

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

Guidelines for the Preparation of Projects used as Culminating Experiences

2024-25



**GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY**
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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Introduction

The purpose of a project used as a culminating experience is for a student to demonstrate competence in their discipline while producing original research, investigating a scholarly topic, or producing a creative work. The completed project should include full documentation, development, and execution of an approved topic. The final document should be completed in a manner that can be understood by both an individual knowledgeable in the topic and an individual whose advanced training is in another discipline.

Selecting a topic or question worthy of a project is a significant aspect of graduate education. Students should choose a topic with thoughtful consideration and in consultation with a graduate advisor. Even though the research, scholarly, or creative development itself may be the most important aspect of the work, the clear and effective communication of the research, scholarship, or creative work is also of prime importance.

This manual defines the procedures for creating and submitting a project at Grand Valley State University. **Adhering to the guidelines for projects will help students avoid delays in the completion and the acceptance of their final document.** The final written document submitted to Grand Valley State University becomes a part of the university's permanent collection and contributes to scholarship in a given field. Consequently, it should be of professional quality and be free of spelling, grammatical, and formatting errors. Additionally, it must contain the requisite signatures and then be submitted to ScholarWorks by the deadlines detailed on the website (<https://www.gvsu.edu/gs/project-guidelines-104.htm>) in order to have the student's degree conferred. Students are responsible for knowing their program or department's specific requirements regarding the project. The scholarly content of the completed document is outside the province of this manual. When Grand Valley State University receives a project, it assumes that the research, scholarship, or creative activity is completed, that all required approvals and/or permissions have been acquired, and that the final draft has been examined and approved by the supervising graduate faculty member.

Section I: Process Overview for Final Projects

A project represents the culminating experience within an academic field or discipline. The completed project is considered a scholarly contribution to the student's professional field or discipline; therefore, it should be performed to present meaningful and credible conclusions. The process for completing a project is detailed throughout this manual, but a general overview is included in the steps shown in the Project Process flow chart on the next page. It is important for students to maintain open communication with their faculty advisor for the project. This will facilitate an efficient progression through the process.

Prior to beginning the process outlined in these guidelines, students must meet with an advisor or Graduate Program Director to review any program or department-specific guidelines and information.

Responsible Conduct of Research

All graduate students are required to complete the Responsible Conduct of Research training prior to initiating any research or scholarly activities. Students should contact their Graduate Program Director to determine which activities satisfy program-specific requirements or visit the following website: gvsu.edu/gs/responsible-conduct-of-research-requirements.

Project Workshop

All students completing a research project are eligible to attend a project, thesis, or dissertation workshop. Students enrolled in 693 or 793 credits are invited to attend a workshop sponsored by The Graduate School during the concurrent semester. Attendance is not mandatory but highly recommended. The current schedule of workshops is available on The Graduate School's website (gvsu.edu/gs/thesis-and-dissertation-information).

Project Credits and Workload

Students should enroll in the number of project credit hours per semester that is consistent with the following workload guideline: 1 credit hour is expected to average between 3-6 clock hours of work per week, or 45 - 90 clock hours of work per semester.

Continuous Enrollment

Students begin the **master's** project phase of their program when they first enroll in the course xxx¹-693 (Project). Thereafter, they must continue to enroll in either xxx-693 or xxx-696 (Continuous Enrollment) for at least one credit hour every semester until they have completed all requirements for the project. Students begin the **doctoral** project phase of their program when they first enroll in xxx-793 (Project). Thereafter, they must continue to enroll in either xxx-793 or xxx-796 (Continuous Enrollment) for at least one credit hour every semester until they have completed all requirements for the doctoral project.

¹xxx refers to the standard discipline-based course prefix (e.g., CMB for Cell and Molecular Biology)

The continuous enrollment requirement also applies to Spring/Summer semesters.

For all policies related to Project completion, please see the Graduate Education Policies and Procedures Manual at gvsu.edu/gs/manual.

Project Flow Chart

Before beginning the process below, students must meet with their faculty advisor or Graduate Program Director to review any program or department-specific guidelines and information. **Students are required to remain continuously enrolled** in either 693/696 or 793/796 once a project is started until the end of the semester of graduation.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

1) **SELECT** Project Advisor AND/OR Project Committee (not required). Must be approved by GPD and Unit Head of the Department.

2) **SELECT** a Subject Area or Topic. Collaborate with Project Advisor OR Committee to choose a topic of interest.

3) **DEVELOP** a Project Proposal and submit it for approval from your advisor. Conduct research/scholarship.

4) **CREATE** a culminating experience project for public presentation.

5) **PRESENT** the culminating experience project and receive approval on the presentation and paper from the project advisor.

6) **FOLLOW UP** on approval from the project advisor, GPD, and Unit Head.

7) **SUBMIT** required final .pdf to ScholarWorks at ScholarWorks@gvsu.edu

PROJECT ADVISOR

1) **GUIDE** student with form submissions, course registration, scheduling, and resources.

2) **VERIFY** that committee members (if chosen) are approved for Grad Faculty Status; submit applications for those without Graduate Faculty Status.

3) **ASSIST** student with Project Presentation scheduling, such as date, time, and room.

4) **CONDUCT** project presentation and confirm any necessary changes for a final grade.

5) **ASSIST** student in collecting signatures from the GPD and Unit Head on their Final Approval Form.

6) **RECEIVE** copy of final .pdf with all appropriate signatures.

7) **RESOLVE** student grade in Banner for diploma release.



Section II: Roles and Responsibilities

Students

It is the student's responsibility to know the program requirements pertaining to the culminating experience expected for the degree. These requirements are usually detailed in the program materials and contained in the Student Handbook provided by each graduate degree program. **Students who choose a project as the culminating experience will need to identify a graduate faculty member to serve as the project advisor.** The student should work with the project advisor to identify additional graduate faculty who would make meaningful contributions to the development and completion of the project. Throughout work on the project, it is the student's responsibility to fulfill the expectations of the project advisor in regards to deadlines, completion of all necessary forms and approvals, and the responsible conduct of research, scholarly, or creative work with academic integrity. Regardless of the form of research, scholarly, or creative activity required for the degree, the student is expected to defend with credibility all decisions regarding the purpose of the study, methodology, interpretation of results, and conclusions in an oral presentation.

Project Advisor

The primary responsibility of the Project Advisor is to mentor the student with the goal of having the student complete a worthwhile project that has rigor and is appropriate for the student to complete within a reasonable amount of time during the academic program. The project should challenge the student to develop and use the skills of critical inquiry, evidence-based decision-making, reflection, presentation, and scholarly writing. **The Project Advisor is required to hold graduate faculty status and be capable of and experienced in, mentoring graduate students in scholarly activities.** The Project Advisor is responsible for calling meetings, coordinating the activities of the project, and setting the tone for fair, honest, and equitable assessment of the student's academic work. Finally, the Project Advisor has the key responsibility of working to ensure a successful, satisfactory outcome for the student.

Project Committee Members

If the student elects (not required) to have a project committee, the responsibilities of the Project Committee members are to work with the student and the Project Advisor to ensure a successful, satisfactory outcome that is assessed in a fair, honest, and equitable manner. Committee members must hold graduate faculty status and make active contributions to improve the project given their expertise and knowledge. Members are expected to critically read and evaluate the final written document, providing constructive feedback, editorial comment, and suggestions for improvement to the student and the Project Advisor in a collegial and timely manner. These responsibilities are completed when they sign the final approval form.

Section III: Preparing the Project

Committee

If the student elects (not required) to have a project committee, the student and the Project Advisor need to identify appropriate graduate faculty willing to serve on the committee, if needed. The following govern the selection of committee members:

- The project advisor (or committee) must be reviewed and approved by the GPD and unit head of the academic department of the graduate program.
- All committee members must hold graduate faculty status at GVSU.
- The Vice Provost for The Graduate School must approve non-graduate faculty as committee members.
- Non-graduate faculty members may include persons external to the university that are approved for non-tenure track graduate faculty status.

Selecting a Subject Area or Topic

The student will collaborate with their project advisor and/or committee when selecting a subject area or topic. The topic selected should be of interest to the student and one that can be completed with academic rigor within a reasonable period of time of the student's graduate studies.

After choosing a subject area or topic, the student will proceed with the development of a proposal that details the research, scholarly, or creative work.

Approval of the project proposal is an important step in the degree program and should be completed as early as possible in the research process. This will allow time to obtain approval from the Human Research Institutional Review Board (IRB) ([gvsu.edu/irb/](https://www.gvsu.edu/irb/)) if the research involves the use of human subjects or approval from the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) ([gvsu.edu/iacuc](https://www.gvsu.edu/iacuc/)) if the research involves the use of animals. If the research project does use human or animal subjects, the student and project advisor must submit an electronic application to these committees at www.gvsu.edu/irb/submission-process-55.htm or <https://www.gvsu.edu/iacuc/protocol-submission-process-9.htm>. No subject recruitment or data collection can begin until written approval is received from the appropriate Institutional Review committee. Depending on the nature of the topic and research, students may need additional approval from any of the following committees: Biological Safety, Laboratory Safety, and Radiation Safety. More information is available on the Research Compliance & Integrity website at <https://www.gvsu.edu/rci/> under the "Research Safety" menu.

Culminating Experience Project Presentation

All culminating experience projects must be publicly presented. If the presentation is open to the public, an announcement may be posted electronically on an academic program or departmental website.

A culminating experience project has been successfully completed when the project advisor approves both the public presentation and the written document. The approval of the culminating experience project is approved when acceptance form is signed by the project advisor, the graduate program director, and the unit.

Fees

Graduate students will be charged the applicable graduate tuition rate for work on their project based on their degree program. Students who do not complete the work after registering for all required project credit hours will be required to maintain continuous enrollment (XXX-696 or XXX-796) during each semester until final approval of the culminating experience project is granted.

Section IV: Preparing the Written Document

Preparation

Students **must use an approved format** for the project written document. Students should consult their project advisor to identify which format and which writing style to use. In fields of study that demand a specific style guide, students should follow it consistently.

In many disciplines, it is common practice to follow a manuscript format for research and scholarly written documents. If that is true for the student's area of study, please contact your project advisor to determine which journal format you will use. Follow the journal's instructions for authors, or the equivalent, as well as current journal practices for all matters not explicitly explained in this manual (including guidelines for textual citations, references, tables, figures, form, hierarchy of headings, treatment of special terms, etc.).

Intellectual Property

Grand Valley State University seeks to promote the public good through excellence in teaching, active scholarship, and service. In the course of these activities, faculty, staff, and students create Intellectual Property that may be eligible for copyright, patent, and other forms of legal protection. In order to reinforce the fairness of mutual commitment and in the spirit of academic freedom, the University recognizes the rich and varied products of individual scholarship, in all its manifestations, are rightly the property of the Creator except as otherwise defined by this policy. The University also recognizes that Intellectual Property should remain available for the benefit of the entire University community and that the Creators shall not use Intellectual Property in conflict or competition with the University. Therefore, the Grand Valley State University community seeks to establish an environment in which the creation of Intellectual Property is suitably recognized as an academic achievement and in which the benefits of intellectual property to the Creators, the university community, and the general public are optimized. For more information, please visit the University Policies webpage gvsu.edu/policies and refer to section 4.1.10.2.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

If you have used AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) in your research, it is pertinent that you include recognition of this use in your document. You will need to describe how you used the tool in your Method section or in a comparable section of your research project (e.g., acknowledgements portion of your document). For literature reviews, you might describe how you used the tool in your introduction. In your text, provide the prompt you used and then any portion of the relevant text that was generated in response.

You may also put the full text of long responses from an AI tool in an appendix of your paper or in online supplemental materials, so readers have access to the exact text that was generated. It is particularly important to document the exact text created because AI will generate a unique response in each chat session, even if given the same prompt. If you create appendices

or supplemental materials, remember that each should be called out at least once in the body of your research project written document.

For further information and citing examples please see the appropriate manual of style for your discipline. For example, please see the APA Style article on “How to cite ChatGPT” if you use APA as your reference style.

Plagiarism and Copyright

Plagiarism

Properly citing sources can help students avoid plagiarism. The style guide used by an academic unit should address plagiarism; for additional information, consult the GVSU Library’s plagiarism guide (<https://help.library.gvsu.edu/knowledgemarket/faq/272017>).

According to the GVSU Student Code (section 4.0), plagiarism is defined as:

Any ideas or material taken from another source for either written or oral presentation must be fully acknowledged. Offering the work of someone else as one's own is plagiarism. The language or ideas taken from another may range from isolated formulas, sentences, or paragraphs to entire articles copied from books, periodicals, speeches, or the writings of another individual. The offering of materials assembled or collected by others in the form of projects or collections without acknowledgment also is considered plagiarism. Any student who fails to give credit in written or oral work for the ideas or materials that have been taken from another is guilty of plagiarism.

Copyright protection

Copyright protection is granted automatically under current U.S. law to “original works of authorship... fixed in any tangible medium of expression.” Copyright notices (e.g., © 2011 John H. Jones) are not required to appear on copies of a work for it to be protected. While copyright does not need to be registered with the U.S. Copyright Office for the work to be protected, there are practical and legal advantages to both notice and registration (for more information, see copyright.gov/help/faq).

Students who incorporate copyrighted works of others into their culminating experience projects are responsible for ensuring that their use of this material is lawful. Whether the material is included under a written grant of permission by the copyright owner or whether the student’s use of the work is covered by one of the statutory limitations on copyright, such as fair use.

The fair use provisions of copyright law provide the opportunity to make limited and reasonable use of copyrighted materials in a culminating experience project. However, being a student does not make one exempt from the limits that fair use places on the use of copyrighted materials. It is also not adequate to simply cite a work when the use of that material exceeds

fair use, and the original author or copyright holder has not granted permission. University Libraries provides a Fair Use Checklist, which is available in Appendix C.

Each instance of incorporating a copyrighted item in a culminating experience project requires a fair use assessment that considers the purpose, nature, amount, and effect of that use. When a use is determined to be outside of fair use, permission from the copyright holder must be obtained to use the material, and evidence of received permission should be included in the appendix of the culminating experience project. A sample of a Copyright Permission Letter can be found in Appendix D.

In addition to applying fair use and requesting permissions, students can also consider including content that has been licensed for reuse under Creative Commons licenses or content that is in the public domain. The University Libraries have developed resources to provide information and to assist authors in the areas of fair use, requesting permissions, and using and identifying content that is licensed for reuse or in the public domain. This and additional information on copyright can be found on the University Libraries website at gvsu.edu/library/copyright.

Research Misconduct

Research misconduct is the fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, reviewing research, in reporting research results, and/or engaging in ordering, advising, or suggesting that subordinates engage in misconduct in research, scholarship, or creative activities. Please see the following link for more information from the Office of Research Compliance and Integrity on research misconduct: gvsu.edu/rcr/research-misconduct-21.htm.

Electronic Filing and Completed Work

All written culminating experience projects must be electronically filed in the GVSU electronic repository (ScholarWorks@GVSU). Students must submit a PDF of the entire document to ScholarWorks after the project has been approved.

Once the culminating experience project is approved the student must submit their work to the University Libraries for inclusion in ScholarWorks@GVSU. This will make the project openly available online to a global audience of researchers, furthering scholarly activity in the student's field of study.

To submit a culminating experience project to ScholarWorks@GVSU, a student will [log in](#) to digitally complete the ScholarWorks@GVSU submission agreement and upload a PDF of the final approved project.

The ScholarWorks@GVSU submission agreement includes an option to embargo a project for a specified period of time after it is submitted. The abstract and title of an embargoed file will be visible online, but the project itself will not be available to read or download until the embargo period ends. Contact the library's ScholarWorks@GVSU administrator for more information

regarding embargoes.

Students are strongly encouraged to work with their advisor if their project could lead to a patent application, includes sensitive or confidential information, or might be submitted for publication in a scholarly journal. Faculty advisors can reach out to The Graduate School to request an exemption from including the student work from ScholarWorks@GVSU by completing a [Petition for Exception](#). All exemptions require the approval of the Vice Provost of the Graduate School.

The current ScholarWorks@GVSU administrator can be reached at scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

Section V: Sample Formatting the Written Document and Orders of Pages

Students should consult with their project advisor or graduate program handbook to identify the format and style of writing to use for their projects. If no format or structure is provided, students should use the following information to format their projects.

General Formatting

Pagination

Arabic numbers are used for written document pagination. Page numbers do not appear on Page 1 (Title Page) and Page 2 (Approval Page). Please see Table 1 for page order and pagination information.

Table 1: Preliminary pages formatting.

Page Name	Required?	Print page number:	Page counts as:
Title page	Yes	No	1
Approval page	Yes	No	2
Abstract (limited to 350 words)	Yes	Yes	(next number in sequence)
Table of contents	Yes	Yes	(next number in sequence)
Lists of tables, figures, key to symbols or abbreviations (each a separate section)	Yes, if applicable	Yes	(next number in sequence)
Text and supplementary pages	Yes	Yes	(next number in sequence)
Appendices	Yes, if applicable	Yes	(next number in sequence)
Bibliography/References	Yes	Yes	(next number in sequence)
Submission agreement for ScholarWorks@GVSU	Yes	No	Not included in page count

Typeface

Acceptable fonts for the culminating experience projects documents are:

- Arial
- Calibri
- Courier
- Garamond
- Times New Roman

Use a single 12-point font consistently for the entire document including the body text, footnotes, and page numbers. A different font for scientific notations and tables may be used as needed. All general text is double-spaced.

Margins

The body of the manuscript, including appendices, must adhere to the following margins:

- Left margin: 1 inch
- Right margin: 1 inch
- Top margin: 1 inch
- Bottom margin: 1 inch

Center page numbers one-half (1/2) inch from the bottom of the page. The page number position should be the same on all pages where page numbers appear.

Justify the left margins but do *not* justify the right margins.

*****Every major division—chapters, references, etc.—should begin on a new page.***

Students should follow their academic program’s style for the main text/body of the document pages, endnotes, reference lists, and/or bibliographies. There are specific formatting requirements for individual pages, as noted below.

Formatting for Individual Pages

Samples of the following pages can be found in the Appendix of this handbook and are also available as MS Word documents on The Graduate School website (<http://www.gvsu.edu/gs/project-guidelines-104.htm>).

Title page

The date on the title page must indicate the month and year in which the student will receive their degree. The title page must conform to the formatting provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Title page formatting.

Page element	Margins & placement
Left margin	1”
Right margin	1”
Top margin	1”
Bottom margin	1”
<Title of Project>	At the top margin, centered; the title must be less than 200 characters total
<student’s name>	Two lines below the last line of the title, centered

Page element	Margins & placement
<A Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of>	Nine lines below student’s name, centered
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY	Two lines below previous line, centered
In	Two lines below previous line, centered
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements	Two lines below previous line, centered
For the Degree of	Two lines below previous line, centered
<title of degree>	Two lines below previous line, centered
<name of academic unit>	Four lines below previous line, centered
<month of graduation> <year of graduation>	Eight lines below previous line, centered
Pagination	Page 1 (page number does not appear)

Approval page

The approval page certifies that the project advisor, graduate program director, and unit head all agree that the student’s completed work satisfies the requirements for the project. The student must use the sample approval page (Appendix A) contained in this Manual (download in MS Word available on The Graduate School website) as a template for the title page, replacing the text in <brackets> with the student’s project title. The sample has signature lines for all appropriate individuals.

Dedication page (optional)

The dedication page, which is optional, follows the title page, is limited to one page, and is numbered (Table 3).

Table 3: Dedication page(s) formatting

Page element	Margins & placement
Left margin	1”
Right margin	1”
Top margin	1”
Bottom margin	1”
Dedication	centered, boldface type
<dedication text>	Two lines below the last line of the title, flush left, double-spaced
Pagination	3, centered, .5” from bottom of page

Acknowledgment (optional)

The acknowledgment page provides the student a venue to recognize individuals who helped with the culminating experience project. Acknowledgments should not exceed one page (Table 4).

Table 4: Acknowledgement page(s) formatting

Page element	Margins & placement
Left margin	1"
Right margin	1"
Top margin	1"
Bottom margin	1"
Acknowledgment (use Acknowledgments if there are more than one)	Centered, boldface type
<acknowledgment text>	Two lines below the last line of the title, flush left, double-spaced
Pagination	3 or 4 (depending on if there was a dedication page); centered, .5" from bottom of page

Preface (optional)

A preface, which is optional, contains brief remarks describing what preceded the undertaking of the work and may be written in the first person. It is not to be used in lieu of the introduction and should not exceed three pages (Table 5).

Table 5: Preface page formatting

Page element	Margins & placement
Left margin	1"
Right margin	1"
Top margin	1"
Bottom margin	1"
Preface	Centered, boldface type
<preface text>	Two lines below the last line of the title, flush left, double-spaced
Pagination	Next in sequence, centered, .5" from bottom of page

Abstracts

The abstract presents a summary of the project (Table 6). It should contain:

- A short statement of the scholarship, problem, or area(s) of investigation
- A brief discussion of the methods and procedures used in gathering information or data
- A summary of findings
- Recommendations or conclusions

Abstracts may not exceed 350 words.

Table 6: Abstract page formatting

Page element	Margins & placement
Left margin	1"
Right margin	1"
Top margin	1"
Bottom margin	1"
Abstract	Centered, boldface type
<abstract text>	Two lines below the last line of the title, flush left, double-spaced
Pagination	Next in sequence, centered, .5" from bottom of page

Table of contents

The titles of chapters or sections, and at least the primary and secondary subdivisions, should be listed. They must be worded exactly as they appear in the body of the project (Table 7).

Table 7: Table of contents formatting

Page element	Margins & placement
Left margin	1"
Right margin	1"
Top margin	1"
Bottom margin	1"
Table of Contents	Centered, boldface type
<text>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Two lines below Table of Contents, flush left▪ Single-spaced within each entry and double-spaced between▪ Page number should correspond with text▪ Use leader dots before the page number
Pagination	Next in sequence, centered, .5" from bottom of page.

General text

The general text should be double-spaced throughout the document (Table 8). The general text contains all of the information for the project excluding any material that would be contained in the appendices.

Table 8: General text formatting

Page element	Margins & placement
Left margin	1"
Right margin	1"
Top margin	1"
Bottom margin	1"
<text>	Double-spaced throughout the entire document
Pagination	Next in sequence, centered, .5" from bottom of page.

Additional information

Additional information such as appendices and data tables may be included in the project. Please be sure to adhere to the appendices formatting guidelines shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Appendices or data table formatting

Page element	Margins & placement
Left margin	1"
Right margin	1"
Top margin	1"
Bottom margin	1"
<text>	Title of appendix should appear centered at the top of the page
Pagination	Next in sequence, centered, .5" from bottom of page.

Original Sources Consulted for these Project Guidelines

College of Graduate Studies and Research. (2009). *Guidelines for preparing theses and dissertations*. Towson MD: Towson University.

Cratis D. Williams Graduate School. (2008). *Student handbook for dissertation & thesis preparation*. Boone, NC: Appalachian State University.

Graduate School. (2010). *Thesis guidelines*. Bellingham, WA: Western Washington University.

Montclair State University. (2009). *Procedures and guidelines for the preparation of master's theses at Montclair State University*. Montclair, NJ: Montclair State University.

The Graduate School. (2010). *Thesis and dissertation manual*. Harrisonburg, Virginia: James Madison University.

Appendices

Appendix A: Project Final Approval Form



The signatures of the individuals below indicate that they have read and approved the project of <your full legal name> in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of <Master of XXXX>.

<name of project advisor>, Project Advisor Date

<name of GPD>, Graduate Program Director Date

<name of unit head>, Unit head Date

Appendix B: Project Title Page

<Title of Project>

(title can be no more than 200 characters in length double spaced)

<Student's full legal name here, double-spaced after title>

A Project Submitted to
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY
In
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
<name of the degree here>

<the academic unit>

<Month of graduation> <Year of graduation>

Appendix C: Fair Use Information

Fair Use Checklist

Introduction to the Checklist

The Fair Use Checklist and variations on it have been widely used for many years to help educators, librarians, lawyers, and many other users of copyrighted works determine whether their activities are within the limits of fair use under U.S. copyright law (Section 107 of the U.S. Copyright Act). Fair use is determined by a balanced application of four factors set forth in the statute: (1) the purpose of the use; (2) the nature of the work used; (3) the amount and substantiality of the work used; and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the work used. Those factors form the structure of this checklist. Congress and courts have offered some insights into the specific meaning of the factors, and those interpretations are reflected in the details of this form.

This checklist is offered as a guide, not as an absolute protection against a charge of infringement.

Benefits of the Checklist

A proper use of this checklist should serve two purposes. First, it should help you focus on factual circumstances that are important in your evaluation of fair use. The meaning and scope of fair use depends on the particular facts of a given situation and changing one or more facts may alter the analysis. Second, the checklist can provide an important mechanism to document your decision-making process. Maintaining a record of your fair use analysis can be critical for establishing good faith; consider adding to the checklist the current date and notes about your project. Keep completed checklists on file for future reference.

The Checklist as Roadmap

As you use the checklist and apply it to your situations, you are likely to check more than one box in each column and even check boxes across columns. Some checked boxes will favor fair use and others may oppose fair use. A key issue is whether you are acting reasonably in checking any given box, with the ultimate question being whether the cumulative weight of the factors favors or turns you away from fair use. This is not an exercise in simply checking and counting boxes. The more boxes checked on the left side of the list the stronger the argument for fair use, but it is not an absolute. Instead, you need to consider the relative persuasive strength of the circumstances and if the overall conditions lean most convincingly for or against fair use. Because you are most familiar with your project, you are probably best positioned to evaluate the facts and make the decision.

Further Information

You can learn more about copyright and fair use from the University Libraries' copyright website: www.gvsu.edu/library/copyright.

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INSERT FAIR USE INFO

Appendix D: Sample Copyright Permission Letter

On the following page is a sample letter for seeking permission to use copyrighted material in a project. This letter is offered as a starting place for drafting a letter suitable to the student's needs. The University Libraries offers this material as a service and makes no representation or warranty about the suitability of this draft for individual purposes. Users should consult an attorney for advice concerning their specific situation.

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[Insert: Today's Date and Your Address and Contact Information]

Name and Address of Addressee

Dear _____:

I am requesting permission to reprint [a portion of] the following work:

[Add here full citation information about the work, including author, title, publisher, date of publication, exact pages you are requesting, and any other identifying information.]

This request is for permission to include the above content as part of the following project that I am preparing:

[Add here full citation information about the project that you are preparing, including the name of the publisher and likely date of publication; also add a brief description of the subject or nature of the work.]

I believe that you/your company, _____, are/is currently the holder of the copyright, because the original work states that copyright is held in your name/the name of the publisher, and my research indicates that _____ *[additional reason you think this person/company owns the copyright]*. If you do not currently hold the rights, please provide me with any information that can help me contact the proper rights holder. Otherwise, your permission confirms that you hold the right to grant this permission.

This request is for a non-exclusive, irrevocable, and royalty-free permission, and it is not intended to interfere with other uses of the same work by you. The permission requested extends to the prospective publication of this culminating experience project by the Grand Valley State University Libraries, which will make this work available to the public through its online institutional repository, ScholarWorks@GVSU. I would be pleased to include a full citation to your work and other acknowledgement as you might request.

I would greatly appreciate your permission. If you require any additional information, do not hesitate to contact me at the address and number above.

A duplicate copy of this request has been provided for your records. If you agree with the terms as described above, please sign the letter where indicated below and return one copy in the enclosed return envelope.

Sincerely,

Permission is hereby granted:

Signature: _____

Name & Title: _____

Company/Affiliation: _____

Date: _____

