MASTER'S THESIS FORMATTING GUIDE

FOR RESEARCH MASTER'S STUDENTS

Need help? Contact:

grad-degree@provost.upenn.edu

Updated 6/22/2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Submitting Your Thesis 1
Who Should Submit a Thesis to the Office of the Provost? 1
Submission Instructions 1
Content of Your Thesis 2
Title Page 2
Table of Contents 3
Margins 3
Paragraph Justification 5
Fonts 5
Spacing 5
Pagination 5
List of Tables 6
List of Illustrations 6
Footnotes and Citations 7
Bibliography 7
Appendix A: Sample Title Page 8

Submitting Your Thesis

Who Should Submit a Thesis to the Office of the Provost?

All Research Master's students should follow the steps on the graduation checklist for Research Master's Students. Many graduate groups require completion of a research paper or thesis for research master's students. However, only certain graduate groups require the thesis to be submitted to the Office of the Provost:

Graduate Group Name	Deposit Requirement
Epidemiology and Biostatistics	**Required**
Linguistics	**Required**

Students in the following graduate groups have the option to submit a thesis to the Office of the Provost, but deposit is not required:

Graduate Group Name	Deposit Requirement
Applied Mathematics and Computational Science	Optional
Anthropology	Optional
Earth and Environmental Science	Optional
East Asian Languages and Civilizations	Optional
History	Optional
Mathematics	Optional
Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures	Optional
South Asia Regional Studies	Optional

If your graduate group is not listed above, do not submit your thesis to the Office of the Provost.

Submission Instructions

Students who are required to submit a thesis to the Office of the Provost – and students who optionally choose do to so -- should complete the following steps after applying to graduate:

1. Schedule a thesis deposit appointment – this appointment is NOT a meeting and you will not be present when your thesis is reviewed. During the time of your scheduled appointment, the

formatting of your thesis will be reviewed and graduation requirements will be examined to determine if you are eligible for thesis approval and degree clearance.

2. Upload the final, approved, and properly-formatted PDF version of your thesis in Qualtrics a minimum of 24 hours before your thesis deposit appointment.

Content of Your Thesis

The items in bold are required; all other items are optional. Pages should appear in the following order:

- **Title Page (required)**
- Dedication (optional)
- Acknowledgment (optional)
- Abstract (optional)
- **Table of Contents** (**required for theses 50 pages or longer,** optional for others)
- List of Tables (optional)
- List of Illustrations (optional)
- **Main Text (required, starts at page 1)**
- Appendices (optional)
- **Bibliography (required)**

Title Page

The Title Page must follow the format in Appendix A. The author's full legal name as it appears in Path@Penn must appear on the Title Page. Although this page counts as page "i" of the preliminary pages, no page number appears on this page.

Table of Contents

A table of contents must be included if the thesis is 50 pages or longer. The table of contents can be in any style but must include all sections of the document and page numbers for each listing.

Margins

IMPORTANT: **Absolutely nothing may be in the blank margin space**. Page numbers, footnotes, headers, and any part of any tables, figures, schemes, and text must all be kept out of the margin space.

Margins on **every page of the thesis must remain set to 1 inch all around** (for the top, bottom, left, and right margins).

You may view your margins using the rulers at the top and side of the Word document. You may also enable **Show text boundaries** to see if any of your text, images, or frames land outside of the margins by following these steps:

1. Click on the **File** menu
2. At the bottom of the left-hand menu, click **Options**
3. On the left-hand menu, click on the **Advanced** tab
4. Under the heading **Show document content**, select **Show text boundaries**

