



TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

# HANDBOOK TO WRITING AN UNDERGRADUATE HONORS THESIS

by

**Hector Miranda, Jr.**

In collaboration with

**Dean Dianne Jemison Pollard and Ms. Renuka Nair**

**Thomas F. Freeman Honors College**  
**Texas Southern University**  
**Houston, Texas 7002**

## Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction .....	1
Timetable for Seniors .....	3
Thesis Format .....	5
Reference Format .....	6
Thesis Preparation .....	8
Data analysis.....	8
Sections of the Thesis and Pagination .....	9
Tips on Paginations .....	11
Proofreading, Editing and Revisions.....	12
Tips on Making Powerpoint Presentations.....	13
Thesis Presentation Guidelines.....	14
Appendix A: Senior Honors Thesis Proposal Form .....	15
Appendix B: Additional Tools and Resources for Research and Writing.....	16
Appendix C: Sample of Approval/Title Page .....	17

## Introduction

The Thomas F. Freeman Honors College requires seniors to write an undergraduate thesis as a capstone in order to be considered as a Freeman Honors graduate. The Thomas F. Freeman Honors College is the only college at Texas Southern University where undergraduates are required to write a thesis. It allows one to pursue his/her own interest, and bring to bear the critical thinking, analytical, oral and writing skills gained over the years.

Writing an Honors undergraduate thesis may be the first step in one's lifelong journey towards professional success. It is an experience that can be profoundly rewarding and can propel one's career towards greater opportunities.

Coming from your junior year, the first question a Freeman Scholar asks is "Where and how do I start?" We hope this handbook will serve as a guide to help you, as an incoming senior Freeman Scholar, navigate the academic writing process.

*So what is a thesis?* A thesis is a proposition, an explanation, or observation to support an idea, an argument, or hypothesis (science majors use this word). Your thesis project can begin with a **question**, and followed by exploring different possible answers (ideas, arguments, hypotheses to support or refute). It may be focused on an accepted idea with some gaps, or that idea may have areas that are still unclear. Your project can focus on a limited part of a larger idea. To avoid going astray, it is important to frame your question well before you start, and clearly delineate your objectives.

What if a student is a major in Art or Theatre? All scholars regardless of major, must write a thesis. An art major can prepare for an exhibit in the university or college. However, the student documents the whole process with compilation of photos and written texts. The written part of the thesis is an extensive narration of what the scholar wanted to convey as an artist, or why the student took a particular approach, why you selected the subject, the media, or performance and what impressions you intend to project. You may want to write the impact that you hope to make in the society and community.

To emphasize your point, one has to provide an extensive body of evidence. The evidence can be experimental in nature, it may involve observations, data gathering, and analysis. It may also involve investigative reporting, interviews, extensive library research, or retrieval of historical documents to support your point.

The intrinsic value of your thesis rests in its originality, and honesty. Originality refers to a different way of looking at things, or presenting the arguments in your own unique way. It calls for independence in thinking, and presenting your case. Avoid plagiarism. Do not claim another person's original idea or proposition, as your own. You can restate other people's work and give credit to their contributions by citing them and listing their publication in the Review

of Literature. The impact of your writing is measured by how often your work is cited by other writers.

Like any other craft, writing a manuscript requires many hours of focus, attention to details and accumulation of strong support to your argument. The last part of this guide provides time-saving tips such as pagination and preparing for presentation. This handbook has been written to provide you with a useful, simplified set of rules so your thesis writing will be rewarding and a fun learning experience. We want the best for our Freeman scholars, to be more competitive, more confident, and a more-empowered leader in the future.

We hope that you find this handbook useful. The Thomas F. Freeman Honors College staff, the dedicated Faculty Fellows will always be there to help and guide you.

## My thesis is written in



WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

## Timetable for Seniors

Below is a timetable for Fall 2019 (Table 1) and for Spring 2020 (Table 2) candidates for graduation.

Table 1. Schedule and deadlines for the different sections of your thesis. This schedule is for those expecting to graduate in December 2019.

### December (Fall) 2019

Scholars must have senior classification to be approved for writing a thesis; work with assigned Faculty Fellow on all aspects of thesis from inception to completion; adhere to all posted deadlines; and, submit thesis by **Friday, November 15, 2019**

#### *Deadlines:*

- |                                                          |                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Meet with Faculty Fellow to discuss title suggestions | (April 29 – May 2, 2019)    |
| 2. Final title selection and thesis statement            | (May 6 – 10, 2019)          |
| 3. Sentence Outline                                      | (June 10 – 14, 2019)        |
| 4. Bibliography                                          | (June 24 – 28, 2019)        |
| 5. Chapter I – Introduction                              | (July 8 – 12, 2019)         |
| 6. Chapter II – First major point                        | (September 16 – 20, 2019)   |
| 7. Chapter III – Second major point                      | (October 1 - 4, 2019)       |
| 8. Chapter IV – Third major point                        | (October 14 – 19, 2019)     |
| 9. Chapter V - Conclusion                                | (October 28 – Nov. 1, 2019) |
| 10. Proofreading and editing                             | (November 4 - 8, 2019)      |
| 11. Bring Thesis to Honors College                       | (November 11 - 15, 2019)    |

**Oral Presentation is November 21 and 22, 2019**

Table 2. Schedule and deadlines for the different sections of your thesis. This schedule is for those expecting to graduate in May 2020.

### **March (Spring) 2020**

Scholars must have senior classification to be approved for writing a thesis; work with assigned Faculty Fellow on all aspects of thesis from inception to completion; adhere to all posted deadlines; and, submit thesis by **Friday, April 10, 2020**

#### *Deadlines:*

- |                                                          |                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Meet with Faculty Fellow to discuss title suggestions | (September 9 – 13, 2019)        |
| 2. Final title selection and thesis statement            | (September 23 -27, 2019)        |
| 3. Sentence Outline                                      | (October 7 - 11, 2019)          |
| 4. Bibliography                                          | (October 28 – November 1, 2019) |
| 5. Chapter I – Introduction                              | (November 11 - 15, 2019)        |
| 6. Chapter II – First major point                        | (January 20 - 24, 2020)         |
| 7. Chapter III – Second major point                      | (February 10 – 14, 2020)        |
| 8. Chapter IV – Third major point                        | (February 24 - 28, 2020)        |
| 9. Chapter V - Conclusion                                | (March 16- 20, 2020)            |
| 10. Proofreading and editing                             | (March 30 – April 3, 2020)      |
| 11. Bring Thesis to Honors College                       | (April 6 - 10, 2020)            |

**Oral Presentation is April 22 – 24, 2020**

## Thesis Format

The length of your thesis is about 40 pages, excluding the bibliography and appendices, with 1.0 (inch) margin from left/right, and top/bottom. The recommended font is Times New Roman 12 point. Arial 11 point is also acceptable. Line spacing is double space. Page number should be at the lower middle margin of the page. Take note that different sections of the manuscript have different styles of page numbering, and this is discussed in more details under Sections of a Thesis and Pagination on page 9. Tips on Pagination in Microsoft Word is also provided in this handbook on page 11.

*Figures.* Illustrations can be drawings, photographs or charts. It is inserted in the main body of the manuscript on the next page following the page when it was cited. The statement citing the figure should have the citation either as part of the statement, as in below:

“As a result, 21 specimens of *megalotis*, 18 of *everetti* and 7 *nigrorum* were included in this study (Table 2).”

Or, the figure can be cited as;

“Table 2 below presents the 21 specimens of *megalotis*, 18 of *everetti* and 7 *nigrorum*.”

Take note that if the figure you used was obtained online, it may be copyrighted and you might need a formal permission to use it. Take time to contact the photographer of illustrator asking permission for use of the figure. Should you get in touch with the author, do not forget to mention that his figure will only be used for academic purpose and not for commercial purpose. Cited figures and images need not be listed in the Bibliography. An example of a figure with a caption indicating the source author(s) is shown below:



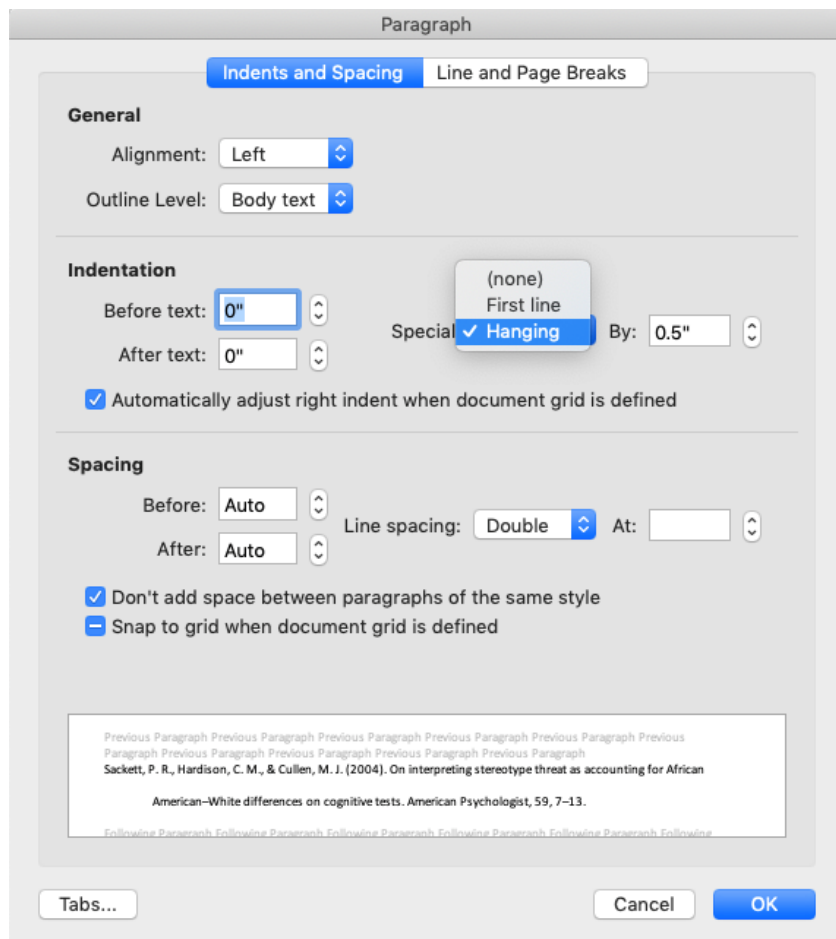
Figure 1. An adult Giant Scops-Owl *O. gurneyi* (Illustration by Hector Miranda, with permission).

## Reference format

Writing and citation format is the American Psychological Association, or APA style, as agreed upon by the Faculty Fellows. The APA style is generally an established writing standard for manuscript publication across diverse disciplines.

Examples of listing of references based on the APA style is below. Many journal, books, and other kinds of information are now available online. However, one must take precaution in citing information online, especially if information is not peer-reviewed, and are 'second-hand' information. Make an effort to be sure that your sources on information are reputable, and if possible, the original work.

References are listed alphabetically by first author's surname. Each reference should have a hanging indent, with the first line aligned flush to the edge of the left margin, and the following lines with an indent of 1.27 cm or 0.5 inches, as shown below. In Microsoft Word, go to *Paragraph* under *Format*, in the box that appears, under *Indentation*, choose *Hanging* under *Special*. Choose 0.5".





*Journal:*

Sackett, P. R., Hardison, C. M., & Cullen, M. J. (2004). On interpreting stereotype threat as accounting for African American–White differences on cognitive tests. *American Psychologist, 59*, 7–13.

Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69*, 797–811.

*Book:*

Price, D. J. (1961). *Science since Babylon*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

*Book chapter:*

Cole, S. (2000). The role of journals in the growth of scientific knowledge. In B. Cronin & H. Barsky Atkins (Eds.), *The web of knowledge: A festschrift in honor of Eugene Garfield* (pp. 109–142). Medford, NJ: Information Today.

*CD-ROM (digital)*

Journal Citation Reports on CD-ROM—Science edition [Computer software]. (1997). Philadelphia: Institute for Scientific Information.

*Electronic Journal:*

Brownlie, D. (2007). Toward effective poster presentations: An annotated bibliography. *European Journal of Marketing, 41*, 1245-1283.  
doi:10.1108/03090560710821161

*Electronic book:*

Smyth, A. M., Parker, A. L., & Pease, D. L. (2002). A study of enjoyment of peas. *Journal of Abnormal Eating*, 8(3), 120-125. Retrieved from <https://www.fakeexamplehomepage.com/full/url/>

## **Thesis Preparation**

How do I start? This is the first question Honors seniors ask. It is wise to see your assigned Faculty Fellow soon as you are assigned one. Think of a topic before you see your adviser/Faculty Fellow. If the topic of your interest is outside the expertise of your designated Faculty Fellow, a primary advisor can be assigned to you and your Faculty Fellow can serve as your secondary adviser. Many Honors student have had opportunities to conduct Summer Internships and that can serve as a potential topic for your thesis. Developing a thesis, analyzing the data, and thorough writing should be most convenient. However, it is important that you are seriously interested in that topic and in what you are doing. It makes the whole experience more rewarding and enjoyable.

Think of a project that is doable. Be practical, given the limited time constraint, funding, and support you expect for an undergraduate thesis. Do not pose a question or propose an argument that would take years to prove. It is very important that you see your adviser as often as you can, perhaps on a weekly basis.

Once you have a topic and have discussed the details with your adviser/Faculty Fellow, prepare a 1 to 2 pages thesis proposal along with an **Honors Thesis Proposal Form** (Appendix C) for approval by the Faculty Fellow and the Dean of the Thomas F. Freeman Honors College.

A good way to start is to construct the outline of the four chapters, following Table 3 below. Don't worry with the Approval Page, Title Page, Abstract, and other items at this point. Focus on the chapters (I to IV)

## **Data Analysis**

Your thesis may not necessarily use tools such as statistics to support your main argument. Students in Political Science or History can use historical records presented in a coherent pattern.

In the sciences, statistical test such as Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), t-tests, are commonly used to support a hypothesis. One little trick to get you started is to use YouTube.com, or other online resources, for data analysis tutorials. You should use the appropriate form of data analysis so you need to confer with your faculty mentors and advisers, especially if you lack a solid background in statistics. Your advisers and Faculty Fellows were hired by Texas Southern University because they are the best in what they do. They are in the best position to help you. Do not hesitate to see them. They will highly appreciate your visits, and you will benefit tremendously in polishing your writing skills.

### Sections of a Thesis and Pagination

Below is an outline of the different sections of a thesis. There can be variations of the sections depending on one's discipline or major. For example, the natural sciences can have an 'Ethics Statement or Copyright Page,' while political science or other disciplines may not need that page.

Table 3. The sequence of different sections of an Honors thesis, a short description of contents, and the style of pagination.

Section	Description	Pagination
Approval Page	Optional. The Approval Page and Title Page can be one, as shown by the example in Appendix C.	No page number
Title Page		No Page number
Abstract	The abstract is an abbreviation of the whole manuscript. The abstract is perhaps is the first material, if not the only material that other writers will read before your thesis is cited.  Generally, it is a summary of a sentence each from the introduction, methods, results, and discussion. A good rule is one to several statements from every section of the main body of your thesis. It is usually from 200 to 500 words in one to two pages. As in most of the manuscript, it should be written in the past tense.	Roman numeral (I, ii, iii, ....)
Table of Contents	The table of contents is a listing of the different sections, and subsections of the manuscript.	Roman numeral
List of Tables	List of all tables used in the thesis in the order of their appearances in the manuscript.	Roman numeral

List of Figures	List of all figures used in the order of their appearances in the manuscript.	Roman numeral
Vita	A short enumeration of your academic history, including degrees and schools.	Roman numeral
Dedication	A statement of devotion, loyalty, or tribute to someone or something. An expression of gratitude to someone who has served as an inspiration to the student.	Roman numeral
Acknowledgements	This section is generally a where you make statements expressing your gratitude for the help and support you received in the course of doing your thesis project. You can also funding sources, if there are any.	Roman numeral
Chapter I: Introduction	This is where you state what you work is about. State the circumstances that lead to your thesis. This may include past works by other investigators that led to your own. Then state clearly the question, or the controversy surrounding the current issue. This section is where you state the significance, and relevance of your work. Why are you doing this? Here, the last paragraph is where you state your hypothesis(es), goals and/or objectives clearly.	Arabic numbers (1,2, 3...)
Review of Literature	In the sciences, the Review of Literature is a comprehensive and thorough retrieval of past literature relevant to your topic. These should be presented in a sequential and systematic manner by time or period. The Review of Literature should also present the current gaps in our knowledge, and areas where the evidence are ambiguous, and how your thesis is linked to these.	Arabic numbers
Chapter II: First major point	For the sciences, Chapter II is for Material and Methods. For the other fields, the first major point is presented here. Present the major point in an organized fashion.	Arabic
Chapter III: Second major point	In the sciences, this section can be the Results. This section is written in the past tense.	Arabic
Chapter IV: Third major point	This section can also be the Discussions and Conclusions. The section is where your power of analysis and synthesis will be presented. Recommendation may also be added in this section.	Arabic

References (or  
Bibliography

Be careful in citing works by others from the internet. Arabic  
It is best to cite only peer-reviewed work, and avoid  
questionable online references.


Citing a reference anywhere in the main body of the  
manuscript means writing the author's last name,  
and year enclosed in parentheses at the end of the  
sentence, like (Murray, 1996). Multiple authors can  
be cited, like (Pollard, et al., 2019). Then the  
complete reference is listed under Reference, or  
Review of Literature. Sequence of citation is author's  
last name, first name initial. Year enclosed in  
parentheses. Title (*italicized*). Journal. Volume, pages.  
The rest of the line after the first is indented.

Appendix(ces)

Optional. The appendix section is where you include Arabic  
supporting documents to your thesis, like protocols  
to an experiment, or large tables, or figures of  
secondary importance.

### Tips on Pagination

This is a tricky part of thesis writing and can be daunting and messy if one is not careful.  
As stated in the outline above, the Title Page/Approval Page and the optional Copyright Page  
**do not have pages**. From the Abstract page until the Acknowledgments page, pagination should  
be **Roman numerals (i, ii, iii...)**. From the Introduction to the end of the manuscript, pagination  
begins with **Arabic numbers (1, 2, 3,... )** until the end of the manuscript, including References  
and Appendices, if there are any.

1. Under Home, click the *Show all the nonprinting characters*  under Home. This way  
all breaks in the manuscript become visible.
2. At the end of the the Title/Approval Page, place the cursor at the last line or at the end of  
the last line.
3. Put the cursor at the footer space to make sure that the page break located is at the end  
of the page.
4. Under *Page Layout* (or *Layout* in Macs), click *Breaks* to open a small window. Then click  
*Next Page*. A blue line showing Section Break (Next Page) appears.

5. The Abstract page is the start of the Roman numeral pagination (I, ii..). Go to the bottom of the Abstract page and double click the bottom margin area to show the Footer section.
6. Unclick the *Link to Previous* under *Header & Footer*. This puts a break in the previous page (Title Pages) without pagination.
7. Click on *Page Number*, then click *Format Page Number*. A small window appears, then click numbers format i, ii, iii..... and hit the button Starts at i.
8. Click *Page Number* again, then click *Page Number*. A small window appears, then Choose *Center Alignment*, and click OK.
9. At the bottom Footer region of the Section before the main body of the manuscript, (which is usually the Acknowledgement), make another Section Break. Make sure that the *Link to Previous* is unclicked.
10. Click Page Number and click Format Page Number. Choose *numbering format 1,2, 3,...* and *Page numbering start at 1* and click OK. This will commence the numbering system from the Introduction to the very end of the manuscript.

If you find yourself in a bind because of hardware, software, and technical problems, you can subdivide your manuscript into three parts: 1) Title Page (no pagination) , 2) Abstract, List of Tables, List of Figures, Vita, and Acknowledgements (Roman numeral I, ii, iii...). 3) from Introduction to the end of manuscript (Arabic numeral 1, 2, 3...). Send the draft in MSWord format to your adviser(s) to help you with formatting.

### **Proofreading, Editing and Revisions**

Be sure to finish the first draft way ahead of the scheduled deadlines, perhaps a month before the deadline. Before submitting the first draft to your adviser or Faculty Fellow, it would be beneficial to request other people to read your manuscript for proofreading. With more people reading your writing, errors of grammar, spelling, and punctuation, will be minimized, if not eliminated. It is fairly normal for writers to not see mistakes and errors. You would be surprised that there may be better and more elegant ways to writing other than your own. Letting others review your draft let you recognize mistakes and typos early on. Suggestions and comments by colleagues can only improve your manuscript. Give your manuscript several rounds of reviews by different people, if possible, before submitting it to your Honors Fellow.

People have different preferences in doing reviews. Some prefer to write (in pencil) on the hardcopy draft itself, making notes in between the double-spaced lines and on the margins. Others prefer to use *Review* tools built-in in Microsoft Word.

There are several Sharing Tools available to Honors students. Examples of these are Google Docs, SharePoint in Microsoft Outlook, and Dropbox. Use whatever is convenient for you and your adviser(s).

### **Tips on Making an Effective PowerPoint Presentation**

It is normal to have a fear of public speaking, but your thesis presentation is a great opportunity to learn to overcome that fear. Remember, Freeman Scholars are the only seniors of Texas Southern University who writes theses, publish, and defend them. This special part of your education can only highlight your qualification and marketability to the global job market.

Thesis defense presentations are usually supported by a Microsoft Powerpoint presentation of about 20 slides. There are other instruments and visual aids to your oral presentations, such as models and actual artifacts of your research. Try to be innovative to excite the audience.

Below are some basic rules to follow. More resources are available online and in Youtube.

- **Use a simple design template for your presentation.** It is always tempting to use complex designs with bright colors. However, too much unnecessary details and overly bright colors can be distracting.
- **Use high contrast.** Dark texts on light background, or light texts on dark background.
- **Make illustrations that are clear and simple.**
- Some small, subtle background vignettes and very translucent earth color background can be pleasing, and too much can be annoying.
- **Too much background patterns can also be distracting.**
- **Limit the number of words.** Use phrases or short sentences, or even just a few words.
- Avoid very small fonts, or very large fonts. Estimate the distance between the screen Presentations in a medium-sized room with 20- 50 people. Make sure audience at the back can read your text.
- **Limit reading your slide, and do not talk to your slide.** It is a reflection of your lack of confidence. It is OK to glance at the screen every now and then.
- **The number of slides should be kept at a minimum.** A good rule is one slide every minute.

- **It is good to practice with someone before your presentation.** Practice with a timer is good. Recording your presentation practice and evaluating yourself will improve your presentation.
- **Try not to be in a hurry to “get it over with.”** Speak clearly and project your voice, and make eye contact to as many people as you can.

### **Thesis Presentation Guidelines**

On a designated date (middle of November for Fall graduates, and middle of April for Spring graduates), thesis student will present their thesis for 20 minutes to a panel of judges. This panel are usually members of the Honors Faculty and Honors Faculty Fellows. The public may also be invited and students from other colleges may be in attendance.

Notes to consider:

1. Please be in place ten (10) minutes before your assigned tie (please see email);
2. Your presentation should be fifteen (15) minutes. Please include the following: The purpose of your topic; the essence of your findings; the importance of your thesis research to the common good of others;
3. Please bring USB if you are doing a PowerPoint presentation;
4. The attire is business professional.

No late entrance will be allowed

### **Note:**

You many come to the Honors College to peruse thesis by fellow peers who have graduated.

**Appendix A: Senior Honors Thesis Proposal Form (next page)**





## SENIOR HONORS THESIS PROPOSAL FORM

### A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Major: \_\_\_\_\_

College: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### B: THESIS PROPOSAL AND SUBMISSION

Write a 1- 2 pages double-spaced Honors Thesis Proposal. Obtain all required signatures, attach your thesis proposal to this form and submit to the Thomas F. Freeman Honors College office, 302 New Learning Center, Texas Southern University, 3100 Cleburne St. Houston, Texas 77004/

### C: SIGNATURES

Primary Faculty Name \_\_\_\_\_ Department \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Advisor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary Advisor's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Department \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary Advisor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### C: THOMAS F. FREEMAN HONORS COLLEGE APPROVAL

This proposal has been approved by the Dean of the Thomas F. Freeman Honors College

Dean's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Additional Tools and Research Resources for Writing

### *Online resources to better writing*

**Harvard Writing Center's Writing Resources:** this website provides helpful guides for writing. <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/resources.html>.

**Purdue Online Writing Lab:** This site provides helpful information on general writing, with extensive information on how to cite and list references obtained from electronic sources or online following the APA style. Website: <https://Owl.purdue.edu>

### *Online resources to writing styles (APA)*

**Resource on APA style:** ([apastyle.apa.org](http://apastyle.apa.org)). A site with all the information about the APA style. This is a rich resource site for everything APA, such as managing references, proper use of punctuation, grammar and Writing style, and formatting.

### *Reference Manager Applications:*

Many modern scholars use commercial applications such as **EndNote** and **Reference Manager** to find, store, create and share research materials. Free software includes RefWorks, F1000, and Zotero. For students of the life sciences, be aware of **PubMed** ([ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/](http://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/)), a search engine for all life science-related literature to all your query.

### *The New Learning Center*

You are fortunate to have the Honors College located at TSU New Learning Center with computer laboratories at every floor. Go online to access databases such as JSTOR.

**APPENDIX C: Sample of Approval/Title page**

ALKALINITY AND MINERAL CONCENTRATION ESTIMATION IN COMMERCIAL  
DRINKING WATER

THOMAS F. FREEMAN HONORS COLLEGE

SENIOR THESIS

BY

JOHN DOE

B.S. CHEMISTRY

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, ENGINEERING, AND TECHNOLOGY

MAY 2019

APPROVED BY

---

HONORS FACULTY FELLOW MENTOR                      DATE

---

DEAN, HONORS COLLEGE                                      DATE



TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY  
Thomas F. Freeman Honors College

