

Dissertation & Thesis: Writing & Structuring

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Bauchi, Bauchi State, Nigeria @TORMP 2020
**Online International Training on Research
Manuscript Drafting and Publishing** organized
by Eudoxia Research Centre, Guwahati, India

➤ Introduction **Outline of the presentation**

➤ Writing style

- **The most common dissertation and thesis structure in the sciences, management and social sciences**
- **Citations, quotation and reference procedures**
- **References**

Introduction

- In most higher learning institutions, a thesis or dissertation represents a significant part of research task that leads to the contribution toward the body of knowledge in a given field.
- Normally, the two terms (Dissertation and Thesis) are used interchangeably.
- However, **dissertation** refers to a research work which requires course work in a particular program while occasionally **thesis** is applied for research work without course work.

Introduction-continued

- For this reason, most of the programs in graduate level require a student to either write a dissertation or a thesis (Musa, 2019).
- Every institution has a format or guideline of preparing a dissertation or thesis.
- Therefore, every student or researcher should take into consideration the guidelines provided by their institutions.

Writing style

- Dissertations and thesis used always to be written in the third person, and in the passive voice; as an example, you might write 'An experiment was carried out to test...'
- However, many journals have now moved away from that convention and request first person and active voice, which would require you to write 'I carried out an experiment to test...'
- Check with your university about their requirements before you start to write.
- If you cannot find any guidelines, then ask your supervisor and/or the person who will be marking your thesis about their preferences. Make sure that the voice and person are consistent throughout.

The most dissertation and thesis structure

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- A dissertation or thesis is a long piece of academic writing based on original research, submitted as part of an undergraduate or postgraduate degree.
 - The structure of a dissertation depends on your field, but it is usually divided into at least four or five chapters (including an introduction and conclusion chapter).
 - The most common dissertation structure in the sciences and social sciences includes:

The dissertation and thesis structure-continued

- An introduction to your topic
- A literature review that surveys relevant sources
- An explanation of your methodology
- An overview of the results of your research
- A discussion of the results and their implications
- A conclusion that shows what your research has contributed

The dissertation and thesis structure-continued

- Dissertations in the humanities are often structured more like a long essay, building an argument by analyzing primary and secondary sources.
- Other important elements of the dissertation include the title page, abstract, and reference list.
- If in doubt about how your dissertation should be structured, always check your department's guidelines and consult with your supervisor.

The dissertation and thesis structure-

Abstract

- The abstract is a short summary of your dissertation, usually about 150-300 words long.
- You should write it at the very end, when you've completed the rest of the dissertation. In the abstract, make sure to:
- Although the abstract is very short, it's the first part (and sometimes the only part) of your dissertation that people will read, so it's important that you get it right.
- If you're struggling to write a strong abstract, read our guide on [how to write an abstract](#).

The dissertation and thesis structure-

Introduction

- In the introduction, you set up your dissertation's topic, purpose, and relevance, and tell the reader what to expect in the rest of the dissertation. The introduction should:
 - Establish your research topic, giving necessary background information to contextualize your work
 - Narrow down the focus and define the scope of the research
 - Discuss the state of existing research on the topic, showing your work's relevance to a broader problem or debate

The dissertation and thesis structure-continued

- Clearly state your objectives and research questions, and indicate how you will answer them
- Give an overview of your dissertation or thesis's structure
- Everything in the introduction should be clear, engaging, and relevant to your research.
- By the end, the reader should understand the *what*, *why* and *how* of your research. Not sure how? Read our guide on how to write a dissertation or thesis introduction.

The dissertation and thesis structure- Literature review/Theoretical framework

- Before you start on your research, you should have conducted a literature review to gain a thorough understanding of the academic work that already exists on your topic.
- This means: Collecting sources (e.g. books and journal articles) and selecting the most relevant ones. Critically evaluating and analyzing each source
- This means: Collecting sources (e.g. books and journal articles) and selecting the most relevant ones. Critically evaluating and analyzing each source
- Drawing connections between them (e.g. themes, patterns, conflicts, gaps) to make an overall point

The dissertation and thesis structure-continued

- In the dissertation or thesis literature review chapter or section, you shouldn't just summarise existing studies, but develop a coherent structure and argument that leads to a clear basis or justification for your own research.
- For example, it might aim to show how your research:
Addresses a gap in the literature
- Takes a new theoretical or methodological approach to the topic
- Proposes a solution to an unresolved problem

The dissertation and thesis structure-continued

- Advances a theoretical debate
- Builds on and strengthens existing knowledge with new data
- The literature review often becomes the basis for a theoretical framework, in which you define and analyse the key theories, concepts and models that frame your research.
- In this section you can answer descriptive research questions about the relationship between concepts or variables.

The dissertation and thesis structure-

Methodology

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- The methodology chapter or section describes how you conducted your research, allowing your reader to assess its validity. You should generally include:
 - The overall approach and type of research (e.g. qualitative, quantitative, experimental, ethnographic)
 - Your methods of collecting data (e.g. interviews, surveys, archives)
 - Details of where, when, and with whom the research took place
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The dissertation and thesis structure-continued

- Your methods of analyzing data (e.g. statistical analysis, discourse analysis)
- Tools and materials you used (e.g. computer programs, lab equipment)
- A discussion of any obstacles you faced in conducting the research and how you overcame them
- An evaluation or justification of your methods
- Your aim in the methodology is to accurately report what you did, as well as convincing the reader that this was the best approach to answering your research questions or objectives.

The dissertation and thesis structure-

Results

- Next, you report the results of your research.
- You can structure this section around sub-questions, hypotheses, or topics.
- Only report results that are relevant to your objectives and research questions.
- In some disciplines, the results section is strictly separated from the discussion, while in others the two are combined.

The dissertation and thesis structure- continued

- For example, for qualitative methods like in-depth interviews, the presentation of the data will often be woven together with discussion and analysis, while in quantitative and experimental research, the results should be presented separately before you discuss their meaning.
- If you're unsure, consult with your supervisor and look at [sample dissertations](#) to find out the best structure for your research.

The dissertation and thesis structure-continued

- In the results section it can often be helpful to include tables, graphs and charts.
- Think carefully about how best to present your data, and don't include tables or figures that just repeat what you have written – they should provide extra information or usefully visualize the results in a way that adds value to your text.

The dissertation and thesis structure-

Discussion

- The discussion is where you explore the meaning and implications of your results in relation to your research questions.
- Here you should interpret the results in detail, discussing whether they met your expectations and how well they fit with the framework that you built in earlier chapters.
- If any of the results were unexpected, offer explanations for why this might be.
- It's a good idea to consider alternative interpretations of your data and discuss any limitations that might have influenced the results.

The dissertation and thesis structure-continued

- The discussion should reference other scholarly work to show how your results fit with existing knowledge.
- You can also make recommendations for future research or practical action.
- This is the heart of the dissertation or thesis and must be more than descriptive.

The dissertation and thesis structure-continued

- This chapter develops analytic and critical thinking on primary results and analysis with reference to theoretical arguments grounded in the literature review.
- You should try to highlight where there are major differences and similarities from the literature or between different groups.
- Where a model or framework of analysis has been used or is being developed you should highlight the main relationships as well as explaining the reason and significance behind features or decisions being discussed.

The dissertation and thesis structure- Conclusion

- The dissertation or thesis conclusion should concisely answer the main research question, leaving the reader with a clear understanding of your central argument.
- Wrap up your dissertation with a final reflection on what you did and how you did it.
- The conclusion often also includes recommendations for research or practice.
- In this section, it's important to show how your findings contribute to knowledge in the field and why your research matters. What have you added to what was already known?

Citations, quotation and reference procedures

- Citation: It is conventional when citing authorities to avoid use of local titles such as Professor, Dr, Chief, Alhaji, Pastor, Imam, etc. Only the surname should be used.
- When writing dissertation or thesis, direct quotation and their sources must be cited along with the quotation.
- To achieve this, the author, year, and page number are usually stated. For example, Sabo (2020) reported that entrepreneurship education is the key to small scale business.

Citations, quotation and reference procedures-continued

Citation: The quotation must contain the exact wording, spelling and interior punctuation of the original source even if the source is incorrect.

- If the material is omitted within the sentence being quoted, three ellipsis points (...) should be used to indicate that material has been omitted from the original source (Imo, 2015).
- When a researcher wants to quote verbatimly from a source, the page from which the quotation is lifted as well as the year of publication is cited.
- However, when the researcher paraphrases the work of another author, only the year of publication is quoted within the page.

Citations, quotation and reference procedures-continued

- References: All references used in writing of the dissertation or thesis (whether direct quotations or paraphrasing) should be included in a reference list/bibliography, compiled in alphabetical order by author.

References

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THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR
LISTENING
