Editing your thesis

Presented by:
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Learning consultant (CTL)
Good presentation applies to...

- Presentation of the problem
- Commanding the literature
- Significance of findings
- Relevance & validity of findings
Your PhD

You will write approx. 200-300 hundred pages
Conduct at least 3 years of research (if not more)
Collect and interpret data
Organise literature
Produce a critical, comprehensive and cohesive discussion to support your thesis

Editing (by definition) involves:
Arranging, revising, and preparing written, audio, or video material for final production…. 

The objectives of editing include:
1. Detection and removal of factual, grammatical, and typographical errors
2. Clarification of obscure passages
3. Elimination of parts not suitable for the targeted audience, and
4. Proper sequencing to achieve a smooth, unbroken flow of narrative

(Business Dictionary, 2018).

Editing your work is not only beneficial, it’s practically a mandatory component of writing your thesis.
Activity:

In small groups discuss editing …

• What does ‘editing’ mean for you?

• What have you been doing?

• What are you planning to do?

• What are you having problems with?

• What is working well for you so far?
Editing your thesis: From macro to micro

As a whole

Each section/chapter

Each paragraph

Each sentence
Reviewing your thesis as a whole:
Make an outline plan and keep it in front of you while you go through your work as a whole.

**Questions to ask yourself:**
- Does your thesis answer your central research question or thesis title?

Research can be unpredictable, therefore, it’s important to make sure that your content matches your title. *For example*, you may have shifted focus while writing, in which case, you will need to re-phrase your dissertation topic while editing.

- Have you defined key words and concepts early on in your thesis?

It’s also important to minimise the risk of confusing a reader. When editing, imagine a friend or family member who has no knowledge of your discipline or your dissertation, and then ask yourself, have I done enough to explain each term and concept?
**Sections/chapters:**

Read each chapter and create a label that will help you to check that all of the relevant points and details are there.

**Questions to ask yourself:**
- Does all of the content belong in this chapter/section?

Flag anything that might be better placed in another section (or possibly be cut). For example, you might identify repetitive parts which have been stated previously, or discussion that is peripheral.

- Is there too much description and not enough analysis?

In other words, are you being explicit about the implications of a point? Remember to make it clear to a reader why a particular point is included, and how this point helps to address the problems/questions in your thesis.

**Structure and flow:**

**Introduction: Does it:**
- Define the topic?
- State the purpose of the research?
- Provide an outline of the thesis discussion?

**Chapters: Do they:**
- Have a logical order?
- Divide the discussions into appropriate sections?
- Have introductory and concluding segments?
- Present smooth transitions between each paragraph?

**Conclusion: Does it:**
- Link back to the introduction?
- Sum up the thesis argument?
- Express ideas for future research avenues?

**Reference List: Does it:**
- List all sources fully and in the correct format?
- List only the references that you have cited in the main body? And vice-versa?

**Appendices: Are they:**
- All included and correctly labelled?
Sections/chapters:

Questions to ask yourself:

• Is the first sentence of each paragraph a topic sentence?

• Does it introduce the idea you want it to communicate as well as show how it relates to the rest of the discussion?

• Have you used signposting words and phrases effectively to show the relationship between the paragraphs and the points in them?

  E.g. Opening phrases like: In addition; Similarly; Furthermore; In contrast; However. Other sentences in the paragraph could include:

• An explanation / Develop a point
• A quote / An indirect reference that supports it
• An example from your research
• A hint at what still remains to be addressed

Editing your thesis: From macro to micro

GOOD & BAD TOPIC SENTENCES

BAD: A sentence that only states the topic using a keyword.

GOOD: A sentence that makes an argument point (e.g. a thesis statement for just that paragraph).

• For example, if your research is about relationships, it’s not enough just to put the keyword ‘relationship’ in the sentence. Rather you have to create a topic sentence that is specific to that paragraph, which in this case, would tell the readers exactly what part of a relationship this paragraph addresses.
Editing a thesis can feel like a BIG job but there are lots of things you can do to minimise the number of typo, grammar and other sentence structure errors:

• **Check your sentence length**: Aim for sentences that are no longer than three lines and carefully review all punctuation.

• **Read each sentence aloud**.

• **Check quotes have quotation marks** – double or single, depending on your referencing style, and ensure that your style is consistent.

• **Check for common grammar errors** (e.g. their/there and advice/advise).

• **Ensure apostrophes are correct**.


Commonly confused words: [http://owll.massey.ac.nz/academic-writing/commonly-confused-words.php](http://owll.massey.ac.nz/academic-writing/commonly-confused-words.php)

Each sentence

Editing your thesis: From macro to micro

• **Identify sentence fragments**: the sentence subject, the verb/action.
  - Are they buried among too many unnecessary words and phrases?
  - Try cutting unnecessary words and read it again.

• **Use a spellchecker**: very helpful in general.
  - Pay attention to your spelling of key names and theories.
  - Ensure the use of capital letters is consistent and correct.

Sentence Fragments: OWLL
[http://owll.massey.ac.nz/academic-writing/sentence-fragments.php](http://owll.massey.ac.nz/academic-writing/sentence-fragments.php)

Also see: Manchester Phrasebank
[http://www.phrasebank.Manchester.ac.uk](http://www.phrasebank.Manchester.ac.uk)
Editing and proofing summary

It’s never too soon to start revising, but try to tackle it in these stages, from Macro to Micro.

Revision of …

– **Macro** - Formatting the whole structure of your thesis:
  • Layout and presentation; margins, spacing, indentation, correct citation details.
  • Does your thesis answer your central research question or thesis title?
  • Are the central concepts clearly defined?

– **Meso** - Content and organisation (How everything fits together):
  • Do you have a clear research question?
  • Are concepts defined (in plain language) early on in chapters?
  • Do your introduction and body and conclusion all flow together?
  • Do the paragraphs in each chapter have a logical flow?

– **Micro** - Grammar and structuring of sentences:
  • Have you used transition sentences, and signposting between chapters and paragraphs. Spell checks, grammatical issues sorted etc.

  **NOTE**: Often editing (especially micro editing) is easier when all of the writing is done. As it’s easier to see what needs to be added, or deleted.

E.g.: Can save you wasting time fixing sentences that you might remove later

**Editing over the thesis timeline**

- **At the beginning**
- **During**
- **Towards the end**
Plagiarism

“Is there any way that I can check my thesis writing before I submit it”

Accessing Turnitin?

• Sometimes students are concerned, or just merely curious about their level of plagiarism

Three ways to avoid plagiarism:

• Referencing properly
• Developing good ways to paraphrase
• Taking good notes

StudyUp online: “How to avoid plagiarism” – http://owll.massey.ac.nz/about-OWLL/studyup-resources.php
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*The thesis as a long document*
Microsoft Word Resources

Microsoft Word

Microsoft Word is the most common word-processing program used to create assignments and other written documents. This section contains guides on how to format documents correctly using this program. Many repetitive tasks – such as double-spacing an assignment, creating a table of contents, or inserting a table or figure caption – can be done automatically.

In this section

- Basic formatting
- Images, tables, and figures
- Long documents

Related sections

For information on how to arrange and present your work, see the section on formatting and layout.

Massey Library webpage: http://owll.massey.ac.nz/computer-skills/microsoft-word.php
Long documents in Microsoft Word

This page contains helpsheets for the three versions of Microsoft Word (2003, 2007, and 2010). If you are not sure which version of Word you are using, check the chart below.

Microsoft Word 2003

Microsoft Word 2007

Microsoft Word 2010

If you have difficulty loading the helpsheets, you may need to install the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader.

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<th>2007</th>
<th>2010</th>
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<tr>
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<td>PDF (88kb)</td>
<td>PDF (110kb)</td>
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</table>
Massey Library offers:

1 workshop per semester
and
1 to 1 tutorials (when requested)

Email: library@massey.ac.nz
(Include the words “long document tutorial” in your subject heading)
Online Quiz

Three categories (26 questions in total):

Qs 1 – 10: Spelling consistency – USA & British
Qs 11 – 18: Singular or Plural forms
Qs 19 – 26: Commonly misspelt words
You’ll see questions on the screen – e.g.

What is the name of Massey’s learning management system?

After a few seconds, you’ll be given two possible answers – e.g.

Stream

Noodle
You need to select the correct answer by pressing the appropriate square on your phone, pad or laptop.

You’ll receive points not only for correct answers but also according to the speed of your selection.
To join the quiz you need to:

- Open kahoot.it in your browser
- Enter the game pin which I will show you in a minute
- Enter your nickname (and you will see it appear on the public screen)
Singular or plural?

- Axis
- Crises
- Criterion
- Nuclei
- Phenomenon
- Stimuli
- Strata
- Matrix

- Singular
- Plural
- Singular
- Plural
- Singular
- Plural
- Singular
Consistency in singular/plural

- Axis vs. Axes
- Crisis vs. Crises
- Criterion vs. Criteria
- Nucleus vs. Nuclei
- Phenomenon vs. Phenomena
- Datum vs. Data
- Stratum vs. Strata
- Matrix vs. Matrices

For example:
- What criterion do you use to find suitable research participants? [Decision based on one factor].
- What criteria do you use to find suitable research participants? [Decision based on multiple factors].
- The data are / show / indicate – data as a group of different factors.
- The data is / shows / indicates – data as a whole unit (datum).

Citing author/s – Singular or Plural?

1 author = shows/states/argues
2 or more authors = show/state/argue

E.g.:
- Smith (2000) states that ….
- Smith and Jones (2001) state that …
Referring to sources: Use of tenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>acknowledge</th>
<th>admit</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>allege</th>
<th>argue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>assert</td>
<td>assume</td>
<td>believe</td>
<td>claim</td>
<td>conclude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consider</td>
<td>decide</td>
<td>demonstrate</td>
<td>deny</td>
<td>determine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discover</td>
<td>doubt</td>
<td>emphasise</td>
<td>explain</td>
<td>find</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hypothesise</td>
<td>imply</td>
<td>indicate</td>
<td>infer</td>
<td>note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>object</td>
<td>observe</td>
<td>point out</td>
<td>prove</td>
<td>reveal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>say</td>
<td>show</td>
<td>state</td>
<td>suggest</td>
<td>think</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Da Souza **argues that** previous researchers have misinterpreted the data.

2. Researchers **have demonstrated that** the use of this procedure is harmful.

3. Smith **admits that** aggregating the data limits the possible variations.

(Smollet, Proctor & Plotnick, 2004)

Also see: [http://www.phrasebank.Manchester.ac.uk](http://www.phrasebank.Manchester.ac.uk)
Consistency in spelling

**USA or British?**

- Labour: British
- Centre: British
- Fiber: USA
- Organize: USA
- Realise: British
- Dialog: USA
- Analogue: British
- Traveler: USA
- Anesthesia: USA
- Programme: British

(Condensed from Venolia, 1995)

NOTE: The NZ dictionary follows the British style of spelling.
Consistency in spelling

USA
Labor
Center
Fiber
Organize
Realize
Dialog
Analog
Traveler
Anesthesia
Program

British
Labour
Centre
Fibre
Organise
Realise
Dialogue
Analogue
Traveller
Anaesthesia
Programme

Note:
• USA shortened version/as sounds
• Use of z rather than s
• Which ever you use, be consistent

(Venolia, 1995)
Common misspellings

- Accomodate  
- Definitely  
- Occurrence  
- Independent  
- Questionnaire  
- Recommend  
- Compulsary  
- Catagories

Accommodate  
Definitely  
Occurrence  
Independent  
Questionnaire  
Recommend  
Compulsory  
Categories
Clients were given good advise/advice about the procedure
This population has been effected/affected by droughts
The knock on effect/affect was a drop in house prices
Fish oil provides an alternate/alternative source of essential minerals
Participants took the medication on alternate/alternative days
Three discreet/discrete measurements were recorded
The interviewer was very discreet/discrete in addressing these difficult issues
Oatmeal serves as a complement/compliment to the babyfood
Following the group therapy session we observed an increased number of complements/compliments
• **Affect** is usually a verb, and it means to impact or change.

• **Effect** is usually a noun, an **effect** is the result of a change.

  **BUT…** ‘affect’ and ‘effect’ can both be verbs and nouns. E.g.: "We want to effect this change immediately" (i.e. cause it to occur) / "The effect of the action was ..." / "This will affect the situation" / "she developed a positive affect" (a subjective way of being, like "affectation" - this one is common in psychology writing).

• **Alternate** = every other  
  **Alternative** = substitute

• **Discreet** = subtle  
  **Discrete** = separate

• **Complement** = to go well with  
  **Compliment** = praise
Avoiding verbose phrases

Simplify sentences:

- Wordy sentences should be avoided and edited down to simpler versions. Doing this will make the content more readable as well as more easily understandable.

For instance:

- Despite the fact that = Although
- In the event that = If
- Has a requirement for = Needs
- It is often the case = Often
- In view of the fact that = Because
Useful tips for avoiding wordiness

• Look out for **prepositions**: "of", "in", "by" (e.g. "in the event of") - if you see it, it often signals a wordy phrase.

• The same thing is often true for "tion" and "ance" words (e.g. "the maintenance of the relationship" vs. "maintaining the relationship").

• **Relative pronouns**: "who" "whose" "whom" "which" and "that" (e.g. "the experiment, which is a new one, showed that ..." vs. "the new experiment showed ...").

• **Introductory phrases** like "There is", "It is" (e.g. "There are many antelope interested in ..." vs. "Many antelope are interested in ...“).

• **Cliches** tend to repeat unnecessarily (e.g. "each and every", “first and foremost”).
Written too much and have to cut words?

Editing to cut:

• Take out certain sections?
  • Deleting whole paragraphs can be problematic if they are connected to other areas of discussion, or be linked to previous signposts.

• Go back to key arguments:
  • If they are adequately answered, you may be able to cut words from places where you have added discussion that is not essential to the point being made.

• Too light in other areas?
  • You may need to add more. It’s a balancing act!

• Look for redundant sentences or material and cut it.
• Create a clear outline to stop yourself from writing too much.
Paragraphing

Clear topic sentence that reflects the whole paragraph

One point per paragraph

Make sure the paragraphs fit together i.e. flow


Read for understanding and clarity

• Do not use overly complicated language:
  • When possible, you need to write as simply as possible so that (theoretically) anyone off the street could pick up your thesis, read it, and understand it.

• Give your thesis chapters to people outside of your discipline:
  • If they can understand it, you are doing well!
  • And if it’s not easily understandable, you will need to work on it some more.
It’s important to remind the reader why your research is important

This study is a first in showing the importance of the early embryonic period in the development of lambs and indicated significant biological and economical implications of the uterine environment in sheep production. Supplements at this early stage would reduce likelihood of infection and the potential for stillborns later on.

This study provides greater understanding and direction for future research into this disease in livestock in New Zealand. The enzyme reaction we observed has the potential to be used as the basis of a vaccine for ...

This research is potentially very useful to the timber industry. It allows growers to distinguish hybrids from pure species and therefore ensure the trees when fully established have the qualities required of..

This study provides greater understanding and direction for future research into this disease in livestock in New Zealand. The enzyme reaction we observed has the potential to be used as the basis of a vaccine for ...
Acknowledging the need for further research

Reinforce the contribution of your own research and acknowledge the need for further research in the area. For example:

A further line of work that would be of considerable interest...

This research has made important contributions to X and Y but there is scope for future work in this area.

The development of a more general X that applies to networks other than Y and Z remains an enormous challenge.

Another recurring issue is ... ... ... The methods we introduce in this thesis present a vast improvement in terms of X ... ... ... however Y makes these methods unsuitable for very large networks. There is still much work that needs to be done in terms of...
Checking your References

– Check for style consistency.

– That all in text citations (in the body) are in the end reference list.

– And vice versa... do you have references in your Reference list that you have not cited in your chapters.

– Checking references can be tedious, but it’s very important. Also it can be incredibly time consuming, so allow yourself time to do this properly, without rushing.

– Enrol in workshops on Endnote, or watch online video tutorials about the software that you are using to record your references (e.g. Zotero, Mendeley, Reciprocity, Citation Manager etc...).
Examples of style inconsistency

Reference list: APA Style


In-text citations:

(Singh, 2005) ✓ (Smith 2000) ✗

In-text citations with page numbers:

(Singh 2005, 25) ✗ (Smith, 2000, p. 12) ✓
EndNote is Massey's preferred reference management software; with it you can:

- create, import, manage and search references
- download and manage full text
- insert citations into Microsoft Word documents
- create bibliographies in a variety of bibliographic styles

EndNote@Massey

Adjusting Author View in a List of References
EndNote X8
Install Instructions for Endnote X8 on Massey Computers
EndNote and Office 365
Repairing Corrupt Libraries
Journal Titles That Can’t Be Changed
Sharing Libraries With Other Users
How Do I Set Endnote To Permanently Open My Library?
Massey Profile Installer
Discover: Import Filter Request
Your working environment

When writing:

- Always try to give yourself time to write and think.
- Remember, writing doesn’t always flow, so factor that into your writing schedule.
- Find a place that lets you work with minimal interruptions.

Working and communicating with supervisors:

- Supervisors will give feedback on your writing, and the sooner the better. So writing early is a really good idea.
- However, you might decide to focus on just getting your points across in early drafts, and going back to do grammar later. So you will need to let your supervisors know.

Have you tried:

- Bootcamps or writing retreats?
Other tips

• Time management:
  – Don’t leave editing to the last minute. It takes time!

• Look at other theses by past PhDs to use as a guideline:
  – They can give you a better idea of how you want your thesis to look (e.g. overall structure and presentation style, Table of Contents, Fonts, Citation style). Also look at the ways they have structured particular sentences in the different sections/chapters of their thesis.

• Long Doc Resources (& unofficial thesis template)
  
  https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/staffroom/national-shared-services/information-technology-services/help/learning-resources-for-students.cfm

• Being a good writer means adopting good writing and revision techniques:
  – Create your own editing checklists. For example…
## Example of an Editing Checklist - Micro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Micro element</th>
<th>Guidelines</th>
<th>Check</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capitalisation</td>
<td>Use of capitalisations are correct and consistently used.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>Commas, colons etc. are correct and in appropriate places, including apostrophes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>All sentences are easy for the reader to understand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formatting</td>
<td>The correct formatting guidelines for PhDs in my college have been followed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>All words are spelled correctly &amp; consistently (e.g. in depth, in-depth, indepth)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary terms</td>
<td>Complex words have been explained in-full when used, AND added to the Glossary’s list of terms, with a full description.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronyms</td>
<td>Acronyms are used for ease of reading and are re-written in full at the first instance in each chapter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What about professional editing services?

Editing companies:
- Typically made up of editors who have an academic background.
- Like to assure quality editing results.
- Multiple editors, so tend to work well with tight deadlines.

Check out several editing agencies to compare prices and level of service.

Freelance editors:
- Like companies, different freelance editors offer different levels of work.

You need to make sure that your editor/proofreader has suitable qualifications, as well as a known history of producing successful work.

Always avoid services that offer to re-write, or even write your thesis. Using a service like this could be seen as a serious offence.

Key points to keep in mind when searching for an editor:
- Ethics
- Affordability
- Capability
- Turn around time

Useful links

Massey’s Doctoral Research Student webpage – (where you can find all of the resources from these and other sessions from 2017 & 2018):
http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/researcher-development/postgraduate-research-student.cfm

What font should you use?
https://thesiswhisperer.com/2016/03/30/what-font-should-i-choose-for-my-thesis/

Choosing a referencing management system
https://thesiswhisperer.com/2013/08/21/endnote-vs-well-everything-else/
Useful literature


Support over the summer period

CTL services: https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/staffroom/teaching-and-learning/centres_tl/centrestl-students/centrestl-students_home.cfm

Library services: https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/library/library_home.cfm

Massey’s Doctoral Research Student webpage: http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/researcher-development/postgraduate-research-student.cfm

Writing workshops by Martin McMorrow: tinyurl.com/martinspresenations AND academicenglishresources.com

Bye for now. We will be back in 2020 with more!