



Quality Thesis Writing: A Context Of Social Science Research

¹Dr. Rajesh Kumar Sharma & ²Dr. Anita Sharma

¹Dept. of Sociology, Govt. College Saipau, District-Dholpur, Rajasthan, India

²Principal, Vivekanand Girls' College, Dholpur, Rajasthan, India

ABSTRACT; A thesis (plural: theses), or dissertation (abbreviated diss.),^[2] is a document submitted in support of candidature for an academic degree or professional qualification presenting the author's research and findings.^[3] In some contexts, the word thesis or a cognate is used for part of a bachelor's or master's course, while dissertation is normally applied to a doctorate. This is the typical arrangement in American English. In other contexts, such as within most institutions of the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland, the reverse is true.^[4] The term graduate thesis is sometimes used to refer to both master's theses and doctoral dissertations.^[5]

The required complexity or quality of research of a thesis or dissertation can vary by country, university, or program, and the required minimum study period may thus vary significantly in duration.

KEYWORDS: thesis, quality, dissertation, doctorate, university, program, social science, research

I.INTRODUCTION

A thesis (or dissertation) may be arranged as a thesis by publication or a monograph, with or without appended papers, respectively, though many graduate programs allow candidates to submit a curated collection of articles. An ordinary monograph has a title page, an abstract, a table of contents, comprising the various chapters like introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, and bibliography or more usually a references section. They differ in their structure in accordance with the many different areas of study (arts, humanities, social sciences, technology, sciences, etc.) and the differences between them. In a thesis by publication, the chapters constitute an introductory and comprehensive review of the appended published and unpublished article documents.¹

Dissertations normally report on a research project or study, or an extended analysis of a topic. The structure of a thesis or dissertation explains the purpose, the previous research literature impinging on the topic of the study, the methods used, and the findings of the project. Most world universities use a multiple chapter format:²

- a) an introduction: which introduces the research topic, the methodology, as well as its scope and significance
- b) a literature review: reviewing relevant literature and showing how this has informed the research issue³
- c) a methodology chapter, explaining how the research has been designed and why the research methods/population/data collection and analysis being used have been chosen
- d) a findings chapter: outlining the findings of the research itself
- e) an analysis and discussion chapter: analysing the findings and discussing them in the context of the literature review (this chapter is often divided into two—analysis and discussion)⁴
- f) a conclusion.^{[7][8]} which shows judgement or decision reached by thesis

Degree-awarding institutions often define their own house style that candidates have to follow when preparing a thesis document. In addition to institution-specific house styles, there exist a number of field-specific, national, and international standards and recommendations for the presentation of theses, for instance ISO 7144.^[3] Other applicable international standards include ISO 2145 on section numbers, ISO 690 on bibliographic references, and ISO 31 or its revision ISO 80000 on quantities or units.⁵

Some older house styles specify that front matter (title page, abstract, table of content, etc.) must use a separate page number sequence from the main text, using Roman numerals. The relevant international standard^[3] and many newer style guides recognize that this book design practice can cause confusion where electronic document viewers number all pages of a document continuously from the first page, independent of any printed page numbers. They, therefore, avoid the traditional separate number sequence for front matter and require a single sequence of Arabic numerals starting with 1 for the first printed page (the recto of the title page).⁶



Presentation requirements, including pagination, layout, type and color of paper, use of acid-free paper (where a copy of the dissertation will become a permanent part of the library collection), paper size, order of components, and citation style, will be checked page by page by the accepting officer before the thesis is accepted and a receipt is issued.

