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Guide for the Preparation of Theses

Introduction

As part of the program requirements, each student must complete a Master's Research Project or a Thesis. The decision to pursue the Thesis or Project must be made in consultation with an Academic Advisor by the time that 36 credits are completed. In general, for those students seeking employment upon graduation, the Master's Project is recommended. For those students interested in pursuing research or doctoral work, the Thesis is recommended.

This handbook offers guidance for those doing the Thesis. The most current version of the guide can be found at the website of the Information Architecture and Knowledge Management (IAKM) Program: <http://iakm.kent.edu/thesis.pdf>

Students who have chosen to write the thesis must have completed the research core course of their choice (COMM 65020, ECON 64004, LIS 60604, or JMC 60007)

Rationale for Theses

Students considering the option of writing a thesis should understand the values of this experience:

- A. It gives students independent experience in seeking out and investigating sources of information – other than their own personal knowledge and experience – in an area of the students' particular interest. It permits more in-depth, more specialized treatment of a topic than is usually possible in a formal classroom setting.
- B. It extends the students' skills in critically interpreting a topic relating to the disciplines that comprise the Information Architecture and Knowledge Management Program.
- C. It aims to improve the students' skills in organizing the results of an investigation into a carefully, clearly organized presentation of an idea or ideas.
- D. It may help students decide their real interest and skills in pursuing further graduate work.
- E. It facilitates students' understanding of the research process, from establishing a proper research topic, reviewing the literature relevant to that topic, formulating goals, objectives and theories, deciding upon and using appropriate methodologies, carrying through the research,

defending the proposal and its conclusion(s), and codifying the results into a research paper.

Thesis Advisor

Each student doing a thesis must select a faculty member with which to work. The thesis advisor is someone who has expertise in the subject area in which the thesis is being done. It is the student's obligation to identify and obtain a thesis advisor with which to work.

The thesis advisor will assist the student in selecting a thesis committee. The committee will consist of three members with the thesis advisor serving as chair. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the IAKM Program, it is recommended that the committee consist of faculty from **at least two disciplines** related to the degree (Business Administration, Communication Studies, Computer Science, Journalism and Mass Communication, Library and Information Science, or Visual Communication Design).

The formation of the committee and the start of thesis work are official upon the submission of the Notification of Approved Thesis Topic Form (See Appendix A, page 8 or <http://www.kent.edu/rags/RAGS-Forms.cfm>). This form is to be filed with the College of Communication and Information no later than the semester preceding that in which the candidate expects to receive a master's degree.

Use of Questionnaires and Interviews

Students contemplating the use of questionnaires and interviews should 1) secure the approval of their thesis advisor and 2) judge the feasibility of cost and time of doing the study proposed.

Students using questionnaires or interviews in preparation of theses should adhere to Kent State University standards and forms in this area. Forms for approval of the use of human subjects can be obtained through the Office of Research and Graduate Studies or their website at <http://www.kent.edu/rags/>.

Literature Search

It is a good idea to select several possible topics and ask your thesis advisor for guidance in choosing one and refining it. Be sure to search the existing literature to be familiar with what has already been written on the topic selected. It is the student's responsibility to avoid duplication of content. Not only does a search of the literature preclude the possibility of such duplication but may also suggest an alternative topic or topic which may need to be brought up to date.

Thesis Guidelines

A thesis written for this Program is expected to be a substantial and original contribution to knowledge. Anyone who undertakes to write a thesis should be willing to accept rigorous standards of scholarship, methodology, and form of presentation.

A. Proposal Approvals

When the literature search has been completed, a proposal should be prepared, following the “Suggested Thesis Proposal Elements” (See Appendix B, page 9 or available online at: <http://iakm.kent.edu/thesis/elements.html>). The proposal and literature search, when completed, should be submitted to the thesis advisor who consults with the faculty committee convened for this purpose.

The thesis committee examines the proposal, and must be satisfied with it before it can be accepted. The student must submit a copy of his/her proposal with the Thesis Proposal Approval Form (See Appendix C, page 10 or available online at: <http://iakm.kent.edu/thesis/proposal.html>) to each committee member for review. Once the committee members have approved the proposal by signing the approval form, it is forwarded to the Director of the Information Architecture and Knowledge Management Program for approval.

B. Registration Requirements

With an approved proposal, the student may register for Thesis I (IAKM 61199) (see the current *Graduate Schools Catalog* for details) through the IAKM Program office. The student will elect a minimum of six semester hours of thesis credit. A student who has completed the required six hours of Thesis I is expected to register continually for Thesis II (61299) each semester, including summer, until all degree requirements are met. While students may exceed the number of credit hours of thesis, only six semester hours will be allowed toward degree requirements. Students electing thesis over several semesters will receive “in progress (IP) grades until such time that their program is successfully completed. At the time all “IP” grades will be changed to “S” grades. Once enrolled in Thesis II, a fee of \$10.00 per two semester hours will be charged.

C. Writing the Thesis

During the actual writing of the paper, the student should have regular consultations with his/her thesis advisor. It is hazardous to work independently for a long period of time and then to turn in a large section of completed writing without getting feedback on smaller segments.

a. Draft Copies

The student is obliged to submit a minimum of two drafts before preparing the final official copies. Each draft should be word-processed and provided to the committee in hard copy. The first draft should be stylistically correct and textually complete (including bibliography, preface, tables, appendices, illustrations, etc.). Electronic copies should be provided on demand. The advisor and committee members will make corrections and recommendations on the first draft and return it to the student for revision.

The second draft shall incorporate all necessary revisions and should be, in effect, the final draft of the thesis. It should be word-processed, with all material in sequence and in correct form, so that it requires only to be copied. An abstract of no more than 500 words is also submitted at this time. The thesis advisor and committee members will examine this draft and return it for the final preparation.

b. Style Manuals

The style guide for the all programs and schools in the College of Communication and Information is the *Publication manual for the American Psychological Association* (latest ed.). Because IAKM is a multidisciplinary program, there may be an exception to this general recommendation. If appropriate, an alternative style guide can be selected under the guidance of the Thesis Advisor. If the student intends to pursue further graduate work s/he should have experience working with the style appropriate to the area s/he is most likely to continue to research.

Certain questions of format and style are given special attention in “Style Guide and Instructions for Typing Theses and Dissertations” published by each College in the University. The guide also includes the “Thesis Preparation Approval Form,” which needs to be submitted to the College of Communication and Information with the final copy of the thesis. (See also Appendix D, page 11 or <http://iakm.kent.edu/thesis/prep.pdf>)

c. Defense Copy

The “defense” copy is a basis for the questioning of the candidate. As such, all parts (Table of Contents, Lists of Figures, List of Tables, all data, Appendixes, and References) that are part of the document must be included as they will appear in final form. All pages must be numbered appropriately. Although it is assumed that changes in the final copy may result from the oral defense, the defense copy should

be in as complete and final form as possible, including content, grammar, style, and format of the manuscript.

A copy of the completed thesis must be submitted to the examining committee along with the Thesis Preparation Approval Form (See Appendix D, page 11 or <http://iakm.kent.edu/thesis/prep.pdf>) at least 10 working days before the oral defense and no later than eight weeks before commencement.

d. Final Copy

Because theses and dissertations are cataloged in the University Library as bound volumes, they must be produced with the same care as printed books with uniform margins. Paper must also be uniform to allow transfer to other formats.

In order to be officially cleared for graduation, a student must submit two boxed originals of the thesis or dissertation to the College of Communication and Information, Office of Graduate Affairs. The deadline for each term for filing final copies is published in the *Graduate Schools Catalog* and posted in the Dean's Office. The deadline can expect to fall approximately four weeks prior to the date of the graduation ceremony.

The fee for binding the copies to be retained by the University is to be paid at the Bursar's office when the candidate applies for graduation. The fee for binding a thesis is \$10. Arrangement and fees for the binding of extra copies are the responsibility of the student. Binding services are available at the special order counter of the University Bookstore. A copy of the receipt must be forwarded to the College of Communication and Information.

Two originals of the thesis must be deposited in the College of Communication and Information, Office of Graduate Affairs. These originals can be:

1. The printed original and a high quality photocopy.
2. Two copies by any method that produces a sharp, high contrast image.

As noted above, in addition to the two required originals, candidates should prepare courtesy copies of the thesis for the faculty member(s) who have served as director or co-director. Electronic and hard copies of the entire paper and abstract must be submitted to the IAKM office for addition to the digital collection of IAKM student papers.

Please refer to the “Style Guide and Instructions for Preparing Theses and Dissertations” for the College of Communication and Information for details on the appropriate format for submission. The guide can be obtained through the College or Program office.

D. Oral Examination

At the completion of the thesis, the thesis committee will conduct a final oral examination of the student. The thesis advisor will serve as moderator of the examination. At the conclusion of the examination, the thesis committee will complete the “Report of Final Examination” form, which will then be forwarded to the Director for signature and then sent to the College.

E. Deadlines

Thesis Deadlines

<u>Graduation Date</u>	<u>Oral Defense</u>	<u>Document Filing</u>
August	By the prior July 5*	By the prior July 26*
December	By the prior November 1*	By the prior December 2*
May	By the prior April 4*	By the prior April 18*

*if the date occurs on a weekend, the previous Friday.

Conclusion

If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to talk with the Thesis Advisor, the Academic Advisor or the Director of the IAKM Program.

APPENDIX A

Sample Form

(Not official – please download from <http://www.kent.edu/rags/RAGS-Forms.cfm>)

**KENT STATE UNIVERSITY
NOTIFICATION OF APPROVED THESIS TOPIC**

The graduate student will file this form with the College or Independent School office no later than the semester preceding that in which the candidate expects to receive a master's degree. Please present the information in typewritten form.

Name _____ Date _____

Local Address _____

Local Phone No. _____ Student No. _____

Degree Program (e.g., M.A., M.S.) _____

Department and area of concentration _____

Proposed title of thesis _____

Are human subjects involved in this research? If yes, date of approval by the Kent State University

Human Subjects Review Board _____

Members of the thesis committee:

Name (typed or printed)

Department

("Outside discipline" person, if required)

APPROVED: _____

Advisor

Date

Graduate Coordinator

Date

Chair, Director, or Dean

Date

Please attach a paragraph describing the thesis research or study.

APPTHESES.NOT.93

APPENDIX B

Suggested Thesis Proposal Elements

- I. A statement of the problem and the justification for the proposed study; the limitations of the work to be done and, when applicable, a tentative hypothesis for the study and/or the objective(s) of the paper.

- II. Background

Description of the literature search of relevant materials, definitions of terms and statement of assumptions basic to the study.

- III. Methodology

Including a description of research design, the type of data to be collected, the method of collection, and how the data will be evaluated.

- IV. Appendices

Proposed appendices and samples.

- V. Tentative Bibliography

APPENDIX C

Kent State University
Information Architecture and Knowledge Management
Thesis Proposal Approval Form
IAKM 61119

Student Name: _____

Expected Semester of Graduation: _____

Title of Thesis: _____

=====

To be completed by Thesis Committee Member:

I have reviewed the attached thesis proposal and approve it for further study.

(Signature of Thesis Committee Member)

(Date)

=====

To be completed by Program Director:

I have reviewed the attached thesis proposal and approve it for further study.

(Signature of Director)

(Date)

APPENDIX D

Kent State University
Information Architecture and Knowledge Management
Thesis Preparation Approval Form
IAKM 61119

Title of Thesis: _____

Please attach the Master's Thesis Proposal and a 500 word (maximum) abstract.

To be completed by student:

I certify that this thesis meets the preparation guidelines as presented in the *Style Guide and Instructions for Preparing Theses and Dissertations*.

(Signature of Student)

(Date)

=====

To be completed by Thesis Advisor and Committee Members:

This thesis is suitable submission.

(Signature of Advisor)

(Date)

(Committee Member) (Date)

(Committee Member) (Date)

=====

To be completed by Program Director:

I certify, to the best of my knowledge, that the required procedures have been followed and the preparation criteria have been met for this thesis.

(Signature of Director)

(Date)

APPENDIX E

Organization of Front Matter

1. Blank Sheet
 2. Title Page (page i, page number does not appear)
 3. Blank Sheet
 4. Approval Page (page ii)
 5. Blank Sheet
 6. Table of Contents (page iii or more, numbered in sequence)
 7. List of Figures (if applicable, numbered in sequence)
 8. List of Illustrations (if any, numbered in sequence)
 9. List of Tables (if applicable, numbered in sequence)
- Preface, including Acknowledgements or Acknowledgements alone if there is no preface (numbered if applicable)

APPENDIX F
Sample Title Page

DIGITAL ARCHIVES OF THESES AND DISSERTATIONS: CASE STUDIES OF
STANDARDS AND PRACTICES IN STATE-FUNDED INSTITUTIONS

A thesis submitted to the College of Communication and Information of Kent
State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Science in Information Architecture and Knowledge Management

by

Edith I. Davidson

August 1, 2003

APPENDIX G
Sample Thesis Approval Page

Thesis written by

Jill Hollister

B.A., Purchase College, 1999

M.S., Kent State University, 2003

Approved by

_____, Thesis Advisor

_____, Director, IAKM

_____, Dean, College of Communication and Information