

Writing a Thesis

What is a thesis?

“Written output from a supervised student project that is the only or major examinable assessment of a research degree” (University of Sydney, 2007).

This guide

- takes you through the process of how to write and prepare your thesis
- explains how to set a timeframe
- describes how to write your first draft
- describes how to prepare your final copy

Key features of a thesis

Normally 40,000 – 80,000 words

Cannot contain any work or content that has previously been included in another degree or diploma

Follows a logical sequence as suggested

Preliminaries:

- Title page
- Abstract
- Acknowledgements
- Table of Contents
- List of Figures and Tables

Main body includes:

- Introduction
- Review of Literature
- Methods
- Results/Findings
- Conclusions

Reference Material

- References / Bibliography
- Appendices

Getting started with writing

Set a timeframe

This helps you manage your time effectively and gives you goals to work towards. Make sure you share your time frame with your supervisors, so that they are ready to receive your drafted work.

Gather information on your topic

Start early with your information retrieval, noting references as you go, and using programmes such as EndNote to collate your literature and references.

Reading and notetaking

Make notes of your reading and file them carefully. Read with purpose, keeping your topic in mind. Try to stay focused on your topic.

Plan your attack

Read through your notes to gain a big picture perspective. Organise sub-headings into logical order and prepare draft outlines.

Write the first draft

Leave the introduction (setting the scene for your treatment of the topic) and conclusion (looking backwards, forwards) and planning the 'big picture' chapters to last.

Write the chapters as you go, i.e., when you have completed the literature search, write the Review of Literature chapter.

Use direct quotes sparingly.

Use the 10 Style Tips

1. Use plain English, writing simply and directly
2. Use the active, not passive voice
3. Make your writing light and crisp by editing out unnecessary words
4. Avoid unnecessary abstraction and jargon that has not been defined or is not necessary
5. Avoid too many long sentences
6. Vary the beginnings of sentences to maintain readers' interest
7. Use sub-headings but do not over use them
8. Avoid one sentence paragraphs
9. Ensure transitions between paragraphs flow
10. Maintain formal, objective tone

Prepare final copy

Edit to remove any spelling or grammatical errors. Be consistent with your spelling (choose either English or NZ version and use it throughout your thesis).

References:

University of Sydney. (2007). *Your practical guide to writing a thesis, treatise or dissertation at the University of Sydney*. Sydney, Australia: SUPRA.