

# Thesis Format Guidelines



Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
Purdue University

## Overview

All theses must be prepared according to both departmental format requirements and University format requirements, as described in *A Manual for the Preparation of Graduate Theses* (available online at <http://www.gradschool.purdue.edu/downloads/thesis/graduate-thesis-manual.pdf>). Students should carefully review this manual. University format requirements dictate such matters as: typeface and quality, spacing, margins, page numbering, title page, and abstract. In addition, the manual also describes the “Purdue format,” which can be used to guide the construction of a thesis including the order and presentation of materials and the formatting of headings. Departmental format requirements cover such matters as how tables and figures are prepared and numbered, style of references, placement of notes, headings, etc.

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction has adopted the most recent editions of either APA or MLA manuscript preparation guidelines for Master’s theses and Doctoral dissertations. Most students in C&I use APA format. Refer to the most recent manuals of APA or MLA format for detailed information. Online references can be found at a number of websites including Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) site in the Department of English (see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>). In Curriculum and Instruction, it is the responsibility of the student’s committee chairperson to ensure that the thesis adheres to the approved thesis format guidelines. There is no departmental thesis format advisor.

The department head reviews all theses prior to deposit. To initiate this review, the student should drop off a complete, unbound copy of his/her thesis and Graduate School Form 9, “Thesis Acceptance” form, at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction main office as the final step before deposit. Individuals depositing electronically may submit the thesis for review electronically (Word or PDF format). The department head will review the thesis and inform the student of any corrections s/he feels need made before the student deposits the thesis at the Thesis Format Office. Students should give the department head at least 24 hours to review the thesis. A student cannot deposit his/her thesis until the signature of the department head has been obtained on the GS Form 9, “Thesis Acceptance” form. The signed GS Form 9 must be submitted to the Thesis Format Office as part of the deposit process. (Note: all of the student’s committee members must have signed the Form 9. The student’s committee chair should have signed the Form 9 in *four* places: as chair of the examining committee, to certify adherence to Purdue’s Policy on Integrity in Research, when designating that the thesis is or is not confidential, and to approve the format.) As of fall 2007, electronic deposit is required for all doctoral dissertations, but printed copies of master’s theses will continue to be deposited.

The university and department thesis format guidelines ensure that theses are uniformly presented and appropriately formatted for the profession. In practice, students may format a C&I thesis in one of two basic ways: (1) using the “Purdue format” to dictate layout of content and headings and using either APA or MLA for the formatting of tables/figures and references, or (2) using “pure” APA or MLA formatting for headings, tables/figures, and references. Following a description of the common components of most theses, these two approaches are illustrated using a short example with APA format, the most commonly used format in the department. You may elect to use either of these two basic approaches (with either APA or MLA) as long as you are consistent in your application of the approach throughout the thesis. Refer to these examples

for basic guidelines, but for detailed guidelines refer to *A Manual for the Preparation of Graduate Theses* and the latest editions of the APA or MLA manuals.

### **Common Elements of Most Theses**

Title Page (required)\*  
 Dedication (optional)  
 Acknowledgements (optional)  
 Preface (optional)  
 Table of Contents (required)\*  
 List of Tables (required if tables are used)\*  
 List of Figures (required if figures are used)\*  
 Abstract (required)\*  
 Chapter 1: Introduction<sup>+</sup>  
 Chapter 2: Review of the Literature<sup>+</sup>  
 Chapter 3: Methods<sup>+</sup>  
 Chapter 4: Results<sup>+</sup>  
 Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions<sup>+</sup>  
 List of References (required)<sup>#</sup>  
 Appendices (optional)<sup>#</sup>  
 Vita (required for doctoral dissertations only)<sup>#</sup>

Note: all major section headings (e.g., Acknowledgements, Table of Contents, Abstract, major chapter headings) should be written in capital letters, centered between the left and right margins, and begin two inches from the top of the page.

\* See *A Manual for the Preparation of Graduate Theses* for specific formatting guidelines with respect to these sections. Make certain that the Table of Contents and Lists of Tables and Figures correctly list the exact headings, titles, and page numbers in the body of the thesis.

<sup>+</sup> The number of chapters and their titles may vary. The examples given here are common, but individual theses may have different numbers of chapters and/or different titles.

<sup>#</sup> Each of these sections is separated from the preceding material by a cover sheet that is neither numbered nor counted.

**Example 1:**

**Using the Purdue Format in Combination with APA**

Margins are 1.5" left, 1" right, 1" top, and 1.25" bottom.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Major headings appear centered in all capitals and begin 2 inches from the top of the page.

### Introduction

First order headings are centered and underlined; they are separated from preceding text by 3 blank lines.

