



School of Graduate Studies and
Research

Thesis and Dissertation Guide

Revised 9/26



Thesis and Dissertation Guide

Students matriculating in a graduate program at Norfolk State University must complete a dissertation when enrolled in a doctoral program or a thesis when enrolled in a thesis option master's degree program. The dissertation and thesis demonstrate a student's capacity to conduct independent, scholarly research under the supervision of a chair and members of the dissertation/thesis committee.

This Thesis and Dissertation guide has been developed to assist students and committees in the preparation of a thesis or dissertation. This guide has been approved by the Graduate Council of NSU. The primary purpose of this document is to provide uniform standards regarding style and format that allows enough flexibility to satisfy the acceptable practices of each academic discipline.

Theses and dissertations must demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the relevant literature and provide a clear explanation of the method, results, and significance of the research. The chair and committee have a vital role in assisting students in the development of research competency.

Thesis/Dissertation Committees. Thesis/Dissertation committees help guide students through the thesis or dissertation process. Committees should be formed in consultation with the chair and following the policies and procedures of the specific program. Committees should be formed early to allow students to gain feedback on the proposed project. Committee members are expected to have some level of expertise that can contribute to the quality of the project.

Once a committee is formed, each member should sign the Thesis/Dissertation Committee Form (Appendix A). If a committee member is replaced, complete the Thesis/Dissertation Committee Change Form (Appendix B) with the current committee's name(s), the replaced committee name(s), and have the new committee member(s) sign the change form. These forms should be submitted to the Graduate Program Chair/Director (GPC) once completed. The GPC will upload a copy of the form to the Office of Graduate Studies SharePoint sites.

Proposal Defense. When the chair has agreed that the proposal document is ready to present and defend, students must submit the proposal document to the committee no later than two weeks prior to the proposal meeting. Upon completion of the proposal defense meeting, the committee confers in private and decides if a student passes with no revisions, passes with minor revisions, or must resubmit and re-present the proposal due to major revisions. If revisions are required, the chair will document these revisions in written format and provide them to the student. The chair and the student should develop a timeline for completing the revisions for resubmissions. If major revisions are required, the proposal meeting must be re-scheduled within the next semester. New timelines for theses or dissertation completion do not change the five-year (master's degrees) or eight-year (doctoral degrees) time limit for degree completion. This process should be documented on the Thesis/Dissertation Proposal Defense Form (Appendix C).

The approved proposal serves as a contract between the student and the committee regarding the scope of work. Any changes to the scope must be agreed to by the student and the committee and documented.

If students are conducting research with human participants or animals, they must complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative ([CITI](#)) module on the Responsible Conduct of Research training. Information on this training can be obtained from the Office of Sponsored Programs. Copies of the completed training must be submitted to the chair and GPC. The Human Subjects Review Committee must approve all research with human and animal participants at Norfolk State University. Contact the Office of Vice Provost for Research and Innovation for IRB forms and requirements. If modification of the proposal is approved by the committee that involves human or animal participant data collection, then a modification request must be submitted to IRB and approved prior to data collection. The process of approval (including the approval number) must be cited in the text of the thesis/dissertation.

Announcement. The chair or program director will submit an announcement to the School of Graduate Studies when the student is ready for a final defense. This process should be documented on the Request to Schedule Final Oral Defense Meeting form (Appendix D). Members of the students' committee should sign the back of the form indicating their approval of the final defense meeting.

Final Defense. When the chair has agreed that the document is ready to present and defend, students, with the permission of the chair, shall submit the final document to the committee no later than two weeks (10 business days) prior to the defense meeting. Students should check with their GPC regarding specific procedures for notifying Graduate Studies. Graduate Studies will notify the NSU community of the defense meeting which is open to the public.

Upon completion of the defense meeting, the committee confers in private and decides if a student passes with no revisions, passes with minor revisions, must make major revisions and reschedule the defense, or fails. This decision should be based on the written and oral presentation of the project that was agreed upon by the committee. If revisions are required, the chair will document these revisions in written format and provide them to the student. The chair and the student should develop a timeline for completing the revisions for resubmissions. If major revisions are required, the defense meeting must be re-scheduled. The revisions must be completed within the five-year (master degrees) or eight-year (doctoral degrees) time limit for degree completion. This process should be documented on the Thesis/Dissertation Final Defense Form (Appendix E).

