 or through Library Chat.
- Check out reserve titles for three-hour library use.
- Reserve a study carrel.
- Provide a library number for those who do not have a Bulldog card.

Important Dates

Activity	Deadline
Defense Hearings	November 30th & April 30
Submission of IRB packets to IRB	Please contact the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs.
Deadline for registering for graduation*	Please see the Academic Calendar for graduation registration deadlines and graduation dates.
Submission of final thesis or dissertation manuscript to the Dean of the Graduate School for graduation.	Last day of final examinations
Graduation	December and May

*Candidates must register for graduation in advance of completing the dissertation.

Please note, thesis and dissertation credit and registration requirements are determined by the individual programs and can be found in the program of study for each degree track. Graduate students must meet their credit requirements and apply for graduation at the beginning of the semester they intend to graduate. See Appendices A and B for an overview of thesis and dissertation timelines with required forms, approvals, and key recipients.

In addition, summer defenses are *not* recommended. Under unique circumstances, however, a defense may be held during the summer. In this case, the student must register for the appropriate section of thesis or dissertation hours during either the first or second summer session. Students must receive approval from the department and the graduate school.

2. Thesis and Dissertation Process

Thesis Process

Master's Student Responsibilities

Master's students' responsibilities include selecting and inviting their committee, topic selection, developing their research and thesis according to the guidance of their committee, conducting their research, passing their defense, and submitting the thesis to the graduate school after the department has approved and signed the thesis.

Committee

Master's thesis committees have three members.
The coordinator of the graduate program approves the thesis committee. Selecting a topic for a thesis is a continuous process that requires the input of all committee members. The candidate must work closely and consistently with the faculty members. Changes in the composition of the committee are generally made and approved within the department. Notification of the change must be sent to the Dean of the Graduate School. See Appendix C for the Committee Approval Form.

All committee members evaluate the thesis manuscript from the time the student enrolls in the thesis course until after the thesis defense.

Chair Responsibilities

- Seeing that the candidate receives **regular and continuing guidance** in their research, including timely response from all committee members regarding the candidate's manuscript;
- **Coordinating the responses of committee members** so that the candidate does not receive fundamentally conflicting advice;
- Informing candidates who are not making reasonable progress of the **action steps for getting back on track**;
- Clearly communicating the consequences of failure to make progress;
- Ensuring that the **thesis committee meets at least once a semester**; and
- **Approving final revisions** for the thesis after the defense.

Thesis Proposal Requirements

The requirements and format of the thesis proposal are the purview of the department. Common elements include a statement of the purpose of the study; the research questions; the warrant for the study; a theoretical framework; a literature review; methods that will be used in the study, including such areas as sampling, tools, variables, data collection methods and data analysis; findings; and significance and implications.

All thesis students must have a proposal defense. Once the student has completed the thesis proposal, the **Approval to Schedule Defense Form** and **Defense Scheduling Form** (Appendix C) are completed and sent to the Dean of the Graduate School. Hybrid, virtual, and in-person modalities are allowed.

Submitting a Proposal to IRB

Any student proposing research that involves the use of human subjects must submit their proposal to Bowie State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). To avoid unnecessary delays, the candidate should submit the proposal to the IRB after the thesis proposal defense (Contact the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs for requirements). Please note, prior to developing IRB materials, graduate students must complete BSU's required CITI training.

Thesis Defense

Once the student has completed the thesis and the committee finds the thesis to be ready, the **Approval to Schedule Defense Form** and the **Defense Scheduling Form** (Appendix C) are completed and sent to the Dean of the Graduate School. During the defense, the student will give an overview of the thesis project and respond to questions from faculty. The defense is open to the university community. All dissertation committee members are required to attend. The modality of the defense is determined by the departmental program. External examiners are subject to departmental attendance policies.

All **Thesis Completion Approval Forms should be completed by the last day of scheduled classes** (Appendix C)**.** Any thesis that fails to meet this deadline may not be included in the program for May graduation.

See Appendix A for a chronological overview of the thesis sequence that details required forms, approvals, and recipients.

Thesis Requirements

The requirements and format of the thesis proposal are the purview of the department. Common elements include:

- Statement of the purpose of the study;
- Research questions;
- Warrant for the study;
- Theoretical framework;
- Literature review;
- Methods that will be used in the study, including such areas as sampling, tools, variables, data collection methods and data analysis;
- Findings; and
- Significance and implications.

