**Dissertation/Thesis Introduction Template**

Thanks for downloading the template. **Here’s what you need to know:**

This document provides a generic template for the introduction chapter/section in a typical dissertation, thesis or research project. While the **exact requirements will vary between universities** and degree programs, this template should help you get started with the generic essentials. Be sure to follow any instructions or guidance provided by your university to ensure you’re aligned with their specific requirements.

In each section, we’ll briefly **explain what that section is all about** and the essential things that you **need to achieve there**. We’ll also provide links to additional videos and blog posts that will help you conquer each section with confidence.

If you’re new to research, a good starting point would be to watch our YouTube video covering the introduction chapter: <https://gradcoach.com/dissertation-thesis-introduction-chapter/>

Graphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated

If you need **1-on-1 assistance** with your dissertation or thesis, feel free to [book an initial consultation](https://my.gradcoach.com/book/new/) with us to discuss private coaching for your project.

Good luck with your research!

***Grad Coach***

Contents

[Opening Section 3](#_gjdgxs)

[Background 3](#_30j0zll)

[Statement of the problem 3](#_1fob9te)

[Rationale 4](#_3znysh7)

[Scope 5](#_2et92p0)

[Significance 6](#_tyjcwt)

[Structure of the document 6](#_3dy6vkm)

[Additional (free) resources 6](#_1t3h5sf)

# Opening Section

As the very first section of your introduction chapter, this section needs to provide a **high-level overview** of your dissertation or thesis. Typically, you’ll include the following:

* A sentence or two introducing the **overall field** of your research
* A sentence introducing your specific **research problem**
* A sentence stating your **research aims and objectives**
* A sentence outlining the **layout of the chapter**

Importantly, this section needs to be concise (it’s just an opener), so don’t ramble on here. Keep it short and sweet.

# Background

After you’ve covered the basics in the opening section, the next section should provide a **broad overview** of the topic area that you’ll be researching, as well as the current **contextual** **factors**. In other words, in this section, you need to provide the relevant **background information** to give the reader a **foundational understanding** of your research area.

This section could, for example, present a brief **history of the topic**, **recent developments** in the area, key pieces of research in the area, etc. Importantly, you **cannot assume** that your reader is an expert in your topic area, so it’s important to write this background section in a very accessible and digestible way (indeed, the same is true for all chapter).

If there are any specific concepts, complex terminology, or other words specific to your industry, this is the section where you should explain them so that so that the reader can understand the rest of your document. **Make no assumptions** – write for the intelligent layman.

# Statement of the problem

Now that you’ve set the backdrop for the research topic in the background section, it’s time to narrow the focus and highlight the specific **research problem** you’ll focus on in your dissertation or thesis.

To present your research problem, you’ll need to make it clear what exactly is **missing in the current literature** and why this is a **problem**. You can split this section up into two sections:

**Section 1 - State the problem**

Start with what’s already **well-established** in the literature, in other words, the current state of research. Then, state **what’s missing** in the literature (in other words, the research gap). This then forms the foundation for the research problem.

When stating the research problem, keep in mind that this can be any issue or question for which there isn’t already a well-established and agreed-upon answer in the existing research. So, pay close attention to **what’s missing** in the literature, especially the areas earmarked as “needing further research” in current journal articles.

**Section 2 - Justify the problem**

Just because there is a problem (a gap) in the current literature doesn’t mean that it needs to be studied, so you’ll need to explain **why this is a problem**. Specifically, you’ll need to answer the question: “why does this research gap need to be filled?”.

Once you’ve clearly articulated and justified the research problem, your foundation will be set, and you can proceed to present a convincing argument for your specific research project.

# Rationale

Now that you’ve stated and justified the research problem, in the rationale section your goal is to explain **what you’re going to do** about the research problem.

This is where you will present the “**golden thread**” of your research study, which is made up of your **research aim(s)**, **research objective(s)**, and **research question(s)**. These three dimensions of the golden thread will determine the focus and boundaries of your study.

**Research aim(s)**

The research aim is the **main goal** or the overarching purpose of your study. It’s a high-level statement of what you’re seeking to achieve. Research aims will typically look something like this:

* “This research aims to…
* “This research sought to…
* “The aim of this study…
* “This study planned to…”

Here’s an example of a research aim:

*This research aims to assess the effects of Virgin Atlantic organizational culture on business profitability*

As you can see, it clearly states what the main goal and purpose of the study will be.

**Research objective(s)**

As opposed to the research aims, the research objectives (RO) are a bit more **practically oriented**, looking at specific things you’ll be doing to achieve your research aim(s). They break down the research aims into more **specific, actionable tasks**. That is, ROs describe the actions you’ll take and the specific things you’ll investigate to achieve your research aims.

For your own research, start with your research aim(s), then break it down into the key aspects that need to be addressed to achieve that aim. Importantly, your research objectives need to be **SMART** (i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound).

Here’s example of a set of research objectives, following from the research aim mentioned earlier:

*The following research objectives would facilitate the achievement of this aim:*

1. *Analyzing the nature of organizational culture at Virgin Atlantic by September 1, 2022*
2. *Identifying factors impacting Virgin Atlantic organizational culture by September 16, 2022*
3. *Analyzing impacts of Virgin Atlantic organizational culture on employee performances by September 30, 2022*
4. *Providing recommendations to Virgin Atlantic strategic level management in terms of increasing the level of effectiveness of organizational culture by October 5, 2022*

**Research question(s)**

These are the **specific questions** that your dissertation or thesis will seek to answer. These questions will act as the **driving force** throughout your dissertation or thesis – from the literature review to the methodology and onward.

The research questions typically **directly relate to the research objectives**. Simply put, they translate the research objectives into answerable questions. Following from the previous sample objectives, here are some potential research questions:

1. What is the nature of the organizational culture at Virgin Atlantic?
2. Which factors may contribute to the organizational culture?
3. What is the relationship between the organizational culture and employee performance?

As you can see, these research questions are **directly linked** to the first three research objectives.

# Scope

Related to the parts in the rationale, the next section is your scope. If your research aims, research objectives and research questions (i.e., your golden thread) are too broad, you’ll risk **losing focus** or investigating a problem that is **too big to solve** within a single dissertation or thesis.

The scope section is where you’ll **establish clear boundaries** for your research project. You can do this, for example, by limiting it according to the following questions:

* What specific **industry** are you targeting?
* What **geographical** area are you investigating?
* What **time** period does your research cover?
* What **demographics** or communities are you researching?
* What specific **themes** or aspects of the topic does your dissertation address?

Don’t be afraid to narrow down your focus and scope. A good research project typically investigates a relatively narrow issue in great depth, not a broad issue superficially. **Focus is your friend!**

# Significance

Now that you’ve explained the research problem and introduced your study, you need to highlight how your research will **make a difference** and what **implications** it will have.

In this section, you should clearly state how your study will benefit **academia** or the **real-world** or – ideally – both. So, the purpose of this section is to clearly explain how the research will help fill a **gap in the literature** as well as provide practical real-world value to organizations.

Importantly, you need to “**sell**” the value of your research here so that the reader understands **why it’s worth** committing an entire dissertation or thesis to it.

Some of the angles you can take for promoting your research in this section are the following:

* Helps solve a practical or theoretical problem
* Addresses a gap in the literature
* Builds on existing research
* Proposes a new understanding of the topic

A strong argument regarding the significance of your study will get the reader **interested** and **invested**, so take the time to craft this section well and “sell” your project to the reader (and marker!).

# Structure of the document

The purpose of this final section is simply to provide your reader with a **roadmap of what to expect** in terms of the structure of your dissertation or thesis. So, in this section, you’ll need to provide a concise **summary of each chapter’s purpose** and contents (including the introduction chapter).

You don’t want to get too detailed here – it’s purely an **outline, not a description** of your research, so a sentence or two explaining what you’ll do in each chapter is generally enough to help the reader become situated. Remember, you only need to describe **what you’ll do**, not **what you found**.

# Additional (free) resources

Here are a few more resources you might find useful while working on your introduction chapter:

* [How to write an introduction chapter](https://gradcoach.com/dissertation-thesis-introduction-chapter/)
* [Common mistakes in the introduction chapter](https://gradcoach.com/dissertation-introduction-mistakes/)
* [How to craft strong arguments in your dissertation](https://gradcoach.com/how-to-create-sound-arguments/)
* [How to structure your dissertation/thesis](https://gradcoach.com/dissertation-structure/)
* [Free dissertation/thesis template (Word Doc)](https://gradcoach.com/dissertation-thesis-template/)
* [Free dissertation writing course (online)](https://gradcoach.com/dissertation-course/)

If you would like **1-on-1 support** with your dissertation, thesis or research project, check out our [private coaching service here](https://gradcoach.com/dissertation-coaching/).