



The Helms School of Government
Graduate Thesis Guide – MS Criminal Justice

I. Purpose

This guide describes the general guidelines for completion of the proposal and thesis for the M.A. in Public Policy, along with the required format for the thesis proposal, the thesis itself, and associated procedures for submission. Also provided are helpful books, websites, and tips for writing, research, and guidance.

All students in the thesis track are encouraged to start thinking about their thesis topic early in their master's program studies. It is important to consider your thesis topic early!

II. Eligibility

Students must have completed 21 hours and have permission from the Program Director before enrolling in PPOG 689 *Thesis Proposal and Research*. In order to gain permission, the student must email the Graduate Director the following information:

1. A purpose statement for your study, based on a preliminary literature review
2. Research question (s)
3. Methods Outline – how do you think you'll go about answering your research question?
4. References Page

Upon review of the information presented, the Program Director will facilitate the process of locating an appropriate faculty member to supervise the thesis research in the roles of Thesis Chair and Reader. Students will work with the Thesis Chair based on the field of study that their thesis work relates to and the availability of faculty.

III. Thesis Topics

Once the student has determined the topic that they wish to pursue for their thesis and the topic has been approved by the student's Thesis Chair, they need to collaborate with their Chair, and move into the process of writing and submitting the Thesis Proposal. The Program Director and Thesis Chair reserve the right to refuse a thesis topic and request the student to reevaluate their topic.

A thesis is intended to demonstrate the student's ability to successfully carry out original research. Theses are often designed to solve practical problems and to answer practical research questions; they also generally deal with underlying theoretical, philosophical and/or ethical issues of interest to scholars and professionals in the discipline. The thesis is expected to be of sufficient depth and breadth that (in edited form) it could be presented for publication in a professional journal. The master's thesis should offer evidence of sound research and an adequate treatment of a well-defined subject. A mere essay or compilation of facts will not be accepted. The thesis must be written on a subject under the cognate area in which the student is seeking.

It is the responsibility of the student to present well-organized, personal research and not

that of the Thesis Chair. Students should seek assistance from the [Graduate Writing Center](#) and [Library](#) should they need instruction in writing and research of their thesis. The Graduate Writing Center will only review the written thesis once. Please review the guidelines for the Graduate Writing Center (posted online) with regard to the thesis process and seek assistance early in your preparation and research in order to take full advantage of their assistance.

IV. Thesis Courses

There are two courses in the thesis sequence: PPOG 689 *Thesis Proposal and Research*, and PPOG 690 *Thesis Defense*.

In PPOG 689 the student is expected to complete their proposal for Thesis Chair approval, and complete the compilation of their research and composition of their thesis. Commensurate to being admitted to the course, the student will be assigned a thesis chair based on the field of study that their thesis work relates to. The chair will also act as the chair during the final defense.

In PPOG 690 the student is expected to defend their thesis in front of the thesis committee. Neither course has scheduled hours but each Thesis Chair may require certain reading materials for either course.

V. Reenrollment

When working on the thesis, maintaining continuous enrollment is vital. Any student who is enrolled in PPOG 689 and does not complete their proposal and thesis to a point deemed acceptable by the student's Chair will be required to enroll again in the next term and pay the fees associated with the class again. This also applies to online students; however, online students will need to enroll in the corresponding term of each 8 weeks (for example, if the student begins PPOG 689 in B-term for Fall then they will re-enroll in B-term for Spring, etc.). The student will have to pay the course fee again for each additional term necessary to complete their thesis and before enrolling in the PPOG 690 course.

VI. Advisory Committee

The student will have a thesis advisory committee of two, comprised of the following:

1. A committee chair (advisor) with an earned doctoral degree who is a Public Policy or Public Administration graduate faculty member (residential or LU Online) at Liberty University;
2. A committee member (reader #1) with a doctoral degree who is employed by Liberty University;

Students are encouraged to select readers upon their enrollment into PPOG 689 but must

be approved by the student's chair. Moreover, if readers are not selected initially they may be employed at any time during the course of PPOG 689, as needed, by request of the chair. In summary, the complete advisory committee can be formed during various phases of enrollment in SMGT GOVT but must be formed before enrollment in PPOG 690.

