

## SEAS Dissertation Format Guidelines

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For any questions on dissertation format, please contact:

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These guidelines address:

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## **General Considerations and Requirements**

### **Electronic Submission Requirements**

The University requires that all dissertations be submitted electronically. Paper dissertations will no longer be accepted. When you are close to completing your dissertation, go to the ETD website:

<http://www.gwu.edu/~etds/index.html>

Create an account and upload your dissertation. You will not be charged anything until all your degree requirements are completed and the finished dissertation is submitted to UMI.

If you have any questions about the ETD website, or how to do anything connected with it, please contact Dan Campbell ([campbeld@gwu.edu](mailto:campbeld@gwu.edu) or phone 994-1858), or the Gelman Library dissertation administrator Valerie Emerson ([etds@gwu.edu](mailto:etds@gwu.edu) or phone 994-2041).

The major change and advantage with electronic dissertations is that you can include much more information and more types of information. You can include color photos, video and sound clips, and active web links. Anything that you can embed in a web page, you can put in your dissertation.

Also note that your ETD submission must be in PDF format. There are instructions on the ETD site for converting to PDF if you are unfamiliar.

### **Margins**

Margin requirements will be enforced without exception. The left margin should be one and one-half inches to allow for binding. Even though dissertations will be electronic, UMI still requires 1.5" left margins so they can print them out and bind them if a hard copy is requested. Top, bottom, and right margins should each be one inch. All text and graphics (except page numbers) must fit inside those margins. Material outside the margins will affect the readability and appearance of the document.

### **Type Size and Spacing**

The type should be 10 - 12 points or larger. A 12 point Times New Roman or a 12 point Courier are good examples of acceptable type fonts. Decorative and ornate fonts are not acceptable. If you are in doubt about whether the type font you want to use is acceptable, please ask before writing your entire dissertation in it. It is permissible to mix type fonts within your dissertation, as suggested in the Figures and Tables section.

All text material should be double-spaced, but long quotations and footnotes may be single-spaced. To avoid confusion about when a new paragraph starts, because the text is all double spaced, you should start each paragraph in the main text portion with a ¼ inch indentation (two dots on the measurement bar at the top of *Word*).

## **Page Numbering**

All pages except the title page must be numbered. Page numbers can be centered in the lower (footer) area of each page, or in the upper right corner of each page in the header.

Preface pages (see next section) will be numbered using small Roman numerals. The title page is considered to be page “i”, but is not numbered. Start numbering with “ii” on the next page.

Pages in the main text will be numbered with Arabic numerals, starting over with “1” on the first page of Chapter One. Numbering will continue through to the end of the dissertation, including the Reference section any appendices.

**Nota Bene:** Even though this guide provides instructions and examples for using Word to write your dissertation, the use of LaTeX is highly encouraged. You will find it much easier to produce complex equations in LaTeX, and it also has a superior ability to create your lists of tables and figures, as well as your table of contents. Please consult with your advisor for his/her opinion of the best tool to use before you start writing.

## Preface Pages

Preface pages are all the material before the main text. They are numbered with small Roman numerals. Note that not all of these pages are required, but if they are included, they should be in this order:

- Title page (required)
- Certification page (required)
- Copyright page (optional)
- Dedication page (optional)
- Acknowledgment page (optional)
- Abstract (required for doctoral dissertations, optional for master's theses)
- Table of Contents (required)
- List of Figures (required if you have any figures)
- List of Tables (required if you have any tables)
- List of Acronyms (optional)
- List of Symbols (optional)
- Glossary of Terms (optional)

All of the preface pages, with the exceptions of the title page, certification page, and copyright page, should have the name of the page centered and in bold at the top of the first page of that section, in the same manner as the titles of the chapter pages.

### Title Page

**See the sample title page at the end of this document.**

All lines should be centered left and right. Start with the dissertation title, in initial caps. Then single space blocks of information with double spacing between each major group of information. Do not list all your committee members, just your advocate. Try to center the text vertically on the page. **This page is not numbered.**

There are only three acceptable completion dates that can be on the Title Page regardless of the actual date of your defense. If you are completing your doctorate in Summer semester, the date will be August 31 of that year. If you are completing in Fall semester, the date will be January 31 of the *following* year. If you are completing in Spring semester, the date will be the date of the GW commencement ceremony.

