

Student Projects & Presentations FAQ

Since Interactive Qualitative Projects (IQPs), Major Qualifying Projects (MQPs), theses, and dissertations are now published online and often distributed to a sponsor; you need to pay even closer attention to copyright law.

When submitting your project, theses or dissertation, you will be asked to agree to the following statement:

I hereby certify that, if appropriate, I have obtained and attached hereto a written permission statement from the owner(s) of each third party copyrighted matter to be included in my project report, allowing distribution as specified below. I certify that the version I submitted is the same as that approved by my advisor(s) and sponsor(s).

CONTACT

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Guidelines

The following are some guidelines for student use of copyright materials in course projects:

- Materials used must be legally acquired.
- Credit the sources with citations and display the copyright notice © and copyright ownership information for all works used in projects.
- On the opening screen or first page of report or presentation, include a notice if needed:

"Certain materials are included under the fair use exemption of the U.S. Copyright Law and have been prepared according to the fair use guidelines and are restricted from further use."

- If project will be for commercial reproduction and distributed beyond the classroom use (this includes posting on a Web site or given to a sponsor),

copyright permission for use of materials is required.

Students may perform and display their own projects created for educational uses in the course for which they were created and may use them in their own portfolios as examples of their academic work for later **personal uses**, such as job and graduate school interviews.

Specific Questions

For a course related project, can I copy an image from a commercial Web site?

For a course assignment that will be submitted to the professor, guidelines suggest that a photograph or illustration may be used in its entirety but no more than 5 images by an artist or photographer may be reproduced or otherwise incorporated. However, some Web sites, such as Smithsonian, allow use for student projects. Check the copyright statement for each site.

For IQP, MQP, thesis or dissertation: permission should be sought for copyrighted images because this work will be published online. Contact copyright@wpi.edu if you have questions.

May I use a chart or table from an article in my MQP, IQP, thesis or dissertation?

Charts, graphs, and tables are not subject to copyright protection because they do not meet one of the key requirements for copyright protection, which is that they are not "original works of authorship" under the definitions in the Copyright Act. Facts and data aren't considered original works of authorship and therefore are generally not under copyright protection because they are regarded as "discovered" and "recorded" natural phenomena rather than "created." Keep in mind however, that some countries do protect data and data sets, so if you are planning on taking your data abroad, be aware that the rules may not be the same as in the U.S. But, your use of data within the United States, for example, on servers in the U.S., is acceptable. Only in cases where a chart, table, or graph creatively represents more than just an expression of the underlying data, would the works be considered under copyright (e.g., a bar graph on U.S. immigration data created in the likeness of a U.S. flag). If you do need permission, refer to the section on [Requesting permission](#) for information and a sample letter to adapt.

For my MQP research, I need to use MP3 music samples to test my software application; can I use songs I have downloaded?

According to [Educational Multimedia guidelines](#), you may incorporate portions of **lawfully acquired** copyrighted works when producing their own educational multimedia projects for a specific course.

For music, lyrics, and music video: up to 10%, but in no event more than 30 seconds, of the music and lyrics from an individual musical work may be used.

Can I use a video clip of a broadcast on tsunamis during my class presentation?

Fair Use Multimedia Guidelines state that you may use 10% or 3 minutes, whichever is less, of a motion media work.

I plan to use a few copyrighted music clips in my presentation and plan to post this on my users.wpi.edu Web space, is this okay?

No. The fair use guidelines state that the distribution of the copyrighted materials must be for the course work only, intended for the professor or students within the course. If redistributed or shown outside the class, permission should be obtained from the copyright owner.

How do I obtain permission from the copyright owner?

Track down the creator of the work, obtain written permission (via e-mail or letter) which should be saved with the final project and submitted as part of the project if you plan to upload it to the [projects database](#), or [electronic thesis/dissertation \(ETD\) repository](#) at WPI. See [How To Secure Permission to Use Copyrighted Works](#) at Copyright Management Center, Indiana University.

Do I need obtain permission from people I interview or photograph before publishing their comments or picture in my final project report?

If you are using a name or likeness of a person, best practice is to request permission from that person by asking them to sign an image or interview consent & release form. See for a [sample of an interview release](#); or their [Personal Release Agreement sample](#).

Do I own the copyright to my MQP, IQP, Sufficiency, Thesis or Dissertation?

Even unpublished works are protected by U. S. Copyright law. According to [WPI's Intellectual Property Policy](#), "Copyright to individual IQP, MQP, sufficiency, thesis, and dissertation reports and documents are owned by the author, subject to other agreements. In the case of a jointly written document, copyright is held jointly by all authors, subject to other agreements. In cases when such a document was submitted to fulfill a degree requirement, students will grant to WPI a nonexclusive royalty-free license to distribute copies of the document, subject to other agreements. In cases in which such a document contains other intellectual property, the author(s) and WPI may mutually agree not to disclose the document until intellectual property implicit in the document has been appropriately protected."

I would like to include two political cartoons from a commercial website in my IQP project report. Do I need permission for this? If so, are there any costs involved?

Because cartoons are protected by copyright, you do need permission from the copyright holder to use them. Check the company's website for their copyright policy, any associated costs, and their contact information.

More Information

For more information, visit the following links, which will open in a new window:

- [U.S. Copyright Act of 1976](#)
- [Fair Use](#)