# JEM002 Hints on Writing Your Thesis 3: Findings, Discussion, and Conclusion

**Results and discussion.**

Analyze properly what you have found and what does it imply. Find the economics behind your theorems or regression coefficients. If you have really nice and consistent results, you may afford to have a modest-sized discussion (and have the rest in appendices). If you have messy and conflicting results, you will need to do more convincing and dedicate to your discussion much more text. You do not need, however, to solve every problem related to your literature. Stay focused; present only those estimates that directly speak to your topic. You do not have to include into discussion every single coefficient from all the regressions you have run but discuss any additional robustness checks (use common sense for what to put into text and what to put into an appendix, discuss whether the robustness check supports your main conclusions). The reader will just get lost or bored. You should, however, refer in the text to all the figures you have in your thesis.

Recall from the previous semester: first, all Tables and Figures (with results) should be presented in a way that is self-explanatory so that the reader does not have to look inside the text to understand these items. Therefore, use notes under the item to explain all that needs to be explained, and avoid any abbreviations (for example, instead of having a variable called “DCFE” in your table, rewrite it to “dummy for country fixed effects”). Mention, whether you report standard errors or t-statistics in parentheses. Second, there is nothing wrong with statistically insignificant results, do not hunt for statistical significance. Statistical significance tells us whether we have enough data to measure the effect with much precision, but it does not tell us whether the magnitude of an estimated effect is big enough to matter.

Answer how relevant your findings are and what they can be used for. Be critical about your work—there is usually more you can/could do than you have done but avoid direct criticism (a method used is not earthshaking) or praise (this work presents a major breakthrough). Support your findings with other sources, discuss the conflicting results. When you find some policy implications, discuss them, but be careful with recommendations: a good conclusion is to say “substituting policy A for policy B would raise GDP by 3%”; on the other hand, a wrong conclusion would be to say “policy A should be substituted for policy B.” Point out the limitations. Some limitations are inherent in all research or are generic to some areas of research (like “using different measures with larger data set we may come to different patterns in results”), avoid stating the obvious; stay with limitations specific to your research --- raise them, and make a good case why (despite limitations) your results are not as grim as they might look.

Above all, stay as clear as possible. You may find yourself repeating from time to time but every reader will appreciate your pointing things out directly and clearly.

**Conclusions.**

The concluding chapter should take less than 10% of the thesis. Conclusion should briefly summarize the problem statement and emphasize the main contribution of the thesis. Draw only warranted conclusions. You need to convince the reader that you have done something that is new, interesting, and correct (and make it compatible with the introduction). Note that in this concluding chapter, you do not discuss anything new that has not already been mentioned in your thesis before. Describe possible extensions or alternative approaches to research the central idea. Readers should be able to understand your conclusion without having to read the whole thesis.

# JEM002 Hints on Writing Your Thesis 5: Introduction and Abstract

**Introduction.**

The last chapter for you to write is the introduction. The introduction should take less than 10% of your thesis. The basic essence of the introduction is to convince the reader that your work is worth reading. There are several points that should appear in the introduction. Include a brief description of the background of the issue under investigation; provide the statement of this issue (what problem do you intend to solve). Present the purpose and significance of your thesis; motivate to read further, for example from controversies, flaws, or unanswered questions that already appear in the current literature. What do you want to add to the present knowledge of the problem? Why is it important? The best way to do this is to cite the study that calls for research you intend to do. Outline the design of your research; you may provide the research hypotheses or qualitative research questions including how did you execute this research. Be clear about the assumptions (methodological or theoretical) and (design) limitations of the study; be clear about the causality, generalizations, intentional areas you do not investigate. Do not, however, spend too much time with these issues (hypotheses and assumptions/limitations) in the introduction. Make sure, your prime focus is the central RESULT(s) of your work, the most robust one, and its economic implications. You may end up your introduction with a paragraph structuring the work, providing brief information about the following chapters and their contents, typically starting with “The thesis is structured as follows.” Make your introduction perfectly compatible with the conclusion. Do not put subheadings into the introduction.

**Abstract.**

The abstract contains a short summary (ca 200 words) of the work, including problem description, research approach, and main findings emphasizing your original contribution. Avoid using acronyms and avoid citing other sources. Make it as simple as possible, so that every educated person can understand it.

**Additional inputs.**

Add Table of Contents, lists of Acronyms, Tables, and Figures; create Appendices, and prepare supplementary data to be uploaded into SIS. Do not forget Acknowledgments. Regarding the list of Acronyms: the fewer acronyms are used, the better (text is clearer to read).

**Thesis title.**

Give once again a deep thought on whether your thesis title really reflects the spirit of your work. Sometimes the title is in form of a general topic, sometimes it is in form of your research question but it can also clearly state your main finding. You can make a list of possible titles and choose the best one afterward. Your title needs to be consistent with the point of view of your thesis.

The most common format of the title consists of a shorter main title, describing the work in general, and a longer subtitle, explaining your research in more detail. These are often separated by a colon. Here are a few examples of how you may formulate the title: “How to Solve the Price Puzzle? A Meta‐Analysis,” “Determinants of FDI Spillovers: Evidence from a Large Survey,” “Rose Effect and the Euro: Is the Magic Gone?,” “Demand for Gasoline Is More Price-Inelastic than Commonly Thought.”

Once you decide to change the title, let us know about the change and ask your supervisor to change it in SIS.

# JEM002 Hints on Writing Your Thesis 6: Final Work – Review, Reread, Reedit

**General information.**

Plan to finish your work at least one month before the official deadline and consider it to be a draft version. Read it several times, let the others (including your supervisor) review and comment on it. Stay consistent in formatting. Proof-read with care, ask someone else to help. Use an electronic spell checker, avoid typos and grammatical errors. Make your writing crystal clear, shades in meaning matter. Polish your masterpiece.

**Manuscript form.**

Many students believe that the thesis form does not matter utterly. It is indeed true that the important thing is the thesis substance. But realize that ignoring the manuscript form is just a silly decision to make. Samuel Johnson, a British linguist, once said that “what is written without effort is in general read without pleasure.” We often bury a good idea with inconsistency in formatting and grammatical errors. While our thesis is a fine piece of analytical work, we present ourselves as lazy and ignorant. Convince your opponent that your thesis is worth reading and do not lose easy evaluation points on the criterion of a manuscript form (which, by faculty standards, is worth 20 points out of 100).

**Proofreading.**

As said before, once you think your thesis is complete, you have still a month of work to do. Go through it at least three times and delete at least 10% of words. Think about each sentence and each word: How could I write it better? When in doubt, “google” the expression (if the search found the expression only a few times in this form, it is probably incorrect). Finally, exchange the thesis with friends and colleagues for mutual proofreading (or ask your supervisor for possibilities to finance professional proofreading).