

Presenting Your Thesis: Notes on the arrangement of theses and their preparation for binding and deposit

1.0 Introduction and summary

This is a guide to the presentation of a thesis required for the award of a research degree.

Academic Services has drawn up this guide as the standard for all theses presented for research degrees in the University of Birmingham. This guide deals with the practicalities of producing your thesis in a format that is acceptable for examination and for deposit in the Library. However, this guide does not deal with the content and academic standard required of a thesis. On these matters you must always consult your supervisor and the guidance issued by your School.

Sections 2 and 3 of this guide are intended to give you general guidance on the layout of the thesis.

Sections 4 and 5 draw to your attention practical issues about which you should be aware before you embark on the final assembly of your thesis. Many decisions (such as the paper to be used, how to cope with illustrative matter, binding procedures etc.) need to be thought out before you put together your completed thesis with all of its constituent elements. Unless you are aware of these practical issues, you may find that it is impossible to have this done in the fashion you anticipated, or that the costs incurred may be greater than they need have been. Some mistakes are impossible to correct when the time comes for binding. The thesis must be produced to a standard acceptable for long-term storage, and bound in accordance with University requirements before the degree may be awarded.

After examination, a final printed copy of the thesis must be deposited in the Library, and you must also deposit an electronic copy of your work in the University's eTheses Repository⁽¹⁾. Your Supervisor or Department may request a copy of your finished thesis.

Full details of current procedures, regulations and deadlines are available via <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/pgr/thesis>

2.0 General Considerations

Before embarking on your thesis, give careful consideration to how you are going to manage your work over the period of your research. For example: if you do not have your own computer, is the software that you intend to use freely available on the computer clusters in the University? Are there any special requirements (e.g. graphing, presentation of statistical data, etc.) which might affect the choice of software?

How are you going to manage your references? If you are using reference management software, does the package allow you to format and print out references in a style suitable for the presentation of your thesis?

If your thesis includes confidential or sensitive material, does this need to be presented in a separate volume or appendix that would enable the Library to withhold that section from public access? If your thesis includes any third-party material, have you sought appropriate permission to incorporate and disseminate it? Further guidance on this is available at <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/copyright/>

You should plan well ahead and allow adequate time for preparation, word processing, assembly, checking, corrections and binding in order to meet all of your specified deadlines.

3.0 Elements of the Thesis or Dissertation

A thesis must be an original work which makes a significant contribution to knowledge in or understanding of a particular field of study. It must contain material worthy of publication. It also demonstrates its relationship to the general corpus of knowledge in the field. In short it is the presentation of the results of original research in a critical and scholarly fashion. For these reasons it is essential that an appropriate presentation is adopted.

A thesis normally consists of the following elements:

- Author's Declaration Form (Library deposit copy only)
 - Preliminaries
 - title page
 - abstract
 - dedication
 - acknowledgements
 - contents listings
 - table of contents
 - list of illustrations
 - list of tables
 - list of definitions and/or abbreviations
 - Text
 - End Pages
 - appendices
 - list of references/bibliography

All the forms referred to in this guide are available at:

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/pgr/thesis>

3.1 Author's Declaration Form

You must complete the Author's Declaration Form and have it bound into the deposit copy of the thesis. Your thesis will be made available for consultation in the University Library, or in another UK library, via the Inter-Library Loans system, unless there are grounds for keeping the content of the thesis confidential. It will also be made available via the eTheses Repository⁽¹⁾ and EThOS⁽²⁾, unless you have requested that it should not appear on the web.

(When you submit your thesis, you will also need to supply an Abstract and Access Form and Declarations form with it, but these are not bound inside the thesis.)

Restricted access: If your thesis contains confidential material and you require an embargo preventing access to any version of your thesis, you are advised to discuss this with your supervisor and submit a formal request for restricted access. You are advised to do this at least two months prior to your intended submission date. If your request is approved, a copy of the restricted access request form will be sent to the examiners with the examination copy of your thesis.)

3.2 Preliminaries

These preliminary pages should not be included in the word count for the thesis. They should be numbered separately from the main body of the thesis, or left unnumbered.

3.2.1 Title Page

The title of the thesis should be given between 5 and 7 cm from the top of the page, followed by the name of the author and, after about a 5 cm space, a statement of the degree for which the thesis is submitted:

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTS OF SELECTION WITHIN AN INBREEDING PROGRAMME IN SUNFLOWER

by

MARTIN TREVOR SMITH

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

The bottom right-hand corner should state department and/or school, university and month of submission, with each element on a separate line:

Institute of Local Government Studies
School of Government and Society
College of Social Sciences
University of Birmingham
October 2014

Give your full name on the title page, as it will appear on your degree certificate and in the degree congregation programme.

For a resubmitted thesis, the date on the title page should be the month of resubmission. For a thesis submitted after minor or major corrections have been made, the date should be the original date of submission.

3.2.2 Abstract

An abstract – a succinct summary of the thesis containing all of the important concepts and conclusions of the work – should immediately follow the title page. It should be no more than 200 words in length. Do not number this page nor record it in the table of contents. This abstract will be used when the thesis is indexed in EThOS⁽²⁾, Index to Theses⁽³⁾ and elsewhere.

3.2.3 Dedication

A dedication is optional. If one is made, the dedication page should follow the abstract. It should be unnumbered and not recorded in the table of contents.

3.2.4 Acknowledgements

You may wish to acknowledge any substantial academic, financial or other assistance that you may have received in the course of your research. Inclusion of acknowledgements – to whom, and the precise wording – is a matter for your own discretion, but they should follow the abstract and dedication on a separate unnumbered page which is not listed in the table of contents.

The University's statement on editorial help for postgraduate research theses can be found at: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/pgr/thesis>. Where a third party editor has been used you must acknowledge what form of contribution the "third party" editor has made, by stating for example "this thesis was copy edited for conventions of language, spelling and grammar by ABC Editing Ltd" and submit a Third Party Declaration Form with your thesis.

3.2.5 Contents Listings

3.2.5.1 Table of Contents

A table of contents, and if needed a list of illustrations and a list of tables, should always be included and should follow the acknowledgements. Contents listings are extremely important

as a thesis has no index. Therefore, the contents listings must be accurate and informative – an examiner or reader may use them to find his or her way round the work. A good contents listing will also display the pattern of ideas through which the reader will be taken. The table of contents should show chapter and section titles (if any), demonstrating the relationship of the parts to each other by (if appropriate) indentation and numbering. Chapters and sections should be referenced to their page numbers.

3.2.5.2 List of Illustrations

A list of illustrations should follow the table of contents on a separate unnumbered page. If different types of illustrations are included this list can be subdivided into headed sections (e.g. Figures, Plates, Maps, Charts etc.). A page number should follow the title of the illustration. If illustrations have been inserted without page numbers then the terms “Facing page” or “Following page” should precede the appropriate page number. “Facing page” is used when one illustration is used; “Following page” is used when a whole series of illustrations has been inserted in the text.

3.2.5.3 List of Tables

If appropriate a list of tables should follow the list of illustrations on a separate unnumbered page.

3.2.5.4. Other Preliminary Listings

It may be advisable to include other listings at this point. For example, if the work extensively employs certain abbreviations, or includes new definitions or symbols, these may be placed here. By placing them at the front, readers are alerted to their existence and can return to them when they need to be reminded of their meaning. However, lengthy lists of abbreviations (i.e. more than a page) may be better located after the main body of the work. Whatever you decide, you must always explain fully any abbreviation, symbol or new term when you first use it in the text.

3.3 The Text

The main body of the text follows the preliminaries and the sequence of page numbers begins here. This is the section you must include in your word count. As has been indicated in the Introduction, this guide is not concerned with the academic content and standard required of a thesis. Within the text, however, it may be necessary to indicate additional information or acknowledge other sources.

Throughout a substantial body of text it is certain that you will need to use references to acknowledge sources that you have consulted and, possibly, footnotes to illuminate some points or issues which are raised. It is important that you have a clear understanding of how and why references and footnotes are employed in a scholarly work.

