



# GRADUATE THESIS/ESSAY/CAPSTONE PROJECT GUIDELINES



## I. INTRODUCTION

### **Purpose:**

The Thesis/Essay/Capstone Project for Master's degree programs requires students to identify a worthy problem in their field, research and analyze that problem, and communicate their findings in clear and competent writing to an academic audience. Completion of this requirement signals to others the students' capability, integrity, perseverance and dedication to define and complete a complex project. Whether students choose to explore a professional issue or theoretical construct, their efforts will help them hone their abilities to identify and solve problems through a systematic research process that can address both theoretical and practical problems in professional, academic and personal settings. For those programs with Thesis/Essay/Capstone Projects as requirements, this manuscript serves as a capstone for the experience, reflecting the maturation of thought and skill gained during the Master's degree.

### **Academic Honesty:**

Academic honesty and ethical behavior, expected of every student, is essential to the process of



experience that the student takes intellectual responsibility and ownership of the project. In this vein, the student is responsible for: (1)

3. A final draft of the thesis/essay/capstone project should be given to the advisor and readers well in advance of the due date for submission to the Graduate School. As a rule of thumb, the thesis/essay/capstone project should be submitted at least one month before the deadline set by the Graduate School,

progress by the Graduate School. Students should refer to the **Graduate Studies Bulletin** or their advisor for additional information.

#### **IV. TIME TABLE FOR COMPLETING THE THESIS/ESSAY/CAPSTONE PROJECT**

It is never too early to map out a plan of study for the graduate degree. If a student is in a discipline that requires a thesis, essay, or capstone project, they should raise this subject with their advisor, if not during the first meeting, certainly during the first term in graduate school. The advisor will give the

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### Step 5

- x Revise draft;
- x Submit revisions to your advisor for overarching comments and larger concerns;
- x Visit the Writing Center for any questions about organization and content (Writing Center consultants can act as “as second pair of eyes” providing another perspective on the work);

### Step 6

- x Revise again;
- x Submit revisions to your advisor;
- x Evaluate the coherence and cohesiveness of original and revised text;

### Step 7

- x Prepare final draft; (see Appendix C for common problems)
- x Visit the Writing Center if you have concerns about grammar, punctuation, or citations;
- x Adjust margins and add page numbers;
- x Prepare title and signature pages;
- x Obtain signatures, and submit to advisor (and readers) at least four weeks prior to deadline;
- x Revise as required by advisor;
- x Submit to Graduate School for final review and approval by the specified deadline;

### Step 8

- x Once approval is given by the Dean, prepare for final electronic submission to Carroll Collected;

## V. THESIS/ESSAY/CAPSTONE PROJECT FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS

All theses/essays/capstone projects must satisfy the requirements set forth by the Graduate School. Students should check with their departments/programs early in the writing process so that they are aware of any program/department specific format requirements. The Graduate School does not require the use of any particular style, although some departments/programs do. Students are encouraged to consult a style guide relevant to their discipline. Following are general requirements. Documents that do not conform to these requirements will not be accepted.

1. **STYLE** Theses, essays, and capstone

9. **APPENDICES AND TABLES** Ask style guidelines specified by the department for the format, pagination, and titles of appendices and tables. Ordinarily, appendices are paginated sequentially.
10. **DOCUMENTATION** All sources for direct quotations and paraphrases must be documented. Students may use any of the standard citation styles subject to the advisor's approval, provided a single style is followed consistently throughout the thesis, essay, or capstone project. If a thesis will be submitted for journal publication and thus follows that journal's formatting requirements, a copy of the journal's publication guidelines should be included when submitting the thesis to the Graduate School.
11. **BINDING** Binding of the thesis is no longer required, as thesis submission is electronic.

### APPLYING DIGITAL SIGNATURES TO FORMS

The signature pages for theses/essays/capstone projects **require** the use of Adobe digital signatures. These signatures include a date stamp and watermark and are considered the official signature for the document. **Scanned images of signatures will not be accepted in lieu of Adobe digital signatures.**

All signature forms can be downloaded from the Graduate School website. Students will need to **download and save the form** to their computer and then open the form in **Adobe Acrobat or Adobe Acrobat Reader**. The forms should not be completed in an online version of the program, as it will not save the signature. Additionally, Mac users should **not** use the default program, Mac Viewer, to add their digital signature, as it will not properly save.