VII. Conflicts and Appeals

Conflicts with Thesis Committee members, appeals (with an exception regarding the proposal), and grade appeals will be handled in accordance with the academic policy for Liberty University.

VIII. The Research

All research will be overseen by the student's chair. The chair will ensure that the research follows the policies of Liberty University and as outlined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB guidelines for student research are as follows (IRB website <http://www.liberty.edu/index.cfm?PID=12606>):

IX. Institutional Review Board Student Research

Students at the beginning of a research project, follow the outline below. Other questions may be answered by the [IRB Frequently Asked Questions page](#), or may be emailed directly to the [IRB](#).

- 1. Determine if an IRB review is needed.*
Masters Theses and dissertations that involve human subjects or secondary/archival data require IRB review.
- 2. Secure a Faculty Sponsor.*
For your thesis, your faculty sponsor will be your Advisor (Chair).
- 3. View the Avoiding Pitfalls link under Resources on our home page.*
Many times, simple modifications to a design can prevent delay (or the need for resubmittal) in the application process. You are encouraged to read each of the tips sheets in the [Avoiding Pitfalls](#) section.
- 4. Once you have completed the above steps, you are ready to complete our [IRB Application](#), found under Resources > Forms on the Left Column of the IRB home page.*
Your form will need your original signature as Primary Investigator and your Faculty Sponsor's original signature to be considered complete. Please see the application form instructions for more information on this step.
- 5. Submit the IRB Application Form according to the Application instructions.*
We encourage you to submit your application via email, as this will make the

process go much faster. Emails may be sent to irb@liberty.edu.

6. *Please feel free to follow-up with the IRB board in two weeks if you have not heard anything. For full review submissions (the most complex category) follow-up in one month if you have not heard anything.*

Please see also the IRB website for further guidelines, forms, and details; or, contact the IRB with any questions.

(<http://www.liberty.edu/academics/graduate/irb/index.cfm?PID=12606>)

X. The Thesis Proposal

Proposal Length and Content

The thesis proposal is the background and planning document for the thesis. It must be professional and thorough, and it must be a product of the student's own original thought and effort. Use of others' work must be properly referenced in accordance with APA guidelines.

The thesis proposal should be between 15 - 20 pages, not including the cover page or references. However, the length will vary according to the demands of each thesis and will ultimately be at the discretion of the Thesis Chair. At a minimum, it will include the following, in APA format:

- Cover page (with working title) Introduction to the proposed topic
- Purpose and significance (why the paper will add to the body of knowledge in the discipline)
- Statement of the research problem (including relevant research questions)
Literature review (assessing relevant scholarship which informs the thesis)
- Methodology (overview of whether the study will be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed, and its justification, and what exact methods are to be used)
- Working Reference List

Proposal Format and Style

The proposal should be written in accordance with the APA style guide (students should contact the writing center, or visit the [Graduate Writing Center website](#), with questions regarding the APA formatting and guidelines). Electronic references (including Tweets, Facebook, Blog, and other online sources) should be formatted as described in the APA guidelines. The proposal also should be preceded by a formal title page.

Margins: 1 inch at the top and bottom, 1 inch on the right side, and 1.5 inch on the left side (for binding purposes). 1 inch top margins for the prefatory pages, for the first page of each chapter, and for the first page of the references.

Font and Justification: Times New Roman, 12 point font. Text within the body of the manuscript should be left justified.

Proposal Deadlines

The student should follow submission deadlines set by their Chair. It is strongly encouraged that the student set a timeline in order to reach completion of their thesis within their desired graduation time.

Personal Time Schedule		
Date	Item to be submitted	Date Submitted

It is strongly suggested that students remain in contact with their Chair during the proposal process as not to miss deadlines. Students who are not in contact with their Chair and showing satisfactory progress may not be permitted to register for an additional research and proposal term should they miss a deadline. This situation might affect graduate assistantships, financial aid status, and potentially delay completion of the program should it occur.