Dissertation Process

Doctoral Student Responsibilities

Doctoral students' responsibilities include selecting and inviting their committee, topic selection, developing their research and

dissertation according to the guidance of their committee, conducting their research study, passing their defense, and submitting the dissertation to the graduate school after the completion of the dissertation has been approved.

Committee

The minimum size of the doctoral committee is three senior faculty members. In addition, some departments require a member from outside the candidate's program area and an external examiner. The chair of the doctoral program in consultation with the doctoral dissertation chair approves the dissertation committee. Changes in the composition of the committee are made and approved within the department. Changes can be initiated by the candidate or chair. Notification of the change must be sent to the Dean of Graduate School. See Appendix C for the Committee Approval Form.

Each member of the doctoral committee will evaluate the dissertation manuscript.

All members of the committee must review the contents of the dissertation and agree that the dissertation is ready for oral defense. Please note, the major input into the original draft of a dissertation will come from the dissertation chair.

See Appendix C for the Committee Meeting Feedback Form. A copy of the Committee Meeting Feedback Form must be placed in the graduate candidate's file and given to the graduate candidate.

Chair Responsibilities

- Seeing that the candidate receives **regular and continuing guidance** in their research, including timely response from all committee members regarding the candidate's manuscript;
- **Coordinating the responses of committee members** so that the candidate does not receive fundamentally conflicting advice;
- Informing candidates who are not making reasonable progress of the **action steps for getting back on track;**
- Communicating the consequences of failure to make progress;
- Ensuring that the **dissertation committee meets a minimum of once a semester**; and
- **Approving final revisions** for the dissertation after the defense.

Dissertation Proposal

The committee works with the dissertation student to develop a proposal. The dissertation proposal demonstrates the dissertation candidate's knowledge of and ability to conduct the proposed research. An approved proposal, signed by the dissertation committee, is an agreement between the candidate and the committee. Part of this agreement is that the proposed research be completed within the time limits established by the graduate school, thus assuring the

continuing relevance of the research topic. Please note, in the dissertation timeline, there must be a minimum of one semester between the dissertation proposal defense and the dissertation defense.

Once the student has completed the dissertation proposal and the committee finds the dissertation proposal to be ready, the **Approval to Schedule Defense Form** and **Defense Scheduling Form** (Appendix C) are completed and sent to the Dean of the Graduate School. Hybrid, virtual, and in-person modalities are allowed.

Within seven (7) days of the committee's proposal approval, the candidate must file the proposal with the department and with the graduate school. The filed proposal must include the following:

- The dissertation committee members' signatures;
- The dissertation proposal; and
- A curriculum vitae, if a dissertation committee chair or committee member is not a Bowie State University senior faculty member or is from outside the university.

Upon proposal approval, and provided the proposal remains current, the dissertation committee may not unilaterally require significant theoretical or methodological changes in the substantive direction of the project. The committee and the graduate candidate may, however, jointly agree on such changes. Such changes should be dated and noted in the candidate's file. **Changes of this nature may also require re-submission, review, and approval by the IRB.**

After the candidate has obtained approvals, the candidate must notify their department of any changes in membership of the committee. Changes in the membership of the dissertation committee after the acceptance of the proposal do not require re-approval of the proposal. A candidate whose dissertation fulfills the commitments made in the proposal and any modifications made to it, as specified above, is entitled to a dissertation defense.

Submitting a Proposal to the IRB

Any candidate proposing research that involves the use of human subjects must submit his or her proposal to the IRB. To avoid unnecessary delays, the candidate should submit the proposal to the IRB after the dissertation proposal defense. Contact the Office of Research

& Sponsored Programs for requirements. Please note, prior to developing IRB materials, graduate students must complete Bowie State University's required CITI trainings.

Doctoral Defense

Dissertation Chapter Requirements

Please note, the requirements of the dissertation chapters follow the standard protocols of university research. For reference, use the standardized APA, MLA, and IEEE formats.

The standard requirements of university research include **at least** the following:

- Chapter 1 describes the research problem, research questions, study goals, theoretical framework, limitations, and key terminology.
- Chapter 2 provides a synthesis and critical evaluation of the literature.
- Chapter 3 details the study's methods including data analysis.
- Chapter 4 describes the findings.
- Chapter 5 highlights the study's significance, implications, and conclusions.

Once the student has completed the dissertation and the committee finds the dissertation to be ready, the **Approval to Schedule Defense Form** and **Defense Scheduling Form** (Appendix C) are completed and sent to the Dean of the Graduate School. During the defense, the candidate will give a presentation of the dissertation research. Then, the candidate will answer the committee's questions. Once the committee is satisfied, the candidate will answer questions from the public. The committee will then go into a closed session for deliberation. After the deliberation, the chair brings the candidate into the session to deliver the results. Result decisions include pass, pass with revisions, continuation, or failure. If revisions are required, they will be listed in writing using the Committee Feedback Form with a deadline for revisions to be completed.

The defense is open to the university community. All dissertation committee members are required to attend. The modality of the defense is determined by the departmental program. External examiners are subject to departmental attendance policies.

All **Dissertation Completion Approval Forms should be completed by the last day of scheduled classes** (Appendix C)**.** Any dissertation that fails to meet this deadline may not be included in the program for May graduation.

See Appendix B for a chronological overview of the dissertation sequence that details required forms, approvals, and recipients.

Thesis & Dissertation Submission

Publishing on ProQuest and BSU Digital Commons

After a successful defense and the chair approves all required revisions, theses and dissertations must be cleared by the Dean of the Graduate School. As such, the final thesis or dissertation along with the Thesis/Dissertation Approval Form must be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School before a final clearance and approval will be granted. Once cleared, students should upload a PDF of their manuscript to ProQuest/UMI. **Please note, for all theses and dissertations, the uploaded PDF of the manuscript must include a signature page that is signed by all required parties.** Students are also required to upload a PDF of their manuscript to the BSU Digital Commons.

Students may register for copyrights and order bound copies if they choose. They may utilize Graduate Writing Services for final formatting support. See Appendix C for detailed submission requirements and instructions.

3. Ethical Conduct

Generative AI

Ethical research is a complex, multistep, and evaluative process. AI is a rapidly shifting new tool that blurs ethical boundaries, outstripping traditional policies and rules regarding plagiarism. For thesis and dissertation research as well as manuscript development, AI can be used as a tool for supporting thinking, research, and writing. AI cannot be used to replace these acts. As such, when students use generative AI as part of their research, they must consult with their committee chair beforehand. They must adhere to guidance from their chair.

Academic Dishonesty

It is vital to attribute all work that is cited according to discipline specific academic publishing guidelines. Plagiarism, even an unintentional infraction, is a serious offense.

See section 11 in the Code of Student Conduct.

In addition, please note, graduate students cannot use AI-generated writing in their thesis or dissertation. If a student uses AI as part of their research process (e.g., searches for studies, key words, parameters, data analysis, etc.), then that use must be detailed and cited according to the academic publishing guidelines in their field. If asked, students must be able to clearly explain and replicate the process of using AI as a tool in their research process. Failure to adhere to this policy constitutes academic dishonesty.

4. Research Compliance

Bowie State University ensures that research is conducted with high standards of integrity and accountability aligned with strong ethical principles, regulatory requirements, and institutional policies. The Office of Research & Sponsored Programs provides guidance, oversight, and resources to the university community to navigate the landscape of research regulations. We are committed to protecting the rights, dignity, health, safety, and privacy of research subjects, and promoting the responsible conduct of research.

CITI Training

CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) Certification is required. All graduate students must complete CITI training. This training must occur early in the graduate career to support all research experiences. Please note, prior to completing CITI training, students cannot develop IRB materials, submit IRB applications, or conduct any research projects involving human subjects. See Research Compliance's procedures for completing CITI Training. *****

Institutional Review Board Approval

The Institutional Review Board is an administrative committee designated to provide ethical and regulatory oversight of research that involves human subjects. The board reviews all the proposed research involving human subjects to ensure that persons who serve as subjects in research are treated ethically and that their rights and welfare are adequately protected. The board ensures compliance with university guidelines and federal regulations regarding the protection of human subjects (Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 46).

