Postgraduate Study,
Writing up your PhD thesis
2017 - 2018

School of Life Sciences
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Thesis Committees

Your PhD studies in the School of Life Sciences conclude with the writing and submission of your PhD thesis, which you will present for viva voce examination.

This booklet has primarily been prepared in order to:

- Provide guidance on how to approach writing up
- Provide information about how to format your thesis
- Provide information about what to include in your thesis
- Help you avoid pitfalls which could slow down your progress in writing
- Specify the criteria against which your work will be judged
- Let you know what happens after your thesis has been submitted

Please read this booklet carefully before and during the writing up period.

Wishing you great success in your PhD project and write-up

Professor Carol MacKintosh
Head of Postgraduate Studies
August 2017
What is a PhD thesis?

- A PhD thesis is the written presentation of an original piece of research performed over a period of 2.5-3.5 years
- It should present the main findings of your research in a clear and concise manner
- It should discuss your main findings and advances in the light of current published data and theories
- It should discuss the implications and new opportunities offered by these findings for future research

What are its functions?

- Present the results and interpretation of your research in a coherent form
- Put your study methodology and data into context with current published methodologies and data
- Show your ability to communicate the results to others (scientists)
- Enable the examiners to judge the outcome of your research efforts (i.e. does it merit the award of a PhD?)
- Be the starting point for the Viva Voce
- Act as a concise summary of methods and results for yourself and your supervisor/laboratory
- Provide training in the process of scientific writing
- Provide training in meeting writing targets

Bear in mind…

- A thesis should be as concise as possible (we recommend that it should not exceed 35,000 words - about 120 pages double-spaced excluding Methods, Figures, Tables and References
- Two of your results chapters could be the equivalent of a paper each (about 10,000 words)
- The third results chapter could contain preliminary, but interesting, results
- Keep in mind that a good thesis can be short!
Formatting your thesis

Your thesis should follow a logical order, namely:

- Title
- Abstract – summary of main results and conclusions
- Introduction and Review of Literature – providing background information and define the questions to be pursued
- Materials and, Methods and Conditions – discuss level of detail with your supervisor
- Results – Chapters 2-4 – including figures and tables, statistical analyses of data
- Discussion – put findings in perspective and context, what is currently known, what was found, its novelty and where to go next
- Acknowledgements
- References

See also www.citethemrightonline.com

Formatting Specifics

- A4 portrait size
- Margins – 40 mm left, others 20 mm.
- Double-spaced typescript in English (one or both sides of the leaf)
- Pages should be numbered consecutively (centrally at top of the page)
- Title page should include the title, author's name, degree designation and date of presentation
- Table of contents
- List of illustrations
- List of abbreviations
- Acknowledgements
- Signed declarations by the student and the supervisor
- Summary (approximately 300 words) – 2 extra copies of the summary are required for publication
- Main text – single spaced footnotes are allowed
- Diagrams, illustrations and tables should be inserted as close as possible to the relevant text
- References arranged in logical sequence, e.g. alphabetically by authors and by date in the case of multiple publications from the same authors
- Supplementary material (e.g. publications, CD ROM) may be sewn into a pocket attached to the back cover
- The copyright of the thesis shall remain with the author

Please see also www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/university-calendar/higher-degree-general-regulations/theses/

From 1st August 2015, graduating research students will no longer have to supply a printed hardbound copy of their final thesis to the University. However, all research students will still be required to upload an electronic version of their final thesis into the University’s research repository (Discovery) and will not be allowed to graduate until they have done this.

The initial submission of your thesis for examination will be in a format specified by the Examiners. In most cases, the Internal Examiners prefer a printed copy and you will need to submit a printed copy to the University Registry who will ensure it is sent to the External Examiner.

www.dundee.ac.uk/library/research/discovery/howtomakeasubmissiontodiscovery/
Formatting your thesis for PhD students completing a Chemistry project

Formatting your thesis

Your thesis should follow a logical order, namely:

- Introduction
- Results and Discussions (often several chapters)
- Summary/Conclusion/ Further work (usually very short)
- Experimental (this is often at least half the thesis)
- References

See also: www.citethemrightonline.com

Formatting Specifics

- A4 portrait size
- Margins – 40 mm left, others 20 mm.
- Typically 1.5 spaced typescript in English (one or both sides of the leaf)
- Pages should be numbered consecutively (centrally at top of the page)
- Title page should include the title, author's name, degree designation and date of presentation
- Table of contents
- List of figures (optional)
- List of abbreviations
- Acknowledgements
- Signed declarations by the student and the supervisor
- Summary (approximately 300 words) – 2 extra copies of the summary are required for publication
- Main text – single spaced footnotes are allowed
- Diagrams, illustrations and tables should be inserted as close as possible to the relevant text
- References arranged in logical sequence, e.g. using J.Med Chem format
- Supplementary material (e.g. publications, CD ROM) may be sewn into a pocket attached to the back cover
- The copyright of the thesis shall remain with the author

Please see also
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Do’s and Don’ts

Do

• Read papers while you are doing research

• Take part in the training courses that you will be offered to hone your pre-writing and writing skills

• Write methods as you go along

• Produce an outline plan early (beginning of year 3, consult your supervisor)

• Start organising data into 2 to 3 results chapters

• Start thinking about:
  Which data to put in the thesis – remember you do not have to present all data obtained
  How to present the data in figures and tables
  Give supervisors adequate time to read chapter drafts
  Keep at least two copies of the draft thesis
  Be aware of who will be the external examiner

Don’t

• Leave data analyses to the last moment

• Leave all writing up to the last moment

• Spend too long trying to create a perfect thesis

• Take up a new position before submitting your thesis

Remember that you will have to allow adequate time to have your thesis printed and bound. We recommend that you allow ONE WEEK for these tasks to be completed.
Timeline

Final Analysis of Data — Methods

Figures and Tables

Results

Discussion

Introduction

Summary

References, etc
Criteria for the Award of a PhD

Your thesis should:

- Present adequate knowledge of the field and related literature
- Form a significant contribution to knowledge
- Give evidence of originality in one or both of
  - (i) the establishment of new facts,
  - (ii) exercise of independent critical thought
- Contain matter suitable for publication
- Be of an acceptable style and presentation

The candidate should:

- Show adequate knowledge of the field and related literature
- Show evidence of independent critical thought
The Examination Procedure

Notice of submission (<3 months before the event)

Appointment of Examiners

Submission

Viva Voce

Result

Appeal?

Resubmission

Amendments

Degree

Degree