Formatting your thesis

# Introduction

This is a guide to the presentation of a thesis required for the award of a research degree at the University of Birmingham. It deals only with the practicalities of producing your thesis in a format that is acceptable for examination and deposit in the Library. It supplements Regulation 7.4.1 which covers thesis requirements and Regulation 7.4.2 which contains key information about language and word count. For the regulations relevant to your cohort, see <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/legislation/regulations/index.aspx>.

If your thesis will include material that has previously been published, please refer to the Alternative Format Thesis guidelines in addition to this document: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentservices/graduateschool/documents/public/rsa/altformatguide.docx>

For aspects of thesis presentation not mentioned in the regulations or in this document, discuss with your supervisor what might be appropriate for your discipline.

# Legal considerations

Whilst there may be valid reasons to restrict access to your thesis temporarily, an electronic copy of your thesis will become publicly available immediately or within a few years of your graduation. Just as would be required with a formal publication, it is your responsibility to ensure your thesis can be legally shared with a broad audience.

## Copyright

It is your responsibility to ensure that you comply with copyright legislation when including third-party material (e.g. quotations, images). For more information, see <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/researchercopyright>.

## Data Protection

Unless you have explicit permission, your thesis must not include commercially sensitve data or sensitive personal data relating to your research participants. Where it is essential to include such data, you should ensure it is fully anonymised. For more information, see <https://ico.org.uk/media/1061/anonymisation-code.pdf>.

## Accessibility

There is a legal requirement to make theses available to those who would benefit from an accessible document, including those using screen-reading software. For more information, see LinkedIn Learning via <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/linkedinlearning-accessible-docs>.

# Elements of the thesis

A thesis normally consists of the following elements, in the order presented here:

* Preliminaries
  + Title page
  + Abstract
  + Dedication (optional)
  + Acknowledgements
  + Contents listings
    - Table of contents
    - List of illustrations (if appropriate)
    - List of tables (if appropriate)
    - List of definitions/abbreviations (if appropriate)
* Main body text
* End pages
  + References/bibliography
  + Appendices

## Preliminaries

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

### Title page

The title page gives the title, author, statement of the degree for which the thesis is submitted, department/school, university and month of submission. Give your full name on the title page to ensure it matches that on your student record.

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

If your thesis consists of more than one volume, a title page should be included in each volume. In this case, the title page should additionally include the number of the particular volume and the total number of volumes of the thesis.

It should be laid out as in the following example:

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

by

MARTIN TREVOR SMITH

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

Institute of Local Government Studies

School of Government and Society

College of Social Sciences

University of Birmingham

October 2020

### Abstract

The abstract should immediately follow the title page, and be no longer than 2 pages. The abstract will be used when the thesis is indexed in EThOS, Index to Theses and elsewhere.

### Acknowledgements

You must include acknowledgement of any funding you have received.

Where a third party editor or generative AI has been used for editorial help, you must acknowledge this. For further information on what needs to be included in either of these cases, see the full statement on editorial help: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentservices/graduateschool/documents/public/rsa/editorialhelp.docx>.

Inclusion of further acknowledgements is a matter for your own discretion, and they may be omitted if the above do not apply to you.

### Contents listings

#### Table of contents

The table of contents should show chapter and section titles, demonstrating the relationship of the parts to each other by indentation and numbering. Chapters and sections should be referenced to their page numbers.

If your thesis consists of more than one volume, each volume should have its own table of contents as well as a complete table of contents.

#### Other preliminary listings

You may also choose to include lists of illustrations, tables, definitions and/or abbreviations.

If your list of illustrations includes different types of illustrations, it can be subdivided into headed sections (e.g. figures, plates, maps, charts). The title of each illustration should be referenced to its page number. If illustrations have been inserted without page numbers then the terms “Facing page” (for one illustration) or “Following page” (series of illustrations) should precede the appropriate page number.

Lists of definitions and/or abbreviations act as an aid to the reader, and do not replace full explanations in the main text when an abbreviation, symbol or new term is used for the first time.

## Main body text

The main body of the text follows the preliminaries and the sequence of page numbers begins here. This section must be included in your word count (less any exemptions such as footnotes, tables, diagrams and figures – see regulation 7.4.2).

A referencing style appropriate to your discipline should be used consistently throughout your thesis. For more information, see <https://libguides.bham.ac.uk/asc/referencing>.

## End pages

### References/bibliography

A list of references must contain all of the sources which you have mentioned in the text, according to your chosen referencing style. This can be headed either “List of References” or “Bibliography” as appropriate to your discipline.

Additionally, you may include a bibliography of sources which you have not cited in the text itself, but which you think readers might wish to go on to consult. This may be sub-divided into sections if that is likely to prove helpful.

### Appendices

Appendices contain information which is supportive but not critical for understanding of the main text. Copyright and appropriate handling of sensitive information also apply to the appendices as in the main text, and it is your responsibility to ensure that you comply.

Where more than one appendix is included, assign each one a number.

# Typesetting and word processing

The thesis must be clearly set out and easy to read.

## Page layout

The margin on the binding edge must be at least 3 cm. It is desirable to have margins of 3 cm at the top and bottom of the page and 2 cm at the outer edge.

## Document layout

It is recommended that you use the heading styles within your word processing software properly. This will facilitate creation of a table of contents, simplify navigation of your document, and increase the accessibility of your thesis to screen readers.

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

Quotations not integrated in the text should be clearly distinguished from the main text.

Equations and formulae should be indented from the margin and separated from the surrounding text by an extra space. They may be numbered.

Illustrations and tables should be positioned near the first reference made to them in the text, and a fully descriptive caption provided. Avoid using colour to convey meaning.

For information on using Microsoft Word to manage long documents, including theses, see <https://canvas.bham.ac.uk/enroll/T9WKYK>.

## Typeface

Recommended fonts include Arial, but any clear, standard, sans serif typeface may be used. Font colour should be black, and font size 12 is recommended for general use.

Use double line spacing throughout the body of your text. Single spacing is acceptable for quotations, footnotes, captions, and the bibliography. Layout should be reasonably uniform in length of line and the number of lines per page.

# Printing and binding for examination

You are not required to submit printed copies of your thesis in the first instance. However, if your examiners specifically request a printed copy, Research Student Administration will contact you and you will then be required to submit a printed copy. These guidelines should be followed in this case.

## Paper

You should use white A4 paper, of good quality (minimum 80 gsm if single-sided or minimum 100 gsm if double-sided). We encourage printing on both sides of the paper, provided the paper doesn’t allow printing to show through and affect legibility.

## Binding

It is normal practice for the copies of your thesis submitted for examination to be bound in a glued soft binding. This binding must be sufficiently secure to ensure that pages do not fall out during the examination process.

# Library deposit copy

After your work has been examined, your corrections (if applicable) have been approved, and you have received your letter of award, you must upload an electronic copy for permanent deposit in the eTheses Respository via <https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/>. For more information, see <http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/library/theses/deposit>.

If your thesis has any supplementary media, this should be provided electronically. Contact Scholarly Communications Services in Libraries and Learning Resources for advice via [ubira@lists.bham.ac.uk](mailto:ubira@lists.bham.ac.uk).

# Further reading

Allison, B. & Race, P. (2004) *The student’s guide to preparing dissertations and theses*. 2nd ed. London; New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

International Organization for Standardization (1986). *ISO 7144: Documentation – presentation of theses and similar documents*.