

M.A. IN MEDICAL SCIENCES THESIS FORMAT GUIDELINES

All theses must follow the format guidelines given to you in your orientation binder entitled *Research Guide for Writers of Thesis and Dissertations*. These guidelines are from Mugar Memorial Library. These guidelines can also be picked up from the GMS office.

The actual format of the main body of the text is up to you but the prepages, references, vita and figures must follow the guidelines exactly. Many MA theses are available for review of format and presentation in the GMS conference room in L315.

LAB THESES

A lab thesis must be a minimum of 35 pages with a range from 35-55. Most lab theses are written in a traditional paper format including an introduction, methods, results, discussion and reference sections. Additionally for the thesis you must add your Vita as well as the prepages.

Between the introduction and the methods section, a section called “present study” or “specific aims” or “goals of study” helps with focus and is often included. It should clearly and concisely tell why and what you plan to do.

The only variable section in the thesis is the introduction since research topics are variable. If your topic is very broad you may have a long introduction. You may choose to write a shorter, more focused introduction, like a manuscript. Both are acceptable. Many students use their thesis as a draft of a future publication so they choose to use similar formats.

Tentative page guidelines are – introduction (10-20 pages), methods (3-6 pages), results (5-15 pages) and discussion (4-8 pages). The results might be longer if there are a lot of figures and tables. You may write as much as you want in the introduction – it’s your choice- but if you write a lengthy introduction remember to include a Specific Aims section before the methods to focus the thesis.

Most lab theses are between 35 and 55 pages; the minimum is 35 PAGES however some are as long as 70 pages.

LIBRARY THESES

Most library theses are between 45 and 60 pages; the minimum page requirement is 45 PAGES. This number does not include the prepages but does include your vita, figures and reference sections. The library thesis should have a novel conclusion. The format generally involves an introduction (10-25 pages) , presentation of published data (which

may include reproduced published figures or summary tables which have tabulated research from many investigators) (10-25 pages), a discussion of the presented data(5-15 pages) and finally conclusions (4-8) which often include a proposal or suggestions for future studies.

Some suggested ideas are

- Write a review paper discussing the advantages and disadvantages of a therapeutic approach and a plan for the future,
- Analyze a topic
 - where the current research field is rapidly changing and involves complex interpretation
 - where the results contain contradictory results and published data needs to be assessed
 - which is a currently very hot and controversial
 - that involves a current problem in the medical field that impacts on society as a whole.

SPECIFIC AIMS

Whether you do a library or a lab thesis you should include an additional section called PURPOSE OF STUDY or SPECIFIC AIMS or CURRENT STUDY or GOALS OF THE PRESENT STUDY. This section is somewhat variable and sometimes is included as part of the intro and not a separate section but is a section that should be included. The AIMS section states why you undertook the study and what your goals are, why the study is needed, what you plan to specifically do and what you hope to learn. Usually this section is about a page,