3.3.1 References and Referencing Systems

Referencing is an essential part of academic scholarship. Intellectual honesty demands that authors identify their sources. Referencing has three main functions:

- a) to acknowledge an intellectual debt to another author where you have drawn heavily from his or her published work or ideas, either explicitly or implicitly;
- b) to support specific facts or claims which you make in your text;
- c) to enable the reader to find sources to which you have referred easily and quickly.

Failure to identify sources upon which you draw is plagiarism, the most serious of academic offences and a possible breach of copyright law. A thesis which embodies deliberate plagiarism will almost certainly be rejected. If you are in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, or how to avoid it, you should consult your supervisor, and read the University's Guidelines on Plagiarism at

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentservices/conduct/misconduct/plagiarism/guidance-students.aspx> .

On submission of your final thesis for examination you are also required to submit an exact copy to your School for checking through TURNITIN. A thesis will not be sent for examination until confirmation has been received by the Research Student Administration team that the TURNITIN check has been completed and the thesis is fit for examination.

Referencing systems are normally based on the author-date system, eg Harvard, or a numerical system such as the Vancouver System. You must adopt a standard system and apply it consistently. For full details on how to construct references for different types of sources, and on referencing systems generally, please refer to the I-CITE⁽⁴⁾ guide.

3.3.2 Footnotes

Footnotes are much less common in a scholarly work than they once were. Footnotes are notes relating to the text placed at the foot of a page. Sometimes they are collected together at the end of a chapter, or at the end of the whole work: in these cases they are then often referred to as “Notes” or “Endnotes.” It is tempting to use these notes but, in fact, they should be used with great caution and considerable restraint. Frequent or over-indulgent use of footnotes is often an indication that the author has not thought out clearly what he or she wishes to say, or is incapable of attaching a proper degree of importance to competing pieces of information or arguments which are being presented. Footnotes, but particularly endnotes, are also distracting to the reader, interrupting his or her concentration on following the line of argument. Footnotes should therefore be restricted as follows:

- a) to develop an idea or expand a quotation where to do so in the text would really disturb the balance of the current argument;
- b) to refer the reader to another part of the thesis;
- c) to state a source;
- d) to acknowledge a borrowing.

If none of the above criteria apply then an appendix or special note at the end of the thesis is probably more appropriate. There are some subjects where footnotes are particularly appropriate (eg law, where it is common to place references to cited cases at the foot of the page so that a reader can quickly identify the full details of a case). In most circumstances, however, they should be used with care and restraint.

Footnotes are generally indicated by small superscript numbers placed at the end of a sentence. Numbering begins afresh on each new page. In works where footnotes are used both as references and as footnotes proper, the numbering is often sequential. Notes or endnotes are numbered sequentially as they appear. If tables are used, footnotes to them should be placed at the bottom of the tables to which they refer, and not at the bottom of the page.

3.3.3 Length of the Thesis

The maximum number of words in a thesis for each research degree qualification is set out in Regulation 7.4.2(d). The calculation of length excludes appendices, tables (including associated legends), diagrams, references, bibliography, footnotes and endnotes and any bound published material.

On submission of your thesis, you are required to complete a Submission of Research Degree Theses: Declarations form confirming the word length of the thesis. If your thesis is likely to exceed the maximum number of words you should, at an early stage, seek written permission of the University’s Research Progress & Awards Sub Panel. The Research Student Administration Team are unable to accept an over-length thesis unless prior approval to exceed the specified word count has been obtained.

3.4 End Pages

The end pages include such sections as appendices, special notes, a list of references and a bibliography. These are not included in the word count.

3.4.1 Appendices

Appendices and special notes may in effect be interchangeable. Appendices are often used for information which is supportive in nature and will not impede the progress of the reader in the main text. They are especially useful for readers who require greater clarification.

Therefore, they can be used as follows:

- a) for explanations and elaborations which are too long for footnotes, but are not essential parts of the text;

- b) texts of documents, laws etc. which illustrate the text;
- c) long charts or tables of test-data, specifications for equipment and materials used, etc.

Do not regard them as repositories for things which do not fit elsewhere in the text – ensure that you have a clear justification for including them. Appendices should be listed on the contents page. Where more than one appendix is included, assign each one a number and list them like chapters.

