

Master's Thesis and Project Formatting Guidelines



Office of Graduate Studies

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Introduction

All formal theses and all creative projects require review by the Office of Graduate Studies and will be cataloged at the SSU Library. Theses and Creative Projects can be found at the SSU Library website here: <http://sonoma-dspace.calstate.edu/>

Thesis

The Master's thesis or project is a serious demonstration of a graduate student's ability to explore, develop, and organize materials relating to a certain topic or problem in a field of study. The goal of the master's thesis or project is not only to pursue research and investigation, but also to write an extended scholarly statement clearly, effectively and directly. The thesis or project becomes a visible and permanent record of the quality of the work that a graduate student has accomplished at Sonoma State University. Library records show heavy borrowing of theses, both on campus and through interlibrary loan. It is very important to ensure that every manuscript represents the highest professional standards. Before a thesis is officially approved by the Graduate Studies office, it must meet the requirements specified below:

- Critical, independent thinking. Mere description, cataloguing, compilations and other superficial procedures are not adequate.
- A clear statement of the details of the study or task, the methods or criteria used, and the supporting data. An effort should be made to make the work accessible to as broad an audience of educated people as possible.

Creative Project

The creative work is a coherent body of writing within a genre (fiction, poetry, or nonfiction); or, should it blur genres, offers awareness as to the nature of its literary hybridity. It should be prefaced by an introduction that explains the project's aim, influences, scope, and design. (It is a good idea to consult the finished work of other students to gain an understanding of the variety of approaches possible in the introduction, as well as to consult with your mentor). Your work should aim for originality as well as facility with language, and should implicitly offer illustration of significant independent thinking. Toward the close of the semester you will take part in a public reading of a portion of your work.

Faculty/Student Responsibilities and SSU Procedures

Composition of Student's Graduate Committee

The student's graduate committee consists of three faculty members. The members will ordinarily be from the department in which the student is a candidate. However, cross-disciplinary theses/projects must have a faculty member from an appropriate outside department as second or third reader. Also, in some cases, an off-campus expert may be appropriate as third reader. In these cases a vita demonstrating the appropriateness of the person's expertise must be on file in the department. The chair of the committee must be a tenured/tenure track member of the student's department.

Responsibilities of the Chair and Members of the Committee

Thesis Chair- It is the responsibility of the thesis chair to:

1. Assist the student in the selection of the other committee members;
2. Determine the appropriateness of the thesis/project topic selected by the student;
3. Determine the adequacy of the thesis/project design before the student begins work;
4. Review and approve the Advancement to Candidacy Form (GSO 1) which describes the final thesis/project;
5. Ensure that the student has obtained the required clearances from the Committee on the Rights of Human Subjects for research involving human subjects before research gathering begins;
6. Review the scholarly execution of the study;
7. Assure that all of the committee members have reviewed the thesis/project before it is typed in final form and that all the necessary changes have been incorporated;
8. See that a high standard of writing quality is maintained throughout the thesis/project;
9. Make certain that the thesis/project, when word processed in final form, conforms to the style manual of the department;
10. Call all necessary meetings and work effectively with the student to set realistic timelines for completion of the thesis/project;
11. Chair the public defense of the thesis/project, which is a systemwide and campus requirement.

Committee Members- It is the responsibility of the committee members to:

1. Review and approve the Advancement to Candidacy Form (GSO 1) which describes the final thesis/project;

2. Check the adequacy of the thesis/project design before the study is begun;
3. Review the scholarly execution of the study;
4. See that a high standard of scholarship and writing quality are maintained throughout the thesis/project;
5. Review the thesis/project before it is typed in final form;
6. Support and participate in the public defense of the thesis/project, which is a systemwide and campus requirement.

