IDM Master's Thesis Paper Guidelines

The Thesis Paper is a written document that covers the content of the following conversation related to your Thesis Project

Person: what is your project?
You: I'm interested in_____. [INTRODUCTION]

Person: Oh yeah? I don't know anything about _____ .
You: The state of the art in _____ is … [BACKGROUND]

Person: Cool. So what are you making?
You: I'm making a thing that is a contribution to the field of _____. [PROJECT] I'm approaching it in this way [METHODOLOGIES] This is how I made it. [METHODS]

Person: Rad. Was it successful?
You: I assessed it in this way, changed it, then assessed it in that way, changed it, and now it works like this. [ASSESSMENT]

Person: Ok, what does that mean?
You: These assessments show that this thing is important (or not!) to the field of _____ for these reasons. [REFLECTIONS]

Next, I'll do this with it. [FUTURE PERSPECTIVES]

Throughout Pre Thesis and Thesis classes we will be workshopping each stage to get you to your final written document. Below are descriptions of each section that may appear in your final paper.

The paper should be at least 20 pages, and the maximum length is 35 pages (excluding images, figures and charts).

Abstract

- Write it last! This is a TLDR summary of your Thesis Paper
- Identify the field in which you are operating, and the problem/issue that you addressed
- Describe your project
- Outline your research methods
- State your main findings/conclusion(s)
- Indicate your recommendations for future perspectives
- Include keywords
- Keep to one page or less

1. Introduction (500-1000 words)

Describe the field or topic you are interested in. Describe the state of the art of the field in a way that someone who knows nothing about it has sufficient information to understand the importance of your project. You should reference previously published papers, projects made by others, books or other literature.
Everything in this section must be properly cited in MLA or APA style. Consult your Thesis Instructor if you are unsure which to follow.

2. Background (2500-3500 words)

Here you give your reader the specific information related to the topic of interest that they need to know to understand the importance of your project. You can describe similar projects or products that are the competition.
Here you discuss in scholarly detail the work that has been done in this field and how it leads you to your research question.
You should interpret, synthesize, relate these works in a reflective and scholarly manner: what you say here is a NOVEL interpretation of the references you have collected, taken as a whole, not a paraphrase.
The background section leads to an open question in the field, an unmet need, or a conceptual space opportunity to explore. End it with a statement that places your project in the context of what you have just described, and how it addresses that question, need, or space you identified.
Everything in this section must be properly cited in MLA or APA style. Consult your Thesis Instructor if you are unsure which to follow.

3. Project

The Project section has several sub-sections, listed below

3.1 Description and Rationale

Summarize here your project - is it a game, a VR piece, an installation? How does it work and who uses it? Describe how the overall design of this project addresses the open question you arrived at in your Background section.

3.2 Methodologies

Describe the methodologies you have used to approach your research question. Refer to List of Methodologies in the class resource folder for an (incomplete) list of possible methodologies to use.

3.3 Methods

Describe in detail how you made your project, and each subsequent iteration. Here what is important is that your reader understands your process. For each version or iteration of your project, describe how your process adapts with respect to the goal set in your introduction.

This iterative process description may:

- Compare data/findings against your Literature Review, Related Work, or Competitive Analysis findings.
- Summarize main empirical findings / process reflections
- Place evidence of (non-confidential) empirical research in appendices (questionnaires, interview transcripts/notes, experiment results, etc.)

For clarity, you can name each iteration (Pilot 1, 2, 3; Experiment 1, 2, 3; Prototype alpha, beta, gold)

3.4 Assessment

Describe in detail how you have assessed the performance of your project, and the results of that assessment. Depending on the project, this could be one or more of:

- a measurement (how high did my hot air balloon rise?)
- user testing (how long did my users take to figure out my app/game?)
- audience feedback (did my audience understand the message conveyed by my installation/performance?)
- Personal feedback (did I feel about this project in the way that I thought I would?)
- hypothesis (in)validation (did my experiment disprove my hypothesis?)
- performance analysis (did my car drive itself in the way I designed it to? did my algorithm execute faster than the competition?)
- Did my artwork get written up in news venues?

Use figures, plots, images to illustrate the assessments described.

4. Reflections and Future Perspectives

- Remind reader of your initial research objectives
- How happy were you with your project?
- What were the main takeaways of the project, and also the process? How do they relate to the questions you posed?
- Offer recommendations for next steps in this investigation. If you were handing off this project to someone, where should they start? What initial questions did you not answer? What questions arose that are new?