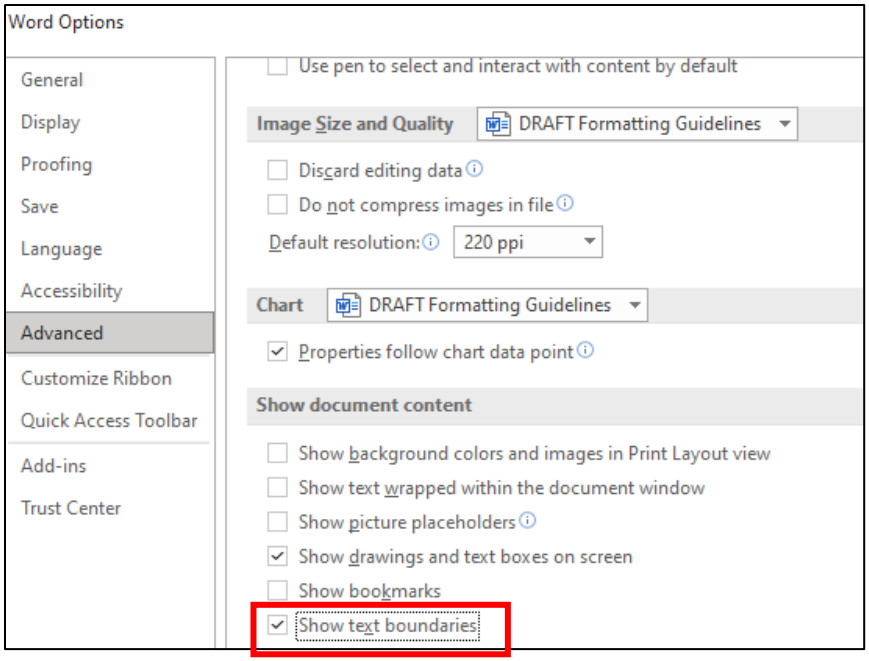

Illustration 1: Show text boundaries

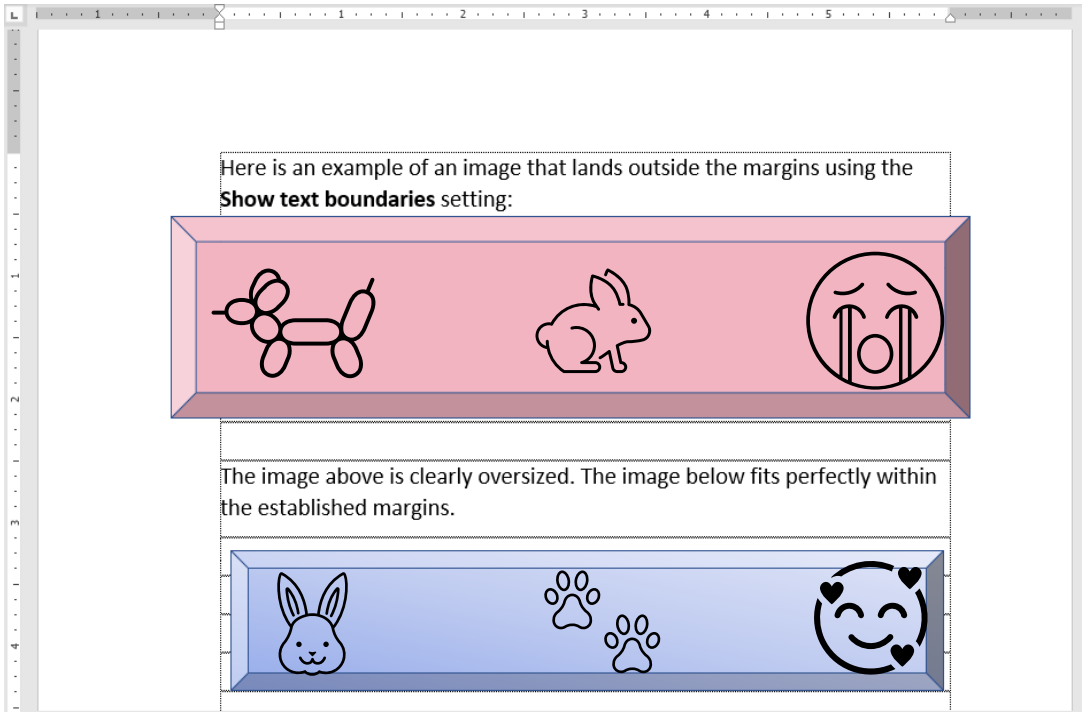

Illustration 2: Examples of images inside and outside the text boundaries

Paragraph Justification

Your main text must be either left-aligned or justified.