Responsibilities of the Student- It is the responsibility of the student to:

1. Constitute a committee of three people willing to act as supervising faculty on the final thesis/project;
2. Decide, in consultation with his/her graduate advisor or committee chair, an appropriate and worthy focal topic for research;
3. Draft a description of the project and receive committee approval prior to enrollment in the thesis/project units;
4. Determine, in consultation with the committee, roles of the committee members, needs of the committee in working through the approval process, and the timelines and deadlines for submitting written work for approval;
5. Understand that re-writes will probably be necessary and that the guidance of the committee is to be taken seriously if the project is to be satisfactorily completed. The student needs to understand that no faculty member can be expected to act as simply a “rubber stamp” for his or her ideas and writing;
6. Obtain editorial help if necessary to meet the standards of the University and the program for quality and presentation of the information in the thesis;
7. Adhere to the appropriate style manual determined by the student's department and to the thesis guidelines outlined herein;
8. Defend the thesis in an open forum prior to final approval;
9. Submit the thesis or project to the Graduate Studies office for final review by the published deadlines,
10. Understand that final acceptance of the thesis/project is determined by the student’s faculty committee, the Graduate Studies Office, and the Associate Vice President of Academic Programs and Graduate Studies. Posting of the final degree is dependent on clearance by all of the above parties.

Timeline to degree and thesis/project completion

Coursework

Students must complete program requirements for coursework. See the [SSU Catalog](#) for program-specific requirements.

Advancement to Candidacy (GSO1)

In order to advance to candidacy students must file a GSO1 form with the Office of Graduate Studies. This form should be filed prior to enrolling in any culminating project coursework. All Graduate students must have an Advancement to Candidacy Form on file with Graduate Studies prior to graduation. See the [Graduate Studies Find Forms and Deadlines page](#) for details and GSO1 forms.

Apply to Graduate

Be sure to apply to graduate before the deadline. The Registrar's Office will not accept late applications. Deadlines can be found on the [Graduate Studies Find Forms and Deadlines page](#) under Deadline Dates for Application for Award of Master's Degree.

Completion of Requirements (GSO2)

Preliminary Draft and Final Copy of Thesis/Project

The student should submit a preliminary draft of the thesis/project to the chair for suggestions and corrections; the draft should also be submitted to the other members of the committee for their suggestions, comments, corrections, and approval. The student is responsible for preparation of a manuscript that meets the standards of the committee. Committee members should not be expected to make extensive corrections or revisions, and the committee may recommend that the student use the services of an editor.

After the thesis/project is prepared in its final form and prior to submission to the Graduate Studies Office, obtain signatures of all committee members on the Thesis Signature Page. The signatures of the committee members indicate their approval, the approval of the department, and certify that the thesis/project conforms to the department's style and reference format, methodology, spelling, punctuation, typing, grammar, and standards of content. A public defense of the thesis/project must then be scheduled and held.

Thesis Defense

The thesis or project must be publicly defended and prior to filing the thesis with Graduate Studies all changes required by your committee must be made.

Thesis Signature Form

Obtain committee members' signatures on the Thesis Signature Form. This page will be filed in the Graduate Studies office. The signatures will not be visible online in SSU ScholarWorks. A title page is required in the thesis or project, but no signatures are included.

Final Approval of the Thesis/Project

After the thesis has been defended and cleared by your committee, submit the following to the Graduate Studies Office on or before the appropriate deadline date (posted on the [Graduate Studies website](#).)

- The final PDF file as an accessible document emailed to graduate.studies@sonoma.edu:
- The Thesis Signature Page (as a PDF);
- The Master's Thesis Submission Agreement form (as a PDF);
- The Completion of Requirements form (GSO 2) (as a PDF).

Theses/projects will not be accepted after the deadline or without all signatures on the title page and the signatures of the committee chair and graduate coordinator on the GSO2 form.

The thesis/project will then be reviewed by the University Thesis Reviewer. Students should allow two to three weeks for the review process to be completed. In order to ensure the quality and uniformity of theses/projects, the following will be checked before clearance:

- all preliminary pages present and in the correct order
- pagination
- margins
- accuracy, consistency, neatness, clarity, etc.
- tables, figures and illustrative materials
- text (format, heading levels, writing quality)
- Presence of all necessary sections: preliminary pages, body, bibliography (as needed), appendices (as needed)
- Conformation to the approved departmental style manual (See Appendix B)

The thesis/project will be returned to the student for final changes (if needed), which will be outlined on the Thesis Review Form (see Appendix C). The student will be given two weeks to make any necessary changes. Once the changes have been made, the student will re-submit the corrected final version to the Graduate Studies Office on or before the final clearance date noted on the Thesis Review Form:

Final approval of all theses/projects rests with the Associate Vice President of Academic Programs and Graduate Studies. If problems arise, the thesis/project will be returned to the chair

of the student's committee. The Graduate Studies Office will forward the final thesis to the Library for electronic publication in SSU ScholarWorks.

