



GUIDELINES FOR THESES PREPARATION

*To assist students in the writing of theses and selection of the most appropriate format, the following additional department-specific information and guidelines are provided to complement those set out by the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Office (GPS). The GPS guidelines are presented in regular font (and have been directly downloaded from its website on March 4, 2024) while those of the department are presented in **italics**.*

Initial Thesis Submission checklist

Students are encouraged to refer to the [Initial Thesis Submission Checklist](#) at the early stages of their thesis writing to help guide their work.

A [completed Initial Thesis Submission Checklist](#) must be uploaded on myThesis as a supplemental document, with a student's initial thesis.

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. It must also contain or conform to the following requirements:

Department: Please see pages 8-9 regarding the chronology of these requirements and depending on the format of your thesis.

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.
- Students can request permission to add the official McGill logo to their thesis cover page by submitting this [webform](#).
- [Example of formatting may be found here.](#)

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.
- Abstracts in English and French are mandatory and must be text only, i.e. no images, special characters (apart from the West European character set excluding the “Œ” and “œ”), chemical or mathematical formulae, or special formatting (e.g. lists, tables). Abstracts have a maximum limit of 4000 characters.

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. Contribution to original knowledge

- A doctoral thesis must clearly state the elements of the thesis that are considered original scholarship and distinct contributions to knowledge.

6. 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.

7. An introduction

- Clearly state the rationale and objectives of the research.

Department: Both the Hypothesis and Objectives should be included at the end of the Introduction

8. A comprehensive review of the relevant literature

- The literature review must be in line with disciplinary expectations.

9. Body of the thesis

In a traditional thesis, the body of the thesis should encompass sections on:

- Methodology
- Research findings

In a manuscript-based thesis:

- Each chapter represents a full manuscript identical to the published or submitted version (except for font/size).
- The chapter includes the full manuscript in its entirety (including the reference list and diagram/figure list).
- **Doctoral students** must include the text of a **minimum of two** manuscripts published, submitted or to be submitted for publication.
- **Master's students** must include the text of **one or more** manuscripts published, submitted or to be submitted for publication.

Department: *For MSc & PhD manuscript-based theses, one manuscript (chapter) **must be accepted and/or published** (not only submitted). See further information at end of page 7 for guidelines on co-authorship.*

Between manuscripts, students must include a bridging text of 1-3 pages to show how the manuscripts relate to each other and how they fit within the bigger picture.

10. A comprehensive scholarly discussion of all the findings

The discussion of findings must be in line with disciplinary expectations. A comprehensive discussion is expected to be a minimum of 10 pages, double-spaced for doctoral students and a minimum of 5 pages, double-spaced for Master's students (including figures, images, and tables). It pertains to the entirety of a thesis. The discussion of findings should provide an final, overarching summary of study themes, limitations, and future directions.

In the case of a [manuscript-based thesis](#), the comprehensive discussion should encompass all of the chapters of the thesis and should not be a repetition of the individual chapters. This section can be used to address issues not sufficiently covered in the preceding chapters or papers (e.g., critiques raised by

reviewers that could not be incorporated into published works, or reintroducing discussion arguments removed from published papers upon reviewer request). This section can also be used to elaborate on the practical/applied aspects of published findings in a manner that is more accessible to less expert readers.

11. A final conclusion and summary

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

Department: Conclusions and Future Directions should be stated in a separate Chapter. These may also be 2 separate Chapters (see thesis checklist).

12. A thorough bibliography or reference list

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).

A Doctoral thesis must be as succinct as is consistent with the sound scholarly exposition of the subject under investigation and disciplinary norms. There is no page limit, but unnecessarily long theses are viewed negatively since one of the norms of academic scholarship is concision.

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.

Department: use the same font and line spacing throughout the thesis, including figure legends and references.

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.

Department: the Title page counts as page 1, but the page number should not appear on it.

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](#) 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 format, a thesis may be presented as a collection of scholarly papers of which the student is the first author or co-first author. A manuscript-based doctoral thesis must include the text of a minimum of two manuscripts published, submitted or to be submitted for publication.

Department: For MSc & PhD manuscript-based theses, one manuscript (chapter) must be accepted and/or published (not only submitted). See further information at the end of pages 7 for guidelines on co-authorship.

Articles must be formatted according to the requirements described below. A manuscript-based Master's thesis must include the text of one or more manuscripts.

Manuscripts for publication in journals are frequently very concise documents. A thesis, however, is expected to consist of more detailed, scholarly work. A manuscript-based thesis will be evaluated by the examiners as a unified, logically coherent document in the same way a traditional thesis is evaluated. Publication of manuscripts, or acceptance for publication by a peer-reviewed journal, does not guarantee that the thesis will be found acceptable for the degree sought.

A manuscript-based thesis must:

- be presented with uniform font size, line spacing, and margin sizes (see Thesis Format under [Preparation of a Thesis](#));
- conform to all other requirements listed under Thesis Components on the [Preparation of a Thesis](#) page;
- contain additional text that connects the manuscript(s) in a logical progression from one chapter to the next, producing a cohesive, unitary focus, and documenting a single program of research - the manuscript(s) alone do not constitute the thesis;
- stand as an integrated whole.

For manuscript-based thesis, each individual chapter/manuscript should be identical to the published/submitted version of the paper, including the reference list. The only change is with respect to the font/size which should be the same as the one used for the rest of the thesis for consistency and homogeneity reasons. So, each chapter represents a full manuscript and has its own reference list. Then, at the end of the thesis, you have a master reference list which includes all the other references cited throughout the other sections of the thesis, mostly within the general introduction but also from the general discussion.



In the case of multiple-authored articles, the student must be the first 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 traditional format thesis, identifying individual contributions. Consult [this page](#) for information on intellectual property and required permissions/waivers.

In the case of **co-first authored articles**, only **one** student can use the article in a manuscript-based thesis and must have a written agreement from the other co-first author student(s).

*Department: Each manuscript should represent original research. Review articles may not be included in a manuscript-based thesis. Not all chapters need to be published/accepted for publication or submitted. For PhD theses, **at least one chapter has been accepted/published**. A manuscript may only be included in ONE thesis. Co-first authors (who are both students) must come to an agreement on which student will include it in their thesis or that BOTH students will submit traditional theses.*

Each manuscript chapter should have a Title page with list of authors and affiliations, Abstract, Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, Discussion, References, data figures/tables and supplemental data (if included in the published/submitted manuscript). Each manuscript chapter should be reproduced exactly as per published paper or submission. There should be a 'Connecting Text' between data/manuscript chapters. For more information see the Checklist.



Department: Table 1. PHD thesis format

Traditional Format	Manuscript format
Title	Title
Dedication (optional)	Dedication (optional)
Abstract	Abstract
Résumé	Résumé
Table of Contents	Table of Contents
List of Abbreviations	List of Abbreviations
List of Figures	List of Figures
List of Tables	List of Tables
Acknowledgments	Acknowledgments
Contribution to original knowledge	Contribution to original knowledge
Format of the thesis	Format of the thesis
Contribution of Authors	Contribution of Authors
Chapter 1 Introduction: a literature review of relevant background for the thesis. Both the Hypothesis and Objectives should be included at the end of the introduction	Chapter 1 General Introduction (not in a manuscript format): a literature review of relevant background for the thesis. Both the Hypothesis and Objectives should be included at the end of the General Introduction
Chapter 2 Materials and Methods	Chapter 2 Manuscript 1 (original research contribution) including title page with a list of authors and affiliations, name of journal, date of publication, volume and pages (if published), abstract, introduction, methodology, results, discussion, list of references, figures and tables, supplementary material (if any).
Chapters 3-5 Results Connecting text between Chapters	Connecting text Chapter 3 Manuscript 2 (see above). Connecting text Chapter 4 Manuscript 3 (see above).
Chapter 6. Discussion	Chapter 5. General Discussion (not in a manuscript format)
Chapter 7. Conclusions and Future Directions	Chapter 6. Conclusions and Future Directions
Chapter 8. References	Chapter 7. Master reference list includes all the other references cited throughout the other sections of the thesis, mostly within the general introduction but also from the general discussion
Appendices: Additional material that the student may want to include. Copyright permissions (permissions to re-use for published figures or tables should be obtained from the publisher) Ethics and related certificates	Appendices: Additional material that the student may want to include. Copyright permissions (permissions to re-use for published figures or tables should be obtained from the publisher) Ethics and related certificates



Department: Table 2. MS thesis format

Traditional Format	Manuscript format
Title	Title
Dedication (optional)	Dedication (optional)
Abstract	Abstract
Résumé	Résumé
Table of Contents	Table of Contents
List of Abbreviations	List of Abbreviations
List of Figures	List of Figures
List of Tables	List of Tables
Acknowledgments	Acknowledgments
Format of the thesis	Format of the thesis
Contribution of Authors	Contribution of Authors
Chapter 1 Introduction: a literature review of relevant background for the thesis. Both the Hypothesis and Objectives should be included at the end of the Introduction	Chapter 1 General Introduction (not in a manuscript format): a literature review of relevant background for the thesis. Both the Hypothesis and Objectives should be included at the end of the General Introduction
Chapter 2 Materials and Methods	Chapter 2+n Manuscript(s) (at least one original research contribution) including title page with a list of authors and affiliations, name of journal, date of publication, volume and pages (if published), introduction, methodology, results, discussion, list of references, figures and tables, supplementary material (if any).
Chapter 3 Results	
Chapter 4. Discussion	Chapter 3. General Discussion
Chapter 5. Conclusions and Future Directions	Chapter 4. Conclusions and Future Directions
Chapter 6. References	Chapter 5. Master reference list includes all the other references cited throughout the other sections of the thesis, mostly within the general introduction but also from the general discussion
Appendices: Additional material that the student may want to include. Copyright permissions (permissions to re-use for published figures or tables should be obtained from the publisher) Ethics and related certificates	Appendices: Additional material that the student may want to include. Copyright permissions (permissions to re-use for published figures or tables should be obtained from the publisher) Ethics and related certificates