



5. The Thesis

5.1 Rule for the Format of the Thesis

If there is any doubt over how to construct a thesis, the student should ask their First Supervisor to provide examples of best practice.

5.1.1 Format and Word Counts

5.1.1.1 Word counts differ between subject areas. The general expectations for word count are given in the following table, but Supervisors will advise on any deviation within the specific subject area.

	Minimum Length	Maximum Length
MA	25,000 words	40,000 words
MSc	25,000 words	40,000 words
LLM	25,000 words	40,000 words
MPhil	40,000 words	60,000 words
PhD	70,000 words	80,000 words

These word counts exclude the thesis abstract, appendices, footnotes, tables, references and bibliography/works cited, unless there are departmental rules to the contrary.

5.1.1.2 It is accepted that occasionally a thesis may fall outside of these ranges, e.g. a thesis involving a statistical model may have a lower word count. If a thesis looks as if it will fall more than 10% outside of the guidelines, the Research Officer must approve the word count before submission, noting this in the relevant section on the Intention to Submit Form. If such a request is not approved, the student and Supervisor(s) may appeal the decision by means of a written rationale submitted to the Chair of the University Research Committee, whose decision will be final.

5.1.1.3 The entire thesis must be written in English, unless prior permission is obtained.

5.1.2 Prior Publication

Prior publication of parts of a thesis is encouraged. Where such publication has taken place, or where publication is pending, this should be carefully noted in the thesis, with full bibliographical details, so that it is exactly clear what has previously appeared or is about to appear in the public domain. It is crucial, however, that pre-published work is not simply replicated exactly in the thesis. It should be revised, more or less as required, to fit into the total argument of the thesis as presented for examination.



5.1.3 Order of Contents

For EdD formatting and contents guidance please see the EdD Course Handbook.

5.1.3.1 The Title Page should bear the full title and sub-title; the full name of the author, including forenames; the qualification for which the thesis is submitted; and the month and year of submission. (Please see Appendix 9. Thesis Front Cover Template)

5.1.3.2 An Abstract of up to 1000 words should precede the body of the thesis.

5.1.3.3 Acknowledgements

5.1.3.4 The Contents should list, with page numbers, all the sub-divisions of the thesis.

5.1.3.5 A List of Illustrations, if relevant, will include lists of all figures, photos, maps, or other illustrations, giving their page numbers.

5.1.3.6 A List of Tables, if relevant, giving their page numbers.

5.1.3.7 A List of Abbreviations used in the text, if relevant. A glossary of terms may be recommended by the Supervisor(s).

5.1.3.8 A Declaration of Originality and Prior Publication which indicates what material contained in the thesis has been previously submitted for a degree in this or any other university and, if it is based on joint research, what part of it is the author's individual contribution. (please see appendix XYZ Declaration of Originality and Prior Publication Template).

5.1.3.9 The Main Text of the Thesis, divided into chapters, each with a clear title.

5.1.3.10 Appendices, if relevant, each with a descriptive title.

5.1.3.11 Bibliography/References

(a) Non-Science theses

All works consulted should be listed in a Bibliography at the end of the text and may also appear as footnotes on the relevant pages. This should include all relevant material which has been consulted and found useful, whether or not it has been cited in the text of the thesis. The form of these references should conform to the stylistic conventions in the referencing system used. A bibliography may be split into several sections for broad subject classes, or, if appropriate, divided into manuscript sources, primary sources and secondary sources.

(b) Science theses

A list of References should include all articles cited in the text of the thesis (and none which are not cited) and should be listed in full in alphabetical order and date order where more than one publication by an author(s) has been cited.



5.1.4 Use of Style Systems

The thesis should be presented as professionally as possible, conforming to the conventions used in high-level scholarship or research in the particular field. It should be styled in conformity with one of the standard scholarly style manuals. The First Supervisor will advise on the most appropriate styling/referencing system to use.

5.1.5 Layout

5.1.5.1 Consistency and accuracy are crucial in all subjects. The thesis should as far as possible conform to the appearance of a good scholarly book or series of journal articles in the chosen field. It is important that it be correctly styled in all respects, with regard to everything from simple matters of punctuation and paragraphing, to correct use of notes and internal references, through to consistency in punctuation and indenting, use of abbreviations, quality of diagrams and so forth.