Policies

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of another's ideas without giving proper credit, or the use of another phraseology without: (1) enclosing it in quotation marks, or (2) blocking it by indenting and single spacing. Plagiarism also includes simple mechanical modification of another's writing; for example, replacing a word or dropping or interpolating words here and there, but retaining the essence of the other person's work without acknowledgment.

In conducting research and in writing, students should observe the practices and standards of their particular discipline. Students' work should be their own and, if not, there should be careful and accurate acknowledgement of the work of others. All quoted or paraphrased material should be referenced according to the footnote, note, or parenthetical referencing practice of a student's department and/or discipline. Extracts and quotations may be used to a limited extent for purposes of illustration and criticism. The language of the copyright law is vague as to what constitutes fair use, so if students are concerned about exceeding the "fair use" doctrine, they should seek permission or consult with the Graduate Studies Office. The CSU Office of General Council has prepared a document called Fundamentals of Copyright and Fair Use, available on the web at <http://calstate.edu/gc/Docs/CopyrightManual.pdf>.

Copyright

Under the 1976 Copyright Law, unpublished theses are protected by statutory law against unauthorized copying, publication, or use. When a thesis has been uploaded into SSU ScholarWorks, it has been published. The student should include a copyright notice on the page following the title page in order to protect his/her rights. (See Appendix A) Although the law does not make registration a condition of the copyright protection, a student may wish to register his/her thesis promptly with the Copyright Office. Registration is a prerequisite to an infringement suit and certain rights and remedies for infringement depend on registration. The forms and additional information are available on the web at <http://www.copyright.gov/>

Accessibility

An accessible document is created to be easily readable by all readers, whether the reader be sighted, low vision, or non-sighted. Making documents accessible is important so that screen reader software is able to correctly interpret and relay material to the reader. In your thesis or creative project there are a number of elements that are commonly made to be non-accessible. The Office of Graduate Studies recommends using an accessibility checker, available for Microsoft Word and Google Docs, in order to ensure that your work is accessible to all readers.

When using Microsoft Word or Google Docs, the easiest way to create an accessible document is to have the Accessibility Checker open from beginning to end. This feature provides you with Inspection Results, which explain why the issue has occurred and how to fix it step-by-step.

To use Microsoft Word Accessibility Checker:

1. Open a new document.
2. Go to File.
3. Select the box Check For Issues under Inspect Document
4. Select Accessibility.
5. This will open the feature on the right side of your document and will update automatically.

Google Docs Accessibility Check (Grackle Docs):

1. Open a new document.
2. In the top menu bar, select Add-ons.
3. Select Get add-ons.
4. Search for and install Grackle Docs.
5. Grackle Docs will ask you to log in to Google.
6. Grackle Docs will open the feature on the right side of your document and will update automatically.

The Use of Human Subjects in Research

If a project or thesis, either directly or indirectly, involves humans in research, the student must seek approval from the Committee on the Rights of Human Subjects prior to initiating any activity with the subjects. There is human subject involvement when human beings are asked to participate:

- physically in an activity or to donate their tissue, organs, fluids, and other bodily material;
- when information is sought from them directly (as through interview, questionnaire) or indirectly (as through observation);
- when information concerning specific, individually identifiable human beings is asked for from third parties – whether through access to files, data banks, or other means – or through direct inquiry of third parties concerning the individuals in question.

Research proposals for which the question of human subject involvement is itself uncertain or ambiguous *must be submitted for review*. The Human Subjects application and detailed information on the review process can be downloaded from <http://web.sonoma.edu/orsp/compliance/human-subjects.html>. Your application must be reviewed *before you begin your research*, and evidence of approval should be included as an Appendix of the thesis/project. The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs is located in Salazar 2057, 664-3972.

