

DMS Dissertation Guidelines

The dissertation must show original treatment of a fitting subject, contain a scholarly review of the pertinent literature, give evidence of independent research, and be clearly, logically, and carefully written. Students are expected to give a public seminar on their dissertation research.

Attributions to the Dissertation

The Ph.D. dissertation is expected to contain a substantial amount of independent research work of publishable quality. In addition to chapters of research, each dissertation must contain Introduction and Conclusion chapters that present the themes of the dissertation and summarize the accomplishments. In some cases, the student has done all of the work in the dissertation; more often portions of the dissertation result from collaborative research. In all dissertations containing collaborative results, the dissertation should indicate concisely who contributed the work.

For example, a chapter containing multi-authored, published work must include a complete reference and a brief description of the candidate's and the colleagues' contributions. For work that is not published but which resulted from multiple researchers, the contributors must be named and respective attributions made clearly. This policy allows stylistic flexibility; depending on the amount of collaborative work in the dissertation and the status of publication(s), the attributions can be together at the end of either the Acknowledgments or Introduction sections of the dissertation or before each relevant chapter.

It is permissible for more than one student to include work from the same collaboration or publication as long as the required attributions are clear, justified, and complete.

Individual chapters can be that of published articles as long as there are comprehensive Introduction and Conclusion chapters written by the student. Use of actual reprints as a chapter is not permissible. A word document of the published article must be used in place of a reprint as pages in the dissertation must be consecutively numbered. It is recommended that authors consult their publishing agreements directly to determine whether and to what extent they may have transferred exclusive rights under copyright. The [Office for Scholarly Communication \(OSC\)](#) is available to help the author determine whether they has retained the necessary rights or requires permission. Please note, however, OSC and the Copyright First Responders are not able to assist with the permissions process itself.

Any dissertation that varies significantly from the Graduate School guidelines or is not neat and readable is subject to required stylistic revision before acceptance by the University. See the GSAS page Formatting Your Dissertation: <https://gsas.harvard.edu/degree-requirements/dissertations/formatting-your-dissertation>