1. Guidelines for Thesis Writing up

Whether you have attended the workshop on thesis writing up and submission, you should carefully read follow this document.

**1. The Thesis Style**

There is no absolute standard to follow. However, the following points can be used as general guidelines

1. Thesis should be written in a style similar to that used for formal technical reports and refereed papers. The third person is preferred, i.e. the words ‘I’, ‘we’ and ‘you’ should normally be avoided. Grammar, spelling and punctuation must be accurate.
2. The emphasis should be on a clear, objective and logical presentation of material with a sharp analysis of the evidence. Arguments should be impartial. ‘Padding’ should be avoided. Jargons should be minimised and conversational colloquialisms must be avoided. Short and clearly structured sentences are very helpful to the reader. Repetition between sections should be minimised by referring back or forward.
3. Quotations should be used effectively, for example, to support the argument. Paraphrasing should be used, and in every case, the originator must be given credit by proper referencing. The format of *italics*, **bold** and underlining should be used for emphasis and must be used sparingly.
4. Shortened words such as “phone” or “isn’t” should not be used. Acronyms may be used provided they are defined (e.g. their full form is given when they first appear in the text) and preferably included in the Glossary. There is no need to define well-known phrases or acronyms such as *laser*.
5. There are two main styles for references, and the important thing to remember is the consistency of format.
6. References are cited by the author’s surname followed by the year of publication, and listed in the References section in alphabetic order of the (first) author. If there are more than two authors, only the first author’s surname is used followed by the word *et al*. If more than one references of the same author(s) in the same year are referenced, the year is suffixed with letters, a, b, c, … to differentiate the references.

For example,

In the main text:

There have been several publications on writing styles (Wang and Liu 2001, Smith et al 1999a, Smith et al 1999b), providing useful guidelines for various technical presentations.

In the References section:

C Smith, A Common and D Davies (1999a), *A Handbook for Writing Technical Reports*, The Press, The Place.

C Smith, A Common and D Davies (1999b), *A Handbook for Thesis Writing-up*, The Press, The Place.

W Wang and H Liu (2001), The importance of concise writing, *Journal of Presentation*, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp 22-29.

1. References are cited by numbers in the main text and listed in the References section in the order as they appear in the main text.

For example,

In the main text:

There have been several publications on writing styles [1-3], providing useful guidelines for various technical presentations.

In the References section:

[1] W Wang and H Liu, The importance of concise writing, *Journal of Presentation*, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp 22-29, 2001.

[2] C Smith, A Common and D Davies, *A Handbook for Writing Technical Reports*, The Press, The Place, 1999.

[3] C Smith, A Common and D Davies, *A Handbook for Thesis Writing-up*, The Press, The Place, 1999.

1. The total length of the main body depends on the nature of the project. Theoretic work-based projects tend to result in a longer thesis while experiment-based projects also require detailed description. A rough guide would be 12,000 to 18,000 words for the main body; this means a page count of 40-55 pages for the main body (including tables and figures).
2. There is no strict standard for the page layout, such as margins, line space and header / footer styles. You may choose to use, for example, 1.5 line space, and 3.0 mm as left margin and 2.5 mm as other margins. Times New Roman (size 12) can be used as the main font type. Note that any use of personal style should be consistent throughout the thesis.
3. As the writing progresses, every aspect of the entire thesis should be read and re-read, checked and double-checked to minimise errors. Electronic checking is also helpful with errors in spelling, grammar, and so on. Calculations should also be thoroughly checked. References must be scrutinised for accuracy. Mistakes, sloppy presentation, numerous typographical errors, all give a very bad impression.

**2. The Thesis Structure**

The thesis is divided into logical chapters. Details are also shown at the presentation slides of workshop 2. The structure should generally follow the following format where the number of chapters may vary.

* Title Page
* The Following Pages

- Abstract

* Acknowledgements
* Dedication

- Glossary / Key words (if necessary)

* Table of Contents Page

(List of Table and List of Figures may be included if necessary)

* Chapter 1 Introduction
* Chapter 2 Research / Literature Review
* Chapter 3
* Chapter 4 Implementation
* Chapter 5 Evaluation/Testing
* …
* Chapter n Conclusions
* References
* Appendix 1.
* …
* Appendix n.

