

Important Tips from the A&S Graduate Studies Office with regard to your dissertation and paperwork.

There have been a number of issues concerning the submission of electronic thesis and dissertations (etds) and I want to bring some things to your attention as we move forward with subsequent graduations.

1. Our office handles a large volume of applicants for graduation and also I am the only one who reviews the etds and that will not be changing. Students and departments should not expect an immediate turn around or response the closer it gets to the submission deadline date. I review more etds than anyone on campus and I process them quickly.
2. All etd paperwork and submission of the etd to the d-scholarship website is the responsibility of the graduating student. I know that departments try to be helpful but only students receive the complete graduation packets with the forms and if Graduate Administrators or friends of the students are submitting the paperwork and things are incorrect – they are not going to be able to fix the paperwork. The student must do it.
3. Students are not reviewing or reading the graduation packet and do not have the appropriate ETD approval form required by the university at their defense to get signatures – students who do not have all of the paperwork required for their etd submission submitted by the etd deadline will not be certified for graduation.
4. I know that some departments have committee chairs and thesis advisors as far as the etd paperwork is concerned we only use committee chair, committee co-chair or committee member as approved by our office for admission to candidacy. This must be made clear to your students. There is a lot of back and forth correcting paperwork because students are confused about who must sign what document.
5. Departments and students should not request an extension of the etd deadline date for any reason. I work very closely with Becky to ensure that we give the maximum time we can to departments and students to get everything submitted and to still leave time for us to check everything to get students certified for graduation. That window is very tight – there is no wiggle room. If your students have been granted statute extensions by our office where it stipulates that they must complete everything and graduate in a particular term or they will be terminated from the program and they do not do so by the etd deadline date they will be terminated. It is not about my office not being flexible it is that there is no extra time built into our deadline and it is also the student and department's responsibility to make sure students meet all deadlines especially if they have been given an extension.
6. Students who require certification letters from Becky for potential employers must request them at least a month in advance of them being due and must submit their paperwork and etd for review as early as possible. With the high volume of graduation work Becky and I cannot always accommodate a student who submits their graduation paperwork and has a deadline of 1-2 weeks for the letter to be submitted to a potential employer.
7. Students must not look to old etds for formatting we have all manners of resources available to them and are constantly refining the information. By looking at old etds students run into formatting issues. One major issue is the submission of etds with individual chapter abstracts. The etd is one cohesive document and there is only one abstract at the beginning of the document that gets submitted with the student's paperwork. If there are multiple abstracts they must be reworked into chapter introductions or removed.
8. Our school name as changed we are no longer the Faculty of Arts and Sciences or the School of Arts and Sciences we are now the Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences. Students should be aware of our current name for their etd paperwork.
9. I have worked very closely over the years on every aspect of the etd process with the etd steering committee and we have put multiple resources in place to assist students. Some students take advantage of the resources but not all. Here is what is available: the etd website: <http://www.pitt.edu/~graduate/etd/instructions.html>, etd

video tutorials: http://www.library.pitt.edu/other/files//etd_tutorials/etdtutorial.html, etd workshops conducted by the library system: <http://www.library.pitt.edu/etd-workshop>, etd walk-in and email support by staff in the library: <http://www.library.pitt.edu/etd-support>, both word and LaTeX templates that students can use to write their documents: <http://www.pitt.edu/~graduate/etd/training.html>, etd workshops conducted by me each semester and hosted by the GSO, an etd workshop as part of the Dissertation Writing Boot Camps: <http://www.writingcenter.pitt.edu/graduate-services/dissertation-boot-camp> and finally we added an etd workshop this year to the professionalization workshops conducted by our office for students.

Finally, as I have stated in the past – I will gladly review etd documents at any time. While I have been working on April graduation I have already had about ½ dozen students submit etds for review for August graduation. There is no reason for students to wait to upload drafts of their etds to the d-scholarship site for review. They do not have to be in their final form, the students are not required to have defended their dissertation or thesis for me to review the document for formatting. Please share this information with your students. Let me know if you have any questions.

All the best,

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