

Preparation of a Thesis

Thesis Components

A thesis can be written and organized either in the traditional monograph style or the manuscript (article) based style. It cannot be a mixture of the two. Theses must conform to the requirements of Library and Archives Canada. These requirements are listed below.

In either monograph or manuscript format, the thesis must contain methodology, results and scholarly discussion, in accordance with disciplinary norms. It must also contain or conform to the following requirements:

1. Title page

- The title of the thesis
- The student's name and Unit* followed by "McGill University, Montreal"
- The month and year the thesis was submitted
- The following statement: "A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of...."
- The universal copyright notice "©" followed by the student's name and the year the thesis was submitted

2. A detailed table of contents

3. A brief abstract in both English and French.

- If the language of the thesis is neither English nor French (only allowed for specific language Units) then a third abstract in the language of the thesis is required.

4. Acknowledgements

- Among other acknowledgements, the student is required to declare the extent to which assistance (paid or unpaid) has been given by members of staff, fellow students, research assistants, technicians, or others in the collection of materials and data, the design and construction of apparatus, the performance of experiments, the analysis of data, and the preparation of the thesis (including editorial help).
- In addition, it is appropriate to recognize the supervision and advice given by the thesis supervisor(s) and advisors.

5. Preface and Contribution of Authors

- Contributions of the student to each chapter must be explicitly stated.
- Contributions of any co-authors to each chapter must be explicitly stated.
- The Preface of a doctoral thesis must also clearly state the elements of the thesis that are considered original scholarship and distinct contributions to knowledge.

6. An introduction

- Clearly state the rationale and objectives of the research

7. A comprehensive review of the relevant literature

- The literature review must be in line with disciplinary norms and expectations

8. A final conclusion and summary

- Clearly state how the objectives of the research were met and discuss implications of findings

9. A thorough bibliography or reference list

- Follow disciplinary norms

Length

Normally, a Master's thesis does not exceed 100 pages in length. GPS considers 150 pages to be the maximum (including title page, abstracts, table of contents, contribution of authors/preface, acknowledgements, bibliography/reference list, and appendices).

Appendices

Appendices are useful to present supplementary or raw data, details of methodology (particularly for manuscript-based theses), consent forms, or other information that would detract from the presentation of the research in the main body of the thesis, but would assist readers in their review. All material in appendices will be open to examination.

Thesis Format

Script and Page Format

A conventional font, size 12-point, 12 characters per inch must be used. Line spacing must be double or 1.5. Left and right hand margins should be 1 inch.

Pagination

Positioning of page numbers is optional. Pages with figures or illustrations may be numbered in sequence or left unnumbered. The chosen procedure must be used consistently throughout the thesis. Pagination must be carefully checked for correct sequence and completeness.

Footnotes, references and appendices

- These should conform to a scholarly style appropriate to the discipline.
- Footnotes may be placed at the bottom of the page or as endnotes at the end of each chapter.
- Consistency of formatting for footnotes and references is required throughout the thesis.
- **Note:** Handbooks such as the MLA or APA handbook may be consulted for formatting styles. These are available at the [Reference desk \(http://www.mcgill.ca/library/services/citation\)](http://www.mcgill.ca/library/services/citation) of the McLennan Library.

Figures, illustrations, photographs and digital images

- Figures, tables, graphs, etc., should be positioned according to the publication conventions of the discipline. Charts, graphs, maps, and tables that are larger than the standard page should be avoided unless absolutely necessary. Overlays must be meticulously positioned in the text.
- Where graphs, illustrations, photographs, etc. fill an entire page, these pages can be numbered in sequence or left unnumbered (see Pagination above). Legends or captions accompanying such full-page graphics must be presented on a separate page.

Additional materials

Slides, tapes, etc. are to be avoided if possible and can be included only if the student authorizes the reproduction of the thesis without them.

Manuscript-Based (Article-Based) Theses

As an alternative to the traditional thesis format, the thesis research may be presented as a collection of scholarly papers of which the student is the author or co-author; that is, it can include the text of one or more manuscripts, submitted or to be submitted for publication, and/or published articles reformatted according to the requirements described below. Manuscripts for publication are frequently very concise documents. The thesis is expected to be a more detailed, scholarly work than manuscripts for publication in journals. A manuscript-based thesis will be judged by the examiners as a unified, logically-coherent document in the same way a traditional thesis is judged.

A manuscript-based thesis must:

- be presented with uniform font size, line spacing, and margin sizes (see thesis format);
- conform to all other requirements listed under [thesis components \(/www.mcgill.ca/gps/theses/guidelines/preparation#components\)](https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/theses/guidelines/preparation#components) above;

- contain additional text that connects the manuscripts in a logical progression from one chapter to the next, producing a cohesive, unitary focus, and documenting a single program of research - the manuscripts alone do not constitute the thesis;
- function as an integrated whole.

There is no specified number of manuscripts or articles required for a Master's or a Doctoral thesis, nor is prior publication or acceptance for publication of the manuscripts a requirement. Publication or acceptance for publication of research results before presentation of the thesis in no way supersedes the University's evaluation and judgment of the work during the thesis examination process (i.e., it does not guarantee that the thesis will be found acceptable for the degree).

In the case of multiple-authored articles, the student must be the primary author. Multiple-authored articles cannot be used in more than one thesis. In the case of students who have worked collaboratively on projects, it may be preferable for both students to write a standard format thesis, identifying individual contributions. (See Intellectual Property ([//www.mcgill.ca/gps/thesis/guidelines/general-requirements](https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/thesis/guidelines/general-requirements)) re: required permissions/waivers.)

***Unit** refers to a department, a division, a school, an institute, or a Faculty/University-wide program.