Acceptance of Proposal

The thesis Chair (and/or readers) will review the proposal and respond to the student with either: (1) accepted and approved to continue, (2) conditional accepted (the student must modify the proposal before continuing work on the thesis), or (3) rejected (the proposal is deemed unacceptable and the student should contact the thesis Chair for advice on preparing a different proposal). Proposals that are conditionally accepted or rejected must submit a new proposal to the Chair by the due date given.

Electronic Submission

Please contact your Thesis Chair to inquire about electronic submissions of proposals.

XI. The Thesis

Length and Content

There are no maximum page requirements for a Master's thesis; although, the length of

the paper should reflect the scope of the topic, the amount of literature to be reviewed, and the chosen methodology.

The Chair will have the final say as to what content is appropriate in the Master's thesis, but in general any thesis will include the following:

- Title page Signature page
- Dedication/ Acknowledgement (optional) Table of Contents
- List of Tables List of Figures
- List of Abbreviations Manuscript Chapters References Appendices

The thesis will be divided into chapters. (Not all theses will have the same chapter titles or the same number of chapters – this depends on the nature of the study.)

Thesis Format and Style

The body of the paper must be written using APA style as outlined in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

- **Margins:** 1 inch at the top and bottom, 1 inch on the right side, and 1.5 inch on the left side (for binding purposes). 1 .5 inch top margins for the prefatory pages, for the first page of each chapter, and for the first page of the references.
- **Font and Justification:** Times New Roman, 12 point font. Text within the body of the manuscript should be left justified.
- **Page Numbering and Count:** Page numbers are centered, 1 inch from the bottom of the page. The prefatory pages are numbered using Roman Numerals; the body of the dissertation is numbered using Arabic numerals. The counting of pages begins with the title page; however, the page number is not put on the title page. The copy right page, the signature page, and the abstract page are not counted nor numbered. The dedication page is the first page after the title page that is counted and numbered (i.e. ii).

For further information regarding formatting please see the Appendix–Editing Checklist.

Deadlines and Submission Procedures

The final draft of the thesis should be submitted to the Thesis Chair and the readers no later than the date given by the Chair. If revisions are required, the revised thesis should be delivered to the Chair by the submission due date given. Once approved by the Chair, the student will be enrolled into PPOG 690, and scheduling for the final defense may begin.

Electronic Submission

Electronic submission of the thesis final draft is by discretion of the Chair.

XII. The Defense

After the thesis is deemed acceptable by your Thesis Chair for you to be enrolled in PPOG 690, you will orally defend your research for the Thesis Committee. Working with your Chair, you will need to arrange the date, time and location to present your final defense. You can expect the thesis defense to last 1 to 3 hours. Once the date, time and location are confirmed you will need to complete and email the Defense Announcement Form to the Program Director. *(Please see Appendix D – Final Defense Announcement.)* **Defense of online student's thesis may be accomplished via a mutually agreeable web conferencing software.**

Defense Day

Most defenses will be done online via webinar or some similar format. Basic questions that will be posed to the student regarding the thesis will include questions on the design of their study, outcomes of their research, choice of methods, other research in the field, and analysis. The student will need to be prepared to answer questions regarding all aspects of their methodologies, findings, and conclusions included in the thesis. The student is also required to bring a hard copy of the thesis manuscript to the defense for each committee member.

During the defense, students must dress in proper business attire. The student will be given 20 minutes to present an overview of their thesis (a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation is required and should be sent to the Chair at least one week prior to the defense). Again, the PowerPoint may be presented virtually. The presentation needs to include an overview of the study's purpose and significance (both practical and empirical), the methods, the analysis, the results, limitations, discussion of the findings, and suggestions for future research. Following the presentation, the student will be presented questions by the thesis committee. Two rounds of questions will be posed by the committee after which visitors may be allowed to ask questions at the discretion of the Chair. Any committee member who cannot attend the final defense must, in advance, submit questions in writing to the Chair. The Chair will read the questions and ensure that they are answered by the student to the satisfaction of the other committee members. If a committee member is absent without submitting questions in advance, the thesis defense must be rescheduled.

Following the student's presentation and the rounds of questions, the final defense will be adjourned and the student and any visitors will be asked to leave the room. The committee will make a decision based on the following categories:

- *Accepted:* The thesis may require typographical or minor editorial corrections to

be made to the satisfaction of the Chair.

