

MARYWOOD UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE ART THERAPY PROGRAM
PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION / RESEARCH
THESIS
STUDENT GUIDELINES

2025-2026

Dear Thesis I, II, III Students:

Welcome to the final phase of your professional education. The following information is meant to help clarify and assist you as you move through the three individual credits which will lead to the completion of either your Personal Contribution or Research Thesis. At this point you have started the initial steps of collecting material for your annotated bibliography and literature review.

Both the Professional Contribution (PC) and Research Thesis (RT) demonstrate your competency within your graduate education necessary for attainment of the Master's Degree in Art Therapy. Both types of projects are important to the field of art therapy. Your ability to bring together your gained knowledge, creative efforts and scholarly rigor will make this culminating experience relevant and gratifying.

You have the option of doing a PC or RT project to validate development and accomplishment of your learning in our program. This experience serves as a final academic opportunity to explore a topic of choice combining critical and creative thinking. The professional Contribution is an opportunity for you to develop rigorous writing and creative projects. Alternatively, students may choose to do an original research project individually or in small groups subject to the approval of our Institutional Research Board (IRB). Both professional contribution and research thesis require a lengthy paper – usually about 50-60 pages – to support and elucidate the professional contribution or research process. All Professional Contributions and Theses topics are subject to approval of the Director of the Art Therapy Program.

During AT 533 Art Based Research & Assessment, a pre-requisite before beginning your PC or RT, you will be assigned a faculty mentor, based upon your mode (PC or RT) and topic interest. This person will help guide you through the next 3 credit thesis process. In **Thesis I**, you will be expected to hone in on defining your topic, significantly complete your literature review and/or determine if need institutional approval and thus prepare applications for the Internal Review Board (IRB)*. In **Thesis II** you will be gathering data, developing projects relevant to your topic and generally active in the process of your topic. You will need to consider finding a 'reader' during **Thesis III** when you are completing the project and finalizing the writing as well as all other aspects of the project.

It is expected that you will provide a positive and creative contribution to the body of knowledge of the art therapy profession. Creating a Professional Contribution or Research Thesis is a wonderful opportunity to integrate what you have learned, who you are and your vision of the profession of Art Therapy. Although the topic ideas are broad, please consider the following items when designing and focusing on your PC topic:

- The topic or problem should be directly relevant to the art therapy discipline.
- The continuation of personal engagement in art making is expected with emphasis on the integration of artistic activity with the focus of the project topic.
- A thorough literature review is essential. In order to contribute to the body of knowledge that exists, you must first be knowledgeable about what has already been written on a particular topic.

**Integration of the core values of the University and the Art Therapy Program should be included in any topic you choose.*

***PLEASE NOTE:** If you are completing a research thesis you are required to submit additional material to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Marywood University Topic Formation.

The following resource(s) will be useful in narrowing your topic interests:

- <http://libguides.marywood.edu/researching>

The following resource(s) will be useful when conducting your literature review:

- <http://guides.library.cornell.edu/annotatedbibliography>
- <http://libguides.marywood.edu/citing>
- <http://www.amazon.com/PREPARING-LITERATURE-REVIEWS-4th-Edition/dp/B00D9W9L1A>

Artistic Inquiry

Think about how you have used art making during the program. Did you do response art? Did you do creative journaling? In what ways did art serve to enhance your educational and clinical experiences? How might art making appropriately be incorporated into your PC? This is an opportunity to bring the importance of the art into your culminating project!

Final Document Overview

The final typed version should be approximately 50-75 pages of text. All work should be 12 point, Times New Roman, double-spaced, and with 1 ½” left margin and 1” right, top, bottom margins. You are expected to see that all text meets the American Psychological Association (APA) format.

It is your responsibility to find a Volunteer Reader who is willing to review the final draft of the document and who will provide timely, comments for you to make revisions. After making any changes to the document based on feedback from the Volunteer Reader, you will submit a final version with the formal evaluation (See Appendix B) to the Faculty Mentor.

After you receive final approval from the Faculty Mentor, the completed document, **including required signatures from the student and Program Director**, is sent as a .pdf version to the Program Director. If you want a bound hard copy you can have this done at a number of commercial locations.

Examples for Review

The “AATA Research Committee graduate thesis/dissertation abstract compilation” is a document which includes references and abstracts compiled alphabetically from as many of the EPAB approved and accredited schools in the country as possible, in order to provide students and researchers with a sense of what research topics are currently being undertaken. The goal of this tool is to demonstrate the wide range of topics that are investigated each year, to facilitate the sharing of research prior to publishing, and to perhaps connect students with art therapists in the community who share their interests. More information can be found through the www.arttherapy.org website.

You are expected to remain in close communication with your Faculty Mentor meeting submission deadlines for draft and final material of the PC/RT. It is the FULL responsibility of the student to meet deadlines in order to move the PC/RT process forward.

