

"Typical" thesis structure

- Prefatory material
 - Title page, Acknowledgements, Table of Contents, Abstract
 - May also include Dedication, List of Publications, List of Abbreviations etc
- (Introduction)
- Review of the Literature
 - May be selectively focused on issues of relevance to the thesis
 - May summarise using tables
- (Statement of Hypotheses)

"Typical" thesis structure

- Methods (and Preliminary Experiments)
 - Must be in sufficient detail to permit replication of your experiments
 - Lengthy standard methods may be presented in Appendices
- Results
 - May be in the form of text or primarily as figures and tables
 - May have Discussion with each chapter
- (Concluding) Discussion
- References
 - An author-date format is preferable

Getting started

- Think about the "plot" of your thesis
- Define your structure early -- write a table of contents with subheadings
 - At the outset, for the literature review
 - As data become available, for the results and discussion
- Get to know your software
 - word processor, reference manager
 - statistics and graphics programs if appropriate
- Talk to a statistics advisor if appropriate

Some guidelines for scientific writing

- Short, clear sentences
- Conventional is no first person, generally passive voice
- Clear subsections, separate paragraphs for each point
- Avoid verbosity and jargon; avoid excessive abbreviations
- Remember, you're trying to sell your story, not bury it!

Getting on with it

- Planning and time management are crucial
- Attention to basic ergonomics is valuable
- Save often and make backups!!!
- Arrange regular review meetings with your supervisor and co-supervisor
- Agree target dates -- then meet them!
- Pay attention to feedback
- Discuss potential examiners early

Writing for your examiners

- Extent to which the thesis objectives were met by the candidate
- Opinion on the originality and significance of the work
- Opinion on overall presentation of thesis
- Quality of Literature Review; Method; Results, Findings and Data Analysis; Discussion of Results; Style

Getting it finished

- Remember the "plot" when writing the Discussion
 - Link to existing knowledge
 - Explain what's new and different
 - Identify new questions that arise
 - Emphasise the potential of the work
- Self-criticism beats examiners' criticism
- Avoid over-interpretation at all costs

Submission

- Get another person to proofread your thesis or learn to read backwards
- Spelling and grammar checkers are pathetic!
- Review figures and tables with special care
- Obtain a copy of the thesis submission kit
 - follow guidelines on formatting
 - ensure all required forms are completed
 - notify the Graduate Research School of your intention to submit

Examiners' recommendations

- The thesis merits the award of the degree.
- The thesis merits the award of the degree subject to minor corrections as listed being made to the satisfaction of the Head of School.
- The thesis requires further work on matters detailed in my report. Should performance in this further work be to the satisfaction of the Faculty Higher Degree Committee, the thesis would merit the award of the degree.
- The thesis does not merit the award of the degree in its present form and further work as described in my report is required. The revised thesis should be subject to re-examination.
- The thesis does not merit the award of the degree and does not demonstrate sufficient ability by the candidate for a resubmitted thesis to achieve this merit.

Some useful UNSW links

- How to write a PhD thesis (by Prof Joe Wolfe, School of Physics)
<http://www.phys.unsw.edu.au/~jw/thesis.html>
- Graduate Research School information
<http://www.grs.unsw.edu.au/currentstudents/thesis.html>
- UNSW Library Thesis Information
<http://info.library.unsw.edu.au/skills/services/postthesis.html>