Structuring and Redrafting Your Thesis

STUDYSMarter RESEARCH SERIES

Ant Gray
Learning Skills Advisor (Honours and Coursework Postgrad)
antony.gray@uwa.edu.au
“It’s not what you look at that matters, it’s what you see.”
– Henry David Thoreau

Rewrite in stages

1. Editing (BIG PICTURE)
2. Rethinking and redrafting
3. Proofreading (small details)
4. Formatting and referencing

MACRO

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MICRO
Examiners’ comments for highly rated theses

The candidate sets out to describe the *focus* of her research in the very first sentence of the Introduction. This kind of clarity is typical of the entire thesis.

The thesis is *well written* and has been put together with some care; it has a *logical structure*, is *well illustrated* and it is easy for the reader to navigate their way through it.

The *clear presentation* of hypothesis and *aim* at the start of each chapter is an attractive feature.

The candidate is acquainted with *influential research* in her field.

This thesis has been well thought out... It is beautifully written — clear, concise and readable. The figures and tables are *logically laid out*, complement the text and are clearly captioned and the photos are really quite good.
Good academic writing

Aim for a dissertation /thesis that ...

- Is easy to read, interesting & intellectually rigorous
  - Evidence-based and referenced

Has effective structure (micro & macro)
  - Clear, simple language (with exception of technical terms)
  - Simple, clear illustrations
  - Correct spelling and grammar

Follows disciplinary conventions

SEE THE BIG PICTURE

REWORK, RETHINK, REWRITE

SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

SEE THE BIG PICTURE
Develop a table of contents
Draft some chapter titles
Draft an outline
Check the flow/logic

Think about structure often and early

What goes where?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why am I doing it?</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is known?</td>
<td>Significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is unknown?</td>
<td>Review of research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do I hope to discover?</td>
<td>Aims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How am I going to discover it?</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What have I found?</td>
<td>Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does it mean?</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So what? What are possible applications/recommendations?</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What contribution does it make to knowledge? What next?</td>
<td>Implications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generic thesis structure – Sciences (For your reference)

- Introduction/Background
- Literature review
- Theory/Approach/Method/Materials/Subjects
- Analysis/Results
- Interpretation/Discussion
- Conclusions/Implications/Recommendations

Generic Thesis Structure

Humanities & Social Sciences  (For your reference)

- Ch. 1 Introduction
  - Chapter titles are descriptive and reflect content.

- Ch. 2 Topic & subtopic
  - Literature probably reviewed at beginning of each chapter.

- Ch. 3 Topic & subtopic
  - Each chapter should have an introduction and/or conclusion/link to next chapter.

- Ch. 4 Topic & subtopic
  - Each chapter should deal with one main topic and probably a subtopic.

- Ch. 5 Topic & subtopic

- Ch. 6 Conclusion
  - Conclusion may have a distinct title.

Introduction /Background  (For your reference)

- Outline the context
- Position your study
- Limit the scope
- Provide an overview

Provide clarity about your research purpose

Theory / Approach/Method/Materials/Subjects  (For your reference)

Describe the design of your experiments, surveys, questionnaires etc. used to
- test your hypotheses
- answer your research question

Include
- Why
- When
- Where
- What
- How
Interpretation/Discussion (For your reference)

- Examine results
- Evaluate
- Interpret
- Justify

Refer to literature mentioned in review

Conclusions/Implications/ Recommendations (For your reference)

- Tie ideas together
- Discuss implications
- Focus on the future

State the significance of what you found
After finishing a draft...

Leave time between writing and editing (at least 24 hours)

Be understanding
Look at structure
Do a reverse outline

EACH ELEMENT IS LIKE A FUNNEL:

TOPIC-DEVELOPMENT-STRUCTURE

Intro
PARA 1.
PARA 2.
PARA 3., etc.
Conclusion

Good Writing is CLEAR...

COHESIVE
LOGICAL
EXPRESSED WELL
ANALYTICAL
RELEVANT
Does each part flow onto the next?

Cohesion

COHESIVE WRITING IS...
- EASY TO FOLLOW
- Predictable
- Fluid, unified and interconnected

COHESIVE WRITING USES...
- Topic sentences
- TRANSITION WORDS
- Summary statements

Relevance

Linked from start to finish
Relevance

Do all the themes belong together?

Thesis Statement
Idea 1
Idea 2
Idea 3...
Restate thesis

Logical

General to specific
(overview to detail)
SPECIFIC TO GENERAL

SEQUENCE TYPES...
- Chronological (time)
- Spatial (space, place)
- Step-by-step (process)
- Order of importance (most important to least)
- By kind (like with like)

Analytic

Analytical writing...
Carefully explores the relationships between ideas

Discusses: Consider by argument, debate
Compares: Identifying similarities, differences
Synthesises: Combining ideas
Critically evaluates: Judging against criteria
Clear, catchy, interesting

Expressed Well

Clear, authoritative, satisfying

SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

Sentences to avoid

Unnecessarily wordy (aim for 12-25 words and one main idea)
From analysing the data presented in Table 2 the results show that sample A is higher in sodium levels than sample B. Sample A is higher in sodium levels than sample B (Table 2).

Incomplete
Although many of these instruments are commonly applied to the assessment of learning in young children. They have a number of potential limitations.

Unclear (multiple interpretations or meanings)
Sample X was chilled.
Patient 3 had an incurable disease.
A: The level of demand on the commitment and ability of communities to undertake coordinated and targeted action in Natural Resource Management has increased over the last two decades and there has been recognition of the need to develop community capacity to meet these new challenges yet there is little evidence of consideration of the notions of communities that can be derived from a rich, if fluctuating, history of community research.

B. The demand for communities to undertake coordinated and targeted action in Natural Resource Management has increased over the last two decades. There has been recognition of the need to develop community capacity to meet these new challenges. However, in addressing these problems, there is little evidence that the history of community research has been consulted.

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www.youtube.com/UWAstudents

ADVANCED WRITING: MAKE AN IMPACT

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Upcoming Honours & Masters workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon 8</td>
<td>Practicing your seminar presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs 11</td>
<td>Preparing your seminar presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon 15</td>
<td>Practising your seminar presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs 18</td>
<td>Preparing your seminar presentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coursework Research Forum
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Free Study Advice

**WRITESmart**

Every day, 10am-12pm.
Reid Library, Ground floor.