Fonts

A font 10-12 points in size and a consistent color (black) should be used. Headings may be larger. We recommend using one of the following options:

Arial (10pt), Calibri (11pt), Georgia (11pt), or Times New Roman (12 pt)

For footnotes, figures, citations, charts and graphs, a font of 8 points or larger should be used. Italic type may be used for quotations, words in a foreign language, occasional emphasis, book titles, or to differentiate subheadings.

Spacing

For the sake of readability, you may wish to double-space your thesis. Only the following parts of your text, if included, are required to be single-spaced:

- Footnotes
- Long quoted passages (more than four lines of prose or three lines of verse)

Pagination

1. The Title page must not have a visible page number, but for counting purposes, it is considered page i.
2. If you have any optional preliminary pages (dedication, acknowledgements, table of contents, lists of graphs, tables, and illustrations), use lowercase Roman numerals (ii, iii, iv…) starting with ii until the main text of your thesis.
3. The main text of your thesis should start on page 1 and is numbered with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3) from the first page of your thesis (page 1) to the end of the Bibliography.

4. Page numbers cannot appear in the blank margin space, so if you have page numbers at the bottom of your page, there should still be 1 inch of blank space below the page number.
5. If you choose to put your page numbers at the top of the page, there must be 1 inch of blank space above the page number.

In Word, this can be adjusted when you click the page number in the footer. The **Header & Footer** menu will show at the top; in the **Position** section, increase the **Footer from Bottom** or **Header from Top** distance to 1 inch.

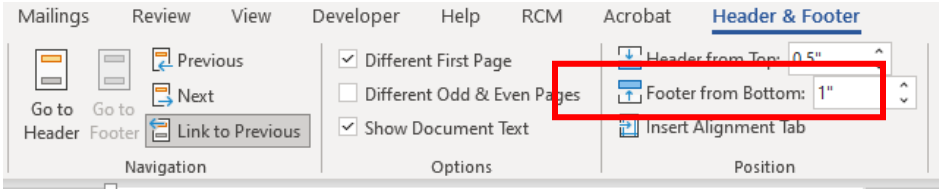

Illustration 3: Adjusting Footer from Bottom to 1 inch

List of Tables

If you have tables in your thesis, including a List of Tables is completely optional at the research master's level. We only suggest doing so if you have a large number of tables. If included, the List of Tables should function like a Table of Contents with page numbers for each item. List of Tables is a separate section after the Table of Contents in the order of pages.

List of Illustrations

If you have illustrations, figures, or images in your thesis, including a List of Illustrations is completely optional at the research master's level. We only suggest doing so if you have a large number of images.

If included, the List of Illustrations should function like a Table of Contents with page numbers for each item. List of Illustrations is a separate section after the List of Tables in the order of pages.

Footnotes and Citations

For citations, footnotes, references, and grammar, you should follow the guidelines in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, the *MLA Handbook*, the *APA Manual*, or the appropriate manual in your field of study. If using footnotes, they must be continuously numbered throughout the document (the count should **not** restart at each chapter).

Bibliography

The Bibliography is required and should be in the citation style recommended by your Graduate Group. This is an alphabetical listing of all references. It may be a single alphabetical list, an alphabetical list by chapters, subject or class of publications, or a numbered reference list if that is used by your citation style. If your list is numbered, it must be in order of use.

Note: Page numbers on the bibliography pages continue the pagination of the main text; do not number the bibliography separately.

If you have any other questions about submitting your thesis, please contact grad-degree@provost.upenn.edu.

Appendix A: Sample Title Page

1 inch margins all around

TITLE OF YOUR THESIS IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS

Author's Name

Name must match Path@Penn

A THESIS

in

Graduate Group Name

Use the official Grad Group name

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Arts

or Degree of Master of Science

2022

Supervisor of Thesis
Typed Name
Full Faculty Title

Graduate Group Chair
Typed Name
Full Faculty Title