5.1.5.2 The minimum font size for text is 11pt (12pt is preferred) and 10pt for footnotes. Easily readable fonts are preferred (e.g. Times New Roman, Garamond, Ariel, Georgia, etc.).

5.1.5.3 At least 20mm margin should be left all round. Larger margins, however, at the top and bottom sometimes make for a clearer appearance.

5.1.5.4 Lines should be set at 1.5 or double-spacing throughout, except for indented quotations, tables, figures, equations, or footnotes, where single spacing is adequate, if this is preferred.

5.1.6 Pagination

Pages should be numbered consecutively throughout the thesis, including preliminaries and appendices. The preliminary sections should be in lower-case roman and the text of the thesis itself in Arabic numerals.

5.1.7 Footnotes and Endnotes (not Science or EdD thesis)

Notes may appear as either footnotes or, where the usual style for a discipline is to use endnotes and this has been approved by the Supervisor(s), as notes at the end of each chapter. It is not permitted to use both footnotes and endnotes.

Footnotes or endnotes may be used for any of the following reasons:

- (a) To acknowledge direct quotations or sources of information
- (b) To cite the authority for statements in the text, allowing the reader to check the evidence on which the argument is based
- (c) To amplify a point which is not central to the main argument of the text, introducing parenthetical discussion which is not long enough to form an appendix



- (d) To provide a cross reference to other parts of the thesis. In all cases, notes are an interruption to the reader and should be kept to what is strictly necessary.

5.2 Proof-Reading and Editing

The University expects a high quality of written English in candidates for all higher degrees. To ensure this, it checks the English language capacity and level of applicants at the point of admission, particularly when English is an additional language. All those admitted to postgraduate research degrees should be capable of writing clearly and appropriately.

Achieving a postgraduate degree indicates the student can write independently in an appropriate academic style in their chosen discipline.

5.2.1 Supervisor Responsibilities

5.2.1.1 Supervisors should help postgraduate research students with their written work, in terms of grammar, style and the quality of subject-specific discourse. The induction into a fluent use of particular discourses or styles of writing is an important part of any higher degree and will most often happen through comments and markings on the student's draft work, where the Supervisor can:

- (a) indicate to the student how to improve language so it better achieves the appropriate style of academic discourse
- (b) indicate characteristic faults of grammar, punctuation, syntax, styling, or referencing

5.2.1.2 Examples may be given to help the student achieve a style of discourse appropriate to their academic discipline. If the student requires more help than can be appropriately provided by the Supervisor, the student should be referred to the Academic Skills Know-how (ASK) department for additional support.

5.2.2 Student Responsibilities

5.2.2.1 Many students will enjoy proof-reading their own work. It is legitimate, however, for students to seek help from others (whether family, friends, or professionals) to proof-read their work, but this should be strictly proof-reading not editing (see definitions below). Anything that could be construed as editing risks being a breach of academic integrity. If a student has any doubts about what is reasonable, they should consult with their Supervisor(s), who may refer them to Academic Skills Know-how (ASK) for additional support as appropriate.

5.2.2.2 Students are required to observe the following in the use of proof-readers:

- (a) It is the student's responsibility to provide proof-readers with a copy of these guidelines
- (b) The University expects that any work submitted for assessment is the student's own and any assistance by a proof-reader should not compromise the expectations outlined in the Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure



- (c) Students should note that the use of a proof-reader will not be accepted as mitigation for any deficiencies in their work
- (d) Failure to adhere to these guidelines could be judged a breach of academic integrity and contravene the Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure

5.2.3 The Distinction Between Proof-Reading and Editing

5.2.1.3 Proof-reading involves minor corrections to achieve a fully accurate presentation of ideas and findings. Licit proof-reading may, for example:

- (a) Identify typographical errors
- (b) Indicate missing words
- (c) Indicate spelling errors in complex/subject-specific words
- (d) Indicate missing punctuation
- (e) Indicate a missing paragraph indent
- (f) Indicate incorrect placing of footnote numbers
- (g) Indicate incorrect use of double or single quotation marks
- (h) Indicate accidental changes of font within the text
- (i) Indicate failure to use italics properly (e.g. on book titles)
- (j) Indicate omissions in footnote references
- (k) Check author references in the text for consistency with bibliography/reference-list/ works cited
- (l) Indicate errors in the bibliography that do not follow the Style Guide used
- (m) Identify errors in the labelling of diagrams, charts, or figures

5.2.1.4 A student may not usually seek help from others that involves editing or sub-editing her or his work. Editing, as defined here, is an intervention that makes more significant changes to the student's text, manifestly improving the written style or the logic, clarity, or rhetoric of the argument. Professional editors or sub-editors should not be used by a student. Examples of editing are:

- (a) Suggesting word substitutions to improve sense or nuance
- (b) Creating new content, phrases, or full sentences to insert in the text
- (c) Re-ordering of words in a sentence to create a grammatical or better syntax
- (d) Re-ordering the sentences of a paragraph
- (e) Rephrasing of sentences to improve syntax and grammar
- (f) Improving structure or argument by moving sentences or paragraphs into different positions in the text



- (g) Deleting individual sentences or paragraphs
- (h) Deleting paragraphs that repeat material and are considered redundant
- (i) Reducing content so as to comply with a specified word limit
- (j) Inserting new sub-headings or other divisions of the text
- (k) Translating any part of the work into English
- (l) Re-labelling, checking, or correcting diagrams, charts, figures, calculations or formulae

5.2.1.5 The logic of the distinction drawn here between proof-reading and editing is that the former involves the correction of minor errors, omissions, or mistakes, while the latter is a more fundamental intervention, often at sentence or paragraph level and usually involving some significant form of rewriting of the text. The use of a professional editor would make it unclear if the student had, at the completion of their degree, achieved the ability to write in an appropriate academic style in their chosen discipline.

5.3 Submission of Thesis

- 5.3.1 The thesis is due for submission by the student's end date and will normally be submitted at any time in the term preceding this end date.
- 5.3.2 To begin the submission process, the student should send Appendix 2. Intention to Submit Form, completed and signed both by themselves and their First Supervisor, to the Research Administrator, who will seek approval for submission from the Research Officer. Once the Research Officer has signed the Intention to Submit Form, the Research Administrator will contact the student and inform them they have permission to submit.
- 5.3.3 The full thesis can then be emailed to the Research Administrator in Microsoft Word or PDF format. The Research Administrator is responsible for sending the thesis, together with Appendix 8. Report on Thesis Submitted for a Research Degree, to the Internal and External Examiners. The Examiners' report and final recommendation, together with the copies of the thesis, should be returned to the Research Administrator. The Research Administrator is responsible for ensuring due internal process is carried out with regard to the Examiners' final recommendation, then communicates the final result to the student.
- 5.3.4 A student shall not be permitted to submit as their thesis a thesis which is being submitted for a degree in another university or for which a degree has already been conferred on them in this or any other university. A student shall not be precluded, however, from incorporating work which they have already submitted for a degree in this or any other university, or work which has been published previously, provided that:
 - (a) They indicate which work has been so incorporated
 - (b) The work is more or less revised, as required, to become an integral part of the overall argument and/or investigation represented by the thesis



5.3.5 Archiving and Restriction of Access

The usual procedure is that, once an award is approved, a PhD thesis is stored on the publicly accessible Buckingham E-Archive of Research (BEAR) and British Library's EThOS website for the use of future students and academics in general. An MA/LLM/MSc/MPhil thesis is stored on the University's SharePoint site and is accessible to current students and staff. Exceptionally, a student may request that access to their thesis be restricted by completing Appendix 3. Restriction of Access Form. The most likely acceptable reasons for restriction are:

- a) it is intended to be published in a book or a journal form at a future date and it is reasonable it be withheld until that date
- b) the contents constitute a trade secret, or its disclosure would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person
- c) disclosure would be likely to endanger an individual's health or safety
- d) publication would cause the candidate or third parties mentioned in the text to be open to persecution, e.g. racial, ethnic, political.

5.3.6 Early Submission

A thesis may not normally be submitted until the end of the prescribed period of study. Early submission requires the approval of the University Research Committee, to whom application may be made via the Research Officer in the area of study. In any case, it is expected that a minimum of two-thirds of the prescribed period of study should have been completed.

5.3.7 Turnitin

A draft thesis must be run through Turnitin by the student/First Supervisor before the Intention to Submit form is completed. The student then has opportunity to address any issues before submission is made. Should potential misconduct be uncovered after formal submission, the thesis will be referred to the relevant School Academic Integrity Advocate before proceeding to examination.