

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 guidelines below. These are guidelines and there may be some deviations to satisfy the 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, and you must include a table of contents, a list of figures, and a list of tables.

Remember to fill out all 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. Please bring it to your thesis defense for your committee members to fill out.

<https://plantbiology.northwestern.edu/graduate/resources/pbc-thesis-proposal-form.pdf>

The Graduate School awards degrees in December, March, June, and August. Remember the deadline for submitting your completed and approved thesis to TGS when scheduling your defense. Check the TGS academic calendar for exact deadlines:

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

Many of these forms can be accessed through:

<https://plantbiology.northwestern.edu/graduate/resources/forms-and-documents.html#ms>

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 the 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 completing 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, along with starting and ending page numbers. You may have several chapters, each containing the following: 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) and complete titles. 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) and chapter titles. 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 submitted to your committee members at least two weeks before the defense. You should turn this to 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 must reserve a room, projector, and computer for the event. This should be done as early as possible to improve the chances of securing the room you would like. Room reservations at CBG can be made through your advisor and at Northwestern University through the PBC program assistant. After booking a room, send your title and headshot to the PBC's program Assistant to prepare a flyer and an email announcement to advertise your talk. *Please ensure that you send this information at least 10 days before your presentation.*

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://plantbiology.northwestern.edu/graduate/resources/forms-and-documents.html#ms>.

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, what they are and if the entire committee needs to see them once they are made or just the major adviser before the thesis is officially accepted by the program should be specified. Once the revisions (if any) are reviewed and signed by your adviser, the thesis decision form should be uploaded to your GSTS portal and emailed to plantbiology@northwestern.edu. The student should retain a copy for themselves if revisions are expected.

11. Final Thesis Submission

Once the student has made the revisions and has been reviewed, approved, and signed by the adviser, the MS Decision Form and the final draft of the thesis must be uploaded to the student's GSTS portal and emailed to plantbiology@northwestern.edu. This is a requirement before you can graduate. Lastly, PBC will notify TGS and WCAS about the completion of your academic and program requirements, and that you are eligible to graduate.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Additional forms must be submitted via the GSTS portal to request graduation approval from Northwestern University. However, PBC's program assistant will email you these forms and deadlines close to the quarter you will graduate. Thus, please be aware of important graduation information in your NU email.

Keep deadlines in mind for completion. Visit the TGS webpage for deadlines:

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