3.4.2 List of References/Bibliography

This is an important part of the thesis. It is important systematically to record the sources you have consulted and to manage your references in a way that facilitates their incorporation in your thesis.

The list of references must contain all of the sources which you have found significant enough to mention in the text. These may include primary and secondary sources, published and unpublished writings, books, articles, images, media, data and internet. Presentation of these sources must be consistent, and in line with whichever referencing system you have adopted. “List of References” is often the preferred heading for introducing such a list for a thesis in the Sciences; “Bibliography” is often the term preferred in the Humanities.

It should be noted, however, that “bibliography” is a term, which has a slightly more precise meaning. It is often used to include sources which have not been cited in the text itself, but which the author thinks that readers might wish to go on to consult. Such a bibliography, if included, is often sub-divided into sections if this is likely to prove more helpful. Where your research has made extensive use of primary sources (unpublished materials) then these might best be listed separately from published material. Where the work is exclusively about one individual then it may be advisable to give separate lists of works by and about that individual. If these conditions do not apply then normally a consolidated alphabetical sequence is to be preferred.

4.0 Printing and binding for examination

4.1 Typing and Wordprocessing

You must make your own arrangements for the typing of your thesis. Use double line-spacing throughout the body of the text. Single-spacing is acceptable for quotations, footnotes, captions, etc and within items in the bibliography. Layout should be reasonably uniform in length of line and the number of lines per page.

The final script should be printed using a good quality printer. If double-sided printing is used, there must be no show through of ink from one side of the paper to the other, nor transfer of ink to facing pages.

Training is available on using advanced functions in Word to produce research documents, see <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/claddivision/skills/index.aspx> .

4.2 Typeface and Point Size

The thesis must be clearly set out and easy to read, and the e-version will need to conform to archival standards. A clear, standard typeface should be used throughout the main body of your text. Recommended fonts include Times Roman, Arial and Courier or other type-1 or true-type fonts.

To help ensure clarity, it is important that the point size is not too small. Your thesis may be photocopied or reduced at a later stage, so a 12 point typeface is the recommended standard for general use. If there is felt to be a strong reason for using another point size you should consult your supervisor before proceeding.

4.3 Margins and Pagination

The margin on the binding edge must be at least 3 cm. When photographs are mounted the binding margin must be increased to 4 cm (see section 2.7 below).

It is desirable to leave 3 cm at the top and bottom of the page and about 2 cm at the outer edge.

Preliminary pages (see section 3.2) are unnumbered, pagination beginning with the first page of the text proper. Page numbers may either be placed at top-centre, 1 cm below the edge or at the foot of the page, 2 cm above the edge. Be consistent in whichever style you choose.

4.4 Chapter Headings and Sub-Headings

New chapters should always commence on a fresh page. Titles should be in capitals and centered. Sub-headings within chapters should be left-justified.

4.5 Paper

You should use A4 paper. See Section 4.10 for information on dealing with oversize matter. Buy a sufficient quantity of paper for the whole job at the outset. If you find that the paper you have varies in size, or that insertions (e.g. photographs, plates, maps etc.) are slightly different, consult staff in the Print-me – Digital Print Shop in the University Centre⁽⁵⁾ for advice before proceeding and certainly before you assemble the thesis. It may not be possible to trim to a uniform format after assembly.

The paper itself should be good quality bond paper. For single-sided printing, the weight must be at least 70 grammes per square metre (gsm). If you print on both sides of the paper, it should be at least 80 gsm, preferably 100 gsm, and sufficiently opaque for the text to be clearly legible on both sides.

4.6 Photocopies or Copied Material

If photocopies are to be included, ensure that all copies are clear and of high quality, especially when plates are being reproduced. It is important that the printed matter is square-set on each page with margins as specified in section 4.3.

If you are submitting a thesis that incorporates published articles (regulation 7.4.1(g)), the pages of the publications themselves will not be included in the pagination sequence of the thesis. Candidates should insert a sheet of A4 before each publication on which is displayed the publication number, publication title and full reference, and the page number of the thesis. For example, if the publications section starts on p75, insert an A4 sheet before the first publication on which is printed the name and number of the publication and p75. The first publication will then follow, with its own pagination. Before the second publication insert another A4 sheet on which is printed the name and number of the second publication and p76, and so on. This applies equally to the print and electronic thesis.

It is also important to ensure that you are not infringing someone else's copyright in the material.

4.7 Graphs, Diagrams and Plates

Page-size graphs, diagrams and plates require careful thought if good appearance is to be achieved. These can be mounted upright (portrait) or sideways (landscape). The general rule in either case is: caption below plate, and plate number immediately above the plate. If the plate is to be mounted sideways then its head should be towards the binding edge. It is of vital importance that a binding margin of 4cm is available on the correct side of the page.

4.8 Photographs

Colour photocopies or digital images printed onto photographic quality A4 paper can provide good quality reproduction of photographs. If this produces a satisfactory result, the binding process is made easier. You will also need to scan and non-digital photographs for inclusion in the electronic version of your thesis.

4.9 Original mounted photographs

Where original photographs are used either a matt or gloss finish is acceptable but you should seek the advice of your supervisor on the most effective one for the purpose in hand.

Full-page photographs are best mounted on single weight printing paper, preferably not glazed. Double weight paper is difficult to oversee, and might have to be hinged which will increase the cost of binding. Copy paper is not heavy enough for satisfactory mounting. For photographs larger than the page size, refer to section 4.10.

Photographs can be mounted by a variety of methods, but whichever method you choose must be permanent. The use of 'photographic stamps' is a good method but not always readily available. Photographs can also be mounted with PVA (polyvinyl acetate) based glue which is available from good stationers and photographic shops. Photos should be 'spot mounted' at the corners and middle, and not glued all over. This helps to avoid warping of the mounting paper. Use the adhesive sparingly to avoid transfer to adjacent pages. Photographs attached with other paste based adhesives tend to dry out and become detached after a while.

4.10 Oversize Photographs, Maps, Diagrams and supplementary media (anything which will not fit within an A4 page)

These require great care. Consult staff in the Print-me – Digital Print Shop in the University Centre for advice on how to get the most professional finish.

Joining of charts, graphs and diagrams: It is not recommended that charts etc. be joined unless absolutely necessary. They can be printed on A3 paper and folded in at the front edge of the thesis. If this is not possible, they should be overlapped slightly and joined with a suitable PVA based adhesive.

Folding: We recommend that you do not attempt to fold oversized material yourself, as a page wrongly folded may have to be refolded and its appearance will then be spoiled.

Allow generous margins when printing these pages, particularly on the binding edge (at least 3cm). Graph, diagram and map numbers are best positioned in the bottom right-hand corner.

When folded, the pages will need to be smaller than A4 in both the width and length to avoid the folds being cut off when the book is trimmed. If these dimensions cannot be achieved, eg for very large maps and diagrams, then a separate portfolio or a pocket at the end of the thesis may be required.

Disks, music manuscript and other non-standard pages: Theses often need to contain supplementary media. Disks can usually be built into a pocket at the back of the volume, whilst bulkier items may need to be boxed as a separate item.

5.0 Binding Procedures

5.1 Submitting for examination

Three months before submitting your thesis, you must complete a Notice of Intention to Submit a Thesis Form available at: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/pgr/intention> and return it to the Research Student Administration Team in Registry. Receipt of this form will start the process for the nomination of examiners.

5.2 Printing and Photocopying Service

A quick, competitive printing and photocopying service is available. Prices and advice are available on request from Central Print (tel. 0121 414 6496).

5.3 Temporary Bindings

It is normal practice for the copies of your thesis submitted for examination to be bound in a glued soft binding for examination purposes. This is an inexpensive binding that allows any corrections to be made before a relatively expensive hard copy is made. The Print-me shop⁽⁵⁾ operates a fast service Monday-Friday. After examination it is often possible for the Print-me staff to unbind these copies and potentially re-use the pages for the final hard copy.

This temporary binding must be sufficiently secure to ensure that pages do not fall out during the examination process. Theses that are not securely bound will not be sent to the

examiners and will be returned to the student by the Research Student Administration team for more secure rebinding.

