

GUIDELINES FOR WRITERS OF MAJOR PROJECTS IN LIEU OF THESES AKAMAI UNIVERSITY

General Policies for Major Projects

When permitted by the research parameters of their degree field and the expectations of the graduate committee, many students elect to conduct a major project in lieu of traditional research thesis. The major project may take the form of a novel, a book of poetry, a textbook, directory, handbook or a series of scholarly papers, new computer software, an original work of art, an academic conference or symposium, a business establishment or nonprofit organization, a community-based project, or another major project of unique design.

Graduate students choosing to submit a major project in lieu of thesis are required to prepare a formal write-up, which justifies the project, describes its purpose and importance, and explores its consequence. The write-up will look quite similar to the traditional thesis manuscript. Student will need to describe the project's structure and the processes through which it was developed, and clearly describe the role they have played in the project. A write-up of 50 pages may be adequate, provided it is guided by the procedural information in this handbook and an approved publisher's style manual.

Typical Chapters of a Major Project Manuscript

The following discussion will guide students in the preparation of the manuscript for a project in lieu of thesis.

Preliminary Pages in Project Write-Up

The preliminary pages of the manuscript for major projects should be the same as for the standard thesis, including title page, copyright notice, table of contents, acknowledgements, lists of figures, list of tables, abstract, preface, and other special sections, as appropriate. The order of pages, page numbering and other information pertinent to the style and structure of the manuscript are outlined elsewhere in this handbook, and in approved style manuals.

Introduction to the Project

An introductory chapter should describe the academic field that was addressed, it should draw upon demographic statistics and discuss the project's importance to the academic field or its meaningfulness to the culture. Writers of projects will need to clarify the specific problems they have addressed and explain these issues in detail. The introduction should flow from a statement of the problem addressed and justification for the project and move toward a statement of the main objectives of their project. Deriving the main objectives is made easier by fully clarifying why the project was selected and justifying how it effectively addresses the problem and provides a desired solution.

Project Review of Literature

Moving beyond the Introduction, students must explore in detail what the academic literature states about the primary focus of their project. They will need to discuss and contrast the literature as it informs their work and explain the thinking of the experts. Students should identify the relevant positions within the literature, both pro and con regarding their project, exploring where their work rests with regard to other major work in the field. They need to present a scholarly discussion of the literature and present an orderly academic argument that justifies some of the major elements behind the intent of their project. This chapter is not intended to be merely a series of book reports strung together, but the chapter should move in a logical fashion toward a conclusion to justify the project. In the end, the chapter must follow the expectations of the graduate committee with regard to academic argument and referencing of the literature

Project Procedures

In this chapter, students should describe their actions to address the problem. They should clarify the processes followed from inception to completion in conducting their projects. They should explain the planning process, the initial exercises, and the research activities leading to finalizing the product. Students must explain how they tested the usefulness and quality of their project, field tests and trial runs, explaining the processes and outcomes. They must also clarify their role in the overall project and the contributions of significant colleagues and contributors.

Project Results/Findings/Summary

Students describe the output of their projects using photographs, videos, CD-ROM, other media or diagrams, as need to describe the finished products. Describe each section or chapter of a book or manual. Explain to what degree the project is a success or a failure, reflecting on the objectives of the project. Explain what effects or potential effects the projects have or will have on the academic discipline, the workplace, the community and the society.

Project Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter clarifies what was learned from the project and the impact upon professional knowledge and career development. It discusses how it will bring about change in the culture. Students should be clear as to what other conclusions can be drawn from their projects and what recommendations they can validly derive from their projects.

Project Appendix

The Appendix includes the written material related to their projects, or references to supplemental materials to be submitted with the manuscript for storage in the archival library. This might include books, video- or audiotapes, photographs, copies of works of art, and other materials that clarify the outcome of the project.

Project Bibliography

Students are to submit proper bibliographies of all sources cited in the review of literature and elsewhere in the formal write-up. This is separate from bibliographic references incorporated within the actual project documents.