

# Guidelines for Writing a Master's Report

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## 1 Report Time Line

You should send a final draft of your report, which already conforms to the formatting guidelines below, to me one month before the last day of classes of the semester you plan to graduate. This ensures plenty of time for review and revision by myself, and the report reader.

## 2 Plagiarism

Every student who intends to write a master's report should first read the Dean of Students' information on scholastic dishonesty and plagiarism:

[http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis\\_whatism.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis_whatism.php)

[http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis\\_plagiarism.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis_plagiarism.php)

and send me an email confirmation affirming that you have read and understood the web page. Many times I have found that students do not know the rules governing properly citing other work and/or ideas. Let me know if you have questions regarding this issue.

## 3 Formatting Guidelines

Some of these rules may seem obvious, but I have seen each one violated numerous times in "final drafts" of master's reports. Please check to see that your document conforms to these guidelines before sending me a draft.

1. All text of the same type should be in the same font.
2. Sections should be numbered.
3. Tables, charts, and figures should be centered and labeled with a number and title. Such objects should then be referenced by number (e.g., Table 1) in the text.
4. Tables need to be legible and have properly labeled axes. You should avoid importing as a JPG, because this often creates a blurred image.
5. Use a spell checker! Although Microsoft Word has flaws, its spell checker is often correct.

6. References in the bibliography need to have consistent and correct formatting. Journal articles, books, and conference proceedings each have different format. See the last page of this document for one example of correct formatting. Correct formats for journal articles (Bramson [1] and Dai [3]), books (Chen and Yao [2]), and proceedings (Kumar [5]) appear there. In the bibliography, references should appear in alphabetical order by last name of the first author.
7. Any references to books, journal articles, proceedings, web pages, etc. need to have a citation in the main text and a reference entry at the end of the paper. The text citations should appear as in the point above, with the author name followed by a number in brackets. Other citation systems are acceptable, but you should discuss this with me before implementing a different system.
8. Check for consistency in the verb tense used. For example, in general you should use the present tense, rather than the future tense to refer to the research in your report, i.e., “in this report we investigate the effect of ...” is better than “in this report we will investigate the effect of ....” In referring to other papers, either the past tense or present tense is acceptable, but you should be consistent.
9. Check for consistency in capitalization. For example, in a section title you may either capitalize the first word, or each “important” word in the title. However, whichever of these styles you choose you should stick to throughout the document. The same is true for lists and special terminology in the text.
10. Avoid using the symbol “&” in place of “and.” Avoid using contractions.
11. Check for consistency in lists. For example, each entry in a list could be a sentence, a noun, or a verb form. However, in general you should avoid mixing these types in a given list.
12. Algebraic symbols which appear in the text (as opposed to being displayed in an equation) should be italicized. For example, “let  $m$  be the number of stations” is incorrect, whereas “let  $m$  be the number of stations” is correct.
13. Equations which are referred to later in the text should be numbered and referred to by number. Equations numbers should be right-justified.
14. All equations which end a sentence should contain a period immediately after the last symbol in the equation.
15. All equations should be in the same font and size throughout the document and should be centered.

16. If you have a series of equations in one display, they should be aligned by the equals sign:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} x & = & y + z \\ r + s & = & t. \end{array}$$

17. All brackets and parenthesis need to be appropriately sized. Incorrect

$$x = z + (\frac{1}{2}y),$$

correct

$$x = z + \left(\frac{1}{2}y\right).$$

18. Spell “et al.” correctly. Also “et al.” should be used when there are three or more authors, not when there are only two authors. In a reference the correct punctuation is Dai et al. [4].
19. “i.e.” and “e.g.” are always followed by commas. They are preceded by commas also, unless they are part of a parenthetical phrase (e.g., this phrase here).

## References

- [1] M. Bramson. Stability of earliest-due-date, first-served queueing networks. *Queueing Systems: Theory and Applications*, 39(1):79–102, 2001.
- [2] H. Chen and D. Yao. *Fundamentals of Queueing Networks*. Springer, New York, 2001.
- [3] J. G. Dai. A fluid-limit model criterion for instability of multiclass queueing networks. *Annals of Applied Probability*, 6:751–757, 1996.
- [4] J. G. Dai, J. J. Hasenbein, and J. H. VandeVate. Stability and instability of a two-station queueing network. *Annals of Applied Probability*, 14:326–377, 2004.
- [5] P. K. Kumar. Scheduling queueing networks: Stability, performance analysis and design. In F. Kelly and R. J. Williams, editors, *Stochastic Networks*, volume 71 of *The IMA volumes in mathematics and its applications*, pages 21–70, New York, 1995. Springer-Verlag.