

Sheridan College
Faculty of Applied Science & Technology
Thesis Guide

OVERVIEW

Following is a road map that briefly outlines the contents of an entire thesis. This is a comprehensive overview, and as such is helpful in making sure that at a glance you understand up front the necessary elements that will constitute each section of your dissertation. This broad overview is a prelude to the steps involved in each of the chapters that are described further in this document.

FRONT MATTER

- Title page
- Abstract (limit 150 words)
- Acknowledgments
- Table of contents
- List of tables and figures

THESIS CHAPTERS

Below are generic outlines for a five-chapter thesis

1. Introduction
2. Literature review
3. Methodology
4. Findings (Data Analysis)
5. Discussions, Conclusions and Recommendations

The following pages will provide a guide for each section of the thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction

- Introduction
 - The introduction includes an overview of the purpose and focus of the study, why it is significant, how it was conducted, and how it will contribute.
- Statement of the Problem
 - The problem indicates the need for the study, describes the issue or problem to be studied, and situates it in a broader educational or social context. The problem statement includes a brief, well-articulated summary of the literature that substantiates the study, with references to more detailed discussions in Chapter 2.
- Purpose of the Study
 - Describing the research purpose in a logical, explicit manner, the statement of purpose is the major objective or intent of the study; it enables the reader to understand the central thrust of the research
- Research Question / Thesis Statement
 - Research question / Thesis Statement is directly tied to the purpose. It should be specific, unambiguously stated, and open-ended. It cues readers to the direction the study will take and help to shape the scope of the study.
- Contribution of the Study
 - Contribution addresses the benefits that may be derived from doing the study (theoretical and practical significance), thereby reaffirming the research purpose and clearly outlining the specific contribution of the study to the existing body of knowledge.
- Definition of Terms
- Organization of the thesis
 - This brief concluding explanation delineates the contents of the remaining chapters in the dissertation
- Conclusion

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This chapter situates the study in the context of previous research and scholarly material pertaining to the topic, presents a critical synthesis of empirical literature according to relevant themes or variables, justifies how the study addresses a gap or problem in the literature, and outlines the theoretical or conceptual framework of the study. A dissertation does not merely restate the available knowledge base of a particular topic, but adds to or augments it.

- Introduction: The introduction describes the content, scope, and organization of the review as well as the strategy used in the literature search.

- Review of literature: This section
 - is clearly related to the problem statement, purpose, and research questions;
 - states up front the bodies of literature that will be covered, and why;
 - reviews primary sources that are mostly recent empirical studies from scholarly journals and publications, as well as secondary sources;
 - is logically organized by theme or subtopic, from broad to narrow;
 - synthesizes findings across studies and compares and contrasts different research outcomes, perspectives, or methods;
 - notes gaps, debates, or shortcomings in the literature and provides a rationale for the study
- Theoretical/Conceptual framework: The conceptual framework draws on theory and research and examines the relationship among constructs and ideas. As such, it is the structure or heuristic that guides your research. In essence, the conceptual framework provides the theoretical and methodological bases for development of the study and analysis of findings. When appropriate, a graphic depiction of the model is included, showing the relationships between concepts, ideas, or variables to be studied.
- Summary: A comprehensive synthesis of the literature review should complete this section.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

- Introduction: The introduction restates the research purpose and describes the organization of the chapter.
- Research Design: rationale for their suitability regarding addressing the research questions, and citing appropriate methodological literature. This section outlines the methodological type or approach, the research setting, the sample, instrumentation (if relevant), and methods of data collection and analysis used
- *Data collection methods*: This section describes and justifies all data collection methods, tools, instruments, and procedures, including how, when, where, and by whom data were collected.
- Data Analysis Methods
- Software Definition, Design, (Development & Testing to be done in the fall)
- Experimental Framework (A detailed and clear narrative of how the experimental phase of the study will be conducted)
- Research Validation
- Assumptions of the Study

- Limitations of the Study
- Summary: A comprehensive summary overview covers all the sections of this chapter, recapping and highlighting all the important points. Discussion is concise and precise.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

- Introduction: The introduction provides a brief summary of and rationale for how data were analyzed. It describes the organization of the chapter according to research questions, conceptual framework, or thematic categories.
- Data Analysis
- Report Findings: Present the findings in relation to your research question
- Summary: This section explains in summary form what the chapter has discovered, and also prepares the reader for the chapter to follow.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Discussion, and Suggestions for Future Research

- Introduction: The introduction provides an overview of the chapter's organization and content.
- Discussion: This section provides an in-depth interpretation, analysis, and synthesis of the results/findings
- Conclusion: Conclusions are not the same as findings; neither are conclusions the same as interpretations. Rather, conclusions are essentially conclusive statements of what you now know, having done this research that you did not know before.
- Recommendations are actionable; that is, they suggest implications for policy and practice based on the findings, providing specific action plans and next steps.

References

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Sage Publications. *A Complete Dissertation, The Big Picture*. Retrieved from https://us.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/47686_ch_1.pdf on Jan 10, 2018