- Completing Fall 08 = January 31, 2009
- Completing Spring 09 = May 17, 2009
- Completing Summer 09 = August 31, 2009
- Completing Fall 09 = January 31, 2010
- Completing Spring 10 = May 16, 2010
- Completing Summer 10 = August 31, 2010

## **Certification Page**

The Certification Page is an official statement that your dissertation has been accepted and you have completed all requirements for your doctorate. Please see the sample page at the end of this guide. This is where you can put the actual date of your defense. This will always be page ii. Committee members do not sign this page.

## **Copyright Page**

As the author of a thesis or dissertation, you own the copyright to your work just by virtue of being its author. If you are concerned that someone may infringe on your intellectual work, you can pay a fee and register your copyright. Here is what registering the copyright accomplishes:

1. A registered copyright serves as prima facie evidence of copyright validity and is a prerequisite for filing an infringement action against someone in court.
2. A copyright owner can recover statutory damages and attorney's fees only if the work is registered prior to infringement or within three months of publication.
3. If the infringement occurred prior to registration, the copyright owner can still file an action, but it is limited to actual damages and injunctive relief. In other words, you could register the copyright after you find out about the infringement and still take action against the violator.
4. By paying the registration fee to Bell & Howell, you are paying Bell & Howell to register the copyright on your behalf. Alternatively you can do it on your own now or later.

As this suggests, registering the copyright might not be necessary in many cases. However, if your work is something that has the potential to make money (e.g., book royalties or a patent), it is probably wise to register the copyright. Whether or not you do formally copyright your work, you can have a copyright page. All it needs to say is Copyright © and the year, centered vertically and horizontally in the page. The year of the copyright should match the year of completion that is on the Title Page. If you have a copyright page, it will be numbered iii.

If your work could lead you to seek a patent for an invention or discovery, you have the option when you register on the ETD website to delay making your work public to give yourself time to file for a patent. Once you make your invention or discovery public, you may lose your opportunity for a patent after a certain time.

If you developed a patentable invention with University funds or facilities, please also understand that you have a responsibility to disclose this to the University (the Associate Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies or the Medical Center Office of Research). For more information, please visit the website of the Office of Sponsored Research.

## **Dedication Page**

If you wish to dedicate your dissertation to a particular person, institution, or anything else, this is where you do it. Write about who you wish to dedicate it to and why. If you have a copyright page, this will be numbered iv. If you do not have a copyright page, this will be page iii.

## **Acknowledgement Page**

Writing a dissertation is a huge effort and is rarely done without any help. This page is for you to formally thank all the people who have helped you on your path to completion of your dissertation. Be generous with your thanks.

## **Abstract**

The abstract is a one or two page (absolutely no longer than two) summary of your research in terms that a general audience would be able to understand. Think about how you would explain your research to a first year engineering undergraduate. Do not cite references in the abstract.

## **Table of Contents**

The title page, the certification page, and the copyright page are *not* listed in the table of contents. All of the other preface pages, if used, and *every* numbered organizational subdivision within the main text, the reference pages, and any appendices, must be listed along with the page number that each starts on.

Refer to the section on organization below under Main Text for the organizational scheme. All of the organizational subdivisions should be listed by number, followed by the subdivision title, then a line of dots out to the right margin where you put the page number. Page numbers can be easily lined up by using a right justified tab.

It will help you and your readers to follow your organization if you indent subheaders  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in the table of contents. See the example page at the end of this document.

It is important that if the descriptive title of a section is very long, the text does not overflow into the page number column. Start a new line instead. Continuation lines should be indented  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch from the start of the previous line to avoid confusion with the next organizational entry. See the example page at the end of this document.

It is a good idea to build your table of contents as you write so you can see at a glance how the structure of your dissertation is forming. Word and LaTeX have a function which will automatically build a table of contents as you mark the headers.

### **List of Figures.**

If you have any figures, you must list them by number and label name, and tell what page they are on. See the section on figures and tables for more information.

### **List of Tables**

If you have any tables, you must list them by number and label name, and tell what page they are on. See the section on figures and tables for more information.

### **List of Symbols**

If you use a lot of symbols and variables in equations, your readers may find it helpful if you list the meanings of those that you use frequently. Try to alphabetize them so looking up a particular symbol is easier. This is not always easy with a mix of Greek letters, Latin letters, and non-alphanumeric symbols, but try to alphabetize by the name of the symbol. One method is to have a list of Roman alphabet symbols, followed by a list of Greek letter symbols, followed by a list of “other” symbols.

### **List of Acronyms**

Washington, DC, is known as a land of “alphabet soup.” A bewildering variety of acronyms are used in government agencies, by businesses, and also within your scientific research community. Outsiders usually do not have a clue what they mean. Keep in mind that your dissertation will be read by people both within and outside of your particular area of expertise. If you use a lot of acronyms, even though you will be spelling them out the first time you use them (see section on Main Text) it is a good thing to have one central location where all acronyms are explained so the reader does not have to hunt through the text looking for a particular acronym’s first use.

### **Glossary of Terms**

As with acronyms above, not all terms are crystal clear to all readers. Many terms that look like they are in common usage may be used in a particular way or have a specific meaning within your discipline that is different from common usage. Having some of your more esoteric terms explained in one central place may be very helpful.

## **Main Text**

Main Text sections must be placed in this order:

- Main text of dissertation (required)
- References (required)
- Appendices (optional)

The most important thing to keep in mind when writing the text of your dissertation is the fact that a variety of people will be reading it in the future. In an immediate sense, you are writing it for your advisor and your dissertation committee. You can assume that those people are all very familiar with your subject material, your methods, and your results. However, after your doctoral defense is complete, your dissertation will be published and will be available for reading by anyone who troubles to look it up. You can assume that those readers will have the technical background necessary to mentally grasp your points; however, you should also assume that they may not have the narrow expertise and familiarity with your particular research that will allow them to read about your work on the same level that you and your committee do. Therefore, as you write, you should explain some of the more esoteric details. Don't just assume that everyone knows what you are talking about.

A good test is to have one of your classmates read your text. He or she will have technical knowledge equivalent to you, but may not have the specialized knowledge you have in your particular area. If that reader does not immediately understand certain parts, perhaps those parts should be rewritten to provide more explanation.

Another important consideration is that future readers probably will not read your dissertation from beginning to end. They may only read the parts that they are interested in. Thus, they may skip your introduction and literature review chapters and go straight to how you performed your experiment. You can help this type of reader by spelling out acronyms, and otherwise explaining new concepts the first time they are used in each chapter, even if you have already done so in previous chapters.

### **Organization**

Dissertations will be organized into numbered chapters, each chapter will be divided into numbered sections, sections may be divided into numbered sub-sections, etc. down as many levels as you need. Just remember that if you have a section "x.1", you must always have a section "x.2". In other words, do not subdivide a section into only one dependent part. You must always have at least two. See the example of headings below.

In general, your first chapter will be an introduction to your research problem. State the problem; briefly state the history of the problem and where research into it stands at the present. Briefly state what you propose to do, how, and why. The last section of your first chapter may be a brief chapter-by-chapter overview of your entire dissertation.

When writing your dissertation, you may want to write the introduction chapter last so you can accurately “predict” what you will say in later chapters.

The second chapter is usually a “literature review.” You describe in detail the research that has been done on your problem in the past, how it has influenced subsequent research, how and why past research has led up to your present situation.

In the third chapter you present your new contribution to the research, explain the theory of how and why your research works, and how it will solve the problem stated in the introduction.

In the fourth chapter you go over your research step-by-step. Explain how and why you set up your experiment to obtain your results.

In the fifth chapter you talk about what happened when you actually ran your experiment and talk about your results. Mention any problems you encountered while running the experiment and how you overcame them.

The sixth chapter is for your conclusions. Were you right or wrong in your approach to your experiment? What went particularly well or badly? How might you have done things differently? What further research might be done to follow up on your results?

This is not the only acceptable organization, but it is the most common. You may need a totally different organizational approach because of your particular type of research. Just be sure to talk with your advisor about how you should organize your dissertation before you start writing.

At each organizational level you need to give a very short descriptive title of what you are writing about in that section. This will also be put in the table of contents. Put your section headers in bold. Start your second level headers (X.X) flush with the left margin. Indent each successive levels (X.X.X, etc) an additional ¼ inch (two additional dots on the measurement bar at the top of your *Word* window). Note that your text always starts with only a ¼ inch indentation, and it always starts on the next line (accounting for the fact that everything is double spaced) after the header. You should double space before a new header (see example below).