- *Accepted with modifications:* The thesis requires minor changes in substance or major editorial changes which are to be made to the satisfaction of members of the Thesis Committee designated by the Committee. The Thesis Committee's report must include a brief outline of the nature of the changes required, the date by which the changes are to be completed, and the consequences if the student fails to comply.
- *Accepted conditionally:* The thesis requires more substantive changes, but will be acceptable when these changes are made to the satisfaction of the members of the Thesis Committee designated by the Committee. The Thesis Committee's report must include a brief outline of the nature of the changes required, the date by which the changes are to be completed, and the consequences if the student fails to comply.
- *Decision deferred:* The thesis requires modifications of a substantial nature the need for which makes the acceptability of the thesis questionable. The Thesis Committee's report must contain a brief outline of modifications required, the date by which the changes are to be completed, and the consequences if the student fails to comply. The revised thesis must be re-submitted to the Committee for reexamination. The reexamination will follow the same procedures as for the initial submission. This decision is only open once for each candidate.
- *Rejected:* The thesis is rejected. The Chair of the examination will report the reasons for rejection and advise the student on the suitability of the candidate continuing in the program.

Subsequently, the student will be invited to reenter the room (or call back in, if it is a webinar) and the final decision of the committee will be conveyed to the student. After the final defense is finished, the Chair will complete the Final Thesis Defense Decision Form (*Please see Appendix E*) and will deliver it to the student with the necessary signatures.

Changes may be required to the thesis after the final defense. Once these changes have been completed, the student must submit the final thesis to the Chair. Once the final thesis is approved, the chair determines a final grade for PPOG 690. The grade should not be provided until all edits are complete and the final document is submitted to the library through the digital commons system (see below).

Final Submission

Upon approval from the chair, the student follows the ILRC submission guidelines for publication. These guidelines must be strictly followed and can be accessed at [Theses and Dissertation Publishing Guidelines](#).

The candidate is required to furnish bound copies of his or her thesis to the chair and the Liberty University Helms School of Government (Step 8 on the ILRC website: the bindery). The student must select cover color 490, gold lettering for the cover, title printed on the spine and the cover, and single-sided printing option.

Disclaimer

This guide and its content reflect the practices and policies of Liberty University, the School of Education, and the Helms School of Government. This guide does contain original material, common knowledge material, and non-original documents; it is in no way represented as original work solely by the composer(s). It does not constitute a contract and is subject to change at the discretion of Liberty University Helms School of Government.

This version of the thesis guide supersedes all previous versions.

Bibliography

Eggenschwiler, Jean (1997). Cliffs Quick Review; Writing: Grammar, Usage, and Style. Lincoln, Nebraska: Cliffs Notes. USBN: 0-49086-05367-8 Liberty University Faculty Handbook (July, 2011)

Liberty University School of Education Dissertation Guide.
http://www.liberty.edu/media/1152/Dissertation_Handbook.pdf

Liberty University Writing Program Thesis/ Dissertation Guidelines
<http://www.liberty.edu/library/submitting-dissertations-and-theses/>

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry Thesis Project Handbook
http://www.liberty.edu/media/9932/DOCTOR_OF_MINISTRY_-_2016_Edition-1.pdf

Liberty University Library
<http://www.liberty.edu/library/>

XIII. Appendices

Appendix A- Editing Checklist
Appendix B- Writing Tips
Appendix C- Plagiarism
Appendix D- Final Defense Announcement
Appendix E- Final Thesis Defense Decision Form