Once final approval has been obtained from the committee, the student should review this document for formatting requirements to ensure compliance with the format guide of the School of Graduate Studies and Research. Once all changes are made, the document is submitted to Graduate Studies for final review.

Grades for thesis and dissertation. Thesis and dissertation courses are graded as Pass (P) or Fail (F). Grades of Incomplete (I) are recorded on the student's EVAL with an end date of the time limit for degree completion (5 years for masters and 8 years for doctoral students). If a student has an incomplete, it should not be removed until the final defense and final document has been approved by the chair and the committee.

Graduation Application Submission. The graduation application should not be submitted until the format has been approved the School of Graduate Studies and Research.

Binding. The School of Graduate Studies will bind the University required copy of the document or provide a digital format to the library. Other copies can be bound locally or via theses online binding services using the Graduate Studies approved PDF copy. Information on resources for binding is available at the Graduate School.

Once the format is approved, the student, chair, and GPC/D will be notified.

Continuous registration. Students who have completed all degree requirements except for their thesis or dissertation must be continuously enrolled at the university including the semester in which they plan to graduate. Students must register for continuous registration each semester and pay the required fee which is equivalent to one credit hour. If a student is not continuously enrolled, then the student must apply for readmission and pay the required fees.

To be eligible to participate in commencement, please see Graduate Studies' website for due dates for submission of document for format approval ([Office of Graduate Studies | Norfolk State University - Norfolk State University \(nsu.edu\)](https://www.norfolkstate.edu/graduate-studies)). Typically, documents are due 3-4 weeks prior to commencement in the fall and spring for students who plan to participate in the commencement ceremony so students should plan accordingly. Adherence to the format guidelines ensures timely processing of documents.

Process for Submitting Theses/Dissertations

Final/Thesis or Dissertation

- Student and Committee ensure quality of content and form.
- This is generally a reiterative process between student/chair/committee.
- Final approval of document for a final defense meeting must be given by Chair.

Submission to Thesis/Dissertation Committee

- Final document should be submitted to the committee and program coordinator (GPC) two weeks prior to final oral defense. Check program for earlier due dates.
- The GPC notifies Graduate Studies when the final defense meeting is approved.
- An announcement of the final defense will be posted by the Graduate School.

Thesis/Dissertation Defense

- Final Defenses are held in front of the committee and are open to the public.
- The decision of pass or fail rests with the committee and must be agreed upon by a majority. The decision does not have to be unanimous, but the decision must include a majority of the members from the student's department.

Committee Recommendation

- The chair shall communicate the results to the student immediately following the final defense meeting. Further revisions may be required.
- Once all revisions are approved, the Thesis/Dissertation Final Defense Form, signed iThenticate report, and final document should be submitted to the GPC for review and approval.

Submission to Graduate Studies

- A digital copy in WORD of the final document should be submitted to the Graduate School by the GPC for format compliance. Unapproved final documents will not be reviewed after the final defense.
- A Graduate School hold will be placed on the student's account until the format is approved.
- Notifications of required revisions will be sent to the student and GPC.
- Deadlines for submission are posted on the Graduate Studies webpage. No exceptions will be made for deadlines.

Final Steps

- Once the format is approved, the student, chair, and GPC will be notified, and the Graduate School hold will be removed.
- The Office of Graduate Studies will print the University copy of the document or provide an appropriate digital version for archival purposes.
- If your department requires additional copies, local or online print shops may be used.
- For archival purposes it is recommended that additional copies be printed on good quality bond paper that is at least 25% rag cotton fiber.

General Format Requirements

1. Organization of the Thesis/Dissertation

The thesis/dissertation should be organized in the order indicated below.

PRELIMINARY PAGES

Title Page with committee names (no page number and no signature lines)

Abstract (no page number)

Dedication (optional)

Acknowledgments (optional)

Table of Contents

List of Tables (if two or more appear in text)

List of Figures (if two or more appear in text)

List of Code Listing, Equations, and Acronyms (optional, if two or more appear in text)

MAIN BODY

Introduction

Main body of text divided into various chapters or sections

Discussion (Summary, Conclusions, Implications)

REFERENCES AND SUPPLEMENTAL SECTIONS

References

Appendix material (i.e., copyrights)

Copyright. By law, students may claim their own copyright in a thesis or dissertation. Information on securing copyright through the U.S. Copyright Office can be found at this link: <https://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/index.html>. Candidates must not violate copyright laws. All sources cited in theses and dissertations should be properly credited and permission to use a portion of the work of another must be obtained in writing. The candidate must adhere to all stipulations on the presentation of copyrighted material. The copyright holder may charge a fee.

2. MANUSCRIPT REQUIREMENTS

Font Face

1. The manuscript must have a uniform font or typeface throughout the document. New Times Roman is recommended for the font. **Do not use different sizes or styles in the document.** The Chair of the committee will make the final decision regarding legibility and acceptability of fonts.

2. Italics and boldface print (in the same size as the text) may be used for major headings, subheadings, and for emphasis. Underlining is acceptable but should not be used with boldface or italics.

3. Tables, figures, and materials in the appendices may be of different fonts. **Font**

Size:

1. The manuscript must have a uniform **12-point font size including headings.**

- All headings must be consistent within the document.
- Point size reductions can occur for footnotes, tables, figures, images, and appendix material only.
- When using **APA style**, figures and table titles should conform to the latest edition of the style manual.

2. For student using **IEEE style**, figure and table titles should be conform to the latest edition of the style manual.

NOTE: Tables that carryover to a new page must conform to the style guide and must carryover the headings.

Pagination

1. Pages should have 1” margins throughout the document.
2. Page numbers are placed in the upper right-hand corner of the page, approximately one-half inch below the top edge of the paper and one inch from the right-hand edge.
3. PRELIMINARY PAGES must begin with lower case **Roman Numerals** (iii, iv, etc.).
4. The MAIN BODY (Chapters), REFERENCES and APPENDICES pages are numbered with **Arabic numbers** beginning with 1. Every subsequent page has a page number.

5. Specific page number requirements

- The **Title page** is assumed to be i (**no page number** appears on this page)
- The **Abstract** is assumed to be ii (**no page number** on this page).
- The **first numbered page** is the page after the abstract and is **iii or iv**
- See section on creating different page numbers in Word.

Tooltip: YouTube Video on inserting different types of page numbers:

https://youtu.be/57A_tvZo17g

Spacing:

1. The spacing must be double spaced throughout the entire document except the dedication page which should be single spaced. There should not be extra spacing between paragraphs.
2. Please make sure the auto add space before/after paragraph is turned off in WORD (under the line spacing option).
3. Mixing spacing is not acceptable.
4. Single spacing is used only for long, blocked, inset quotations, footnotes, endnotes, and itemized or tabular material and titles in LISTS in the preliminary pages (except the Dedication page).

Text:

1. Each paragraph should be indented.
2. Divide MAIN BODY into chapters
3. Chapter Numbers and Titles should be consistent with the Table of Contents.
4. Each text page must have at least 4.5 inches of text on it unless the page contains a table or a figure or the next text begins a new chapter or major section. Minimize blank space on pages.
5. No page should end with a single line of text.
6. Do not use double column text.

Tables and Figures

1. Tables should have titles at the top of the table.
2. Tables that carry over to another page, must have the Table number, title and headings on the subsequent pages.
3. Figure titles should be at the bottom of the figure.
4. Figures can be reduced in size to reduce white spaces on pages.
5. Numbering equations, if used, should be consecutive and should be referenced in the document. No two equations may be numbered the same unless identical term for term.

Major Headings and Subheadings:

1. All headings must be consistent throughout the document.
2. All major headings must be centered in all capital letters.
3. All chapters must begin on a new page and double spaced.
4. There is no punctuation after a heading or 2nd level subheading.
5. Spacing before and after headings must be consistent throughout the manuscript.
6. The style used for subheadings must be consistent throughout the document and must clearly demonstrate different levels. You must use your style guide or the example in the sample chapter.
7. Subheadings do not begin on a new page.
8. A subheading at the bottom of a page must be followed by at least one line of text.