According to Smith (2001), two of the most important issues in education today are curriculum and instruction. In fact, both curriculum and instruction are foundational to the educational enterprise (Jones, 2003). Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.

This illustrates two common ways of citing references within the text using APA style.

Use line and a half to two line spacing for the text in the body of the thesis.

### Curriculum and Instruction

Second order headings are centered but not underlined; they are separated from preceding text by 3 blank lines.

Smith and Jones (2004) have described various perspectives of curriculum and instruction. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.

In APA, when citing two authors outside parentheses use "and" but inside parentheses use "&".

### Curriculum

Third order headings are left-aligned and underlined; they are separated from preceding text by 1.5 – 2 blank lines.

Fourth order headings (not shown) are left-aligned but not underlined; they are separated from preceding text by 1.5 – 2 blank lines.

Curriculum has been defined as "an integrated course of academic studies" (Jones & Smith, 2005, p. 14). Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.

When quoting in APA format, include the page number.

## Instruction

Jones and Smith (2005) refer to instruction as “the activities of educating or instructing or teaching” (p. 15). Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Table 1 shows a comparison of instruction with no instruction on students’ achievement, attitudes toward subject matter, and attitudes toward learning.

This is an alternate way to cite a page number when quoting in APA format.

Tables and figures should appear on the same or next page as the first reference to them in the text. Do not break them across pages unless necessary.

Except for certain exceptions (e.g., *p* and *r* values), report data to only 2 decimal places.

In APA, the table number goes on one line. The italicized title appears on the next line. Capitalize each major word in the table title.

Use only horizontal lines to delimit tables.

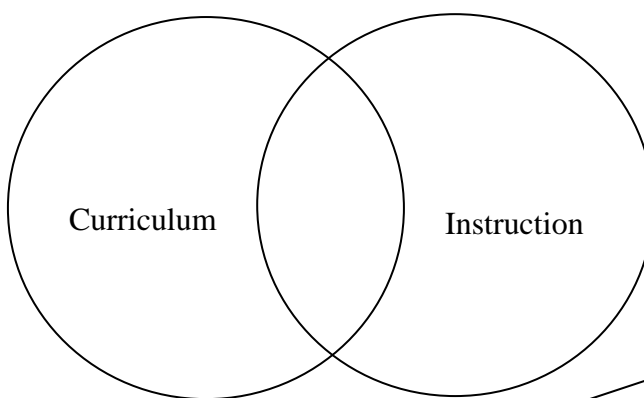
Table 1

*Comparison of the Effects of Instruction on Students’ Achievement and Attitudes*

Outcome Measures	With Instruction	Without Instruction
Achievement	75.23	61.05
Attitudes toward subject matter	10.48	8.83
Attitudes toward learning	9.14	8.65

Figure 1 shows an illustration of the overlap between curriculum and instruction.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.



In APA, the figure number and caption go at the bottom of the figure on one line (unless it is too long). Figure and the number are italicized, but the caption is not. Capitalize only the first word and proper names in the caption.

*Figure 1.* Diagrammatic illustration of the overlap between curriculum and instruction.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

Jones, A. B. (2003). On the importance of curriculum: A postmodern perspective.  
*Curriculum Studies*, 23(3), 139-153.

This is the format for a journal  
article citation in APA.

Jones, A. B., & Smith, C. D. (2005). *Curriculum and instruction: A primer*. New York:  
Academic Press.

This is the format for a book  
citation in APA.

Smith, C. (2001). Understanding the role of instruction in the curricular context. In E.  
F. Johnson & G. H. Wise (Eds.), *Conversations about curriculum* (pp. 210-230).  
Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum Associates.

This is the format for a book  
chapter citation in APA.

Smith, C. D., & Jones, A. B. (2004). Perspectives on curriculum and instruction.  
*Journal of Educational Research*, 55(1), 28-54.

**Example 2:**  
**Using “Pure” APA**

Only the difference in headings is highlighted in this example. Margins, spacing, reference style, and table and figure formatting are the same as the preceding example.



## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Major headings (level 5) appear centered and in all capitals.

### Introduction

First order headings are centered but not italicized.

According to Smith (2001), two of the most important issues in education today are curriculum and instruction. In fact, both curriculum and instruction are foundational to the educational enterprise (Jones, 2003). Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.

### *Curriculum and Instruction*

Second order headings are centered and italicized.

Smith and Jones (2004) have described various perspectives of curriculum and instruction. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.

### *Curriculum*

Third order headings are left-aligned and italicized.

Fourth order headings (not shown) are left-indented and italicized.

Curriculum has been defined as “an integrated course of academic studies” (Jones & Smith, 2005, p. 14). Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.