Manuscript Preparation - Format and Style

General Format Instructions

All master's theses/projects must follow certain basic style and format guidelines and also adhere to basic standards of clear, correct English and careful presentation. Students are encouraged to hire a professional editor to assist in the preparation of the final draft.

All theses and dissertations must follow GS formatting requirements regardless of style guide instructions. The instructions below thus take precedence over style guide information. The following items must be formatted according to GS specifications:

- the front pages preceding the introductory section of the body of the text;
- figures and tables, which must be in the body shortly after the figure or table citation;
- justification, which must be left (not block or right) throughout;
- indentations, which must be approximately 0.25 inch;
- division of words at the end of lines with hyphens, which is prohibited; double columns, which cannot be used except under limited circumstances;
- spacing, which should be double throughout except in offset quotations, footnotes, figure and table captions, and within entries in the Table of Contents, the figure and table lists, and the reference section (see examples in the appendices);
- offset quotations, which should be indented from both margins inward;
- fonts, for which there can be only one in the entire thesis or dissertation, except for appendices;
- margins, which are specified in a later section;
- headers and footers, which are prohibited except to accommodate page numbers.

Students are warned not to follow the style and format of a thesis completed earlier at Sonoma State University or elsewhere. It may not have been properly prepared, or what was previously acceptable may not meet present requirements. Students should be sure that they are using the current *SSU Guidelines for Digitally Submitted Master's Theses and Projects*, available on the Graduate Studies website-- <http://www.sonoma.edu/aa/gs/thesis-review.html>.

Basic Appearance

Font: The font size should be either 10 or 12 point (12 point is preferred). A common font such as Times, Geneva, Helvetica, etc. should be used. Bold font should be used sparingly. Outline, shadow, or similar “trick” forms are not allowed anywhere in the thesis/project. Font used for charts, graphs, drawings, tables, etc., may differ according to format and space requirements but should always remain consistent. Italics may be used for appropriate purposes, i.e., for foreign words or phrases, for book and journal titles, etc. Students may also choose to use underlining in place of italics, although italics are preferred. In either case, consistency of form is required.

Alignment/Justification: Text should be left-justified with a “ragged” right margin. Fully justified text is not acceptable.

Pagination: Each page must have a number designation, though numbers may be left off the title page and pages of chapter headings if the student prefers. All pages must be numbered consecutively as follows:

- Preliminary Pages: Lower-case Roman numerals (i.e., i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, etc.) are used for preliminary pages. The numerals appear centered at the bottom of the page, approximately 1/2" above the bottom.
- Body: Arabic numerals (i.e., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, etc.) are used for the body of the thesis/project. The numerals appear in the upper right of the page, approximately 1/2" down from the top and 1/2" in from the right margin. • Material inserted after final typing should be numbered as in this example: 21, 21a, 21b, etc. *This expedient should be used sparingly.*
- Appendices and the bibliography or reference list should be numbered consecutively with the rest of the thesis

Preliminary Pages of the Thesis/Project (in order of appearance):

*Note that preliminary pages must be formatted to SSU Thesis Guidelines even if the student is using Journal Style. English-MA students should include their Critical Introduction in the body of the thesis, beginning it with page 1.

Title Page: This page includes the approved title for the thesis and must list all members of the committee and be dated. (see Appendix A) It should be counted as p. i.

Copyright Page: The student should include a copyright notice on the page following the title page in order to protect his/her rights (see Copyright section under Policies for more information).

Authorization Form: This form enables a student to decide whether or not to allow reproduction of all or part of the thesis and accompanying material. Students should remember that if the work is a project, it should read "project" (not "thesis") on this page. (See Appendix A)

Abstract: The Abstract typically consists of a brief statement of the nature of the study, the method and design used, and the findings or conclusions. It may not exceed two pages and must be single-spaced. The title of the thesis/project and author's name must match exactly with the title and author's name as it appears on the title page. (See Appendix A)

Note for projects: The sample format in Appendix A is appropriate for most theses and many projects. However, some projects, especially creative projects, may not lend themselves to this form of abstract. In those cases, a summary or a statement of intent, scope, and approach or methodology will be sufficient.