However, strict standards are not always required. Most Italian universities, for example, have only general requirements on the character size and the page formatting, and leave much freedom for the actual typographic details.^[9]

The thesis committee (or dissertation committee) is a committee that supervises a student's dissertation. In the US, these committees usually consist of a primary supervisor or advisor and two or more committee members, who supervise the progress of the dissertation and may also act as the examining committee, or jury, at the oral examination of the thesis (see § Thesis examinations).⁷

At most universities, the committee is chosen by the student in conjunction with their primary adviser, usually after completion of the comprehensive examinations or prospectus meeting, and may consist of members of the comps committee. The committee members are doctors in their field (whether a PhD or other designation) and have the task of reading the dissertation, making suggestions for changes and improvements, and sitting in on the defense. Sometimes, at least one member of the committee must be a professor in a department that is different from that of the student.

The role of the thesis supervisor is to assist and support a student in their studies, and to determine whether a thesis is ready for examination.^[10] The thesis is authored by the student, not the supervisor. The duties of the thesis supervisor also include checking for copyright⁸ compliance and ensuring that the student has included in/with the thesis a statement attesting that he/she is the sole author of the thesis.^[11]

In India the thesis defense is called a viva voce (Latin for "by live voice") examination (viva in short). Involved in the viva are two examiners, one guide(student guide) and the candidate. One examiner is an academic from the candidate's own university department (but not one of the candidate's supervisors) and the other is an external examiner from a different university.^[22]

In India, PG Qualifications such as MSc Physics accompanies submission of dissertation in Part I and submission of a Project (a working model of an innovation) in Part II. Engineering and Designing qualifications such as BTech, B.E., B.Des, MTech, M.E. or M.Des also involves submission of dissertation. In all the cases, the dissertation can be extended for summer internship at certain research and development organizations or also as PhD synopsis.⁹

II.DISCUSSION

One of the requirements for certain advanced degrees is often an oral examination (called a viva voce examination or just viva in the UK and certain other English-speaking countries). This examination normally occurs after the dissertation is finished but before it is submitted to the university, and may comprise a presentation (often public) by the student and questions posed by an examining committee or jury. In North America, an initial oral examination in the field of specialization may take place just before the student settles down to work on the dissertation. An additional oral exam may take place after the dissertation is completed and is known as a thesis defense or dissertation defense, which at some universities may be a mere formality and at others may result in the student being required to make significant revisions. The result of the examination may be given immediately following deliberation by the examination committee (in which case the candidate may immediately be considered to have received their degree), or at a later date, in which case the examiners may prepare a defense report that is forwarded to a Board or Committee of Postgraduate Studies, which then officially recommends the candidate for the degree.¹⁰

Potential decisions (or "verdicts") include:

- Accepted/pass with no corrections.
The thesis is accepted as presented. A grade may be awarded, though in many countries PhDs are not graded at all, and in others, only one of the theoretically possible grades (the highest) is ever used in practice.¹¹
- The thesis must be revised.
Revisions (for example, correction of numerous grammatical or spelling errors; clarification of concepts or methodology; an addition of sections) are required. One or more members of the jury or the thesis supervisor will make the decision on the acceptability of revisions and provide written confirmation that they have been satisfactorily completed. If, as is often the case, the needed revisions are relatively modest, the examiners may all sign the thesis with the verbal understanding that the candidate will review the revised thesis with their supervisor before submitting the completed version.¹²



- Extensive revision required.

The thesis must be revised extensively and undergo the evaluation and defense process again from the beginning with the same examiners. Problems may include theoretical or methodological issues. A candidate who is not recommended for the degree after the second defense must normally withdraw from the program.¹³

- Unacceptable.

The thesis is unacceptable and the candidate must withdraw from the program. This verdict is given only when the thesis requires major revisions and when the examination makes it clear that the candidate is incapable of making such revisions.¹⁴

At most North American institutions the latter two verdicts are extremely rare, for two reasons. First, to obtain the status of doctoral candidates, graduate students typically pass a qualifying examination or comprehensive examination, which often includes an oral defense. Students who pass the qualifying examination are deemed capable of completing scholarly work independently and are allowed to proceed with working on a dissertation. Second, since the thesis supervisor (and the other members of the advisory committee) will normally have reviewed the thesis extensively before recommending the student to proceed to the defense, such an outcome would be regarded as a major failure not only on the part of the candidate but also by the candidate's supervisor (who should have recognized the substandard quality of the dissertation long before the defense was allowed to take place). It is also fairly rare for a thesis to be accepted without any revisions; the most common outcome of a defense is for the examiners to specify minor revisions (which the candidate typically completes in a few days or weeks).¹⁵

At universities on the British pattern it is not uncommon for theses at the viva stage to be subject to major revisions in which a substantial rewrite is required, sometimes followed by a new viva. Very rarely, the thesis may be awarded the lesser degree of M.Phil. (Master of Philosophy) instead, preventing the candidate from resubmitting the thesis.¹⁶

A submission of the thesis is the last formal requirement for most students after the defense. By the final deadline, the student must submit a complete copy of the thesis to the appropriate body within the accepting institution, along with the appropriate forms, bearing the signatures of the primary supervisor, the examiners, and in some cases, the head of the student's department. Other required forms may include library authorizations (giving the university library permission to make the thesis available as part of its collection) and copyright permissions (in the event that the student has incorporated copyrighted materials in the thesis). Many large scientific publishing houses (e.g. Taylor & Francis, Elsevier) use copyright agreements that allow the authors to incorporate their published articles into dissertations without separate authorization.¹⁷

Failure to submit the thesis by the deadline may result in graduation (and granting of the degree) being delayed. At most U.S. institutions, there will also be various fees (for binding, microfilming, copyright registration, and the like), which must be paid before the degree will be granted.¹⁸

Once all the paperwork is in order, copies of the thesis may be made available in one or more university libraries. Specialist abstracting services exist to publicize the content of these beyond the institutions in which they are produced. Many institutions now insist on submission of digitized as well as printed copies of theses; the digitized versions of successful theses are often made available online.¹⁹

III. RESULTS

A thesis as a collection of articles^[1] or series of papers,^[2] also known as thesis by published works,^[1] or article thesis,^[3] is a doctoral dissertation that, as opposed to a coherent monograph, is a collection of research papers with an introductory section consisting of summary chapters. Other less used terms are "sandwich thesis" and "stapler thesis". It is composed of already-published journal articles, conference papers and book chapters; and, occasionally, not-yet-published manuscripts. A thesis by publication is a form of compilation thesis (a term used in Nordic countries). Another form of compilation thesis is the essay thesis, which is composed of previously unpublished independent essays.^[3]

Today, article theses are the standard format in natural, medical, and engineering sciences (e.g., in the Nordic countries),²⁰ while in social and cultural sciences, there is a strong but decreasing tradition to produce coherent monographs, i.e., thesis as a series of linked chapters. At other times, doctoral students may have a choice between writing a monograph or a compilation thesis.^{[4][5]}

The thesis by published works format is chosen in cases where the student intends to first publish the thesis in parts in international journals. It often results in a higher number of publications during doctoral studies than a monograph, and may render in a higher number of citations in other research publications – something that may be advantageous from



research funding point of view and may facilitate readership appointment after the dissertation²¹. A further reason for writing a compilation thesis is that some of the articles can be written together with other authors, which may be especially helpful for new doctoral students. A majority of the articles should be reviewed by referees outside of the student's own department, supplementing the audit carried out by the supervisory staff and dissertation opponent, thus assuring international standards.^[4]

The introductory or summary chapters of a thesis by published works should be written independently by the student. They should include an extensive annotated bibliography or literature review, placing the scope and results of the articles in the wider context of the current state of international research. They constitute a comprehensive summary of the appended papers, and should clarify the contribution of the doctoral student if the papers are written by several authors.²² They should not provide new results, but may provide synthesis of new conclusions by combining results from several of the papers. They may supplement the articles with a motivation of the chosen scope, research problems, objectives and methods, and a strengthening of the theoretical framework, analysis and conclusions, since the extent of the articles normally does not allow these kind of longer discussions.^{[3][6][7]}

IV. CONCLUSIONS

When it comes to writing a thesis, it is very essential to follow certain factors to deliver an effective and good thesis.²³ These factors are key to quality work, made simple yet promising. The following 10 tips can very easily take the steps to write a quality thesis simple, clear, and engaging!

