

What is it?

The purpose of the conclusion is to summarise what you did, what you found and what the implications are. It needs to wrap up the research question by tying together the literature review, theory and the empirical and discussion chapters to address the gaps and research question you outlined.

What should it include?

The conclusion should answer the following questions:

1. What are your answers to the research questions?
2. How have you addressed your aims and objectives?
3. What is the significance and implications of your findings?
4. What contribution has the study made?
5. What are the limitations of the study and questions for further research?

What should you avoid?

- Avoid over-generalising your contribution
- Avoid claiming your thesis is perfect by clearly discussing the limitations
- Avoid repeating yourself. Summarise, sure, but don't repeat findings unnecessarily.
- Don't introduce new text or material
- Don't pretend your thesis does more than it actually does

How can you make it great?

- Own your research by talking like an expert
- Clearly state the contribution that you have made
- Reflect back on your original aims and intentions and discuss them in terms of your findings and new expertise

How does it relate to other chapters?

- It is here that you clearly answer your research questions, state your contribution, fill in the gaps in the literature and claim your status as an authority in your field
- The conclusion includes a summary of the thesis as a whole
- Think of reading a PhD thesis being like a journey. At the beginning, you are talking in speculative terms. You are saying 'what if' and postulating about what might be out there once you enter the field. As you go through the empirical chapters you begin to introduce a bit more certainty into your discussion. You start to change from 'what if' to 'here is what's happening'. By the time you have reached the conclusion you have eliminated all uncertainty. As a result, you are now the expert in your field. You have scoped out the potential, jumped into the field and achieved your objectives.
- See the thesis, not the detail. The time for detail is over; in the conclusion you relate that detail back to the original aims, objectives and research questions.

Notes:

