

A Guide to Completing the Music Education Thesis

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A Guide to Completing the Master of Music Education Thesis

INTRODUCTION

Completing a thesis is the culminating activity in the Master of Music Education degree program. For some students the experience of writing a thesis can be a rewarding one and can serve as a critical point of entry into doctoral study. For others, writing a thesis can be a daunting task. The general purpose of this document is to help students complete their thesis in a reasonable period of time and with as few problems as possible. This manual explains the format and arrangement requirements for your thesis as established by policy for the Music Education Department of Westminster Choir College of Rider University. This handbook was revised June 2015 and replaces all previous versions.

Students in the MME degree program preparing a thesis should register for one credit of thesis with the college registrar for each semester they are working with a thesis advisor.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Carole Slade, in her book, *Form and Style*, defines a thesis as "... a substantial research project. As the word implies, a thesis should draw an original conclusion based on information derived from research" (1997, p. xv).

A thesis may have only one author. Previously completed work by the author may be included in the thesis provided that the work represents research conducted by the student while the student was enrolled in the Westminster M.M.E. degree program and has not been used to meet the requirements for another degree and is not co-authored.

1. Parts of the Thesis

A thesis generally contains five sections:

Introduction
Review of the Literature
Methodology
Data Analysis
Conclusion

A reference list, containing all sources, appears at the end of the document.

2. Length of the Thesis

A Masters Thesis is typically between 50 and 150 double-spaced pages in length. It is recommended that the research design be qualitative in nature. It is further recommended that students enroll in ME 685: Research in Music Education in preparation for the completion of the Master's thesis. Students are also referred to the following texts:

Creswell, John W. *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2007.

EndNote, *Bibliographies Made Easy* (computer software)

Slade, Carole. *Form and Style*, 13th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008.

3. Use of Copyrighted Material

When copyright material is included in the thesis manuscript, the author is responsible for obtaining written permission from the owner. Westminster Choir College of Rider University takes no responsibility for damages that may arise from copyright violations by a degree student.

4. Use of Human Subjects

If human subjects are used in the research for the thesis, the student must adhere to all of the policies and procedures as established by the Rider University Institutional Research Board (IRB). The Human Subjects Research policy and Human Subjects forms are available on the web at <http://www.rider.edu/offices/academic-affairs/human-subjects-research-policy>.

5. The Thesis Advisor

The MME student completes the Master's thesis while under the supervision of a thesis advisor. The Department Chair assigns the thesis advisor for Music Education. The student's academic advisor may or may not be the thesis advisor. All full-time members of the department shall approve the thesis proposal. The advisor shall approve the completed final document.

The student should work with the thesis advisor to choose a topic for study and an appropriate research design.

6. Submission of the Thesis Proposal

The first step in writing the masters thesis is the completion of a thesis proposal. Written in future tense, the proposal constitutes sections 1, II and III of the thesis. It contains:

- (a) a working title and statement of the purpose of the study, including such topics as the need for the study;
- (b) the research question or questions that the thesis will attempt to answer;
- (c) a literature review containing a presentation of relevant research so that the proposed study is placed in a theoretical context;
- (d) a detailed presentation of the methods that will be used in the study;
- (e) a proposed timeline, containing an estimate of when each of the separate parts of the thesis (data collection, data analysis, completion of the first draft, etc.) will be completed;
- (f) a copy of the signed approval from the University Institutional Research Board (IRB) if the research includes participation by human subjects;
- (g) a table of contents to assist the readers.

When completed, the proposal is submitted to the department via the advisor at which time a date will be scheduled for the presentation of the proposal to the department. It is the student's responsibility to have the thesis proposal completed in a timely fashion allowing the department adequate time to review the document before the presentation date.

Each student must present his/her proposal to the department who will then offer suggestions to make the research stronger or more feasible. Students will bring the Proposal Cover Sheet (see example in this handbook) for each full-time member of the department to sign for approval at the meeting or shortly thereafter. It may be necessary for the student to revise the thesis proposal before final approval by the faculty members in the department. When all full-time members of the department have reviewed and approved the proposal, they shall sign the Proposal Cover Sheet, and the thesis is then considered approved.

After the proposal has been approved the student may begin the process of implementing the study. A critical element in this process is close contact and collaboration with the thesis advisor.

7. Thesis Registration

In April 2007, the Westminster Academic Policy Committee passed the following:

Students enrolled in programs with a thesis requirement must register for thesis credit (ME 650) each semester from onset through completion of the document. Part time students in the MME program who complete their coursework exclusively during summers must register for thesis credit every summer from onset through completion of the document, and in any semester during the regular academic year in which thesis advising is expected. If there is a lapse in thesis registration prior to completion of the document, the student can be held accountable for program requirements in place at the time of return. Music Education students are currently required to submit the completed thesis a minimum of 1 month prior to graduation.