References/Bibliography

1. The title is the same heading used in the format model (REFERENCES for **APA Style** and BIBLIOGRAPHY for **IEEE Style**). The heading is in all capital letters and bold if major headings are bold.
2. The reference list must be consistent, accurate, and complete.
3. Only references cited in the text should be included in the reference list.
4. APA Style (current edition) must be used for students in COLA, Education, and Social Work. IEEE style must be used for students in CSET. Capitalization, punctuation, headings, and ordering (alphabetized, or alphabetized and numbered, or non-alphabetized and numbered) of information must follow these models.
5. In an alphabetized list, the system of ordering multiple entries must be consistent.

Appendices

1. Appendices are for supplemental material such as tables of raw data and survey instruments.
2. A separate appendix must be used for each type of material included.
3. Headings can be centered on a separate page or centered at the top of the first page of the material. Be consistent from appendix to appendix.
4. All materials must be within the margins. Material reduced in size must be legible.
5. Tables and figures in Appendices must be numbered consecutively following the text.
6. Supplemental material can have mixed fonts and be single spaced.

"[Click here and type THESIS TITLE]"

by

"[Click HERE and type Author Name]"

"[Click HERE and type degrees held, dates conferred, institution]"

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Norfolk State University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

[Click **here** and type DEGREE, such as MASTER OF SCIENCE]

[Click **here** and type MAJOR, such as GEOLOGY]

NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY

"[Click here and type Graduation Date: Month XXXX]"

Approved by:

[Director Name]" (Chair)

[Member Name]" (Member)

[Member Name]" (Member)

[Member Name]" (Member)

[Member Name]" (Member)

NO PAGE
NUMBER

ALL CAPS,
CENTERED AND
DOUBLE SPACED

MY WORKING TITLE FOR MY THESIS

by

Sheila A. Student
B.A., May 2019, Norfolk State University

IF DEGREE IS
OUTSIDE US, ADD
COUNTRY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Norfolk State University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

DEGREE MUST
MATCH NAME IN
CATALOG

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY
December 2021

Approved by:

Chair Name, Chair

Member Name, Member

Member Name, Member

Member Name, Member

Member Name, Member

MY WORKING TITLE FOR MY DISSERTATION

by

Sheila A. Student
B.S. May 2016, Old Dominion University
M.S. May 2019, University of Australia, Australia

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
Norfolk State University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

MATERIALS SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY
May 2027

Approved by:

Chair Name, Chair

Member Name, Member

Member Name, Member

Member Name, Member

Member Name, Member

ABSTRACT

[Click **here** and type THESIS TITLE]

"[Click here & type Author's Name in the same format as title page]"

Norfolk State University, 2021

Chair: "[Chair Name]"

Abstract Content. One page limit. Single-paragraph, single-spaced and fully justified

NO PAGE
NUMBER

ABSTRACT

MY WORKING TITLE FOR MY DISSERTATION

SINGLE- SPACED
SINGLE PARAGRAPH

Cynthia A. Student
Norfolk State University, 2027
Chair: Dr. Mary G. Advisor

DOUBLE-
SPACED

This section contains a summary of the thesis (dissertation) and is double-spaced **below the heading**. It should not be indented and contain a brief description your research. It should be one page and fully justified. This page should not contain page numbers. Single spacing should be maintained throughout the document except between paragraphs which should be double spaced.

This thesis is dedicated to [Whoever or Whatever]. No heading should be on this page. This section focuses on those who have supported you through your graduate education or life to get to this point. It is not for chairs, committee members, or faculty who have assisted in the research project.

It should be double-spaced and indented no more than two pages.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SAMPLE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
PAGE
DOUBLE-SPACED
INDENTE PARAGRAPH
MAXIMUM 2 PAGES

iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This should be double-spaced with indented paragraphs. This is where you thank your Director, Chair, Advisor, committee members and/or anyone else who helped you to complete this project as well as acknowledge any research funding support. It should be no more than two pages.

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LIST OF [Click here and type].....[Click **here** for page #]

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II. [Click here and type HEADING] [#]

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III. [Click here and type HEADING] [#]

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IV. [Click here and type HEADING]..... [#]

[Click here and type subheading] [#]

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INDENT
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NO MORE
THAN
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WORDING
OF ALL
HEADINGS
MUST BE
EXACTLY
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TEXT

VERFIY
THAT ALL
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NUMBERS
ARE
CORRECT

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WORDING OF
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[#] . [Click here and type graph name]..... [#]

[#] . [Click here and type graph name]..... [#]

[Click **here** and type chapter name]

[Click **here** and type contents]

I. INTRODUCTION

This is where the start of your dissertation begins. It should begin with page number one in Arabic numbers in the top right corner. It should be double-spaced and indented throughout the document. Please use spellcheck and verify that references are accurate in the document. You can full justify or right justify the document.

When starting a new paragraph, there should only be one double space. Figures and Tables should also be one double space from the text. Subheadings should follow format guide of APA, IEEE, or use the examples in this document.

Subheading Level 2

Second level subheadings should be sectioned in such a way that it is clear that it is a subheading. Second level subheadings should be consistent throughout the document.

Subheading level 3. Indent third level subheadings followed by a period. There should not be more than 3 levels of subheadings.

Tool Tip: Style changes: A demonstration of how to indent 3rd level headings can be found here: <https://youtu.be/iviwx95RbA>

If you have more than 3 levels, then you **MUST** follow APA or IEEE for all heading styles.

1. TITLE

This is where the start of your dissertation begins. It should begin with page number one in Arabic numbers. It should be double-spaced and indented throughout the document. Please use spellcheck and verify that references are accurate in the document. You can full justify or right justify the document.

When starting a new paragraph, there should only be one double space. Figures and Tables should also be one double space from the text. Subheadings should follow format guide of APA, IEEE, or use the examples in this document.

I.I Subheading Level 2

Second level subheadings should be sectioned in such a way that it is clear that it is a subheading. Second level subheadings should be consistent throughout the document.

I.I.1 Subheading 3. Indent third level subheadings followed by a period.

Tool Tip: Style changes: A demonstration of how to indent 3rd level headings can be found here:

<https://youtu.be/iviwx95RbA>

If you have more than 3 levels, then you **MUST** follow APA or IEEE for all heading styles.

REFERENCES

Use Style Guide for IEEE or APA for reference section.

APPENDIX [#]

"[Click here and type appendix name]"

[Click **here** and type contents]



School of Graduate Studies and Research

McDemmond Center for Applied Research (MCAR), Ste 602

700 Park Ave. Norfolk, VA 23504 Phone: 757-823-8015

Thesis/Dissertation Committee Form

A Thesis/Dissertation Committee has been established for:

Student Name: _____ Identification Number: _____

Degree Program: _____ Masters Ph.D/Terminal

Member - Print Name	Members Signature	Date
_____	Thesis/Dissertation Chair/Advisor	_____
_____	Member Signature	_____
_____	Member Signature	_____
_____	Member Signature	_____
_____	Member Signature	_____

I understand that the faculty listed above will serve as my Thesis/Dissertation Committee.

Student: _____
Student Signature Date

APPROVAL:

Graduate Program Coordinator/Director: _____
Signature Date

Send copy to: Department Chair
Academic Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Thesis/Dissertation Committee Change Form

I hereby request the following change to the Thesis/Dissertation Committee to be established for:

Student Name: Choose a building block.____ Identification Number: Choose a building block. _

Degree Program: Choose a building block. _ Concentration: Choose a building block. _____

Thesis/Dissertation Committee

Current Committee
Print Name

New Committee
Print Name

New Member
Signature

Member Signature

Member Signature

Member Signature

Member Signature

Member Signature

Signature of Current Thesis/Dissertation Advisor/Committee Chair

Signature of New Thesis/Dissertation Advisor/Committee Chair

I understand that my Thesis/Dissertation Committee composition has changed.

Student: _____
Signature

Date

APPROVAL:

Graduate Program Coordinator/Director: _____
Signature

Date

Send copy to: Department Chair
School of Graduate Studies and Research

School of Graduate Studies and Research

McDemmond Center for Applied Research (MCAR), Ste 602
700 Park Ave. Norfolk, VA 23504 Phone: 757-823-8015

Thesis/Dissertation Proposal Defense Form

The following student has successfully proposed his/her Thesis/Dissertation:

Name: _____ Identification Number: _____ Proposal Date: _____

Program: _____ Degree Program: Masters Ph.D/Terminal

Title of Proposal:

Member - Print Name	Members Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
	Thesis/Dissertation Chair/Advisor	
_____	_____	_____
	Member Signature	
_____	_____	_____
	Member Signature	
_____	_____	_____
	Member Signature	
_____	_____	_____
	Member Signature	

☐ Approved with no changes.

☐ Approved with minor revisions. Attach summary of revisions and provide a copy to the student.

☐ Not approved, significant revisions and new final defense required.

Graduate Program Coordinator/Director: _____

Signature Date

PLEASE NOTE: Any revisions must be completed prior to submitting the final document to the Office of Graduate Studies for format compliance review. Please use the online Thesis Guide for format requirements.

Send copy to: Department Chair
 School of Graduate Studies and Research

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

THESIS/DISSERTATION DEFENSE

Name

Degree

Title

Chair

Date

Time

Location

All NSU faculty, staff, and students are invited to attend

ABSTRACT

**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
REQUEST TO SCHEDULE FINAL ORAL DEFENSE MEETING**

This document attests to the following student's readiness to hold a final defense meeting for his/her thesis/dissertation.

Student Name

Program

I hereby give the above student permission to submit his/her proposal to the committee for review and approval to schedule a final defense meeting.

Chair Signature

Date

The following committee members are attesting that they have reviewed the above student's thesis/dissertation and agree that it is ready for final defense meeting:

Member Signature

Date

Member Signature

Date

Member Signature

Date

Member Signature

Date

*This form **MUST** be signed by **ALL** committee members and submitted to School of Graduate Studies and Research at least 5 business days before the scheduled final defense to facilitate the widest possible dissemination of the notice of defense. Individual programs may require more time for notification. Consult with the Program coordinator for the policy within your program.*

TO BE COMPLETED BY THESIS/DISSERTATION COMMITTEE CHAIR

General Assessment of Proposal (As Applicable)

This proposal was judged to have an adequate:

- ☐ review of the relevant research literature
- ☐ statement of research problem and rationale for the research
- ☐ methods section including detailed description of procedure and design
- ☐ reference section

Comments:

School of Graduate Studies and Research

McDemmond Center for Applied Research (MCAR), Ste 602
700 Park Ave. Norfolk, VA 23504 Phone: 757-823-8015

Thesis/Dissertation Final Defense Form

The following student has successfully defended his/her Thesis/Dissertation:

Name: _____ Identification Number: _____ Defense Date: _____

Program: _____ Degree Program: M.S. Ph.D

Title of Thesis/Dissertation: _____

Member - Print Name	Members Signature	Date
_____	Thesis/Dissertation Chair/Advisor	_____
_____	Member Signature	_____
_____	Member Signature	_____
_____	Member Signature	_____
_____	Member Signature	_____

☐ Approved with no changes.

☐ Approved with minor revisions. Attach summary of revisions and provide a copy to the student.

☐ Not approved, significant revisions and new final defense required.

Graduate Program Coordinator/Director: _____

Signature

Date

Send copy to: Department Chair
School of Graduate Studies and Research

TO BE COMPLETED BY THESIS/DISSERTATION COMMITTEE CHAIR

General Assessment of Thesis (As Applicable)

This thesis research project was judged to have an adequate:

- ☐ review of the relevant research literature
- ☐ statement of research problem and rationale for the empirical research
- ☐ methods section including detailed description of experimental procedure and design
- ☐ results section describing obtained data and how it was analyzed
- ☐ discussion of obtained data or process
- ☐ integration of obtained findings with research literature presented in paper's introduction
- ☐ reference section
- ☐ formal figure(s) depicting the obtained data in graphical form
- ☐ safe assign report attached

Comments: