

Geography 4900/01E Thesis Guide for Students

(Revised February 2012)

1.0 Introduction

The undergraduate thesis (Geography 4900/01E) is an opportunity for students to develop and complete an independent research project in an area of their own interest and background. Completing a thesis provides valuable experience and development of skills in all aspects of research and report writing. Students who complete the thesis find that the experience is valued by employers and is excellent preparation for graduate studies. This guide for students in 4900/01E provides information on the course regulations and procedures (section 2.0); advice on timelines for thesis completion (section 3.0), formatting instructions for the written thesis (section 4.0 and Appendix); and some references on research, writing and graphics for Geography students (section 5.0).

2.0 General Regulations

2.1 Course Credit and Registration

To obtain credit (1.5 course equivalent) for Geography 4900/01E, students must submit a thesis, based on their own research, for evaluation by the faculty of the Department of Geography. This thesis must be acceptable in both substance and in format, including graphics, and must be written in English. Students are required to make whatever changes in content and language that the evaluators suggest or require before the thesis will be accepted by the Department.

Any student in the fourth year of an Honors program in Geography (this includes students in a 'double Major' Geography program leading to an Honors degree) may register for 4900/01E. Registration for Geography 4900/01E follows the normal course registration procedure and deadlines. Registration and add/drop deadlines are those set by the Registrar for full-year courses.

The grade in the course is based 100% on the marking of the submitted thesis.

2.2 Expectations of Faculty and Students in GEO 4900/01E

Students must have an approved supervisor and topic in order to proceed with the course. No faculty member is obliged to supervise a particular topic or student so you may have to compromise on your choice of supervisor and/or topic. It is wise to have a preliminary topic and supervisor decided before the end of the winter term so that you can do some work on the thesis over the summer. All students should confirm their topic, supervisor and registration with the Geography 4900/01E Thesis Coordinator at the beginning of the Fall Term.

You, the student, are responsible for designing and conducting the research, organizing your time effectively, and preparing all text and graphics in the thesis. Supervisors assist you in learning how to conduct, complete and present independent research and to set timelines for completing the process. This may include commenting on thesis drafts. It is your responsibility to meet with your thesis supervisor to discuss the progress of the thesis. Supervisors are not responsible for funding student research or providing data, but may do so at their discretion. In some cases, there may be opportunities for developing a thesis project as part of summer research assistant employment with your supervisor.

The Thesis Coordinator manages course meetings and the marking process. The Coordinator is responsible for advising students about the course and the thesis, but not about the research itself; that is the responsibility of the supervisor. The Coordinator is eligible to be a supervisor and a marker.

2.3 Submission and Marking

The thesis must be submitted by 4 p.m. on the due date (the exact date varies each year but is usually a Tuesday in mid March). Submit the thesis electronically as a single PDF file attached to an email sent to the 4900/01 thesis coordinator and the undergraduate assistant.

On the title page put your student number, not your name. Name the PDF file using the following convention: 'student number'_4900/01 thesis 2012_ grading

This version of the thesis should not include:

- certificate of examination
- acknowledgements
- dedication (if you have one)
- CV.

The penalty for submitting the thesis after the deadline is the deduction of marks from the final grade of the thesis. 2% is deducted for the first late day and 1% for each subsequent day. Weekends are included in the calculation. Students will be provided extensions only in exceptional circumstances that are out of their control. In this event, you should write to the Thesis Coordinator outlining the reason(s) for the request.

Your thesis will be graded by your supervisor and one other Geography Department faculty member. The second grade is “double blind” - you don't know who marked it, and the faculty member doesn't know who wrote it. The Coordinator compares the two grades. If the grades are within 10%, the final grade is the average of the two. If the grades are more than 10% apart, a third faculty reader will assess the thesis and the final grade will be the average of the three marks. Appeals of grades are made to the Coordinator in consultation with your supervisor. Marking of the theses typically takes 2-3 weeks.

2.4 Corrections, Final Submission and Copies

The graded thesis is returned to you with written comments and corrections indicated by the markers. These may be directly on the PDF file or as a separate set of comments. You will also receive a copy of the thesis evaluation form from both examiners and a ‘preliminary’ grade. In some cases examiners may print the thesis and write comments on the paper copy, in which case that copy will be returned to you.

When the thesis is returned, you must make the corrections, show them to your supervisor and obtain your supervisor’s signature on the Certificate of Examination.

The thesis will not be accepted at the office without the supervisor's signature.

Make sure that this copy includes the certificate of examination, acknowledgements (and dedication, if you have one) and CV that were not in your evaluation copy.

Change the title page to show your name.

Submit the corrected final copy electronically to the Undergraduate Assistant by the due date. At the time that you hand in this copy you may also bring additional hard copies for your own use for binding at your expense. When you hand in the final copy you will have to submit the Certificate of Examination signed by your supervisor, fill out the thesis submission form, submit a 50-character title for the spine, and pay for any additional binding. Check with the Undergraduate Assistant in the Main Office for the current costs of binding. At the same time, a digital copy must be submitted, by email, to the Thesis Coordinator. The digital should merge all text and illustrations into **a single PDF file**. Please use the following convention for naming your pdf file:

“4900/01E2012 your surname, supervisor surname, first 3-4 words of title”

Submission of electronic copy of the thesis is a course requirement.

A final grade will not be issued until the electronic copy is submitted. The grade for Geography 4900/01E is not official until the corrected and approved copy has been accepted by the Department and the Certificate of Examination has been signed by the Department Chair.

2.5 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a major academic offence. For information on scholastic offences, penalties and other academic rights and responsibilities please see the Academic Rights and Responsibilities section of the academic calendar.

Students must write their thesis in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations.

Theses may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. Those submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of theses subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

2.6 Responsible conduct of research

In addition to the plagiarism regulations, it is important to understand that good research is done according to the norms of “responsible conduct” – including issues such as fabrication, falsification, misappropriation of others’ work, and authorship. The University has an approved policy on these matters that you should be aware of. The

document is available via the University Administration Policies and Procedures website section 7.0.

2.7 Ethics Approval for Research with Human Subjects

If you are planning to do research with human subjects (e.g. using interviews, surveys, focus groups or observation of human activity or behaviour), you need to obtain ethics approval from the University's Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) *before* beginning your data collection. Ethical issues that arise during research include such things as the means of participant recruitment, risks and benefits of the research, compensation to research subjects, protecting participant privacy and confidentiality, and obtaining informed consent. Details are available on the website of the UWO Office of Research Ethics. See especially the Guidelines, Instructions and Forms.

The NMREB requires 11 copies of the Protocol Submission Form (3-F-001; see website above and appendix to this document). These must be signed by your 490 advisor, who will take on the role of principal investigator for purposes of the ethics application and will ensure that you conduct the research according to NMREB guidelines. Your advisor will assist you in completing the ethics application form. There is also a Geography Department committee, the Geography Ethics Application Screening Committee (GEASC), to which you can submit a draft of your form before final submission to the Ethics Board for approval. Information on GEASC is on the Department website. Note that the whole process takes a few weeks, so you should aim to obtain ethics approval as early as possible in order not to delay your data collection.

3.0. Suggested approximate timetable for 4900/01E completion

Your schedule for thesis completion is a personal matter, determined in consultation with your supervisor and depends, in part, on the nature of your research project and style of thesis. Successful completion, on schedule, requires long-term planning. Consult on a frequent and regular basis with your supervisor at all stages. Leave lots of time for editing, revision, preparation of graphics, and also for ‘slippage’. Table 1 shows a sample generic schedule for the major thesis tasks. Following these stages will help you to meet the submission date with some time to spare. Develop and modify your own detailed timeline, in close consultation with your supervisor.

Date	Task
February-March	Conduct a literature search on possible topic(s) and discuss them with potential supervisor(s)
March-April	Finalize a topic with a supervisor Discuss the research problem, develop an initial outline and your plans to collect and analyze data
Summer	Register for GEO 4900/01E Read relevant literature Ideally use the summer to do at least some of your data gathering and background reading
September	Continue or complete all data gathering Continue background literature searching and reading
October-November	Complete data analysis Develop final thesis writing outline
December	Begin drafting major thesis chapters
January-February	Focus on supplementary analysis, writing and revising the body of the thesis and getting feedback from your Supervisor Good first draft ready by mid-February Preparation of graphics and references
March	Final revisions, editing, proofreading, formatting Refine graphics Submission of thesis
April	Corrections and electronic submission of final copy

Table 1: Generic approximate schedule for major thesis tasks

4.0 Format Specifications for the Thesis

4.1 Formatting guidelines for the body of the thesis

4.1.2 Printing

Printing of the thesis is no longer a course requirement.

Do not use headers or footers.

4.1.2 Typescript (font) and point size

You may use any typescript you wish, but you must use the same font consistently throughout the thesis (except figures). A serif font (type with small tails on the letters) is preferable because it is easier to read, especially in long sections of text. For the text, the print size must be no smaller than 12 point, although a smaller point size may be used for footnotes, graphs, formulas and appendices (but avoid using font sizes smaller than 9 point).

4.1.3 Margins, line spacing and justification

All text, figures and tables must fit within the margin specifications given in Table 2 :

Left:	(38 mm) 1.5 inches
Right:	(25 mm) 1 inch
Top:	(25 mm) 1 inch
Bottom:	(25 mm) 1 inch

Table 2. Margins for the Geography 4900/01E Thesis.

All textual material should have spacing of 1.5 – 2 lines. The only exceptions to this requirement are the list of references cited, footnotes, tables and indented long quotations, which may be single-spaced.

The first line of all paragraphs should be indented 12.5 mm (0.5 inch) from the left margin.

4.1.4 Page numbering

All pages in the thesis, with the exception of the title page, must be numbered. Small Roman numerals, placed at the bottom center of the page, are used for the preliminary pages of the thesis. The remainder of the thesis, starting with the first page of Chapter One, is numbered with Arabic numerals placed in the upper right-hand corner not less than 12.5 mm (0.5 inch) from each edge. See Table 2.

Note that in MS-Word the page numbering can be very tricky. The Insert→Page Numbers menu is not recommended, especially if you are required to do something clever like use Roman numerals in one section and Arabic numerals in another, or not show the number on the first page. There are lots of places to learn how to do this, especially on the web and especially on MS-Office help pages e.g.

<http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;en-us;326536> (last accessed February 22, 2012). Figure this out ahead of time not at the last minute.

4.1.5 Headings and sub-headings

All Chapters, sections and sub-sections should be numbered, using Arabic numerals. Do not use block capitals. Chapter headings may be centred. All sections and sub-section headings should be left justified. Indenting may be used to help readability. Choose a consistent set of fonts to convey the heading hierarchy.

4.1.6 Figures and Tables

“Figures” are any mainly-graphical illustration such a diagram, map, photograph or sketch. Refer to all of these as “figures”. Anything that is mainly text (summary data, summary statistical results etc.) is a Table, not a Figure.

4.1.7 Placing and Numbering of Figures and Tables

Use a separate numbering sequence for figures (maps, diagrams, photographs) and Tables. Figures and Tables should be incorporated into the text, not collected at the end of chapters or the thesis. Small figures and tables can be placed within the text. Larger ones can appear on a separate page. Do not devote a full page to a figure unless its legibility or complexity demands it. In all cases, figures and tables should appear either at the point in the text where they are first referred to, or on the following page. Figures and Tables may be numbered continuously through all chapters in the thesis (e.g. Fig. 1, 2, 3 etc. to the end of the thesis) or within each chapter (e.g. within Chapter 2 you would use numbers 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 etc., which reduces the amount of renumbering needed during revision).

All figures and tables must fit within the margin specifications listed above (Table 2). To fit within the margins, the maximum image area within which the illustration must appear on a standard size page (8.5” x 11”) is 6” x 9”.. If the figure contains limited information and can fit into a smaller area, make it smaller, and embed the figure into the text. If the figure contains detailed information that may be lost when you reduce the image to fit onto the standard size page, or if its shape is particularly long in one dimension relative to the other, consider using oversize paper (11” x 17”), which has an image area of 9” x 14.5”.

4.1.8 Title and captions for figures and tables

All figures and tables should have a title and (if necessary) an explanatory caption, placed immediately underneath the table or figure.

4.1.9 Graphics advice

The staff in the Cartographic Section (Room 1302) offers a seminar each winter (usually early February) for thesis students to provide guidance on design of maps and graphics. ; They are also available for consultations with students who attend the seminar. Section 5.0 of this guide has several references on graphic and cartographic design.

4.1.10 Citation style

Citations in the body of the text must follow a standard ‘author-date’ style. APA is recommended. Details of APA referencing style are widely available in books, on the internet, through the University Library (e.g. the “cite references” link on the library home page), at the Effective Writing Centre website and some of the books in section 5.0 of this manual.

4.2 Format and content of other Thesis elements

The thesis must include (with the exception of Appendices) all the elements listed in **Table 3** (below). Note the pagination requirements for each.

Thesis Element	Pagination Type
Title Page	None
Certificate of Examination	Roman, bottom centered
Foreword	Roman, bottom centered
Abstract	Roman, bottom centered
Acknowledgements	Roman, bottom centered
Table of Contents	Roman, bottom centered
List of Tables (if any)	Roman, bottom centered
List of Figures (if any)	Roman, bottom centered
List of Appendices (if any)	Roman, bottom centered
Body of thesis, in chapters	Arabic, upper right
References Cited	Arabic, upper right
Appendices	Arabic, upper right
Curriculum Vitae	Arabic, upper right

Table 3: Page numbering format for introductory pages

Examples of the formatting style for some of these elements are in the Appendix at the end of this guide. Please format your thesis to conform to these examples.

4.2.1 Title page

The title should be a meaningful and concise description of the content of the thesis. Note that the print type and font size used on the title page are the same as those used throughout the thesis. ***Do not use any block capitals or underlining on the title page.***

You must provide a title of no more than 50 characters (including spaces). This spine title should follow the wording of the original title as closely as possible. Your last name and the year of publication are also included on the spine of the thesis. The spine title is only needed when you hand in the final copy.

A copyright symbol (©) is included on the title page to indicate that permission to copy lengthy sections of the thesis must be obtained from the author or the Department of Geography. The academic copyright is shared because (a) the thesis is the personal property of the author, and (b) the thesis itself is the property of the Department. Note that the Department will not grant permission for extensive copying of the thesis without the consent of the author. Because the thesis is academic rather than commercial, students may not prohibit the Department's use of the thesis or its loan to other individuals for academic purposes.

4.2.2 Certificate of Examination

The Certificate of Examination records the acceptance of the thesis by the Department of Geography. The Certificate of Examination page is placed immediately after the title page. You must submit the official copy of the Certificate of Examination to the Undergraduate Assistant in the Geography Main Office. **Original signatures (not photocopies) are required on this official page.** You do not need original signatures on your personal copies.

4.2.3 Abstract and Keywords

The purpose of an abstract is to provide the reader with an overview of the thesis. It is a summary of the entire thesis including the major conclusions. The keywords (no more than four) should identify major subject topics of the thesis that can be used as search terms in a data base. Consult with your supervisor about the proper form and content of the abstract and choice of keywords.

4.2.4 Acknowledgments

This section is optional. Use it to thank those individuals and organizations that aided in the research and completion of the thesis in any way. For example, by providing data, financial support, technical assistance, access to field sites, or editing.

4.2.5 Dedication.

This is optional but, if you have one, it should be on a separate page.

4.2.6 Table of Contents

The table of contents provides a listing of the main elements in the thesis. The headings listed in the table of contents must be identical to those provided in the thesis. If the list of subheadings within a chapter is continued on the following page, the appropriate chapter number must be repeated as well.

4.2.7 List of Tables

The titles in the list must be identical to those provided in the body of the thesis. Do not include tables that appear in appendices. If more than one table appears on a single page, each table must be listed separately in the list of tables.

4.2.8 List of Figures

The titles in this list must be identical to those provided in the thesis. Do not list figures that appear in appendices.

4.2.9 References Cited

All references cited (including electronic sources) in the text of your thesis must be fully documented in this section. The format of the list of references must conform to a standard referencing format that you used in the body of the thesis. See section 4.1.10.

4.2.10 Appendixes

The purpose of an appendix is to allow you to include in your thesis materials that are not an essential part of the text. For example, if you provided questionnaires or letters of information to subjects, obtained ethics approval letters, designed an instrument to collect data, or wrote a program to analyze or model the data, then you should include these in an appendix. The details of methods used to collect data, or tabulated data (but not large quantities of raw data) can also be included in an appendix. Copyright releases from publications are included in an appendix. Materials included in an appendix must conform to the format and standards required for thesis text and figures.

4.2.11 *Curriculum Vitae* The vita is not intended to be a job resume; keep it brief and academic in content. See the example in the Appendix of this Guide.

4.3 Equations

Equations are numbered sequentially according to the format used for tables and figures (chapter, equation number). The equation label is right-justified and in brackets, and the equation itself is indented or centered on the page. The equation is part of the sentence and includes punctuation. Descriptions of the variables follow the equation

For example: The psychometric equation is given by

$$e = e_s(T_w) - \gamma (T - T_w), \quad (4.1)$$

where $e_s(T_w)$ is the saturation vapour pressure determined at the wet-bulb temperature (T_w), γ is the psychrometric “constant” $\approx 0.66 \text{ mb } ^\circ\text{C}^{-1}$, and T is the air temperature.

5.0 Books and guides about thesis research, writing and graphic design.

There are many books on academic research, research methods, writing, style and graphical presentation. Your supervisor should be able to recommend some, especially books specific to your research field, topic and methods. Here are a few suggestions. There are now also numerous websites providing guidance on thesis research, research methods and writing.

5.1 Research and Writing

Aaron, J.E. & McArthur, M. (2006). *The Little Brown Compact Handbook* (3rd Canadian Edition). Toronto: Pearson Education Canada.

Flowerdew, R. & Martin, D. (Eds.) (2005). *Methods in human geography: a guide for students doing a research project*. Harlow, England; New York: Prentice Hall.

Kneale, P.E. (2003). *Study Skills for Geography Students: A Practical Guide. Second Edition*. London: Hobart Press.

Lipson, C. (2005). *How to Write a BA Thesis: A Practical Guide from Your First Ideas to Your Finished Paper*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Miller, J. E. (2004). *The Chicago Guide to Writing about Numbers*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Montgomery, S.L., (2003). *The Chicago Guide to Communicating Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Northey, M. and Knight, D.B. (2005). *Making Sense in Geography and Environmental Studies: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing*. (Updated 2nd Ed.). Don Mills: Oxford University Press Canada.

5.2 Maps and Graphics

Cleveland, William S. (1994). *The Elements of Graphing Data*. Murray Hill (NJ). : AT&T Bell Laboratories ; Summit, (NJ) : Hobart Press.

Flowerdew, R. & Martin, D. (Eds.) (2005). *Methods in Human Geography: a guide for students doing a research project*. Harlow, England; New York: Prentice Hall.

Kosslyn, S.M. (1994). *Elements of Graph Design*. New York: W.H. Freeman.

Robinson, A. H., Morrison, J.L., Muehrcke, P.C., Kimerling, A.J. & Guptill, S.C.(1995). *Elements of Cartography* (6th ed.). Toronto, Ontario: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Slocum, T.A., McMaster, R.B., Kessler, F.C. & Howard, H. (2005). *Thematic Cartography and Geographic Visualization* (2nd ed). Upper Saddle River (NJ): Prentice Hall.

Appendices

The following pages show examples of the content and format of the CV and of the supplementary pages at the beginning of the thesis

Title of thesis

By

Student's name

Submitted in Fulfillment of the
Requirements of Geography 4900 or 4901E

Department of Geography
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario

Year

©

 Student's name

CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION

This report by

Student's name

is accepted in fulfillment of the
Requirements of Geography 4900E or 4901E

Date _____

Advisor

Chair
Department of Geography

ABSTRACT

The thesis must include an abstract of no more than 200 words. An abstract is neither an introduction nor a conclusion; it is a summary of the essential information in your thesis. It should provide the context of your study, state the research question or objectives, briefly describe the methods used to obtain the data, describe the important results, and discuss the implications of those results. Avoid statements such as: “the methods are described”, or “the implications of the results are discussed”; instead, briefly describe the methods used, and state the implications of the results. Do not use references and symbols. The abstract should have the same line spacing as the text in the body of the thesis (1.5-spaced). It should provide an alphabetized list of no more than ten keywords (or terms) at the end of the abstract. Abstract and keywords must fit on one page (the next paragraph provides an example).

This manual supersedes the *B.A. Senior Report Manual*, published by the Department of Geography in 1989. It is intended to remove inconsistency about requirements for physical layout and format of the thesis. The manual provides recommendations for the physical layout, format, structure and organization of the GEO 4900/01E thesis. While much of this manual deals with physical preparation of the thesis, Chapters Two and Three cover items such as general regulations, and suggested structure and organization of a thesis. This manual is formatted and organized like a thesis. It provides examples of all the pages required for the undergraduate GEO4900/01 report (e.g. the title page, certification of examination, table of contents, etc). However, the individual chapters should not be seen as guides for corresponding chapters of an actual thesis.

Keywords: Department of Geography, GEO 4900/01E, thesis, thesis structure and organization, thesis format, thesis regulations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The acknowledgments should list the people you wish to thank. It is appropriate to acknowledge the support and advice provided by your supervisor and other faculty who aided your study. You may also wish to thank the second marker (you can refer to them as “an anonymous reader”), especially if that person provided you with substantial feedback that improved your thesis.

You should acknowledge, where applicable, the assistance provided by staff, fellow students, technicians and others who helped you in data collection, data analysis and the writing of the thesis. You should also acknowledge any organizations that provided you with data or other assistance.

Many students also choose to thank their friends and family.

Finally, you should acknowledge financial support, if any. For example, if you were hired under an NSERC research grant to your supervisor, or were paid by a SEED or an Environmental Youth Corps (EYC) grant, or if you had a university scholarship, you should acknowledge that assistance and include the name and holder of the award.

Note that the text of the acknowledgments follows the same format as the rest of the thesis.

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Example C.V. page

CURRICULUM VITAE	
Name:	Your full name, including middle initial (e.g. Joan A. Smith)
Place of Birth	City, Province (or country if outside Canada) (e.g. Toronto, Ontario)(Paris, France)
Year of Birth	Year only (e.g. 1992)
Post-secondary Education and Degrees	Year you started to year you completed (e.g. 2008-2012) Degree Type (e.g. Honours Bachelor of Arts in Geography) and Program (e.g. Urban Development)
Honours and Awards:	If you received any scholarships or awards while at The University of Western Ontario, include the name of the award, and the year(s) was awarded or held. (e.g. NSERC Undergraduate Summer Research Award).
Related Work Experience	If you worked as a research or field assistant for a professor or graduate student, include the relevant information here e.g. Research Assistant to Dr. J. Voogt, Department of Geography The University of Western Ontario, May to August 2011.
Publications	If you have written and published a paper or article relate to your academic work, including your thesis, or presented a paper at an academic conference you can reference these using the format used in the References Cited section of the thesis.