FORMAT AND APPEARANCE OF THE THESIS DOCUMENT

1. Methods of Production

All theses must be produced with word processing or page layout software. No other production methods are acceptable. The original must be on quality white opaque paper, 20-24 lb. bond, 100% rag, 8-1/2" x 11" sheets. This may be photocopied from computer-generated copy. This paper may be purchased at any stationary store. A recommended paper is Southworth #403C.

2. Preparation of the Manuscript

a. Font Type

Font size must be 12 points. Print must be legible and readable. Traditional serif fonts such as Times or Palatino are encouraged.

b. Margins

Left margin must be 1-1/2" (1.5 inches); all other margins must be 1".

Subheadings and body text must have at least two full lines of text below or must begin on a new page.

c. Pagination

- (1) Number consecutively all pages following the title page in the upper right hand corner at the 1" margin intersection.
- (2) Use lower case Roman numerals for the preliminary pages since they are counted and numbered. Begin with the Roman numeral "ii" on the first page *after* the title page.
- (3) Use Arabic numbers for the text, references, appendices, bibliography,

and all other pages including photographs, illustrations, and drawings.

Note: Begin these numbers on the first page of the text and continue in consecutive order until the end of the thesis.

- (a) Do not use a period after the page number.
- (b) Do not number the title page even though it is counted as “i.”
- (c) Do not insert lettered page numbers such as 10a, 10b, or 10c.

d. Spacing

- (1) Double space general text material.
- (2) Insert 4 line spaces above and below figures, table, and other graphics.
- (3) Single space footnotes, long quotations and bibliographic entries. However, use double spacing to separate these bibliographic entries from each other.

e. Footnotes

Separate footnotes from the text with a solid line across the page and leave two spaces between the line and the footnote.

f. Tables and Figures

- (1) Tables and figures must be included as part of the document. They should be included with the text when preparing the manuscript.
- (2) The same margin limitations apply to tables and figures.
- (3) Tables and figures are to be placed as close to the text to which they apply as possible. They may be in portrait or landscape orientation.
- (4) Where possible, photographs should be scanned into body of the document and included with the text.
- (5) Labels and captions on photographs must printed on the document.
- (6) No attachments may be made to the thesis paper.
- (7) Musical notation must be prepared on the computer. Handwritten manuscript is not acceptable.

g. Binding

Upon completion of the final document, the student will submit 2 unbound copies to their thesis advisor along with a check in the amount of \$35 payable to Rider University. This covers the cost of binding. Once bound, a copy will be placed in Talbott Library and a second copy will be stored in the Music Education Resource Room (Taylor B17). Students may purchase additional bound copies of their thesis for \$35 per copy.

h. Style Manual

The thesis must conform to a standard style manual. Most educational research conforms to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* commonly called the “APA Style Manual.” Qualitative studies often conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style* or to the style manual by Kate Turabian. All styles are included in Slade, *Form and Style*. Thesis rarely use MLA format.

ARRANGEMENT

Every thesis is composed of the following parts:

1. The Preliminaries

(a) Thesis Approval Form

- (1) See Sample on page 11 of this manual.
- (2) Print or type your full name and thesis title.
- (3) You must obtain all required signatures.
- (4) This page is required and will be bound in the front of the original thesis only. It is neither numbered nor counted.

(b) Title Page

- (1) See Sample at the end of this manual (page 12).
- (2) Use your full name, including your middle initial or name.
- (3) Write out the name of the degree for which you are a student. All Master’s Degree students must use the precise degree name (i.e. Master of Music Education).
- (4) Use the month and year in which the degree is to be granted or your thesis was accepted.
- (5) This page is counted but not numbered.

(c) Copyright or Blank Page

If the thesis is copyrighted, the following information should be included: a copyright notice, full legal name of author, and date of publication on file. Students must obtain the necessary forms for copyright on their own. The following information should be centered on the page is shown:

© Copyright 2015
Ima G. Student
All Rights Reserved

Include a blank page even if the thesis is not copyrighted.
In either situation, the page is neither counted nor numbered.

(d) *Dedications*

- (1) This page is optional and should appear before the acknowledgments page.
- (2) This page must be counted and numbered.

(e) *Acknowledgments*

- (1) This page is optional but most theses do include a brief statement of thanks or recognition of any special assistance.
- (2) The heading “Acknowledgments” should be bold, centered but without punctuation, and at least 2” from the top of the page.
- (3) This page must be counted and numbered.

(f) *Table of Contents*

- (1) The heading “Table of Contents” should be bold, centered but without punctuation, and at least 2” from the top of the page.
- (2) Do not list any titles that precede the Table of Contents (i.e. Dedications, Acknowledgments).
- (4) List titles of the sections, and at least the first or second order subdivisions. These titles must be worded exactly as they appear in the body of the thesis.
- (5) These pages are numbered in lowercase Roman Numerals.

(g) *List of Tables*

Consult the appropriate style manual for the formatting of tables.

(h) *List of Figures*

Consult the appropriate style manual for the formatting of figures.

(i) *Abstract*

- (1) All theses must contain an abstract. It is a summary that will permit a reader to determine the value of reading a full thesis. Abstracts include a statement of the problem, an outline of procedures or methods, and a summary of results and conclusions. The abstract should be limited to 350 words.
- (2) The following heading is centered at the top of the abstract page, at least 2” from the top of the page:

Abstract
Full Title of Thesis
Author’s Name as it appears on the Thesis
Thesis Advisor’s Name

- (3) The text begins four lines below this heading.
- (4) The text must be double-spaced.
- (5) The abstract is numbered in lowercase Roman numerals.

(j) *Blank Page*

This page separates the preliminary section from the text. It is neither numbered nor counted.

2. The Text

(a) The text should be subdivided into five major parts. The major parts may contain such subjects as introduction, general argument, description of procedures, research methods, discussion, summary, conclusions, recommendations, and other pertinent topics that are necessary for a complete understanding on the part of a sophisticated or professional reader.

(b) The subdivisions of the preliminaries, text and the reference material should be the same as the headings listed in the Table of Contents.

3. Reference Material

(a) *Footnotes*

- (1) Each footnote cites an authority for statements in the text.
- (2) Each one is numbered chronologically in superscript Arabic numerals, following any punctuation mark except a dash.
- (3) Each one is placed at the bottom of the same reference page.
- (4) Each footnote entry uses single spaces.

(b) *Bibliography or Reference List*

- (1) Any thesis that includes other works, either in direct quotation or by reference, must contain a Bibliography that lists these sources. If pertinent works have been consulted but not cited specifically in the text, they should be listed separately as an appendage to the Bibliography and given the sub-heading General References.
- (2) The section begins with a cover sheet that bears the heading Bibliography (or List of References) centered without punctuation. This page is neither counted nor numbered.
- (3) The heading is repeated on the first page of the Bibliography itself, 2" from the top, centered, and without punctuation. The list of sources begins four spaces below the heading.
- (4) The list of sources is double-spaced between entries, but single-spaced within each entry.
- (5) Entries may be in any consistent arrangement (i.e. alphabetical by author, numerical, or chronological) as specified by the style manual used.

(c) *Appendices*

- (1) If supplementary original data, illustrative material, a detailed derivation of equations, as extensive proof of a theorem, or a quotation too extensive for the body of the thesis are included, they may be presented in appendices. Similar material should be gathered in a single appendix.

Note: A list of nomenclature and symbols, if used, should be included as a separate appendix.

(2) This section is separated from the preceding material by a cover sheet that bears the heading Appendix (or Appendices) centered vertically and horizontally without punctuation. This sheet is neither numbered nor counted.

(3) The appendices may be divided into Appendix A, Appendix B, etc., depending on the kinds and amount of material used. Each appendix may have its own cover sheet that is not counted nor numbered. The heading is repeated on the page that bears the material. The title of the material follows four spaces below the heading.

(4) Each appendix and its title should be listed separately in the Table of Contents.

(d) *Last Page*

An unnumbered blank page ends the thesis.

For details not covered by the preceding instructions, consult the appropriate style manual.

Quick Guide to Arranging Your Thesis

1. Title Page
2. Blank (or copyright) page
3. Dedications (optional)
4. Acknowledgments (optional)
5. Table of Contents
6. List of Tables
7. List of Figures
8. Abstract
9. Blank page
10. Text
11. Bibliography
12. Appendices
13. Blank page

(Sample Proposal Title Page)

**PROPOSAL
FOR A THESIS IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER OF MUSIC EDUCATION
DEGREE**

**IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT OF AN ADVANCED CLASS FOR
MUSICALLY TALENTED FIRST GRADERS:
A CASE STUDY**

Ima G. Student

**Music Education Department
Westminster Choir College of Rider University**

May 2015

Approval of the Music Education Department:

Signed: _____	Chairperson Al
Holcomb	Date
Signed: _____	Member Frank
Abrahams	Date
Signed: _____	Member Janet
Cape	Date
Signed: _____	Member Donna
Gallo	Date
Signed: _____	Member Sharon
Morrow	Date

(Sample Title Page of the Finished Thesis)

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW NATIONAL STANDARDS
FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL GENERAL MUSIC CLASSES:
AN ACTION RESEARCH

A Thesis

Submitted to

the Music Education Department

Westminster Choir College of Rider University

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Music Education

by

Ima G. Student

May 2015

Al Holcomb, Thesis Advisor