Preface or Acknowledgement: (Optional) This page usually acknowledges and/or thanks individuals for their assistance.

Table of Contents: Titles and subtitles are to correspond exactly with those in the text. You are not required to use "Chapter One", etc., as seen in the example Table of Contents. Alternative titles are acceptable. Make sure that the page numbers listed are accurate. Check out this

YouTube video for directions on how to insert leader dots in Microsoft Word:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yyvi1mWDhx4>

List of Tables: This is separate from the Table of Contents. The tables/figures are numbered in the order in which they appear. Titles are to correspond exactly with those in the text. Follow your disciplinary style guide for formatting.

List of Figures: This is also a separate page. Graphs, charts, photographs, and illustrations are all examples of figures. Figures are numbered in the order in which they appear in the entire thesis/project, not within each chapter or appendix. Again, titles must correspond exactly with those in the text.

Body of Thesis/Project

Margins: ALL margins set at ONE inch (1”).

Line Spacing: Double spacing, except in those places where conventional usage calls for single spacing, (e.g., abstracts, footnotes, block quotations, or tables.)

Indentations: The first line of every paragraph should be indented. Block quotations (more than four typed lines) must be indented from the left margin and single-spaced.

Illustrative Material: The student's departmental style manual should be consulted for proper format and placement of tables, figures, graphs, drawings, photographs, etc. Graphs, photos, and other images must be clear. Color images are acceptable. Alternative text for equal accessibility is highly recommended.

Footnotes/Endnotes: An approved style manual should be used for format. Footnotes/endnotes are used to document sources, to amplify or qualify a statement, or to make acknowledgments.

Appendix: The title page bears only the centered word APPENDIX (or APPENDICES). Page numbers are continuous with the text. The Appendix contains material which may be of interest to the reader but not an integral part of the thesis. If items protected by copyright are to be included, written permission from the author or publisher must be obtained and so noted.

References: Both theses and projects should include a bibliography or list of literature cited, consisting of references to original literature relevant to the area of inquiry. A bibliography must include, but is not limited to, all works cited in the text. Students should follow the approved departmental style manual for the format of the Bibliography, Works Cited or Reference List. Page numbers are continuous with the text.

Style Guide

It is the student's responsibility to determine the style guide that their department requires. Please contact your advisor or Graduate Coordinator to determine the style guide for your thesis or project. With permission from your advisor, it is acceptable to use a journal format, with the following exceptions:

- Preliminary pages must be consistent with Graduate Studies guidelines, including preliminary page pagination

- All margins must follow Graduate Studies guidelines
- Double column layouts are not permitted
- Indentations must follow SSU Thesis Guidelines

Program-specific Citation Style Guides

Biology

Style Manual Committee, Council of Biology Editors. 2006. *Scientific Style and Format: The CBE Manual for Authors, Editors and Publishers*. 6th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Computer Engineering Science

Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers.

<https://pitt.libguides.com/citationhelp/ieee#:~:text=IEEE%20citation%20style%20includes%20in,the%20IEEE%20Editorial%20Style%20Manual>

Cultural Resources Management

Society for American Archaeology. Editorial Policy, Information for Authors, and Style Guide.

https://documents.saa.org/container/docs/default-source/doc-publications/style-guide/saa-style-guide_updated-july-2018c5062f7e55154959ab57564384bda7de.pdf?sfvrsn=8247640e_6

Education

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th edition. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2009).

<http://www.apastyle.org/manual/index.aspx> .

English

The MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing

Alternatively, APA can be used for thesis in English Education/Rhetoric track

<https://www.mla.org/Publications/Bookstore/Nonseries/MLA-Style-Manual-andGuide-to-Scholarly-Publishing-Third-Edition> .

History

Turabian, Kate L. 2013. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. 8th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html . \

Interdisciplinary Studies

Consult your Committee Chair for style guide information.

