Digital Commons
Electronic Thesis Submission Process
Fall 2011

NEW POLICY AND PROCESS:
As of the fall 2011 semester, graduate students will no longer be required to get their theses bound for submission to the Graduate School as a requirement for graduation. Rather, students will be required to submit their theses electronically to the Digital Commons Web site via Butler Library. This process has been vetted through students and chairs of graduate programs and was discussed at the Graduate School meeting in September 2011. It should be an excellent benefit to graduate students as it is free, is less cumbersome for students, and allows our students' work to be widely available through the web.

Though this change applies to Graduate School requirements, departments can implement policies that apply to their students.

INITIAL STAGES OF THESIS REVIEW:
The initial stages of the thesis approval process will remain relatively the same. Students will work with their adviser and readers in whatever process has been outlined in the department. Students will continue to work with their adviser regarding issues of content, style requirements, and all relevant deadlines. (Please be advised that the Graduate School deadline for submission of the thesis through Digital Commons is three weeks before the end of the semester in which the student wishes to graduate.) The adviser and any additional readers may choose to read the thesis in print or electronically. This process, as always, is developed in the department, and students need to follow the process as outlined by their department.

AFTER INITIAL APPROVAL:
When all readers and adviser have approved the thesis, the advisor needs to notify the department chair and give the student the Digital Commons submission guidelines. The chair of the department needs to know that the entire committee has approved the thesis, and this communication is best managed by the thesis adviser. Since students cannot upload their thesis until it has been approved by all involved, the thesis adviser is also responsible for giving the student the step-by-step instructions on how to upload the thesis to the Digital Commons portal. **Theses cannot be uploaded until they have been approved by readers and the adviser.**

The Graduate School will supply departments with step-by-step guidelines for submission to the Digital Commons site – for both students and chairs.

DEPARTMENT CHAIR AND GRADUATE DEAN APPROVAL:
When the thesis is uploaded to the Digital Commons Web site, the academic chair will receive an e-mail confirmation that the thesis is ready for review. S/he will read the thesis and either approve it or notify the student and adviser that it needs revision.

After department chair approval, the thesis will be electronically forwarded to the graduate dean for review. The dean will review the thesis and will either approve and publish the thesis or contact the chair regarding issues and the need for revisions.

If revisions are necessary at this point, the chair is responsible for ensuring revisions are made and a new thesis is uploaded and approved correctly.

PUBLICATION OF THESIS AND GRADUATION:
Only after all these approvals are in place will the thesis be officially published and the student be cleared for graduation (pending review of other degree requirements). The graduate dean has the responsibility of publishing the thesis and clearing the student for final graduation review.

COPYRIGHT ISSUES: Students and faculty should carefully read the copyright information posted on the Digital Commons site. Publishing theses in this way places student work in the public sphere in a more direct way than it has been in the past. All copyright issues should be discussed within departments and students should know both their rights, for their own work, and their responsibilities, in terms of using other's people work.

HIGHLIGHTS OF NEW POLICY:

- Students do not need to get their thesis bound for Graduate School.
- Students save money and no longer need to send thesis all across campus for signatures; off campus students do not need to come to campus.
- Thesis is widely available to public through web.
- Process does not really change for most faculty.
- Departments still have flexibility to determine details of process and to maintain department specific policies and requirements.
- Student work is readily available to future students to review and learn from.