## **Chapter 1 — Introduction**

This is an example of organizational headers. Start each new chapter on a new page. Chapter headings will be centered, in bold, and in all caps or initial caps.

Leave a space after the chapter heading before starting the text. That is different from the lower level headings. After second and lower level headings, start the text on the next line. You do not have to have text immediately following a chapter heading. You can go right in to the next sub-heading. After lower level headings, you should have text before the next lower heading level.

### **1.1 Second Level Header**

Text.

#### **1.1.1 Third Level Header**

Text.

##### **1.1.1.1 Fourth Level Header**

Text.

###### **1.1.1.1.1 Fifth Level Header**

Text.

Notice that even though the header keeps moving over with each lower level, the text always starts in the same place.

## Graphics

A graphic is anything that is not text, plus the labeling for the graphic. Common graphics include tables, graphs, photos, drawings, charts, equations, etc. Every graphic must have a label so it can be referred to in the text.

When incorporating graphics into your dissertation, the best way to introduce them is to mention or explain them before they appear in the text. If you place the graphic before mentioning it in the text, the reader will wonder what the graphic is about and it will interrupt the flow of reading. If possible, your first mention of the graphic should be on the same page so the reader can read the textual description and look at the graphic without having to turn any pages.

### *Figures & Tables*

There are two types of graphics that must be labeled and listed in the preface pages: figures and tables. A figure is every kind of graphic except tables and equations. Figures include graphs, photos, drawings, clip art, and anything else that is not text. A table is a display of data in an array of columns and rows. You use the *Table* pulldown in *Word* to create one.

If at all possible, make your tables and figures fit completely on one page. That way the reader can see all the data at once without having to turn pages. You can turn a graphic sideways, as discussed below, to make it fit. If it is not possible to fit a graphic on one page and it continues onto the next page, you will need to label the continued graphic at the top of the following page so the reader knows it is a continuation of a previous graphic and not a new graphic. Label continuations exactly the same way as the main graphic, but write Table 2-1 (cont.) and the title at the top of the next page so readers know the graphic is a continuation and they should look at the previous page to see the start. Again, remember that future readers may not start reading at the beginning of your dissertation, and may not have read the previous pages. Also, if a table must be continued on the next page, be sure to label the vertical data columns again at the top of the new page so readers know what those columns mean.

### *Labeling Graphics*

All graphics must be labeled. Tables are labeled on top of the table. Figures are labeled below the figure. You should use slightly smaller type and a different type font in the label so that the reader knows that it is a label and not regular text. For example, if you use 12-point Times New Roman for your main text, make your labels 10-point Arial.

Make your graphic titles short and to the point. Keep in mind that titles will be listed in the prefatory material and a graphic title that is five lines long is not really helpful. You can put a short title on the label and then put more information below the graphic, and as part of it, to explain what's going on.

Tables and Figures will be numbered sequentially within each chapter. All tables will be numbered starting with 1 and figures will be numbered separately starting with 1. Thus, in Chapter 2 you may have Table 2-1, Table 2-2, etc. and Figure 2-1, Figure 2-2, etc.

*Example:*

Text text text text text text text text. In Figure 2-1, we see three SEAS doctoral candidates in a blinding snow blizzard, walking to their lab in Staughton Hall.

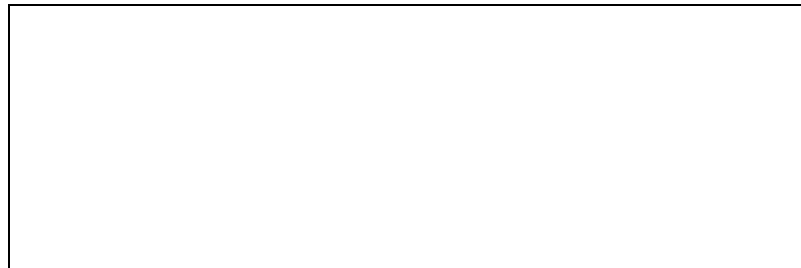


Figure 2-1: Three SEAS doctoral candidates in a blizzard

This is an example of further explaining what is happening in the graphic. This text is considered part of the graphic, not the main text. It is not part of the graphic label that goes in the List of Figures.

