
Getting the Thesis Written

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What's involved?

- Writing before enrolment
 - Writing throughout the Doctoral Programme
 - Writing the thesis
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Most important ...

.... students need practice in
writing

and

... you need to be aware of how
their writing ability is developing

Initial Groundwork

- Set initial writing tasks
 - Set regular writing tasks
 - Ask students to keep a reading log
 - Ask students to read for style and treatment of content, not just for ideas
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Examples

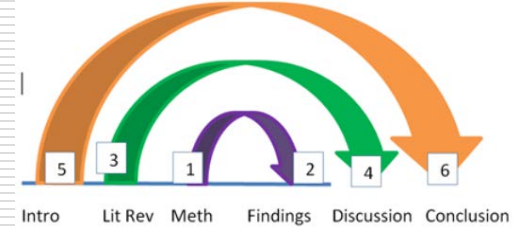
- Summary of recent articles
 - Comparative review of two recent articles
 - Critical review of two or three key articles focusing either on conceptual issues, methodology, findings and/or implications
 - Comparative review of research design in three recent studies focusing on how they relate to your research
 - Issues of concept and definition related to your research topic in the last decade
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Reading logs

- Submitted monthly/ every two months
 - Full and consistent citation of sources
 - Starred according to usefulness
 - Brief commentary on each article, and the (potential) relevance to the research topic
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Developing student awareness of good writing

- Students need to read critically in terms of style
 - Students need to be able to identify 'good'
 - Abstracts
 - Introductions
 - Description of research problem
 - Development of research questions
 - Reviews of literature ...
 - Students need to understand important differences, e.g. between results, discussion and conclusion
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Starting to write the thesis

Students need to ...

- Develop a plan for the order of writing of chapters
 - Present and discuss an outline for each chapter before they begin to write
 - Indicate in the outline which sources are to be cited or quoted
 - Develop headings and sub-headings in the outline for each chapter
 - Indicate approximate word count for each section
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Only then

... should they begin to write a chapter

Submitting Drafts

Some useful hints

- Ask students to use the Headings function in Word to submit a ToC with each draft, and to number pages
 - Indicate a draft should be to a high standard in terms of formatting, etc.
 - References should be included
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It can be useful to....

- Ask students to provide a commentary when they submit a draft, e.g.
 - Areas they found difficult and why
 - Questions they have
 - Identifying the strongest and the weakest sections of the chapter
 - Particular aspects they may want feedback on
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Developing Feedback

Some useful hints:

- Tell students what you have focused on and why
 - Indicate clearly the quality of the draft, and how close it is to a final draft
 - Maybe link your evaluation to the earlier outline and verbal commentary the student presented
 - Respond to student's request for feedback, or signal why you have responded differently
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Developing student ownership of their writing....

- Use providing feedback as a way of preparing for the oral exam – getting students used to responding to questions
 - Ask students to indicate how they built on one or two aspects of the feedback
 - Ask for the next draft “What sort of feedback do you want on this?”
 - Check sections of the chapter for different things, and indicate that students should check in a similar way
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Working with co-supervisors

- Decide how you will share the role of providing feedback on the thesis
 - Make this clear to the student, and be consistent
 - Where at all possible collaborate in terms of feedback on substantive issues
 - Emphasise that different readers will 'see' different things in the writing
 - A division of labour is particularly useful at the end
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Further Sources

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