DIGF 6C04 THESIS 2: The Thesis Outline Milestone

Due: Week 10, Wed. 13 November 2013.

A Generic Thesis Outline

1. Introduction

This is a *general* introduction to what the thesis is all about -- it is *not* just a description of the contents of each section. Briefly *summarize* the question (you will be stating the question in detail later), some of the reasons why it is a worthwhile question, and perhaps give an overview of your main results. This is a birds-eye view of the answers to the main questions answered in the thesis (see above).

2. Background Information (optional)

A brief section giving background information may be necessary, especially if your work spans two or more traditional fields. That means that your readers may not have any experience with some of the material needed to follow your thesis, so you need to give it to them.

3. Literature Review *or* the State of the Art

Here you review the state of the art/design/science/research relevant to your thesis. The idea is to *present* the major ideas in the state of the art right up to, but not including, your own research and contribution (critical analysis comes a little bit later). You organize this section *around ideas*, and not by author or by publication.

4. Research Question or Problem Statement

1. a concise statement of the question that your thesis tackles
2. justification, by *direct* reference to section 3, that your particular question is previously unanswered or not approached or tackled in the way that you intend to
3. discussion of why it is worthwhile to answer this question or tackle this problem.

Item 2 above is where you *analyse* the information which you presented in Section 3.

5. Describing How You Solved the Problem or Answered the Question

This part of the thesis is much more free-form. It may have one or several sections and subsections. But it all has only one purpose: to convince the examiners that you answered the question or solved the problem that you set for yourself in Section 4. So show what you did that is *relevant* to answering the question or solving the problem: if there were blind alleys and dead ends, do *not* include these, unless specifically relevant to the demonstration that you answered the thesis question.

6. Conclusions

You generally cover three things in the Conclusions section, and each of these usually merits a separate subsection:

1. Conclusions
2. Summary of your research findings our outcomes
3. Future Research

7. End Notes, References, and Works Cited

The list of references is closely tied to the literature review or state of the art given in section 3. It may also contain end notes, if used. All references given *must* be referred to in the main body of the thesis. Note the difference from a Bibliography, which may include works that are not directly referenced in the thesis. Organize the list of references either alphabetically by author surname (if using in text citation), or by order of citation in the thesis if using End Notes. Bibliographic citations in this section should contain exact page references.

8. Bibliography

9. Appendices

What goes in the appendices? Any material which impedes the smooth development of your presentation, but which is important to justify or document the results of the thesis. Generally it is material that is at a level of detail that is too complex for inclusion in the main body of the thesis, but which should be available for perusal by the examiners and readers. Examples include process documentation and imagery, immense tables of data, code, and digital documentation. Your REB approval documentation and also must be included as an Appendix.

With reference and acknowledgement of direct quotation and some adaptation of the useful work "How to Organize Your Thesis" by Prof. John W. Chinneck, Dept. of Systems and Computer Engineering, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.

http://www.sce.carleton.ca/faculty/chinneck/thesis.html