The Bowie State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) must approve all research involving primary (human subject) and secondary data. Bowie State University requires IRB review and approval of all research projects involving human subjects or human materials before initiation to ensure the protection of human subjects and to comply with federal law. Students must have IRB approval before soliciting human subject participation or starting data collection. In addition, the contact information for BSU's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs must be listed on all human subject recruitment materials and consent forms. All theses, dissertations, and proposals must have an appendix that displays completion certificates for required CITI certification(s). These certifications must be up to date.

See BSU's Research Compliance information and procedures for seeking Institutional Review Board approval.

*** Please note, the graduate school requires that all students in the health sciences take the CITI Biomedical Research course. All students in social sciences and humanities must take the CITI Social and Behavioral Research course. In addition, doctoral students must take the CITI Principle Investigators/Co-Principle Investigators course before developing research proposals. Specific programs may require additional CITI courses.**

5. Manuscript Formatting Requirements

Manuscripts must adhere to standardized APA, MLA, or IEEE formats.

The manuscript front matter titles for pages, chapter titles, and backmatter titles for pages are capitalized and bolded. Please note, all-caps formatting is not used.

All pages should have one-inch margins. Text should be unjustified and double-spaced. Check discipline-specific academic publishing guidelines to determine whether long quotations, footnotes, and the sources page should be single-spaced or double-spaced. Do not add additional spaces between paragraphs or sections. Use left aligned text for paragraphing. If a running head is used, it should be placed within the 1" top margin, at the top of every page, above the regular text.

Use black font throughout your document. Choose a font recommended by ProQuest Dissertation Publishing (e.g., Times New Roman 12 pt).

Numbers are shown on all pages except for the title page. Begin page numbering starting with "ii" for the signature page. All numbered pages preceding Chapter 1 should be numbered with lower case Roman numerals. Numbers starting with the first page of Chapter 1 should be Arabic numerals. Do not add periods, hyphens, or parenthesis to page numbers. Page numbers are placed in the upper right-hand corner.

6. Required Manuscript Front Matter

Title Page

The title page must include the following:

- Full title of the manuscript;
- Full legal name;
- A submission statement including the program's official title and the name of the degree; and
- The submission date (i.e., May XX, 20XX).

This title page should be counted as page "i" but should not have the page number listed. The title page is not included in the table of contents. The title should be centered on the top quarter of the page. The author's name should be centered in the center of the page. Project information should be centered on the bottom quarter of the page. Please refer to Appendix C for a sample title page.

Signature Page

Starting on a new page, the signature page must include the following:

- Full title of manuscript;
- Full legal name; and
- Signature lines for required approvers.

For the page title, use "Signature Page". Begin page numbering starting with "ii" for the signature page. Signatures may be electronic. Please refer to Appendix C for a sample signature page.

Acknowledgement Page

Starting on a new page, students can acknowledge people through brief statements of appreciation or recognition. For the page title, use "Acknowledgement". Do not exceed one page. Please refer to Appendix C for a sample acknowledgement page.

Optional Dedication Page

On rare occasions, a dedication page may be included. These dedications are primarily used to acknowledge personal and life altering events that occurred during graduate school. See Appendix C for an example.

Copyright Page

Starting on a new page, the copyright page should include a copyright statement with the student's full legal name and the year. For the page title, use "Copyright". As the author, the student already owns the copyright to their work. However, the copyright can also be registered via ProQuest. This registration is optional. Please refer to Appendix C for a sample copyright page.

Abstract

Starting on a new page, the abstract of the scholarly work should include a brief summary of the research and findings. See discipline specific academic publishing guidelines for additional requirements. For the page title, use "Abstract." Do not exceed 350 words. The abstract page should be included in the Table of Contents. Please refer to Appendix C for a sample abstract page.

Table of Contents

Starting on a new page, the table of contents needs to accurately reflect all headings, sections, and chapters. For the page title, use “Table of Contents.” The word "Page" is the heading to the column of page numbers on the right side of the page. Headings, sections and chapters are left-justified, and page numbers are right-justified with a dot leader preceding them. All section headings are listed in the table of contents and formatting should indicate the correct hierarchy of sections. However, do not list the table of contents or the title page in the table of contents. Please refer to Appendix C for a sample table of contents.

