USA Graduate School T/D FAQ’S:  
05/9/13

- **Should my paper follow any particular style?** Yes! Most graduate students use the APA style [http://apastyle.org/](http://apastyle.org/) The MLA is also acceptable [http://www.mla.org/style](http://www.mla.org/style) LaTex can be used for technical papers [http://www.latex-project.org/](http://www.latex-project.org/) or [http://openwetware.org/wiki/LaTeX](http://openwetware.org/wiki/LaTeX) Check with your department to see if they have any requirements and/or recommendations.

- **What are the margin requirements?** Left margin is 1 ½ inch, Right margin is 1 inch, Bottom margin is 1 ½ inch and the top margin with a major heading is 2 inches, on all other pages the top margin should be 1 inch. ALL pages should follow these requirements including title and signature page.

- **How should my name appear in the paper?** It is your decision whether you want to use your first and last name only or if you want to include your middle name or middle initial, etc. However, you must list your name exactly the same throughout your paper (signature page, title page, abstract, biographical sketch).

- **What order should the preliminary pages follow?** Signature Page, Title Page, Dedication (optional), Acknowledgement (optional), Table of Contents, List of Tables, List of Figures, List of Symbols, List of Abbreviations and/or Nomenclature (if applicable), Abstract.

- **How do I number the pages in my paper?** Your preliminary page numbers should be lower case roman numerals and the numbers must appear on the bottom of the page, centered and ½ inch from the bottom of the page. The page numbers need to be the same size and font type used in the body of your paper. The first page of the body of your paper must be page 1. Page numbers in the body of your paper usually appear on the bottom of the page, same placement as the preliminary page numbers, or can appear at the top right of the page, depending on what formatting style you are using.

- **What pages should NOT be numbered?** Your signature page is not numbered or counted. Your title page is not numbered, but is counted. Cover pages should not be numbered or counted.

- **When should I use cover pages?** Cover pages are required for your References, Appendices and your Biographical Sketch. Also, if you have a multi-volume paper, each volume must have a title (cover) page (these are not numbered or counted).

- **What is the format for my Abstract page?** Your manuscript must include your abstract. Thesis abstracts may only be 1 page in length. Dissertation abstracts may only be 2 pages in length. See example thesis online at [http://www.southalabama.edu/graduatemajors/graduateschool/thesis.html](http://www.southalabama.edu/graduatemajors/graduateschool/thesis.html) for an abstract example.

- **I am having problems with line spacing, how do I fix this?** Certain versions of Windows will add extra line spaces to your work if you are not careful to check your formatting. To correct this issue, go to the Home tab at the top of the page on your computer screen and look in the tool bar for the paragraph symbol (has 4 lines with up and down arrows to the right of the lines). Click on the down arrow to the left of the icon. The bottom two options will add or remove space before or after a paragraph. That will fix the extra spacing problem.

- **What is the format for the major headings and subdivisions in the body of my paper?** Please consult the T/D Guide at 4.

- **How should I format tables in my paper?** Insert 3 single blank line spaces between a table and the text of your paper. There must be one single blank line space between the table and the caption. Captions should be single spaced. There are two ways to format table captions, see [http://www.southalabama.edu/graduatemajors/graduateschool/thesis.html](http://www.southalabama.edu/graduatemajors/graduateschool/thesis.html) The table caption must be placed above the table, left justified or centered. Be consistent in formatting. Use the same size font as in the body of your paper. If your table is too large to place on your page vertically, you may place it horizontally on the page. However, your page margin placement and page number placement must match the rest of your paper. If your table is on the page with no text from the body of your paper, the page should have a 1 inch top margin. Depending on size, multiple tables may appear on the same page as long as they are separated by 3 blank line spaces. Multiple tables must appear vertically, they cannot be placed side by side.

- **How should I format figures in my paper?** Insert 3 single blank line spaces between a figure and the text of your paper. There must be one single blank line space between the figure and the caption. Captions should be single spaced, left justified or centered. Be consistent in formatting. The figure caption must appear below the figure. Figure captions should end with a period. Use the same size font as in the body of your paper. If your figure is too large to place on your page vertically, you may place it horizontally on the page. However, your page margin placement and page number placement must match the rest of your paper. If your figure is on the page with no text from the body of your paper, it must be centered on the page. Depending on size, multiple figures may appear on the same page as long as they are separated by 3 blank line spaces. Multiple figures must appear vertically, they cannot be placed side by side.
• How should I format my Reference Section? There are online software products available for this purpose. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_reference_management_software for further information. Also, the USA Library recommends http://www.mendeley.com/ which is free of charge. You may check with your department as well.

