

Compiling the thesis examination copy

This also refers to compiling the final library copies. Students tend to get so involved in the micro issues of editing and polishing a thesis that they forget the macro issue of compiling the whole volume.

- Do a final check on page numbers (in the Table of Contents) and numbering of figures and tables: this can go so wrong right at the end of writing a thesis.
- Make sure the proof-reader checks your Acknowledgements as well. (I still remember reading a thesis containing the following gaffe: "Being a busy student, my wife and family...")
- As your thesis sections are completed, keep them compiled in a ring file so that you can estimate the thickness of the final bound copy: this cannot easily be calculated by looking at the compiled electronic copy. Overly thick theses cause binding problems.
- Fonts, headings, numbering and layout (including margins and spacing) must be consistent throughout the whole thesis. Note that using a different printer with exactly the same settings can result in different margins, spacing or font sizes, so *use the same printer throughout*.
- Go easy on the colour: your thesis text should be mainly in black and white, and not lit up like a Christmas tree. Fancy fonts, colours and flourishes in the text take away from the scholarly appearance of the thesis and signal "novice" to the examiners.
- Placing of graphics should be adjusted to avoid gaps, and unsightly "widows and orphans" should be sorted out in the final copy (N.B. *Never* write "the above figure" or "the figure below" - the same for tables: just name the figure, e.g. "In Figure 2.1". This gives you much more flexibility in adjusting page gaps when you are finally compiling the thesis.)
- Ensure that you know your faculty's requirements for the *type* (i.e. hard bound, soft bound) and *number* of examination copies required. Always make at least one spare copy, for yourself, if for no one else – while you may have your final chapters on file, you need to know *exactly* what it was that you submitted for examination.
- Find out in advance what bookbinders you may use, what their costs and time frame are, and who will have to pay for the copies (probably you).
- Don't necessarily believe what the bookbinders say about what is "standard practice" for examination copies of theses: take along an example (from your university) if possible.
- Check that *all* of the thesis pages are in the copies sent to the bookbinders: it is not the job of duplicating staff to do this. Check that *all* of the thesis pages are in the returned bound copies.
- If you notice last minute errors or typos in the bound copies, particularly on the front pages, fix these neatly with Tippex: correctness wins over beauty every time in the scholarly sweepstakes.