List of Tables

Starting on a new page, the list of tables immediately follows the table of contents. For the page title, use “List of Tables”. Tables should be numbered consecutively through the text in Arabic numerals. The tables used within the document must match how they are numbered in the list of tables. The word "Page" is the heading to the column of page numbers on the right side of the page. The list numbers and table titles are left-justified. Page numbers are right justified with a dot leader preceding them. Please refer to Appendix C for a sample list of tables.

List of Figures

All illustrative materials other than tables are considered figures (e.g., charts, graphs, drawings, photographs, or formulas). The list of figures follows the list of tables, and the page should follow the same format. For the page title, use “List of Figures”. Figures should be numbered consecutively through the text in Arabic numerals. The figures used within the document must match their numbers in the list of figures. The word "Page" appears as the heading to the column of page numbers on the right side of the page. The list numbers and figure titles are left-justified. Page numbers are right justified with a dot leader preceding them. Please refer to Appendix C for a sample list of figures.

7. Manuscript Back Matter

References/Bibliography/Works Cited

Starting on a separate page, the source page should indicate the sources used during the student’s research. The style guide used will determine the heading. Some examples are “Bibliography,” “References,” or “Works Cited.” See discipline-specific style guides for additional requirements.

Manuscript Appendices

All theses, dissertations, and proposals must include an appendix that displays up-to-date certificates for required CITI course(s). Additional appendices are optional. They are used to include supplementary materials that are not an integral part of the text, but that contribute examples or supporting evidence to the student's research. Each appendix must start on a new page. Appendices are labeled using capital letters (e.g., Appendix A, Appendix B) and are listed at the top of each new page. See the appendices section for examples.

Endnotes

Discipline specific academic publishing guidelines will determine whether endnotes are acceptable and where they are placed. For the page title, use "Endnotes."

8. Appendices

Appendix A— Thesis Sequence

1. Choose Chair
2. Invite and Form Committee
3. Complete and Send the Committee Approval Form to the Dean of the Graduate School
4. Develop Proposal*
5. Complete and Send Approval to Schedule Defense Form and Defense Scheduling Form to the Dean of the Graduate School
6. Defend Proposal
7. Submit IRB Materials (if applicable)
8. Conduct Research & Write Thesis*
9. Complete and Send Approval to Schedule Defense Form and Defense Scheduling Form to the Dean of the Graduate School
10. Defend Thesis
11. Complete Revisions
12. Complete the Thesis/Dissertation Approval Form and Gather Signatures
13. Send Thesis and Thesis/Dissertation Approval Form to the Dean of the Graduate School
14. Receive Clearance and Final Signature from the Dean of the Graduate School
15. Upload to ProQuest

***Please note that committee meetings are ongoing throughout this process and happen at a minimum of once a semester. The committee chair will document committee feedback using the Committee Feedback Form.**

Appendix B— Dissertation Sequence

1. Choose Chair
2. Invite and Form Committee
3. Complete and Send the Committee Approval Form to the Dean of the Graduate School
4. Develop Proposal*
5. Complete and Send Approval to Schedule Defense Form and Defense Scheduling Form to the Dean of the Graduate School
6. Defend Proposal
7. Submit IRB Materials
8. Conduct Research & Write Dissertation*
9. Complete and Send Approval to Schedule Defense Form and Defense Scheduling Form to the Dean of the Graduate School
10. Defend Dissertation
11. Complete Revisions
12. Complete the Thesis/Dissertation Approval Form and Gather Signatures
13. Send Dissertation and Thesis/Dissertation Approval Form to the Dean of the Graduate School
14. Receive Clearance and Final Signature from the Dean of the Graduate School
15. Upload to ProQuest

***Please note that committee meetings are ongoing throughout this process and happen at a minimum of once a semester. The committee chair will document committee feedback using the Committee Feedback Form**.

Appendix C—Required Forms, Templates, and Instructions

Required Forms

- Committee Approval Form
- Committee Feedback Form
- Approval to Schedule Defense Form
- Defense Scheduling Form
- Thesis/Dissertation Approval Form

Front Matter Templates

- Title Page Template
- Signature Page Template
- Acknowledgment Page Template
- Optional Dedication Page Template
- Copyright Page Template
- Abstract Page Template
- Table of Contents Template
- List of Tables Template
- List of Figures Template

ProQuest and BSU Digital Commons Instructions

- Submission Instructions for ProQuest and BSU Digital Commons