Thesis Writers Workshop

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Your most important resources

• Office of Graduate Studies
  https://inside.mines.edu/Graduate_School
  Info, Forms, Policies
  **Thesis Submission & Formatting Guidelines

• Electronic Theses and Dissertations
  http://inside.mines.edu/ETD-home

• Advisor and Committee
  – Discipline and department specific requirements
  – Content
    • Your peers can also read for content

• Writing Center:
  grammar, organization, academic norms
The Process: Pre-Defense

1. Select thesis topic, advisor and committee
2. Submit Thesis Committee Form
3. Submit Research Proposal (1 yr. in advance of defense)
4. Submit Admission to Candidacy & Graduation Application Form
5. Compose and submit draft to advisor, according to Thesis Checklist http://inside.mines.edu/chec klist
6. Schedule defense, then submit Thesis Defense Request Form
7. Defend thesis (at least 5 weeks before the end of the semester)
Working With Your Advisor

• Actively maintain open communication
• Have a discussion about process and expectations EARLY on
• At each meeting, set a plan of action or agree on “next steps” and timelines
• Determine importance of different aspects of writing (both content and style)
Two considerations that drive all written work:
- Audience—who will be reading this?
- Purpose—what am I trying to achieve?
Keep these two elements in mind when deciding whether to include information, to read (yet another) book, defining terms or jargon...
Writing strategies

- Make outlines/plans, even if you stray from them
- Set short-term, achievable deadlines
- Save the “front matter” until last: this likely changes
More strategies

- Write the introduction after the body is complete
- Always get something on the page, even if it’s only bibliographic information
- Make at least three back-ups of your files
- Print each draft on different colored paper
- Take time away from writing
- Get all the deadlines on your calendar early
- Don’t wait to get your committee going and schedule your defense early too
Frequently asked questions

1. Time Management
2. Templates
3. Literature Review
4. Copyright
5. CSM requirements/deadlines
Time Management

• Set those deadlines
• Write every day—observe when you’re most productive, try to set that time aside for writing.
• Be okay with writing as process, not product
Templates

- The Graduate School does NOT provide support for templates, including LaTeX. Templates are great, but may present formatting problems.
- Problems include but are not limited to Figure/Table placement

- Do NOT look at previous theses as templates or formatting guides. Things change!
Conducting Literature Searches

- **Discipline Dependent**
- **No minimum number** (some theses have as few as 30 sources, and dissertations have well over 100)
- **Bottom line:** “Does anyone want to read more about the background than I now have? Am I getting redundant or peripheral?”
Purposes of the Literature Review

- To determine whether your question has already been answered by someone else
- Where did the problem come from?
- What is already known about this problem?
- What other methods have been tried?
- Identify the seminal work in your area
- Identify opposing views
- Identify gaps in the literature
Starting the Literature Review

• Try journals that print abstracts to get overview of scope
• Look at references from other authors
• Talk to your advisor
• Take thorough notes! (include bibliographic info)
Avoiding Plagiarism

• **MAKE CLEAR WHAT IS YOURS.** If you use a result, observation or generalization that is not your own, you must state where in the scientific literature that result is reported. (Exception: where all readers know it, e.g. dynamics equations need not reference Newton.)

• **CITE, CITE, CITE**—you can’t over cite, but you can lose it all if you under cite
Use campus resources

- For content and format questions, see your advisor and committee members.
- For template, submission, deadline questions see the Office of Graduate Studies.
- For organization, format, grammar and writing questions, see the LAIS Writing Center: [http://mines.mywconline.com](http://mines.mywconline.com).
LAIS Writing Center—Alderson 133

• Open to all faculty and students, and will work with any type of writing
• This is a tutorial service (not a proofreading service).
• 30 or 60 minute appointments, Monday-Friday.
• Thesis Formatting Help (schedule will be available near deadlines)
• Best to bring double-spaced documents, including figures
• Plan on working on NOT MORE THAN 5-10 pages of text per appointment.
• Help with organization, grammar, academic expectations, clarity, coherence, etc.
Questions?

Good luck!