Appendix A: Thesis/Project Review Form

Thesis/Project Review Form

Name of Student:

Required Documents		
Component	Submitted?	Additional Notes
Thesis/Project		
Thesis Signature Form		
Master's Thesis Submission Agreement		

Thesis Formatting:

Thesis Formatting			
Component	Present and Formatted Correctly?	Required Edit:	Additional Notes
Title page			
Copyright			
Authorization			
Abstract			
Table of Contents			
List of References			
Margins & Pagination			
Other			

FINAL COPY:

Please make any edits as noted above in the “Required Edit” column and email the final PDF and any documents missing, noted above under “Required documents” to graduate.studies@sonoma.edu by the due date below.

PLEASE SUBMIT FINAL COPY NO LATER THAN:

Reviewed by	Date

Thank you for your submission and congratulations!

Appendix B: Sample Preliminary Pages

A Systematic and Ecological Study of *Delphinium luteum* (Yellow
Larkspur)

by

Edward O. Guerrant, Jr.

A thesis* submitted to

Sonoma State University in partial fulfillment of

the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE**

in

Biology

Committee Members: (Type names; no signatures)

Dr. Charles F. Quibell, Chair

Dr. Robert Sherman

Dr. Joseph Powell

October 1, 2020

* OR "investigative project," "curriculum project," "creative project" **

** OR "Master of Arts," "Master of Public Administration," etc.

Copyright 2016

By Prudence P. Jones

Copyright 2021

by Prudence P. Jones

Authorization for Reproduction of Master's Thesis (or Project)

(Type only ONE option from those offered below)

I grant permission for the print or digital reproduction of this thesis [project] in its entirety, without further authorization from me, on the condition that the person or agency requesting reproduction absorb the cost and provide proper acknowledgment of authorship.

I grant permission for the print or digital reproduction of parts of this thesis [project] without further authorization from me, on the condition that the person or agency requesting reproduction absorb the cost and provide proper acknowledgment of authorship.

Permission to reproduce this thesis [project] in its entirety must be obtained from me.

Permission to reproduce parts of this thesis [project] must be obtained from me.

I do not approve the reproduction of this thesis [project], either in part or in its entirety.

DATE: _____

NAME: _____

A Systematic and Ecological Study of *Delphinium luteum* (Yellow Larkspur)

Thesis [or Project] by

Edward O. Guerrant, Jr.

ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: *Delphinium luteum*, the yellow-flowered larkspur, is a narrowly restricted endemic consisting of two small populations near Bodega Bay, Sonoma County. Early workers suggested that this taxon is most closely related to the widespread, redflowered *D. nudicaule*. Munz and others report that the blue-flowered *D. decorum* occasionally hybridizes in nature with *D. nudicaule*, giving rise to individuals with flowers ranging from purple to yellow. The purpose of this study is to determine evolutionary position of *D. luteum* within the tuberiform series of the genus *Delphinium*.

Procedure: To determine the evolutionary affinities of *D. luteum*, this study has used a combination of ecological, chemical (nectar constituents, floral and foliar pigments), and morphological information. In addition, chromosomes were counted, hybridization and pollinator enclosure experiments were conducted, and pollen vector activity was monitored.

Findings: *Delphinium luteum* was found to be intermediate between *D. nudicaule* and *D. decorum* in almost every morphological character measured in both absolute values and in the ratios between characters. The three taxa have many nectar constituents, and floral and foliar pigments in common, with *D. luteum* occupying an intermediate condition. It also occupies a habitat intermediate in many ways between those of *D. nudicaule* and *D. decorum*.

Conclusions: The two most likely hypotheses to account for the origin of *D. luteum* are that it was derived solely from *D. nudicaule*, or that it was derived from hybridization between *D. decorum* and *D. nudicaule*. The data do not support the first hypothesis, and offer strong circumstantial evidence that *D. luteum* had its origin in a series of hybridizations between *D. nudicaule* and *D. decorum*.

MS [MA, MS, or MPA] Program: Biology

Sonoma State University

Date: _____

Preface of Acknowledgement

(OPTIONAL)

Text furnished by student

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Appendix C: Sample Thesis Body Pages

Appendix D: Sample Creative Project Body Pages