• How should I format my Biographical Sketch? There are two acceptable formats, please consult the T/D Guide at http://www.southalabama.edu/graduatemajors/graduateschool/thesis.html


• If I am having problems with my paper, are there resources for me on campus? Yes, USA has a Writing Center http://www.southalabama.edu/writing/. The Writing Center also has an online writing tutoring service through SMARTTHINKING at http://services.smarthinking.com . Students may enter the site by logging on with their Jag # and using the last four digits of their social security number as the password. The English as a Second Language Center http://www.southalabama.edu/esl/ is also available and the USA Library is an excellent resource http://library.southalabama.edu/

• Before I turn my Thesis or Dissertation in to the Graduate School, what should I do as a final check before submitting? Below are the most common errors we find. If you check for these before submitting your paper, you will drastically decrease the likelihood of being required to submit a 2nd draft.

  □ Make sure your title and/or your name are listed exactly the same on the title page, signature page, abstract, and biographical sketch.

  □ Your thesis/dissertation MUST contain:
    ✓ Signature Page (on required 20-24 lb. cotton rag paper)
    ✓ Title Page
    ✓ Table of Contents (TOC)
    ✓ Abstract
    ✓ References or Works Cited (requires cover page)
    ✓ Biographical Sketch (requires cover page)

  □ Your thesis/dissertation may also contain (if desired or applicable):
    ✓ Dedication
    ✓ Acknowledgement
    ✓ List of Tables (LOT)
    ✓ List of Figures (LOF)
    ✓ List of Abbreviations (LOA)
    ✓ Appendices (requires cover page)

  □ Check your TOC, LOT and LOF to make sure the page number listings actually match what is in the body of your paper.

  □ In your LOT and LOF, only the first sentence of your caption is required to be listed. The caption should EXACTLY match what is in your paper, including capitalization.

  □ Make sure your TOC, LOT, LOF are correctly formatted (see templates). The second line of your listing in the TOC, LOT, LOF should be indented to where 1st line starts. Do not allow text to extend all the way to the page number. Leave at least 5 spaces between text and page number area. Bring extra text down to next line. Single space multi-line listings in TOC, LOT, LOF.

  □ Check for correct formatting/spacing for your subdivisions (see subdivision guide online).

  □ Check all of your pages to see if your margins are within the requirements, especially for large tables or figures (see above for margin requirements).

  □ Check for 3 blank line spaces to separate a table or figure from the text of your paper, top and bottom.

  □ If a figure and its caption are on a page without text from the paper, it must be centered on the page.

  □ If a table and its caption are on a page without text from the paper, it must have a 1 inch top margin.

  □ Small tables and/or figures can be combined on one page if separated by 3 blank line spaces.

  □ If you use the word data in your paper, note that data is plural (datum is singular). For example, write “data are” instead of “data is.”

  □ Ensure that you address whether or not your proposed research questions were answered and in what way in your conclusion.
Check to make sure all of your cited references in your paper are listed in your reference section. Additionally, make sure all references in the reference section appear in your paper. If you have general references, make a subheading “General References” at the end of this section and list them there.

If you cite your references with numbers, they must appear in numerical order in your reference section. Do not superscript your citation numbers. Use normal font size, with parentheses or brackets. Example: (1) or [1] is correct- this is incorrect ¹.

Include all necessary cover pages (see When should I use cover pages? above) and that the heading is in the center of the page.

Take advantage of spellcheck. Carefully correct any misspelled words. Spellcheck does not work on all capped words, by the way.

Be consistent throughout your paper. For example, if you bold the heading on your Abstract Page, then all of your major headings should be bolded.

Remember that your audience should be able to easily understand the terminology in your paper. Explain terms not commonly known outside of your field. If you use various abbreviations or acronyms, include a List of Abbreviations in the preliminary section. Make it easy for the reader to understand your research and findings.