Appendix A: Editing Checklist

Formatting	Y	N	Comments
Page order: The order of the pages is as follows: Title page, Signature page, Abstract, Dedication/Acknowledgement (optional), Table of Contents, List of Tables, List of Figures, List of Abbreviations, Manuscript Chapters, References, Appendices			
Margins: The margins for all chapters of the Thesis are as follows: 1 inch at the top and bottom, 1 inch on the right side, and 1.5 inch on the left side (for binding purposes). 1 inch top margins for the prefatory pages, for the first page of each chapter, and for the first page of the references.			
Text and Justification: All text is Times New Roman, 12 point font. Text within the body of the manuscript should be left justified.			
Page Counts and Numbers: Page numbers are centered, 1 inch from the bottom of the page. The prefatory pages are numbered using Roman Numerals; the body of the dissertation is numbered using Arabic numerals. The counting of pages begins with the title page; however, the page number is not put on the title page. The copy right page, the signature page, and the abstract page are not counted nor numbered. The dedication page is the first page after the title page that is counted and numbered (i.e. ii).			
Title Page: The title page includes the title of the manuscript, the author, the university supervising the research, and the date completed. The title should reflect the research completed and should be 10 words or less. 1 inch top margins are used; a running head is NOT included.			
Abstract: The abstract clearly and succinctly summarizes the contents of the manuscript and is 120 words or less. It is contained on a separate page following the title and signature page. The word			
"ABSTRACT" should be in all caps and a Level 1 heading, centered, 1.5 inches from the top of the page.			

Table of Contents: The Table of Contents lists the various chapters and subsections of the manuscript along with their page numbers. The table of contents includes the acknowledgement, list of tables, list of figures, CHAPTER TITLES (all caps), REFERENCES (all caps), and APPENDICES (all caps). It is justified left. The subsections included are to be level 1 and level 2 headings within the manuscript. Level 1 headings are indented one-half inch. Entries should be double spaced. Page numbers are inserted in the footer, centered, lowercase roman numerals.			
List of Tables: The List of Tables cite the tables and the corresponding pages of each table. The title of this page is a Level 1 heading, centered, 1.5 inches from the top of the page. Entries are double spaced. Page number is inserted in the footer, centered, lowercase roman numerals.			
List of Figures: The List of Figures cites the figures and the corresponding pages of each figure. The title of this page is a Level 1 heading, centered, 1.5 inches from the top of the page. Entries are double spaced. Page number is inserted in the footer, centered, lowercase roman numerals.			
List of Abbreviations: The List of Abbreviations identifies the phrase and corresponding abbreviation or acronym used. The list should be in alphabetical order. Each phrase should be listed and the abbreviation or acronym in parentheses [e.g. Higher Education (HE)]. The title of this page is a Level 1 heading, centered, 1.5 inches from the top of the page. Entries are double spaced. Page number is inserted in the footer, centered, lowercase roman numerals.			
Chapters: The chapter numbers are written rather than in numerical form. The entire chapter titles are capitalized, centered, 1.5 inches from the top of the page. Titles longer than one line are single spaced.			
APA, Grammar, Spelling	Y	N	Comments
Style: The entire manuscript, including references, follows the <i>Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)</i> , the sixth edition.			
Grammar: Proper grammar is used and follows the rules outlined in the <i>Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)</i> , the sixth edition (e.g. verb tense consistent throughout,			

be” verbs, pronoun-antecedent agreement and subject-verb agreement, parallel construction, varied in structure, rhythm, and length, full sentences).			
Punctuation: Punctuation is used correctly and follows the rules outlined in the <i>Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)</i> , the sixth edition.			
Spelling: The manuscript is free from misspelled			
Word Choice: Word choice clear, concise, and precise, Is jargon, figures of speech, anthropomorphism, editorial “we” and colloquialism avoided. Non biased language is used.			
Voice: Active voice is primarily used throughout the manuscript.			
Quotes: Quotes are cited correctly (over 50 words are formatted as a block quote.)			
Numbers: APA rules for numbers used.			
Tables and Figures: If tables and figures are used, they are formatted APA style.			
Flow of Thought; Paragraph and Sentences Structure	Y	N	Comments
The writing is logical, organized, and coherent fashion. The paragraphs flow smoothly from one to another and transitional sentences used between paragraphs.			
Paragraphs have a thesis sentences. All sentences within the paragraph support the thesis sentence			
Sentences are clear and concise (e.g. look at one or two of the sentences and consider if they could be written using less words without losing meaning). Redundancy is avoided.			

Appendix B: Writing Tips

(An outline with references from *Writing: Grammar, Usage, and Style* by Jean Eggenschwiler.)

Collegiate writing involves mainly the following elements: reporting information, providing instruction, explaining a process, arguing a position, proving a point, or analyzing a text, theory, attitude, or event. Most of the collegian’s writing will focus on argument and analysis.

Understand

When approaching your writing, it is best to keep your point or purpose in mind as you develop your paper. You will want to ‘start with the end in mind’ and understand the direction/ point your research material needs to support and develop your topics to meet that end goal.

Balance

Remember that you will want to balance your topic.

For instance, if you are arguing the need for a reform, then you will want to understand and state the current policies, give supporting argument for change in those policies, and point toward your end goal of reformation.

You will want to balance the amount of explanation of current policies and the research detailing the need for a change in those policies. Picture a pie, everyone likes their equal share of a pie and does not want to receive less than anyone else. It is the same with writing, equal portions assist in supporting and moving your writing along while keeping your audience's attention.

Audience

It is highly important to write with your audience in mind. Many writers forget who they are writing for.

In the collegiate atmosphere, you are writing to individuals who have spent years studying and writing on the same topics that you are developing your paper to address. If you were writing for someone who knew nothing of your topic, you might give definitions for area specific terms, with the realization that someone outside of that field of study might not understand what that term is; but, with collegiate writing, you can safely work with the assumption that you will be addressing like-minded individuals with vast experience and knowledge in that field.

Helpful questions to ask yourself, before writing, to identify your audience are:

- Am I writing for a person in particular field of study (Psychology, English literature, Genetics, Sport, etc.)? [Tip: This can be helpful in examining whether or not you will need to relate your topic across more than one field of study for understanding.]
- Will they have prior knowledge of the terminology and concepts I will be discussing? (Yes, keep your definitions to a minimum. No, Define, define, define, as if they have never heard of your work before.)
- Will I need to provide extensive background information on my topic or will a detailed summary be enough? (Expert in the field, detail summary. Novice, Give extensive background.)
- What is the reading level of my audience, will they need a more simplified vocabulary or will they understand more technical and precise language? (If your audience is in middle school, then they might not understand words like 'Eschatology', but would understand 'The Study of the End Times'. If your audience is a bible professor in seminary, then use the word Eschatology, they will know the meaning without explanation.)
- Will my audience agree or disagree to my point of view? (If you are writing your

paper as an argument you will want to keep your language to sway others in support of your view, and not argue against yourself.)

Keep in mind that you will not want to address an expert in a field of study as though they are a Fifth grader who has never heard of your topic!

Organizing Your Writing

Getting started can be difficult, but you can do simple things to help organize your materials, which will in return help your writing to be more organized. Below is helpful information in starting, moving through, and completing the writing process.

Develop an Outline

Developing a true outline of your paper will help you to not only organize your thoughts, but your research and topics/talking points, as well.

Example:

A Need for Reformation in the 20th Century Evangelical Church

- I. The first reformation of the church came in XXXX...
 - A. What brought about the first church reformation?
 - B. How has that affected the Evangelical Church?
 - C. What is the impact on evangelism and the church at this time due to the reformation?
 - D. When does this reformation turn and spur another need for reformation in the church?
- II. The next noted reformation of the church occurred in XXXX...
 - A. What brought about this reformation?
 - B. How did that affect the Evangelical Church?
 - C. How did that affect evangelism in that time and the church?
 - D. Where are we now that would support a new reformation of the evangelical church?
- III. A call for reformation in the 20th Century Evangelical Church
 - A. Where the church or society is spiritually, compared to the past, to support a need for reformation?
 - B. How would we support reformation in the current evangelical church?
 - C. What would be the lessons we need to take from previous reformations and decline of the evangelical church in today's society?

Outlines can be adapted to support chapters of a Master's Thesis. Each question posed can be a chapter or point needing support in the paper. [Tip: By using an outline you allow yourself to be directed in your research and writing, and allow for flexibility should you not find research to support a point. You can easily substitute or eliminate that point without losing focus on your topic, and maintain balance in your writing.]

Writing

Decide on your topic. Choose a topic appropriate to the length of your paper and that interests you. You want a topic that is sufficiently broad to be robust but not too broad so to hinder your matriculation through the thesis process. Hence, a master's thesis could involve a broad topic such as "A Need for Reformation in the 20th Century Evangelical Church" versus a narrow topic such as "The Reformed 20th Century Evangelical Church Model".

The first can be a good document with well-developed topics and discussions on Reformation of the 20th Century Evangelical Church, the latter would be a narrow discussion paper not nearly suitable for a Master's Thesis. [Tip: When choosing your topic you may need to do some brief, early research to ensure that there is sufficient material to cover your topic and present a well-formed Master's Thesis. If you start developing your paper and find that your research is not of sufficient breadth then do not fear changing your topic.]

Explore the research and written material available on your topic. A frequent mistake in writing is failing to provide sufficient examples and evidence that give detailed support of your talking point, topic, and thesis. General, unsupported statements and points are unconvincing and uninteresting.

Take notes while you are reading your research (be sure to write down the citation for your notes, this will assist you in avoiding plagiarism should you incorporate any part of that note in your writing).

The notes, and research associated with them, may never appear in your writing, but may further help you direct the topic you are discussing. [Tip: Keep an on-going citation list (already in APA format) of all of your reference materials that you have reviewed.

This will allow you to easily reference the materials you have used for research and keep you from having to locate a citation when you are finished. This also assists you in avoiding plagiarism.

Formulate your Thesis (main idea) and decide on the points you want to make to support that idea. Your thesis should require you to express a position on your topic and defend that position with research and written materials. [Tip: Write your thesis (or your end goal) at the top of a paper and put each point you wish to make as an outline for organizing your research for later writing.]

Develop your written thesis statement to summarize the argument you will pose and support with your research in order to support your main topic.

Start selecting detailed research and written material that supports the points you want to make in your writing (this will involve a lot of reading and research). [Tip: When you

gather your print materials, organize them under each topic that you want to use to support your main thesis. This will later assist you in writing your paper and organizing your thoughts.]

Once you have collected your data, decide on the order you want to present your data.

[Tip: Keep the balance of your paper in mind, if you have bulky amounts of data for one point, try breaking that point into smaller discussion areas to assist your reader along. Adjust your outline according to those discussion areas.]

Using your data arranged according to your outline, discussion points, and end goal, start writing your first draft, following your outline, and include references for your gathered materials.

Edit. You will not edit less than 3 times before moving into the final draft phase of your writing. When editing keep in mind:

- Content: Do I have sufficient information to support my topics and end goal? Should I gather more research to support any point?
- Style: Am I writing to my audience, is there anything that needs more detailed explanation in order to get my point across better? Are there any areas in which my audience may not understand the topic I am discussing?
- Mechanics: Grammar, word usage, sentence structure, punctuation, formatting for APA, and organization. You will need help here, we all do! This is where your editor comes in handy, use them, abuse them, take them baked goods. Hand your paper to buddies to read and point out things. All of these techniques are important to formatting a good, well written paper. You have looked at your writing for weeks and will become blind to your own mistakes, having extra eyes will allow you to present a more polished and well written paper. Remember, even the most accomplished writer uses editors to achieve their finished product. [Tip: Cite as you write. It is easy to forget where a quote or referenced material comes from, so cite it as you are writing it, it will make your editing process easier in the end.]

Helpful Websites

owl.english.purdue.edu (Great for APA tips and writing help also.)

www.apastyle.org (Official American Psychological Association site)

grammar.quickanddirtytips.com (Grammar Girl)(Also available as podcasts)

Write the FINAL DRAFT: Yes, even after all those eyes have looked at and wrote all over your hard work, you will need to edit again. Take all of the feedback and give your paper a serious look. Change the mechanics where needed. Address anything that is not clear in your topics, adjust wording to ease the readers progress through your paper. All of this will benefit you in the end. Then, have your final finalized. This involves one more look by an outsider. Allow them to mark it up, and make those adjustments (this is your big visit to the writing center).

FINAL: You are ready, you are formatted, you have made your points, you have noted your

research and documents properly, your grammar is fluid, your punctuation is right, you are understood, and you have made your point. It is time to hand in your work.

Appendix C: Plagiarism

Plagiarism is not just using someone else's words, but using someone's ideas also. When you are referencing, even a brief reference, someone's thoughts or ideas on a topic, even if it is not their direct words, you must cite them. Generally known or accepted knowledge, like creationism, does not need to be cited, but someone's direct work regarding creationism must be cited. If you are in doubt as to whether or not to cite a work, cite it anyway. You are better safe than sorry.

All students should regularly review the Power Point Presentation by Dr. Emily Heady of the Online Writing Center at <http://www.liberty.edu/academics/graduate/writing/index.cfm?PID=12268> along with other available writing resources.

Resources

- Online Writing Center: <http://www.liberty.edu/academics/graduate/writing/index.cfm?PID=12268>
- Fair Use and the Fair Use Checklist: <http://www.liberty.edu/information/services/ilrc/library/index.cfm?PID=20109>
- Research Citation Assistance from the Integrated Learning Resource Center (ILRC): <http://www.liberty.edu/index.cfm?PID=1221>
- ILRC Website: <http://www.liberty.edu/index.cfm?PID=10446>

Liberty University's Plagiarism Policy can be found in the [Graduate Catalog](#) Pages 30, 32. The policy states, in brief, as follows:

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the intentional failure to give sufficient attribution to the words, ideas, or data of others that the student has incorporated into his/her work for the purpose of misleading the reader. In some cases, a student may be careless and fail to give credit to the words, ideas or data of others. In such situations, plagiarism has still occurred, but the professor may choose from an array of sanctions he/she deems appropriate. In order to avoid plagiarism, students must conscientiously provide sufficient attribution. Attribution is sufficient if it adequately informs and, therefore, does not materially mislead a reasonable reader as to the true source of the words, ideas, or data. Students who have any doubt as to whether they have provided sufficient attribution have the responsibility to obtain guidance from their professor or other person to whom they are submitting their

work. Plagiarism in papers, projects or any assignment prepared for a class shall include the following:

- Omitting quotation marks or other conventional markings around material quoted from any printed source (including digital material)
- Directly quoting or paraphrasing a specific passage from a specific source without properly referencing the source
- Replicating another person's work or parts thereof and then submitting it as an original
- Purchasing a paper (or parts of a paper) and representing it as one's own work
- Multiple submissions: Multiple submissions is the use of work previously submitted at this or any other institution to fulfill academic requirements in another class. For example, using a paper from a prior class for a current course assignment is academic fraud. Slightly altered work that has been resubmitted is also considered to be fraudulent. With prior permission, some professors may allow students to complete one assignment for two classes. In this case prior permission from both instructors is absolutely necessary.

Cheating

Cheating is a form of dishonesty in which a student attempts to give the appearance of a level of knowledge or skill that the student has not obtained, gives unauthorized aid, or wrongly takes advantage of another's work. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Copying from another person's work on an examination or an assignment
- Allowing another student to copy any portion of one's work on an examination or an assignment
- Using unauthorized materials or giving or receiving any other unauthorized assistance on an examination or an assignment
- Take an examination or completing an assignment for another, or permitting another to take an examination or to complete an assignment for the student
- Reusing a paper from a previous course
- Paying another student to complete a course, an individual assignment or an examination

2. Falsification

Falsification is a form of dishonesty in which a student misrepresents the truth, invents facts, or distorts the origin or content of information used as authority. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Dishonestly answering or providing information in the application process
- Citing a source that is known not to exist
- Attributing to a source ideas and information that are not included in the source
- Falsely citing a source in support of a thought or idea when it is known not to support the thought or idea

- Citing a source in a bibliography when the source was neither cited in the body of the paper nor consulted
- Intentionally distorting the meaning or applicability of data
- Inventing data or statistical results to support conclusions

Appendix D: Final Defense Announcement

Please Specify the Location of Defense: ____

Defense Date and Time: ____

Thesis Title: __

Abstract:

Biographical Information:

Candidate Signature Date

Print Name

*Please submit the completed form to the Program Director.

(This document is sourced from the Liberty University School of Education.)

Appendix E: Final Thesis Defense Decision Form

HELMS SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT
MASTER OF SCIENCE

ID Number __ Last Name _____ First Name _ Student Signature_____

DATE: _____

THESIS TITLE:

Committee Decision:

Explain Decision (as applicable):

List revisions needed:

Chair: _

Reader 1: _____

Reader 2: _____