



Ball State University

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**Graduate Thesis Guide**



## Chapter 1

# Thesis, Creative Project, Research Paper?

## THESIS OVERVIEW

### What is it?

You can receive 6 hours of graduate credit for completing a thesis. This is a comprehensive research paper directly related to your degree or area of specialization. You'll need to show careful research and the ability to draw valid and specific conclusions from your data. You'll work closely with a committee of three graduate faculty members, who will need to approve your thesis topic, proposal, and final project when you are finished.

### What a thesis requires:

1. The candidate to present a thesis embodying the results of a study of some subject directly related to the area of specialization.
2. The thesis must show that the candidate possesses the abilities to pursue a research problem successfully and to draw valid and significant conclusions from the data.
3. The student must have a committee of three faculty members.
4. The candidate's advisor and departmental chairperson have signed a statement approving the subject.
5. A student must also be in good academic standing to register for THES 698. Approval forms are available online.
6. The student who writes a thesis must enroll in THES 698 Thesis, for a total of 6 hours of credit after receiving approval from the Graduate School.
7. The approved thesis must be presented to the dean of the Graduate School in final form at least four weeks before the close of the semester or term in which the student is to be certified for graduation.
8. The final copy of the approved thesis, any accompanying materials, and a 100-to 150-word abstract of the thesis describing the nature of the study and findings must be submitted to the Graduate School electronically at <https://apps.bsu.edu/ElectronicThesis>.
9. The thesis is not used to meet the requirements for any course except THES 698.
10. The grading system used for THES 698 is credit/no credit.



## CREATIVE PROJECT OVERVIEW

### What is it?

You can receive 3 or 6 hours of graduate credit by completing a creative project directly related to your degree or area of concentration. Examples include a musical arrangement, composition or recital, painting, literary composition, or instructional unit in science or social science. You'll need to support your project with a written report that includes background research, significant information, and a description of your project. If you pursue a 6-hour project, you'll work closely with a committee of three graduate faculty members, who must approve your project when it is complete.

### What a creative project requires:

1. The creative research project (3 or 6 hours) must be in the student's concentration area. Examples of creative projects are a musical arrangement, composition, or recital; painting(s), sculpture, or a craft project; a literary composition; and instructional units in science or social science.
2. The creative project must be supported by a written report that includes background research and other significant information basic to the project, as well as a thorough description of the project itself.
3. The student is required to have a committee of three for the 6-hour project and an advisor for the 3-hour project.
4. A creative research project must show evidence of superior craftsmanship and creative scholarship and must be limited to students, on the recommendation of the department chairperson, who are capable of exhibiting these traits.
5. It must meet the approval of the student's advisor and the chairperson of the department concerned.
6. A student must also be in good academic standing to register for CRPR 698. Approval forms are available online.
7. The student who writes a creative project will enroll in CRPR 698 Creative Project for a total of 3 or 6 hours of credit.
8. The project in its final approved form must be submitted to the Graduate School at least four weeks before the close of the semester or term in which the candidate is to be certified for graduation. The final copy of the approved project, any accompanying materials, and a 100-to 150-word abstract of the project describing the nature of the project must be submitted to the Graduate School electronically at <https://apps.bsu.edu/ElectronicThesis>.
9. The creative research project is not used to meet the requirements for any course except CRPR 698.
10. The grading system used for CRPR 698 is credit/no credit.



## RESEARCH PAPER OVERVIEW

### What is it?

You can earn 3 hours of graduate credit by completing a research paper on a topic directly related to your degree or area of specialization. You'll need to show careful research and the ability to draw valid and specific conclusions from your data. Your advisor and department chair must approve your topic.

### How to:

1. This paper must be an original study of non-thesis proportions showing that the candidate possesses the abilities to pursue a research problem successfully and to draw valid and significant conclusions from the data.
2. It must be on some subject directly related to the candidate's area of concentration and must meet the approval of the student's departmental advisor and the department chairperson.
3. A student must also be in good academic standing to register for RES 697. Approval forms are available online.
4. The student who writes a research paper must enroll in RES 697 Research Paper for 3 hours of credit.
5. A student must submit the research paper in its final approved form at least four weeks before the close of the semester or term in which the candidate is to be certified for graduation.
6. The final copy of the approved research paper, any accompanying materials, and a 100-to 150-word abstract of the research paper describing the nature of the study and findings must be submitted to the Graduate School electronically at <https://apps.bsu.edu/ElectronicThesis>.
7. The research paper is not used to meet the requirements of any course except RES 697.
8. The grading system used for RES 697 is credit/no credit.

***NOTE\*\*\*\*Your thesis, creative project or research paper is a professional document and should meet professional standards in content and appearance. The Graduate School has established guidelines to ensure uniformity in style and format, and your document must meet these standards to be approved.\*\*\*\****



## Chapter 2

# Research Ethics and Compliance

## RESEARCH ETHICS

Students should conduct and report the results of their research in an ethical manner. Ethical misconduct in research is any falsification, fabrication, and plagiarism in proposing, conducting or disseminating research or other creative activities. Fabricating research findings entails making up results, and falsifying research results refers to changing, misrepresenting, or selectively reporting findings. These acts violate the integrity of the research process and are serious breaches of accepted ethical standards. Students at all stages of the research process are required to conduct their research in an open and honest manner and make every effort to ensure the accuracy of their findings. Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of the phrasing, ideas, and depictions of publicly available work without appropriately acknowledging their sources. Using the work of another without acknowledgment of the original sources constitutes plagiarism and is subject to penalty. Students at the Ball State University are expected to maintain the ethical standards in proposing, conducting, and reporting their research in the research project, thesis, creative project or dissertation.

## RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

The Office of Research Integrity (ORI) handles most research related regulatory activities at BSU, including administering the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR), Radiation Safety (RSC), Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC), Laboratory Safety and Security (LSSC), Federal Significant Conflicts of Interests (SFCI), and so forth. Any questions concerning these areas should be directed to the Office of Research Integrity. Research involving human participants, animals (lab and field), certain biological agents, and/or radioactive materials must receive the appropriate committee's approval before any research with these can begin. In some cases, multiple committee reviews may be needed.



## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD SUBMISSION

IRB must be obtained prior to any data being collected in research including human participants in any way.

### Step-by-Step

1. Complete CITI Training.
  - Principle Investigator (PI) and all team members must complete all required CITI trainings before approval can be granted.
  - PI and all team members should complete the CITI training course that most closely aligns with their research area (i.e. Social and Behavioral or Biomedical)
  - If the research is supported by National Science Foundation (NSF) funds, the PI and all team members must also complete the CITI RCR courses.
2. Register on IRBNet.
3. Review submission deadlines for the Institutional Review Board.
4. Complete all pieces of the application. This will include the **Human Subjects Research Application and Narrative form**, along with any additional relevant documents. This might include informed consent documents, surveys, recruitment letters or e-mails, and so forth. You may want to review some of the **IRB resources**.
5. Upload your project to IRBNet.
6. Share your project with your advisor and team members (if applicable).
7. The Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor (if PI is student) must electronically sign off on the project.
  - If the research is for a dissertation, then only the Faculty Advisor needs to complete CITI and e-sign the protocol. The entire Dissertation committee does not need to do these.
  - If the research will take place off-site, at another organization, etc. you will need to get letters of support from those site/organizations. This needs to be on their letterhead and signed by someone in a position of authority to grant you permission to conduct your research there. (i.e. If you wish to collect data at a high school you must receive written permission from the superintendent of the school corporation.)

**NOTE: \*\*\*If this is your first time submitting a research protocol, the Office of Research Integrity has a Peer Mentor Program to help. The Peer Mentor Program gives researchers one-on-one assistance in preparing and submitting their protocols. This can help speed up the submission process.\*\*\***



## Chapter 3

# Registration

## REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Before beginning work on a research project, a student must submit a Topic Approval Form, signed by his or her advisor and the appropriate departmental chairperson, to the dean of the Graduate School. The form, obtainable in the department, the Graduate School office, and online, is to be accompanied by a typewritten description of the proposed research paper, creative project, or thesis including a statement of the problem, the value and significance of the problem, and the research methodology to be used in the study.

After receiving approval for RES 697, THES 698, or CRPR 698 all master's degree candidates must be registered for THES, CRPR, or RES hours each semester during the academic year. If not registering for a course or courses, the candidate will register for MAST 600, Master's Candidate, for a fee of \$75. Before degree conferral, registration and subsequent payment for MAST 600 are mandatory for students who have not registered for MAST 600 during required semesters. Registration in MAST 600 is not required during the summer. Registration in MAST 600 will give the master's candidate the rights and privileges of a regular student.

A master's candidate may also take MAST 600 under other circumstances when not registered for a course or courses—for instance, while working off an incomplete grade—with the approval of the candidate's committee chairperson, the department advisor, and the dean of the Graduate School.

Note that students must be active in order to apply for graduation. If a student is not enrolled in courses, he/she should enroll in MAST 600.

## THESIS SPECIFICS

Students who complete a thesis must register for a total of 6 credit hours of THES 698 before graduating and must receive grades for these credits. Students should not try to register for THES 698 until after the successful proposal meeting and after the Topic Approval Form has been submitted to the Graduate School and you have received an email notification that you can go ahead and register.



## **CREATIVE PROJECT SPECIFICS**

Students who complete a thesis must register for a total of 3 or 6 credit hours of CRPR 698 before graduating and must receive grades for these credits. Students should not try to register for CRPR 698 until after the successful proposal meeting and after the Topic Approval Form has been submitted to the Graduate School and you have received an email notification that you can go ahead and register.

## **RESEARCH PAPER SPECIFICS**

Students who complete a thesis must register for a total of 6 credit hours of RES 697 before graduating and must receive grades for these credits. Students should not try to register for RES 697 until after the successful proposal meeting and after the Topic Approval Form has been submitted to the Graduate School and you have received an email notification that you can go ahead and register.





## Chapter 4

# Formatting the Thesis, Creative Project, or Research Paper

**\*\*\*NOTE: The following requirements are specific to the Graduate School. Different programs may have different requirements. Make sure to see your department chair or advisor on the program specific details.\*\*\***

## GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

All additional required forms: **ETD Signature Page**, and Signature Page or Final Approval Form (**3 hour RES 697/CRPR 698** or **6 hour CRPR 698/THE 698**), must be received four weeks prior to the end of the intended semester of graduation

The following formatting requirements are based on the needs of ProQuest, Ball State's online submission site. See the formatting requirements here:  
<http://cms.bsue.edu/-/media/www/departamentalcontent/gradschool/pdfs/formatsubmissionguide/110217bsugradformatingsubmissionrequirements.pdf?la=en>

### Margins

Left. 1"

Right. 1"

Top. 1"

Bottom. 1"

These apply to all material except: page numbers, including figures, headers/footers, footnotes/endnotes, and full-page images

### Page Numbering

Page numbers must be at least  $\frac{3}{4}$ " from the edge of the paper

### Spacing

Double-Space: abstract, dedication, acknowledgements, table of contents, body of manuscript, except for quotations as paragraphs, captions, items in tables, lists, graphs, charts

Single-Space: footnotes/endnotes, bibliographic entries, lists in appendices

### Font

Font size for body text may be from 10- to 12 point and should remain consistent throughout the front matter and main text and must be easily legible

Font size and type may differ for footnotes, figure captions, table data, references, and material in an appendix and may be as small as 9-point



## Document Type

All papers must be saved as a Microsoft Word document or PDF file. **How to create a PDF file.**

## Attachments

No embedded media files in your PDF are allowed

Upload media files as supplementary files: During online submission, you will be asked to upload any supplementary files.

Describe files in your abstract: Add a description of each supplementary file in your abstract.

## Signatures

As a precaution, pages or forms with signatures are not to be included in upload.

- All students need a **title page**. Title Pages include title of paper, name, degree, requirements being fulfilled, full name of institution, advisor, and month and year of graduation. Use only capital letters.
- All students need an **abstract**.
- In addition to these two required components, students completing a thesis should include an acknowledgement page and a table of contents. A dedication is optional and can be included if students so desire. Students completing research papers and creative projects are not required to do so, but can if they would like.



## Chapter 5

# Electronic Submission

## ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OVERVIEW

Ball State University has implemented a policy that all master's degree theses, research papers, creative projects, and doctoral dissertations are to be submitted electronically. This means that the Graduate School will no longer accept paper copies of graduate student research projects. The goals of the Graduate School in requiring electronic submission include seeking to instruct graduate students about electronic document preparation and how to use digital libraries. Moreover, many research projects go beyond the traditional text-only format, which cannot be captured in paper copy alone, and this initiative will allow worldwide accessibility to Ball State student research.

## STEPS

Your account will be activated two weeks prior to the final submission deadline.

The following are instructions for final submission:

1. Create two PDF files. The first PDF file will contain your abstract. The second PDF file will contain the body of the paper. This includes the Title Page, Acknowledgments, Bibliography, and Appendices (if any).
2. It may be helpful to have your advisor or chair review and approve of the formatting before uploading the document.
3. Prepare additional attachments to be uploaded (if any). These could include videos, pictures, and musical compositions. These attachments do not have to be in PDF form, but should be in a form appropriate to the type of attachment.
4. Once you submit files, you cannot go back and add files. Please upload all files in the same session.
5. Your committee members are notified once you've completed the submission process and they must electronically sign off on the documents as well. As a consideration for your committee's busy schedule, make sure to give a full week for them to review your uploaded project and sign off.



**\*\*\*\*Note: All materials *MUST* be formatted following the Graduate School Requirements detailed in the previous section. \*\*\*\***

!!!!You **MUST** upload all files at one sitting. Once you click the submit button, you **CANNOT** go back and add additional files later!!!!

## **PUBLICATION AND COPYRIGHTING**

### **Delay of Publication**

Authors may request a publication restriction as part of the ETD submission process. While such restrictions are not generally recommended by the Graduate School, there are cases where their use may be prudent (e.g. patent applications, proprietary data, article and monograph publishing, etc.). Careful consideration should be given before deciding.

Please keep in mind that exercising a restriction will prevent copies of your thesis, creative project, or research paper from being made available to others outside the University who wish to read about your research in a timely fashion. If you are considering a delay of publication please discuss the matter with your committee chair or advisor. See the ETD Signature form for more information regarding the release or delay of publication of your work.

## **DUE DATE FOR SUBMISSION**

All papers and projects must be received in the Graduate School at least 1 month prior to the intended date of graduation. It is recommended that you seek approval by your committee 3 weeks prior to the suggested submission date, in other works, 7 weeks prior to the intended graduation date. See the Graduate School website for dates and deadlines

**\*\*\*\*Note: It is best to discuss with your faculty advisor and set actual deadlines for your work rather than guesstimating. \*\*\*\***



## Chapter 6

# Student's Responsibilities for Graduation

## CHECKLIST FOR GRADUATION

All the below items must be completed to be considered for degree conferral!

- Complete electronic document conversion to acceptable format (i.e., PDF). **How to create a PDF.**
- Download, print, complete, and acquire signatures of committee members and department chairperson (or designate) on the **Research Paper, Thesis, Creative Project, or Dissertation (ETD) Signature Form** and submit it to the Graduate School.
- Download, print, complete, and acquire signatures of committee members and department chairperson (or designate) on the Final Approval Form (**3-hour form; 6-hour form**) and submit it to the Graduate School.
- Remove any incompletes (departmental responsibility).
- Upload and electronically submit the final research paper, thesis, or creative project. This includes the abstract, title page, and acknowledgement page (if applicable).

## APPLICATION FOR GRADUATION

***NOTE\*\*\*\* Before you can graduate, you'll need to complete an online application for graduation and submit it to the Graduate School. You'll need to submit your application for graduation within the first four weeks of the semester in which you plan to graduate or the first two weeks of the summer semester. An \$25 application for graduation fee is required for all degree-seeking students applying for graduation. The fee will appear on the student's billing statement. See the deadlines page for more information.\*\*\*\****



## Chapter 7

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## FAQs

### **I'm not sure if my project requires IRB/Research Compliance review. How do I determine this?**

If you have any questions, please contact John Mulcahy, Associate Director of Research Integrity or Jennifer Weaver Cotton, Research Integrity Administrator.