In Table 2-1 below, we demonstrate the method used to label tables

Table 2-1: This is the label

	Jan 08	Feb 08	Mar 08	Apr 08
Data 1	blah	blah	blah	blah
Data 2	blah	blah	blah	blah
Data 3	blah	blah	blah	blah

A shortcut when you are creating your lists of figures and tables for the preface pages is to just copy your graphics label, past it into the list, change the font from Arial to Times New Roman, and add the page number. Like the table of contents, you must make sure that the text of your graphics titles does not get into the page number column. Start a new line before it gets there.

Graphs should have all data lines labeled either with a key at the bottom of the graph or with a label pointing to the proper data line. Ideally, if you have multiple lines on your graphs, they should be in different colors so readers can tell which line is which.

*Sideways and Larger Graphics*

If you need to present a graphic sideways on the page because it will not fit the regular way (i.e., in landscape view instead of portrait view), please remember that the page number still needs to be oriented in portrait view. If you don't know how to do this, please talk to me because it's rather complicated to write out instructions in this document. Just be sure that the graphic is turned 90° counterclockwise so that the top of the graphic is on the binding (left) side of the page.

If a graphic needs to be larger than one standard page in size, yet needs to be all on the same page, talk to me (Dan Campbell, 994-1858) and we will figure something out. Don't just do it on your own and assume that it will be acceptable.

### *Equations*

It is very likely that you will include equations in your dissertation. If you are using LaTeX to write your equations, they should be centered in the line. If the equation is longer than one line, continue it on the next line, and on subsequent lines.

If you are using *Word* to write your equations, centering them may be a problem. If you are unable to center them, they should start flush with the left margin. In any case, equations should be written in italic type. If the equation runs longer than one line, continue it on the next line, but indent ½ inch.

Each full equation — not each equation line — should be labeled flush with the right margin with a number within parentheses. Number your equations sequentially within each chapter. Thus you might have equations numbered (1.1), (1.2), (2.1), (2.2), etc.

Example in *Word*:

$$1 + 2 = 3 \tag{1.1}$$

You may need to explain any symbols used in your equations. Do that in the text immediately following the equation, and in the List of Symbols section, if you have one, in the preface pages.

### **Footnotes**

Footnotes are used to provide a short explanation of a point within your dissertation that does not really merit discussion in the main text. Footnotes should not be used primarily to cite references, although there may be citations within a footnote. *Word* has a footnoting ability built in under the *Insert* toolbar pulldown.

### **Lists**

If you list more than three items in a sentence, you should consider using a bulleted list rather than a long series of commas. That makes for much easier reading. For example:

- Item one.
- Item two.
- Item three is a longer item, so if it goes longer than one line, you should start the second and subsequent lines even with the text at the beginning of the bullet.
- Bullets should be indented ¼ inch and the text starts ¼ inch beyond that.
  - You can have sublists within bullets.
  - Use a different kind of bullet like this hollow one.

- o Indent it so the bullet is even with the start of the higher level text and if the line is so long it wraps to the next line, make sure it starts even with the text at the start of the bullet.
  - ◆ And so on.
  - ◆ For as many levels as you need.
  - ◆ As with the main text organization, if you have one “sub-bullet”, you must have at least two.

The same applies to numbered lists. Instead of changing the shape of the bullet, alternate numbers and lower case letter for each level. The idea is to ensure readers can tell at a glance what level in the organization they are on.

The difference between bulleted and numbered lists is that bulleted items can be in any order. You can switch the text in bullet one and bullet two and it makes no difference. Numbered lists must be in that order, for instance a list of sequential steps in an operation or a list of priorities would be numbered rather than bulleted.

## **References**

Citing sources is probably the most difficult and time-consuming part of writing a dissertation. However, it is also essential that you properly cite everything that is not your own work to avoid any possibility of plagiarism.

The SEAS faculty has agreed that any style guide may be used to cite references, as long as it is in common usage within your particular discipline. You must consult with your advisor on which citation style he or she wishes you to use. Do not just make up citation styles on your own.

### *Marking citations in the text*

Although there are many styles, they all generally use only a couple different methods of marking cited passages. One method is using numbered citations and the other is using author and year.

The numbered citations method marks cited passages with a number in square brackets like this: [18]. One example of this is the ASME style used by mechanical engineers. The number refers to a full citation back in your References section. The references there are arranged either alphabetically by first author’s last name, or in the order they are cited in the text.

The author and year citations method usually marks cited passages with the first author’s last name, and the year of publication like this: (Martin, 2007). A common example of this method is the Chicago Style Manual. There are some variations on this method; in particular the ACM style used in computer science, which marks citations with only the first three letter of the author’s last name and the last two digits of the publication year

like this: [MAR07]. With the author and year method, cited works are listed in your Reference section alphabetically by the first author's last name.

### *The Reference section*

When putting together your Reference section, keep in mind that all sources used in your research, whether cited in the text or not, must be listed.

All styles, no matter which one you work with, will require the same information. The only difference is how the information is presented.

Reference to journal articles and papers in serial publications should include:

- last name and initials of each author
- year of publication
- full title of the cited article in "quotes"
- name of the journal in which article appears *in italics*
- volume number (if any) in boldface (Do not include the abbreviation, "Vol.")
- issue number (if any) in parentheses (Do not include the abbreviation, "No.")
- inclusive page numbers of the cited article (do include "pp.")

Reference to textbooks and monographs should include:

- last name of each author and their initials
- year of publication
- full title of the publication *in italics*
- publisher
- city of publication
- inclusive page numbers of the work being cited (include "pp.")

Reference to individual conference papers, papers in compiled conference proceedings, or any other collection of works by numerous authors should include:

- last name of each author of the paper cited and their initials
- year of publication
- full title of the cited paper in "quotes"
- individual paper number (if any)
- full title of the publication in italics
- initials followed by last name of editors (if any), followed by the abbreviation, "eds."
- publisher
- city of publication
- volume number (if any) in boldface if a single number, include, "Vol." if part of larger identifier (e.g., "PVP-Vol. 254")
- inclusive page numbers of the work being cited (include "pp.")

Reference to dissertations, theses and technical reports should include:

- last name of each author and their initials
- year of publication
- full title in “quotes”
- report number (if any)
- publisher or institution name, city

Reference to a web page should include:

- last name of each author and their initials, if known. If unknown, list the organization that owns the web site as the author
- year of the latest update to the site at the time you got your information from it.
- web address
- “site accessed on (and the date)”

In spite of the Internet being in common use for well over ten years, many style guides still don't have rules for citing web pages. If you use the form above, combined with the style used for all your other kinds of sources, you should be good. Just be consistent and do it the same way for every web site citation.

Web sites, by their nature, are subject to change without the author having to give notice that there has been a change. A good practice is that at the time you access the site, print out the material that you will use as your reference and write the current date on the page. You may find that by the time your dissertation is finished, your material on the web is different or may have disappeared entirely. Your committee members may need to see the material that was current when you referenced it to help them evaluate your dissertation.

## **Appendices**

Appendices are for supplementary material that supports the subject of your dissertation, but is either not important enough to include in the main text, or is of a bulky, hard-to-read nature. Examples include long tables or figures of raw data results, background material, computer programs, samples of surveys sent out, copies of letters or other documentation received, etc.

You do not have to double space the text in appendices.

Appendices are differentiated by letter, so the first one will be Appendix A, then Appendix B, etc.

Appendix pages are numbered continuously with the rest of the main text. Tables and figures are numbered A-1, A-2, B-1, B-2, etc.

This is a Sample Title Page for a Dissertation

by Your Name

B.S. in Mechanical Engineering, May 2000, Iowa State University  
M.S. in Systems Engineering, December 2003, The George Washington University

A Dissertation submitted to

the Faculty of  
The School of Engineering and Applied Science  
of The George Washington University  
in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Science

January 31, 2009

Dissertation directed by

Robert J. Harrington  
Professor of Engineering and Applied Science

The School of Engineering and Applied Science of The George Washington University certifies that [your full name] has passed the Final Examination for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy as of [date of dissertation defense]. This is the final and approved form of the dissertation.

[Title of dissertation in all caps or initial caps]

[Student's name]

Dissertation Research Committee:

[dissertation director's full name, professorial title, and the label

Dissertation Director—**use Graduate Bulletin for correct listings]**

[if a co-director: his/her full name, title, and the label Co-Director after both co-directors]

[committee member's full name, title, Committee Member]

[committee member's full name, title, Committee Member]

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