The thesis/dissertation templates available on The Graduate School website have already been formatted to conform with the University of South Carolina formatting requirements. All you need to do is enter in your information wherever you find red text in the document (don’t forget to change all the red text to black before submitting). You are not required to use a template, but if you choose to do so, the template should not be your only point of reference when formatting your document – the templates are designed to be used in conjunction with the Formatting Guide, not in lieu of it.

Please note that some content or pages in the templates may or may not be in your document. For instance, the template includes a Dedication, which is optional. If you decide not to include one or more of the optional sections in your document, then you must remove those pages from the template, and adjust your Table of Contents and page numbers accordingly.

Also note that if you use a template, the formatting may be altered as you edit your document. For example, the templates have been divided into multiple sections (see the information in the Formatting Guide regarding section breaks); if you are not careful, you may end up deleting the section breaks and throwing off the formatting. Pay attention as you make changes, so that you are careful to keep everything where it needs to be.

One helpful way to keep track of formatting in MS Word is to show the paragraph and formatting indicators that are usually hidden. To do this, navigate to the “Home” tab, and click the paragraph symbol (¶) in the upper right corner of the “Paragraph” section; alternatively, hold the “Ctrl” key and the “Shift” key, then press “8”, or “*”. This is a useful tool because it shows you where invisible things like tabs and section breaks have been inserted.

Finally, do not use the templates or samples when determining which style to apply in your document (such as APA, Chicago, MLA, etc.). As mentioned in the Formatting Guide, you should refer to the style manual approved by your department as you write your thesis/dissertation. This is especially important for things like in-text citations, footnotes, endnotes, bibliography, etc.