### **Do I have to submit my research protocol to IRB/Research Compliance before turning in my Topic Approval Form to the Graduate School?**

You must evaluate whether your project needs research compliance (IRB) approval before turning in your topic approval form to the Graduate School. If your protocol requires research compliance approval but it has not been submitted, you may turn in your topic approval form to the Graduate School as long as you attach an explanation of why your protocol has not been submitted and discuss your timeline for submission.

### **I've submitted a Topic Approval Form, but one of the committee members has since left Ball State. What do I do?**

You will need to submit a new Topic Approval Form to the Graduate School with the new committee member's name and signature. Be sure to attach a short note explaining the reason the new form is being submitted.

### **I've submitted a Topic Approval Form, but there has been a change in my topic. What do I do?**

You will need to submit a new Topic Approval Form to the Graduate School with the updated topic.

### **How do I know if I have completed my degree requirements?**

Coursework and degree requirements are determined by your department. Contact your department or graduate advisor to inquire.

### **I've submitted my Application for Graduation and I'm ready to upload my creative project, dissertation, research paper, or thesis. When can I upload?**

You will receive an email to your Ball State email account from the Associate Dean of the Graduate School when the site is available for upload. The email will include the link to the site as well as instructions for uploading. Generally this email is sent six weeks before the end of the fall/spring semester and four weeks before the end of a summer semester.



**Are there any tips to follow that will help make the electronic upload of my creative project, dissertation, research paper or thesis go smoothly?**

Please make sure that you upload your document as a PDF.

**Can I fax or email a copy of the completed Topic Approval Form, ETD Signature Form, or the Final Approval Form to the Graduate School?**

These forms must have original signatures. Therefore we cannot accept a photocopy, email, or faxed copy. It is the student's responsibility to see that the original forms with original signatures are submitted to the Graduate School, West Quad, Room 100, by the appropriate deadline.

**I've submitted my Application for Graduation for the current semester but realize I'm not going to meet the deadline for completing degree requirements. Can I change my graduation date?**

You will need to reapply for graduation through SSB.

**After I have submitted the Application for Graduation, how do I pay the \$25 application fee?**

The application fee is assessed by the Bursar's Office and will appear on your student account. Be sure to monitor your student account to make payment by the due date. Student account questions may be addressed to the Bursar's Office at (765) 285-1643 or [bursar@bsu.edu](mailto:bursar@bsu.edu).

**When will I receive my diploma?**

Diplomas are mailed from the Commencement Office and take approximately 4-6 weeks to arrive to the student. It may take longer to arrive, if the destination is outside of the United States.

For master's degree students, regardless of whether or not you attend commencement, the diplomas are mailed from the Commencement Office and take approximately 4-6 weeks to arrive to the student. Please allow additional time if the destination is outside the United States.



## Chapter 8

# Appendices

## ESSENTIAL LINKS TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Formatting/Submission Requirements

### REQUIRED FORMS

#### Creative Project (3 Credit Hour)

ETD Signature Page  
Topic Approval Form (Masters - 3hr)  
Final Approval Form (Masters - 3hr)  
Title Page (Masters - 3hr - Sample)  
Abstract (Sample)

#### Creative Project (6 Credit Hour)

ETD Signature Page  
Topic Approval Form (Masters - 6hr)  
Final Approval Form (Masters - 6hr - Sample)  
Title Page (Masters - 6hr - Sample)  
Abstract (Sample)

#### Research Project

ETD Signature Page  
Topic Approval Form (Masters - 3hr)  
Final Approval Form (Masters - 3hr)  
Title Page (Masters - 3hr - Sample)  
Abstract (Sample)

#### Thesis

ETD Signature Page  
Topic Approval Form (Masters - 6hr)  
Final Approval Form (Masters - 6hr - Sample)  
Title Page (Masters - 6hr - Sample)  
Abstract (Thesis, Research Paper or Creative Project - Sample)