

# THE MOST COMMON FORMAT ERRORS FOUND IN THESES AND DISSERTATIONS

When a thesis or dissertation is not approved by the Graduate School, the reason can be traced, usually, to the student's failure to follow the official format guidelines. The information below is intended to assist you by listing the most critical problems we have noted in the final review of documents by the Thesis and Dissertation Coordinator.

## 1. Incorrect/variable margins and/or headers and footers.

The margins (or white space surrounding the text) specified in *Guide to the Preparation of Theses and Dissertations* are 1.5 inches on the left, 1.0 inch on the right, top of the page, and 1.25 inches on the bottom of the page. The header and footer specified in *Guide to the Preparation of Theses and Dissertations* are 0.0 inches for the header and 1.0 inch for the footer. This applies, without exception, to **ALL PAGES** in your thesis or dissertation including preliminary pages, chapters, and appendices. After printing a hard copy, measure the margins with a ruler.

## 2. Tables or figures protruding into margins.

Nothing can enter the margin areas. Regardless of the circumstances, there are no exceptions. If you have a table or figure that is too large to fit within the text area, consider some of the alternate format options. Also consider whether the table or figure is essential to your thesis or dissertation. Can it be omitted? If it is a table, can it be rebuilt into more than one table?

## 3. Incorrect distance between the page number and the edge of the page

Nothing may intrude into the white space created by the margins including the page numbers. When setting the margins, set the header to 0" and footer to 1" from the edge of the page: Click on LAYOUT then PAGE SETUP then LAYOUT. In the header dialogue box, enter 0.0. In the footer dialogue box, enter 1.0.

## 4. Incorrect title pages

- Incorrect name: The name you must use is the name under which you are registered. This is printed on your transcripts and can be found when you log in to your SAIL account.
- Incorrect name of degree: Ask the Thesis and Dissertation Coordinator about the name of your degree. Occasionally, degree names change.
- Incorrect paper: You must submit 1 copy of your thesis or dissertation on 24 lb. 25% Capitol Cotton paper with the OU watermark. Check with your department for departmental paper requirements.

- Formatting errors: The Thesis and Dissertation Coordinator must compare your cover page with your advisor's signed content approval memo. Cover pages that are not formatted correctly or cover pages and approval memos that don't match will not be approved.

## 5. Section headings not listed in the Table of Contents

Beside the chapter or chapter equivalent heading, section and subsection headings must be included in the Table of Contents. Only these three levels of headings may be included.

## 6. Section headings listed in the Table of Contents do not match the headings appearing in the text

Chapter and section headings listed in the Table of Contents must match, word-for-word, the headings appearing in the text.

## 7. Incorrect figures and table placement

One of the most difficult concepts to describe is the placement of tables and figures in relation to their mention in the text. One of the keys to proper placement is this:

*It is the first physical mention of the table or figure, by number, that tells the writer where to place it. The discussion of the table or figure plays little or no part in the placement.*

The major caveat to remember is:

*Only very small illustrations can be embedded on a page with text above and below them. On any page that contains a table or figure that is one-half page or less in length, there must be at least one-half page of unseparated text. This means, then, that any table or figure over one-half page in length will be placed on its own page.*

When several tables and/or figures are mentioned on a page of text, the text on the page should continue to the bottom, as it normally would—then all the tables and/or figures mentioned on that page are placed in sequence after the full page of text.

## 8. Widows and orphans

Sometimes these cannot be avoided. Acceptability will be based on the professional appearance of the thesis or dissertation. Make sure Word's Widow/Orphan Control is activated: click on HOME then PARAGRAPH then LINE AND PAGE BREAKS then check the WIDOW/ORPHAN CONTROL box.

## 9. Poor quality of reproduced figures

Many figures are rejected because the print quality is not clear, sharp, and of high contrast or, if they have been reproduced by a photocopier, they have dots, shading and lines in the background. Only reproduced illustrations (figures, charts and graphs) of the highest quality are accepted.

## 10. Text in figures does not meet the minimum size requirement

Text in figures can be no smaller than 10 pt. Type a sample of text in 10 pt., print it and hold it up to a printed copy of the figure you wish to use. If the text in your figure is smaller than the sample, the figure will not be approved.

## 11. Text in tables does not meet the minimum size requirement

Ideally, tables should be produced in 12 pt. However, if a table protrudes into the margins, you may produce the table in 11 pt. If the table still is too large, try the smallest font size option, 10pt. Under no circumstances can you use a font size smaller than 10 pt. in tables. See **Table or figures protruding into margins** above.

## 12. Overall inconsistency in spacing

- spacing of chapter and reference headings
- spacing between the end of a paragraph and a new heading
- spacing before or after tables and figures
- spacing before and after equations