Firstly,

Know your subject well- A better understanding of the subject not only makes the process of writing inspiring but also strengthens the quality of work. When one is a subject expert each phase of writing becomes easier and well communicable.²⁴

Secondly,

Focus to specific- To deliver better writing it is important to be specific and follow a particular area with in-depth understanding. Moreover, to boost the subject matter the title should also be catchy and specific. One should be precise about the subject matter, the quality of the work enhances from both writing and research point of view.

Thirdly,

A finer Literature review is the key- For any superior thesis, a review of literature is the base. So, better execution of the literature review enhances not only the quality of work but also shows a proper direction towards penning down the complete thesis.

Fourthly,

An analytical mind as a companion- When it comes to writing a thesis it is also essential to have a research-oriented mindset along with good writing skills. Writing a thesis requires an analytical angle generating an engaging thesis.²⁵

Fifthly,

Know the pillars- The pillars of a better thesis are Research Methodology and Data analysis. Needless to say, a quality thesis requires a better understanding of research methodology and data analysis. Proper guidance, reference book along with the pilot study also simplifies the writing part of the chapters based on methodology and data analysis.

Sixthly-

Outline the Chapters- Having a proper skeleton of the entire thesis, helps in developing the structure and content along with it. Any thesis usually consists of chapters such as –Introduction, Literature review, Methodology, Data Analysis, Findings and Discussion, Conclusion. Needless to say, such chapter formation gives a direction in easy and prompt filtering of content. Moreover, precise writing gets simplified and one can focus on chapter writing as the research progresses. This way it is not mandatory to write the beginning part initially.²⁶

Seventhly,

Walk-in three stages, the key to quick and quality thesis – Writing a thesis requires patience! So, to deliver a better write-up, it is required to divide the process of writing in three-stage or phases. The first phase is to have better research before writing. When one is well equipped with better knowledge and research about the subject, it becomes easier to



focus on what to write and whatnot. Descriptive and explanatory writing counts volume. The second phase is writing in a flow without editing. This way it becomes effortless to write at length creative, original, and quality substance. And the third phase is editing, especially line and copy editing. Like writing, editing is equally important to have polished content.

Eighthly,

Writing is a practice, to be penned in pieces – Most of the time, thesis writing becomes a tiring affair because most of the time one focuses on the bigger picture, that is the entire thesis. Needless to say, to enjoy the process, it is necessary to write on a regular basis in pieces, and focus on small chunks of chapters. That keeps motivated and the thesis is not only qualitatively better but also is completed faster.

Ninthly,

Take a Break- A quality thesis has to be error-free. And to find the error or mistakes it is essential to take a break after writing the entire thesis. After a short break or gap of a few days, it is important to have a fresh start and again re-read the entire thesis to give a final polishing touch.

Last but not the least, Finally-

Retouch to Impress- After completion of the entire thesis, finally, the bigger picture is crystal clear. So, it is significant to modify the Introduction and Conclusion chapters. Moreover, the mirror and gateway to developing a good impression of any writing come from its abstract. So, it is significant to write and craft the Abstract well! The abstract gives the picture of the entire thesis, so it should be clear, precise, impressive!

To conclude, there is no instant formula for writing a quality thesis. It is a mix and match of three ingredients that is the literature review, methodology, and data analysis. When these three are well understood and executed it becomes a stimulating and absorbing process to write a well-attributed thesis. However, writing of any sort requires motivation and inspiration and that comes from every bit one writes regularly. The tips and tricks to follow 3Ps- that is PRACTICE- PATIENCE -PERSISTENT can make the entire journey of writing a thesis enjoyable and self-fulfilling.²⁷

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