These are explained below.

**Title Page**: This is the coversheet for your thesis which contains project details. A separate template is on BB for you to use electronically. You should endeavour to keep its format and only change the details that concern your project, i.e.

* Your name
* Your student ID
* The programme that you are studying
* Your project title
* Your supervisor

**Abstract**: The abstract should be a concise summary of the project, identifying the nature and scope, the major findings and the contribution to the overall field of the subject. It gives the reader an overview for the work without first having to read the whole thesis. It must be succinct (not exceeding 200 words) and clearly written. It is important to note that the abstract is not an introduction.

**Acknowledgements**: This part acknowledges the individuals (e.g. the supervisor) who have provided substantial help.

**Dedication**: The author may dedicate the project to his/her spouse, parents or whomever he/she feels deserve.

**Glossary / Key words**: This part may be necessary depending on individual project.

**Chapter 1, Introduction**: This is the first chapter informing the reader of brief subject background, the problem domain, main aim and specific objectives, proposed methodologies and expected outcomes. It may also introduce the thesis structure.

**Chapter 2, Research / Literature Review**: The research is usually conducted through a literature review. This could include a focused background to the subject, the current situation, applications and problems, methodologies, contemporary technologies / software tools for implementation, discussions and analysis of existing work (e.g. comparative / case studies), and so on. It should lay a good basis for your project, providing useful information to demonstrate / justify the academic significance of your project.

It is worth pointing out that the literature used for the research should be largely from refereed ACADEMIC / TECHNICAL publications (e.g. journals and conferences), not textbooks (although textbooks provide essential information on the subject, and can be used as a small part of the literature review). It is the refereed academic / technical publications that provide the latest developments. The figure below depicts the likely grade that the research component of your thesis would get in terms of literature used (textbooks vs refereed publications), noting that too much extract from textbooks will ALSO affect the overall presentation of your thesis. The recommended MAXIMUM length of this part is **20%** of the main body, i.e. 2000-4000 words.

**Grade**

**Use of Sources**

**F**

**E**

**D**

**C**

**B**

**A**

**Textbooks**

**Refereed Publications**

Failure to balance these guidelines may significantly disadvantage the presentation of your thesis.

**Other Chapters**: As described in Workshop 3, these chapters should describe the project realisation. The coverage varies from project to project, but should normally include - technical requirements / specifications, data acquisition and analysis, system / structural design, implementation, testing and analysis of results, improvement and overall evaluation. These chapters should be DIRECTLY FOCUSED to your project (there should not be too much information from textbooks)!

**Conclusions**: This chapter brings together and summarises the findings and main points achieved, limitations of the solution and brief recommendations for further study/work. A self-appraisal section is useful to present and explain attainment over the course of study. The conclusions should not be used to introduce new materials.

**References**: This is a list of references cited in the main text in either alphabetical order by the first authors’ surname or in the order of their appearance in the main text with a sequenced number. Remember consistency is very important.

References include published literature (books and journals), organisations and experts, and the Internet. Appropriate citing the references is important. It acknowledges others’ work and avoids plagiarism suspect. It is not sufficient to just list a website in the reference section. The actual page (not just the homepage) must be referred in the main text, and the date of access given.

**Appendices**: In general, appendices can be used to present detailed information of relevance that is not essential in the main text, helping to minimise ‘clutter’ in the main body of the project, making it more readable. Materials in appendices should be closely linked to the main document. For example, the project plan, source code listings (please do not include all code developed), test data, rough work, questionnaire results (but no the actual questionnaires, a blank sample of the questionnaire is sufficient) and so on may be included as appendices (as advised by the supervisor). Every appendix should be coded with a number (e.g. Appendix 1, Appendix 2, and so on, and should be titled), and begin on a fresh page. All appendices should be cited in the main text.

**An Important Note**: Excellent artefact does not necessarily mean an excellent project! The academic value of a project is of great importance, which is largely reflected in the dissertation/thesis through research, analysis and synthesis, evaluation and substantial conclusions/recommendations. You are strongly advised to refer to the marking sheets on BB.