

Formatting your MS Thesis and Planning Your Defense

All Master of Science theses submitted in Plant Biology and Conservation should be prepared according to the standard guidelines below. These are guidelines and there may be some deviations in order to satisfy requirements of journals to which you would like to submit your thesis for publication. However, a few items **must remain as presented here**. Namely, follow the format for the title page, an abstract must be included, you must include a table of contents, list of figures, and list of tables.

REMEMBER to fill out all of the appropriate forms ahead of time. You must complete:

1. The “Application for Graduation” before your defense.
2. The TGS Master’s Completion form after your defense has been approved.

The above forms are to be completed online via GSTS.

3. You must also complete the PBC “Thesis Defense Decision” form. Bring it to your thesis defense to be filled out by your committee members.

<https://www.plantbiology.northwestern.edu/documents/PBC%20thesis%20proposal%20form.pdf>

Degrees are awarded by The Graduate School in December, March, June and August. When scheduling your defense, keep in mind the deadline for submitting your completed and approved thesis to TGS. Check the TGS academic calendar for exact deadlines.

https://planitpurple.northwestern.edu/calendar/academic_calendar

Many of these forms can be accessed through:

<https://www.plantbiology.northwestern.edu/graduate/current-students/ms/thesis-program/resources.html>

Formatting Guidelines for Master of Science Thesis in Plant Biology and Conservation

1. Typography and Figures

Use *Times* or *Times New Roman* font, 12 pt., and 1-inch margins. The type may be double, 1.5, or single spaced. Figures must be numbered, include legends, and be easily legible. They may be printed on separate pages rather than being integrated into the text.

2. Title Page

{TITLE}

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE PROGRAM IN PLANT BIOLOGY
AND CONSERVATION

BY {NAME}

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER
OF SCIENCE IN PLANT BIOLOGY AND CONSERVATION FROM NORTHWESTERN
UNIVERSITY AND THE CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

{DATE of thesis defense, e.g., APRIL 4, 2000}

3. Signature Page

This is your signed and approved thesis defense decision form from your defense.

4. Abstract

A concise summary of the research problem addressed, results, and implications of your findings. Be careful to spell out any abbreviations used and avoid technical jargon. The abstract should be no longer than a page (~350 words).

5. Acknowledgements

You are free to acknowledge those who assisted with the completion of your research and thesis. Generally, this section is no more than a page or two.

6. Table of Contents

The thesis should contain the sections listed below. Starting and ending page numbers should also be included. You may have several chapters that each contain: Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, and Discussion.

Title page...	{page number}
Signature page...	{page number}
Abstract...	{page number}
Acknowledgements...	{page number}
Table of Contents...	{page number}
List of Figures...	{page number}

List of Tables...	{page number}
Introduction/Background...	{page number}
Materials and Methods...	{page number}
Results...	{page number}
Discussion...	{page number}
References...	{page number}

7. List of Figures

This is simply a list of all the titles of your figures and the page on which they are found.

Figure 1. Cross section of fruit	7
Figure 2. View of study site	24
Figure 3. Phylogeny	63

8. List of Tables

This is simply a list of all the titles of your tables and the page on which they are found.

Table 1. Genetic diversity indices	12
Table 2. List of samples	54

9. Proper Reference Formatting

For journal articles:

The authors' names (year) complete title. *journal name*, volume, and page numbers must be included.

Example:

Smith, A.L., Jones, B.G. and Johnson, V.M. (1999) The effect of shoveling snow on heart rate. *Journal of Cardiology*, 124:456-488.

For book chapters:

The authors' names (year) chapter title. Book title. Editors. Publisher. City, state. Page numbers.

Example:

Smith, A.L., Jones, B.G. and Johnson, V.M. (1999) The relationship between tachycardia and physical stress. In: Stress and the Heart. Eds., J. Matthews, C.A. Benson and J.J. Carlson. Clinical Press, N.Y. pp. 34-56.

10. The Thesis Defense

Your thesis should be turned into your committee members at least two weeks prior to the defense. It is advised that it be turned into your major adviser before this to solicit comments and make any last minute revisions. The defense presentation will be public (scheduled for ~one hour including questions), followed by the defense to just your committee (schedule two hours for this). **You will need to reserve a room, projector, and computer for the event. This should be done as early as possible to improve chances of securing the room you would like.** Room reservations can be made through the PBC program assistant. After you have booked a room send your title and an image for a flyer and email announcement to advertise your talk. During your committee defense, committee members should focus questions on issues pertaining to the thesis research, but more generalized questions relevant to the research subject are also appropriate. All committee members will sign off on the thesis defense decision form. **The thesis defense decision form should be brought to the meeting by the student it is available here:**

<https://www.plantbiology.northwestern.edu/documents/ms-resources/pbc-graduate-ms-thesis-defense-decision-2014.pdf>

On this form, the committee will indicate whether the student has passed with no revisions, with minor revisions, with major revisions, or does not pass. In the case of revisions, it should be specified what they are and if the entire committee needs to see them once are made or just the major adviser, before the thesis is officially accepted by the program. At this point the thesis decision form should be turned into the PBC program assistant. The student should retain a copy for themselves if revisions are expected.

11. Final Thesis Submission

Once the student has made the revisions and they have been approved, the thesis decision form will need to be signed again by the major adviser and should be brought to the PBC program assistant along with a PDF file of the final thesis. This is a requirement before you can graduate. Next, the program director will sign off and the approval will be communicated to TGS. Keep deadlines in mind for completion. Visit TGS webpage for deadlines:

https://planitpurple.northwestern.edu/calendar/academic_calendar/