

## Usability Testing Report on the Dissertation Publishing Agreement

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### Executive Summary

In 2000, the UF Graduate Council required that all graduate students admitted as of Fall 2001 submit their theses and dissertations in electronic format. These electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) would be the “final product of a graduate student's research.” In this format, ETDs allow for ease of sharing, reading, printing, storage and distribution of the student’s work.

The Graduate School Editorial Office staff ensures “all requirements for archiving, preserving and publishing for the UF Graduate School dean and the UF Libraries system” are met. A part of this process is the completion of proper publishing agreement forms. To aid in this, the Graduate School Editorial Office has an FAQ page at <http://gradschool.ufl.edu/editorial/editorial-faqs.html> to give graduate students important information before they sign the forms to control dissemination and access to their work. For example, one question on the FAQ discusses the three options for public access to an ETD, including access over the internet, while another provides advice on signing agreements with publishers. A PhD candidate can use this information and advice from faculty and the Editorial Office staff in completing the forms.

The study, on which this document reports, focuses on the Dissertation Publishing Agreement form. The form certifies copyright permissions; grants nonexclusive license to UF for archiving, preserving and granting access to the ETD; and sets the release date of the ETD. The study involved the current form (see Appendix A) and a proposed form (see Appendix B). The proposed form has added language that is intended to reduce confusion about access and distribution. The language was drafted by the Library ETD Coordinator, Robert Parker, and the Graduate School Editorial Office Coordinator, Stacy Wallace.

Based on a discussion with Mr. Parker and the Interim Head of the Digital Library Center, Laurie Taylor, key areas of concern were identified prior to testing:

- Does the added language in the Dissertation Publishing Agreement clearly articulate the current model of dissemination?
- Does the added language in the Dissertation Publishing Agreement change the understanding of the form and its stated limitations?

- Do students understand that their ETD would be available online and could be discovered through a search in the library catalog, Google and other search engines?

The testing resulted in feedback with the following overall findings:

- The revised form helps to clarify the process that is outlined in the form
- The form may include some jargon that may be difficult for students, including international students, to understand
- Students need additional information or guidance prior to signing and submitting the form and do not generally read over all of the fine print of what they sign
- Additional training and guidance needs to be provided for both staff and faculty advisors

This report provides a summary of findings, including:

- User attitudes and difficulties with the form
- Recommendations to make on the form and form submission process

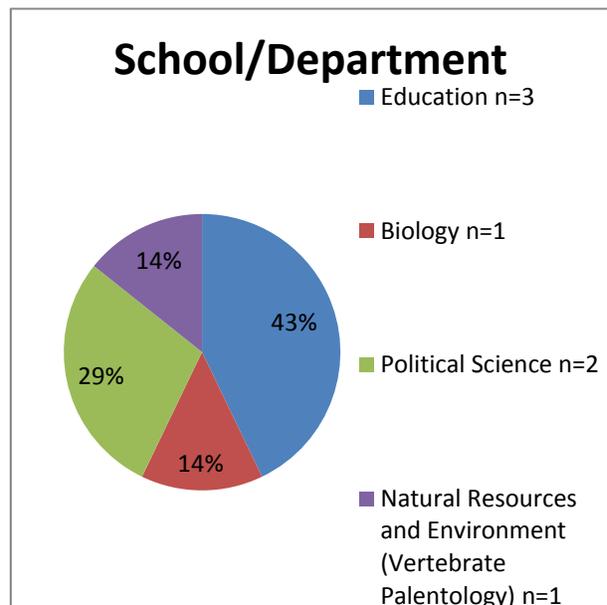
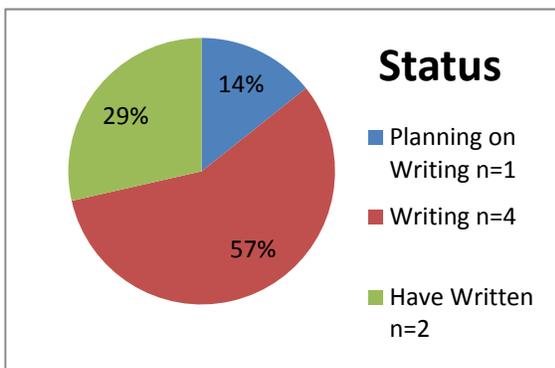
## Methodology

Prior to testing, the Assessment Team Manager submitted a University of Florida Institutional Review Board Protocol. The protocol documentation and survey instruments focused on testing of graduate school participants in focus group sessions and interviews.

At the start of each session, the facilitator gave project background and asked participants to sign an informed consent form and complete a short demographic questionnaire. Participants were then asked to review and comment on copy of original Dissertations Publishing Agreement form. They answered several questions pertaining to the form. They were then asked to read the form with new text and answer several questions reflecting on it. A note taker was present to document responses.

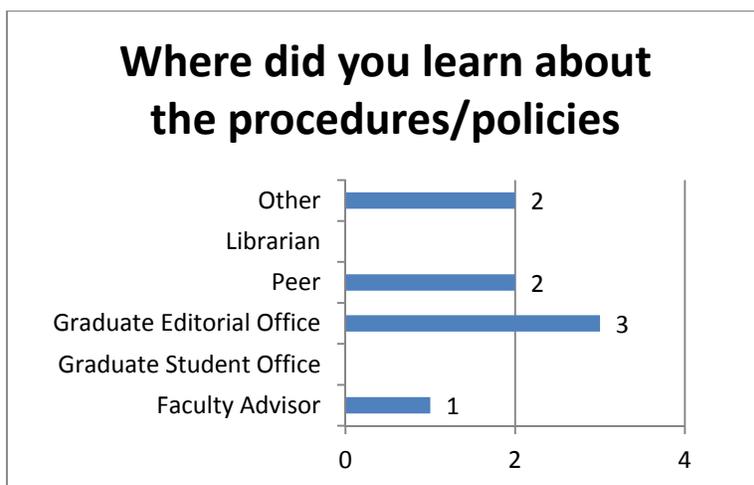
## Who and Where We Tested

The study included seven graduate participants. Recruitment consisted of an open notice via Facebook, signs posted at the libraries and within the HUB, and an email announcement. Although multiple focus group sessions were hosted, all but one session had only one participant. All students were currently enrolled or recently graduated, and have prepared or would be preparing ETDs. Discussions were held in a library room or at the HUB. The students fell into the following categories:



Three participants were familiar with the procedures, policies and forms that are associated with publishing a thesis or dissertation; two of those three recently completed the forms, as they defended in the Fall 2010 term. Two participants noted that they were somewhat familiar with the process; these students were recently awarded candidate status. Two reported that they were not familiar at all with the process and that this was their first exposure; they are both currently writing their dissertations and hope to graduate at the end of Summer 2011. They are both international students.

Of the five students who knew about the forms, they reported that they learned about the procedures and policies through the Graduate School Editorial Office or from a peer. Most students reported that faculty advisors did not have full understanding of the forms so advice needed to be clarified by the Graduate School Editorial Office. The two candidates who indicated “other” below are the same two who reported they were not familiar at all with the process, as noted above.



When asked how they accessed and searched for dissertations or thesis, few indicated that they found them through the library catalog (n=2). Instead, most student (n=7) found dissertations through databases and search engines like Google.

### What Data We Collected

The assessment team collected data that would address the clarity of the Dissertation Publishing Agreement. The discussion focused on the following questions:

- If you have had experience with theses or dissertations, are you familiar with the Dissertation Publishing Agreement? Were you given any advice about the Agreement?
- What do you believe is the purpose of the original form?
- What do you think the additional text on the revised form indicates? What does it mean for the access/distribution of your ETD? Did you find that the revised text reflected these ideas? How might you reword this to reflect these ideas?
- Did you have prior knowledge of the information articulated in the additional text? Does the revision affect your decision regarding the release period?
- What about the revision do you like or dislike? Why?
- What topics do you want to learn more about during training or orientation for dissertation and thesis publishing?

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### Findings and Recommendations

The following are findings and recommendations from participant discussion.

To begin the discussion, participants were asked to summarize their understanding of the form's purpose. Responses were that the form enabled:

- A search of the dissertation in library catalog
- That the student would retain copyright and could control who sees it
- The dissertation would become the property of the University
- Certification that copyrighted works within the dissertation could be republished
- The Library to copy and archive the dissertation
- Google to access the full dissertation if no restriction is selected

The Assessment Team corrected inaccurate understanding of the form and process as necessary (e.g. on ownership).

The participants thought that the revised text successfully reflected these ideas that the ETD could be found in search engine results once the embargo period lapsed. All participants commented favorably on the added text, noting that it:

- Contributes to the overall understanding of the form
- Clarifies the restrictions, what will happen to the ETD, and who has access to it
- Provides a summary of what is being signed
- Provides a clearer message that the dissertation would be found using resources such as Google
- Helps to highlight important aspects of the form
- Does not explain the nuance about campus access
- Impacts a decision on release of the ETD

During the discussion, several recommendations were made by participants. Although the focus of discussion was on the added text, participants mentioned the embargo section. One student commented that one sentence could be revised from "...the student grants access to his/her ETD subject to the following limitations" to "...the student grants access to his/her ETD for:" This change would reduce number of words but also is more correct considering the options that follow; "immediate release" is not a limitation. In addition, the text that reads "then immediate release" within the options could be changed to "then release." If these changes to the embargo text section cannot be implemented, then one participant recommends that the word "restriction" in the added text be changed to "limitation" for consistency.

The language of the form includes jargon and terms that are unfamiliar to some of them. One student remarked that the language in the form was "clear like all legal jargonese" while another commented that it was "legally wordy, but sufficient." Three students advocated for rewriting the form in everyday language. The international students both mentioned that clarification of some of the language would greatly improve their understanding of the implications of signing the form. Another mentioned that when he completed the form he did not fully understand what "embargo" meant in the context of dissertation publishing. Terms/phrases in the form that were problematic include:

- Copyrighted matter
- Nonexclusive license
- Embargo
- "Updates any and all previous statements submitted heretofore"
- Harvest
- Proquest UMI

A recommendation to address this language concern is to provide additional training and a glossary of terms. Also, examples could be added after certain terms; after “copyrighted matter” provide an example: “copyrighted matter (e.g. previously published articles).” In addition, having access to the forms online could give students time to review and understand the form before submission.

A question about the “updates any and all previous statements submitted heretofore” language suggests to the Assessment Team that the line should be rewritten in plain language. The participant’s understanding was that this line addressed renewal of the embargo. This participant recommends a statement describing renewal should be included.

Although additional training would be useful, one student noted that finding the time to sit in a session can be difficult. The recommendation would be to ensure that the graduate offices and advisors who facilitate the process have more training to assist the graduate students. Topics for orientation and training include: publishing process, plagiarism, and writing in general. One student remarked that in his department, the secretary who gave him the forms did not give him all that were required; having the checklist was useful in identifying what was required.

Other recommendations regarding the form and process included:

- Using bullets to highlight points
- Training on use of published articles in the dissertation
- Reorganizing the upload page layout in a simple grid layout, with all required elements identified (e.g. identified with an asterisk)

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## **Conclusion**

The added text appropriately describes what happens after the ETD is submitted to the Graduate School Editorial Office and the ETD’s subsequent availability online. Based on user input, the following list summarizes the modifications suggested above:

- Language changes to the embargo section
- Addition of embargo renewal information
- Development of a glossary or addition of examples for legal or searching terms
- Additional training for department staff who prints forms, etc. for the graduate student
- Additional training for students
- Streamlining the upload page

Awareness of the forms was a benefit for participants of this study. Of the five students who have not yet completed the form and are in the writing or planning stage, all were unaware that they could set an embargo period. Three asked why they would choose this option while the two Political Science candidates indicated that they would not embargo their work. One student indicated that she would discuss the embargo period with her advisor, now knowing that she will have to make a choice about it in the coming year.

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL - UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA  
DISSERTATION PUBLISHING AGREEMENT

Choices marked here must match choices entered in the Editorial Document Management (EDM) system.

Student Name: UFID:

Dissertation Title:

The student has certified that he/she has obtained written permission from the owner(s) of any copyrighted matter to be included in his/her electronic dissertation (hereinafter referred to as ETD), allowing distribution as specified. The student has further certified that he/she maintains copies of all such permissions in his/her files.

The student has hereby granted to the Board of Trustees of the University of Florida (herein after referred to as UF) and its agents, principals, successors and assign the nonexclusive license to archive, preserve and grant access to his/her ETD. This nonexclusive license is bound by the conditions specified below, in all forms of media, now and hereafter.

The student retains ownership of the copyright of his/her ETD along with all rights associated with such ownership, including but not limited to, the right to use all or part of his/her ETD in future works (such as articles or books).

The student has also hereby granted permission to UF to display his/her bibliographic information and the dissertation abstract.

Beginning on the date the student's degree is awarded by UF, the student grants access to his/her ETD subject to the following limitations:

Immediate Release

- 6 month embargo, then immediate release
- 1 year embargo, then immediate release
- 2 year embargo, then immediate release
- Secret for 2 years (for patent or proprietary purposes), then immediate release
- 

The student has agreed to send the content of the ETD to ProQuest/UMI at the end of the above embargo period.

Yes: No:

The undersigned have agreed that this statement updates any and all previous statements submitted heretofore.

Name	Signature	Date
(Student)	_____	
(Chair)	_____	

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The student has agreed to send the content of the ETD to ProQuest/UMI at the end of the above embargo period.

Yes: No:

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The undersigned have agreed that this statement updates any and all previous statements submitted heretofore. They are aware that if a restriction is not selected, Google et al. will be able to harvest the ETD from the Library Catalog. Additionally, if a restriction is selected, when the restriction period is over, Google et al. will be able to harvest the ETD from the Library Catalog.

(Student) \_\_\_\_\_

(Chair) \_\_\_\_\_