Fig. 1. Example of properly formatted digital signature

The signature pages are designed as a fillable pdf. The user should fill in all the required fields and then apply the digital signature. To apply a digital signature, click on the red tab in the upper left corner of the correct signature field. Doing so will open a dialogue box prompting the user to apply their signature (if one is already configured) or to configure a signature (if one has not already been created). The user should follow the step by step instructions to apply their signature. An example of a correctly applied digital signature will look like the image in Fig. 1 (note name, watermark, and date/time stamp). Note that only one signature page should be emailed sequentially to each signatory until all signatures are included.

### SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Students must email the digitally signed signature page and the thesis/essay/capstone project document (including the title page) to the Dean of the Graduate School by the appropriate deadline to ensure sufficient time for review. If edits are requested by the Dean, these edits must be made, and the revised document must be submitted to the Dean until approval is granted. Following Dean approval, the document is submitted to Carroll Collected for inclusion in the University's digital repository.

## ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION GUIDELINES TO CARROLL COLLECTED

Students are required to submit their approved thesis/essay/capstone project to [Carroll Collected](#) the JCU Institutional Repository, to provide an enduring record of the work. An Access Agreement, which can be found in Appendix D in this document and on the Graduate School website, is submitted with the thesis/essay/capstone project. To submit a thesis/essay/capstone project to **Carroll Collected**, please provide via [email](#): (1) a digital copy of the thesis/essay/capstone project; (2) a digitally signed signature page; and (3) a digitally signed copy of the access agreement, indicating open access, embargo, or artifact

Advantages of Participating:

x ( )

## Appendix A: Graduate Programs with Thesis/Essay/Capstone Project Options

The following graduate programs in the College of Arts and Sciences may require the thesis or essay in partial fulfillment of the master's degree (see the [Graduate Studies Bulletin](#) for details):

- x Education (Master of Arts)
- x Theology and Religious Studies

The following graduate programs in the College of Health require a capstone project in partial fulfillment of the master's degree:

- x Applied Behavioral Analysis (Capstone Project)

The following graduate programs in the College of Arts and Sciences require the thesis in partial fulfillment of the master's degree:

- x Biology (Master of Science)

The following departments/programs have program-specific policies regarding a capstone experience:

- x Digital Marketing and Communication Strategy – Capstone course
- x Nonprofit Administration – Capstone course
- x Exercise Physiology – Students choose from various options
- x Sports Leadership – Capstone course

## Appendix B: Research Compliance Institutional Review Board:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a committee of faculty and staff who review research projects involving human participants to ensure that the study of human subjects is conducted in a manner that protects the rights and welfare of the participants. All research involving human subjects must be approved by the IRB before beginning the research. For questions regarding the IRB process, contact the IRB administrator (397-1527) or visit their [website](#).

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## Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC):

John Carroll University established the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee in 1998 to oversee JCU's animal program, facilities, and procedures. Students who conduct research with animals are subject to the policies and procedures of IACUC. For more information student may contact the IACUC administrator (397-1527) or visit the [website](#).

## Appendix C: Writing Aids

Style Guides:

The



## Appendix D: Electronic Submission Access Agreement Forms

Access Agreement

John Carroll University  
Office of the Graduate School

## Appendix E: Sample Title and Signature Pages

This is an example of the Title Page for an essay. Substitute the word "Thesis" or the words "apstone

This is an example of the **Signature Page** using the formatting for an **essay** (note: there is a similar form for **capstone projects** that uses the phrase "capstone project" in lieu of "essay," and which has a line for one reader). The signature page is a fillable pdf that is available on the Graduate School website.

The essay of  is hereby accepted:

Advisor—Electronic signature & date

I certify that this is the original document:

Author—Electronic signature & date

This is an example of the **Signature Page** using the formatting for a **thesis/capstone project**. The signature page is a fillable pdf that is available on the [Graduate School website](#).

The thesis/capstone project of \_\_\_\_\_ is hereby accepted:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reader—Electronic signature & date

Reader—Electronic signature & date

Advisor—Electronic signature & date

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