Important Note:

The Library deposit copy needs to include an Author's Declaration Form (see 3.1 above) at the temporary binding stage. Please bring a signed copy with you. It may not be possible to proceed with your binding without it. If you are submitting a PDF copy for printing and binding, please scan your signed form for inclusion at the front of your thesis.

5.4 Final Copies

After your work has been examined and you have received your letter of award, you must have a copy of your thesis hard bound for permanent deposit in the Library. Your Supervisor or School may also request a copy (check with your own School if you are unsure, before you bring in your final copies for binding).

The Library deposit copy must be hard bound in Navy Blue, with gold lettering on the spine giving your name, the degree for which it is presented, and the year in which the degree is conferred. If your thesis comprises more than one volume, the volume numbers must also be lettered on the spine.

You can submit your final thesis for printing and binding via <http://birmingham.thesisonline.co.uk> or you can take your printed copy to the Print-me – Digital Print Shop at University Centre. The normal service time is five working days but may take longer at peak times. Express services are available on request.

In addition to the official copy, the Bindery will be happy to undertake the binding of any personal copies you require to your own specification.

You must also submit an electronic copy to the eTheses Repository (see <http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/information.html>). Take particular care if your thesis includes a) illustrations that you do not hold the rights to, b) personal details, c) data owned by a commercial sponsor or other third party. You may need to supply an additional redacted version of your e-thesis for access purposes, with sensitive material removed from it.

5.5 Charges and Payment

Details of the current charges for thesis binding are available at <http://birmingham.thesisonline.co.uk>

Theses may be sent by post to the Print-me – Digital Print Shop in the University Centre or a printable file emailed to centralprint@contacts.bham.ac.uk. They should be accompanied by the correct fee together with explicit instructions on the distribution of the bound copies. A postage and registration fee will be charged on each volume which is to be sent to an address outside the University. This amount should be added to the binding charge, again, consult the Print-me staff for details. Credit card payments are accepted, or cheques should be made payable to the University of Birmingham. No thesis will be accepted until payment for the work has been received in full.

6.0 Notes

⁽¹⁾ University of Birmingham eTheses Repository <http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/>

⁽²⁾ EThOS (Electronic Theses Online Service) <http://www.ethos.ac.uk>

⁽³⁾ INDEX to theses <http://www.theses.com/>

⁽⁴⁾ I-Cite: Guide to Citing References
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/icite/index.aspx>

⁽⁵⁾ Print-me binding service: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/external/creative-media/bindery/>

7.0 Further Reading

ALLISON, B. (2004) **The student's guide to preparing dissertations and theses**. London: Routledge Falmer (Education Library LB 2369/A)

ANDERSON, Jonathan. (2001) **Assignment and thesis writing**. Chichester: Wiley (OLRC 808.06)

BRITISH STANDARDS INSTITUTION, (1990) **BS 4821: Recommendations for the presentation of theses**. London: BSI

ETHOSnet Project, (2008-09) **ETHOS Toolkit**, especially the FAQs for Authors [online]. Available from <http://ethostoolkit.cranfield.ac.uk> [Accessed June 2014]

MODERN HUMANITIES RESEARCH ASSOCIATION, (2008) **MHRA style guide: a handbook for authors, editors and writers of theses** [online]. Available to download from <http://www.mhra.org.uk/Publications/Books/StyleGuide/> [Accessed June 2014]

MURRAY, R. (2011) **How to write a thesis** Maidenhead: Open University Press (Education Library LB 2369/M)

NEVILLE, C. (2010) **The complete guide to referencing and avoiding plagiarism** Maidenhead: Open University Press (PN 171.F56 or Barnes Library R119)

OLIVER, P. (2008) **Writing your thesis** London: Sage (Education Library LB 2369/O)

THODY, A. (2006) **Writing and presenting research**. London: SAGE (Education Library LB 2369/T)

University of Birmingham (No date) **i-cite Guide to Citing References** [online]. Available from <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/icite/index.aspx> [Accessed June 2014]

All Library Services documents are available in other formats, please contact Library Services on 0121 414 5828 or <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/library/contact/justask.aspx> for information

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