

THESIS CHECKLIST

Title

Is the title informative and concise?	Avoid long winded and colloquial titles. A thesis is not a novel. The title must be serious, not silly. The reader should be able to immediately understand the content of the thesis from the title.
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Abstract

The abstract is the front door to the thesis. It is the first main part of the thesis read by the examiner and is instrumental in forming impressions about the quality of the work to be presented. Although it is written last, it needs to “gleam” from a careful drafting and re-drafting process.

The abstract should contain:

◦ A clear statement of the topic in the first paragraph	The reader should not have to wade through a lot of material to get to a statement of the topic covered in the thesis document.
◦ A rationale for the work being performed	Why was the work done? Chapter 5 has a discussion of development of thesis rationale.
◦ A discussion of the outcomes of the literature review	The literature review is a major part of the thesis. It must figure in the thesis abstract. What was found? What do we know and don't know?
◦ A clear statement of the thesis aims/ hypotheses	The thesis aims/ hypotheses need to be plainly stated.
◦ A clear statement of the study/ data collection(s) and how they have been conducted	Describe each study and its protocols.
◦ A clear statement of the study sample/ participants	Be clear about the study sample sizes and recruitment methods.
◦ A clear statement of the study outcomes	What did each study show?
◦ A clear statement of what the contribution to knowledge has been	Phrase this discussion in terms of the research aims.
An outline of the suggested future work	Avoid a token “more work is needed”. Give some serious suggestions.

Introduction

The introduction should include:

◦ A clear outline of the structure of the introduction	After the preliminaries, you should clearly outline what is going to be included in the introduction ie “Tell them what you are going to tell them”.
◦ A literature review in which all pertinent literature has been covered	The literature review must be comprehensive. Search methods are described in Chapter 5.
◦ An appropriately critical stance in the review of the literature	Some thesis introductions are literature lists rather than critiques. Make sure you have sufficient critique in the review.
◦ A clear discussion of the outcomes of the literature review including identification of knowledge gaps	Spell out “What do we know? What do we not know?”

◦ A rationale for the study drawing upon the literature review outcomes	The rationale development should draw upon the research literature. How prevalent is the issue or problem? Can it be costed? Does it inform theory and practice?
◦ A clear statement of the study's aims/ questions/ hypotheses	State these unambiguously. Put them under a separate heading. Make sure they remain the same throughout the thesis.

Method

The Method section should include:

◦ A full description of how the study participants were chosen	The inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants should be stated as well as the recruitment process.
◦ Details of how many study participants were approached and how many participated	You need to keep the relevant records to provide these details. In survey research this information is expected, but it should be provided for all studies.
◦ A full description of all tools and protocols used in the study including interview schedules, tools and apparatus	The level of detail should be sufficient to enable replication of the study. Put lengthy tools as appendices, but describe their characteristics e.g. reliability and validity.
◦ A balanced methodological defence of the tools and methods chosen	Explain why you used the tools and methods you did. It does not need to be a methodology tutorial but why you chose to do what you did needs to be explicated.

Results

The results section(s) should contain:

◦ A clear outline of the structure of the results chapter(s)	Tell them what you are going to tell them.
◦ Uniquely numbered tables and figures	Each figure and table needs to be consecutively and uniquely numbered. e.g. Table 1,2,3 and Figure 1,2,3.
◦ Clear table and figure titles that stand alone	The table and figure titles need to be such that they could be taken out of the document, shown to an intelligent layperson and their content understood.
◦ Consistently formatted tables and figures prepared according to the relevant style standards	The tables and figures must be consistently formatted in the manner of an approved style standard.

Discussion

The discussion section must include:

◦ A clear outline of the structure of the discussion chapter	Tell them what you are going to tell them.
◦ A point by point analysis of how your results answer the research questions you presented in the thesis introduction	You asked the questions. Now you have to answer them with the evidence you have assembled.
◦ A discussion of how your results compare to the rest of the literature reviewed in the literature review	You now need to describe how your results fit in with the rest of the research literature.

Conclusion

The conclusion section should include:

◦ A clear outline of the structure of the conclusion chapter	Tell them what you are going to tell them.
◦ A short review of the studies you conducted in the thesis	Briefly describe which studies you did and how you did them. The literature review is a major piece of the thesis. Don't ignore it in this discussion.
◦ A clear description of the outcomes of the study you have performed	What did you find?
◦ A discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the study you have performed	What qualifications should be placed upon the outcomes? Do not self flagellate to the extent that the reader wonders why you would have performed such a flawed piece of work
◦ A discussion of the future work that is suggested by your study outcomes	What should happen next. No lame "more work is needed" statements, please.

References and attachments

◦ Are all the references cited in the text, included in the reference list?	It is essential that this is carefully checked.
◦ Are all the references in the reference list included in the text?	It is essential that this is carefully checked.
◦ Do all references adhere to the appropriate style conventions?	It is essential that you adhere rigorously to the style standard.
◦ Is there an accurate table of contents?	Most word processors have Table of Contents generators that work well if you have used proper heading styles. Don't edit your document after you have last created the Table of Contents.
◦ Is there an accurate list of figures and tables?	Make sure there is an exact correspondence between what is in the list and the text.
◦ Are all appendices listed in the text included?	Make sure there is an exact correspondence between what is in the list and the text.
◦ Have you included your ethics clearance details in the locally prescribed manner?	Most thesis requirements now state the clearance and/or a declaration have to be included.

Other requirements

Have you adhered to all local requirements for submission?	Most universities and colleges have their own checklist for submission requirements. It is important that you follow them.
Correct binding method?	Is the method of binding as specified? Most universities have binding services or recommended suppliers that know the requirements.
Correct number of copies?	One for you, one for each supervisor, and then the numbers required by the university (this is often 3 or 4 copies).