Appendix A –
Professional Contribution Option (layout)

i. Title Page

ii. Reproduction Permission I, (name), do/do not grant permission for this PC to be copied.

iii. Table of Contents

iv. Acknowledgements (optional)

v. List of Figures (if you are using graphs)

vi. List of Images (this is the list of artwork included)

vii. Abstract 120 words that summarize your topic
include *keywords*: and add 4-5 words that relate to the topic

CHAPTER I **Introduction.** Define the specific topic including any problems and questions presented (approx. 2-3 pages)

CHAPTER II **Literature Review.** Present a synthesis of scholarly, academic literature about your topic drawing from what others have written and discovered about this topic (approx. 15-20 pages)

CHAPTER III **Project Planned** This section includes detailed description of the project including all aspects of design, implementation, costs etc. (approx. 10-15 pages)

CHAPTER IV **Reflection upon Project** (2-3 pages)

CHAPTER V **Conclusion.** This section will review the entire document. You should include a summation of your case study, implications for practice as well as recommendations for future study. You may also include here (if presented) any other questions that were raised during or as a result of your experiences. (approx. 2-3 pages)

REFERENCES All sources cited in the text.

BIBLIOGRAPHY Any sources that were read and relevant but not cited (this is your annotated bibliography list without the annotations).

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Images of artwork from you

Appendix B: Images of project

Appendix C: Any charts etc...

Appendix B – Research Thesis Option (layout)

i. Title Page

ii. Reproduction Permission I, (name), do/do not grant permission for this CP to be copied.

iii. Table of Contents

iv. Acknowledgements (optional)

v. List of Figures (if you are using graphs)

vi. List of Images (This is the listing of artwork)

vii. Abstract 120 words. Summarize the thesis. This will be one of the last sections you will write for your project.

CHAPTER I **Introduction.** Define the topic, problem and specific thesis question (approx. 2-3 pages)

CHAPTER II **Literature Review.** Present a synthesis of scholarly, academic literature about your topic drawing from what others have written and discovered about this topic. (approx. 10-15 pages)

CHAPTER III **Methodology.** Describe how you studied the problem area, how you approached your inquiry and what your research strategy and design was. Include: Site description, Participants, Apparatus, Procedure, limitations known at beginning of study, Research Stance. This section is written in the past tense. (approx. 3-4 pages)

CHAPTER IV **Results.** Discuss the psychosocial history, observations of sessions and the process and progression of treatment. Artwork reference but not included in body of text. Art will be depicted in Appendix. No interpretation or discussion of literature. This is a presentation of the data. (approx. 10-15 pages)

CHAPTER V **Discussion.** Interpret and discuss the results. It is an analysis of sessions/ art with support from references in Lit review. This should be an integration of what has occurred, and should demonstrate your knowledge of the process and findings. (approx. 10-15 pages)

CHAPTER VI **Conclusion.** This section will review the entire thesis.

You should include your assessment of the thesis, limitations, the implications for practice as well as recommendations for future study. You may also include here any other questions that were raised during or as a result of your research. (approx. 2-3 pages)

REFERENCES

Any sources cited in the text.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Any sources that were read and relevant but not cited (this is your annotated bibliography list without the annotations).

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Images of artwork from client.

Appendix B: Research Documents

Figure 1. IRB Approval letter

Figure 2. Recruitment Consent Script

Figure 3. Legally Authorized Representative Consent Form

Figure 4. Artwork Photo Release Form

Appendix C: Instruments, surveys, questionnaires, interview guidelines.

Appendix D: Reproduction of any other artwork / fine art images used.

Running Head: SHORT TITLE

Example I: Title page

FULL TITLE OF THE PC/RT IN ALL CAPS: ADDING A SUBTITLE IF IT IS
WARRANTED

by

Author first and last name

A Professional Contribution or Research Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of

Marywood University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Art Therapy

Student Date

Program Director Approval Date

Volunteer Thesis/Professional Contribution Reader Evaluation

Student Name: _____

Volunteer Reader Name: _____

Thesis/PC Title: _____

In the rubric below, please circle the most appropriate response

	Exemplary	Competent	Needs Work	Comments
Focus	Convincingly explains why topic is chosen. Research question is clear, arguable, and pertinent.	Topic is clear and relevant.	Topic is too general, predictable, or unclear.	
Organization	Coherent throughout. Clear introduction, discussion, and conclusion sections.	Generally coherent, but some inconsistencies.	Some incoherence. Some ideas are not connected or are confusing.	
Literature Review	Current, balanced, appropriate resources. Literature review is comprehensive, representing art therapy and related disciplines equally.	Adequate resources used, comprehensive, balanced.	Lacks appropriate resources, weak references, unbalanced information.	
Formatting	Full compliance to APA 6 th edition formatting	Less than 5 errors in APA 6 th edition formatting	More than 5 errors in APA 6 th edition formatting	

Reflective Artwork: *(Circle Yes or No)*

Reflective artwork represents fully formed and professional visual expression related to the experience of thesis/PC writing. **Yes / No**

Final Comments: