How to write your

Dissertation or Thesis

Structure:

The structure of a scientific thesis or dissertation has three parts: the beginning, the middle, and the end.

The beginning:

- Title page
- Abstract
- Dedication
- Acknowledgements
- Table of contents
- List of figures
- List of tables
- List of appendices
- List of abbreviations
- Introduction

The middle:

- Methods
- Results

The end:

- Discussion
- References
- Glossary
- Appendices
- Published papers

Abstract:

- An abstract is a condensed version of your whole dissertation or thesis. It is supposed to be a short description of your work.
- Start with the significance of the proposed project.
- Your abstract should be short and not more than one side of paper (250 to 350 words).
- What question are you asking?
- What are you results?
- What is your answer to the question posed?
- Plan your abstract in this order:
    (1) Methods;
    (2) Results;
    (3) Introduction;
    (4) Discussion.
- No references, equations, or figures go here.

Introduction:

- Always start broad, end narrow.
- Introduce your project.
- Write about the background of your research.
- Why your project is interesting.
- What questions you have aimed to answer.
- Keep your sentences quite short.
- Stick to one idea each paragraph.

The beginning:

- General overview of the area.
- Brief history of important findings from past up to date.

The middle:

- The aims of your study and why your doing this.
- Use as many references as you want, be reasonable.

The end:

- Brief introduction about your results.
- Use figures/maps from papers or books

Methods:

- Methods are simply a set of instructions for the reader.
- You may need to carry out a literature review (include sources and equations).
- Writing methods are simply telling someone what you did.
- Be clear and do not get too wordy.
- Do not explain too much about why you have used a certain method.
- You can write your method in either the present or past tense.
- Make full use of diagrams in this section.
- Use symbols in the correct context and correct font style.
- Include all the details of any calculations you have made.
- If you have written computer program, these may fit best in an appendix.
- Do not include any results.
- State exactly which piece of equipment you used; give the name, model number, and manufacturer.
- Reference computer programs, database, and World Wide Websites.

Results:

- The results will show the examiner what you did and how you did it.
- It is a good idea to carry out a review of all the literature.
- Clarify your aims.
- Your aims should fit your results, not the other way around.
- Arrange your results to support your aims.
- You need to know what results you have.
- Think about your project and what you have achieved.
- Include all results that are relevant to your aims.
- Walk from result to result, setting out a logical pathway for your reader to follow.
- Arrange your supporting results into groups under your main results.
- Your results will give facts not opinions.
- When writing your results state which method you used.
- It is possibly to write mainly in the past tense.
- While writing your results, you may think of points that should go into your introduction or discussion chapters. Always keep notes of these as you go along.

Discussion:

- Always start broadly and narrow down to your aims.
- Start by restate your aims.
- Your discussion should explain both what you have done and why you did it.
- Use the present tense for any general conclusions and the past tense to talk about your results.
- Use figures and tables wherever possible to help the reader to understand your presentation.
- Your introduction and results are the building blocks of your discussion.
- You can start by considering your results.

The beginning:

- You should start by introducing your aims again.

The middle:

- Add points for discussion of individual results to build up a body of information that addresses your aims.
- Tell the reader how you could have improved the aspects of your work.
- Relate your results to your field of research.

The end:

- The discussion finishes with the ideas for future work and is then followed by a short final statement called conclusion, which gives a brief summary of the whole project and how it addressed the original aim.

Conclusion:

- Your conclusion should be crystal clear.
- Plan and look carefully at your results; they may be telling you things you have not thought about.

References:

- Enter the full reference description into a reference database program or word processing file.
- Use a consistent style for citations and references.
- Make sure that your references are up-to-date.
- For journal articles enter authors, year, title, journal with correct abbreviation, volume number, page numbers, according to your conventions of your field.
- For books enter all authors, year, title, editors (if any), publisher and the town or city in which they are based.

Figures:

- Decide which figures and tables you need to include.
- Prepare a draft of each figure and table.
- Annotate figures and write a short legend.
- Label each axis of a graph and add units and scale.