

# GUIDELINES FOR THESIS PREPARATION

## SUPERVISION

### ***Supervision meetings***

General advice and discussion will take place online on the *Higher Degrees Research Module (Prof Pratt)*. Advice and discussion specific to each student will take place either by email or face-to-face discussion (by appointment, booked in advance – blanket bookings per week or month will not be made).

Face-to-face meetings will be cancelled if the prescribed work to be discussed (including reading) has not been completed and emailed to the Supervisor before the meeting (*at least* the day before).

Please SMS your Supervisor if you are (unavoidably) going to miss a meeting at the last minute.

Do not come to a meeting if you have an infectious respiratory illness, as this jeopardises the supervision of all of the other students taken by the same Supervisor.

Do not submit a text to your Supervisor/s without ensuring that it follows *basic formatting requirements* (see below).

Please check where the venue is and where you will be able to park for a Supervision meeting (kindly ask the Admin Assistant.)

### ***Emailing of thesis/dissertation drafts to Supervisors***

Once drafts become large they do not send easily via DUT email, so *dropbox* is recommended. Files in the *dropbox* folder can be worked on and saved there (but remember to back up file copies on your hard drive and on an external drive or disk).

### ***Feedback on drafts of proposals and theses***

Students should ask *for specific feedback* on issues they are uncertain about, and not ask vague, blanket questions, such as: “Are my interview questions all right?” or “What do you think of this chapter?”

## EDITING AND PROOF-READING

Examination copies of theses/dissertations must be edited and proof-read *before* final submission. Any costs not covered by the proposal budget must be paid for by the student.

Find out what the proofreading costs cover, e.g.  
Language corrections only (i.e. spelling and grammar)

Does it include:  
Punctuation

Style  
Layout and spacing  
Numbering of headings  
Table of contents  
References (reference style, as well)?

If not, who is going to check these?

## **FORMATTING OF THESES/DISSERTATIONS**

### **Language**

Set the whole document to South African English. However, make sure that you do not let the spell checker correct American English or UK English *when found in verbatim citations*.

Do not use pompous language or convoluted sentence structure: under no circumstances should you use a thesaurus to replace an easier word with a more difficult one, as it probably will not have the exact meaning you wish to convey, and will make you look stupid.

### **Software**

Theses/dissertations should be typed on *MSWord* (use of style templates is not recommended unless you are an advanced *MSWord* user). The *MSWord* text should be "saved as PDF" (i.e. not scanned) for the electronic library copy of the thesis, but we advise printing examination and library copies from the *MSWord* file, as graphics saved as PDF often do not print properly. Texts typed (or edited) on Apple Software are not acceptable (note that the Apple version of Office does not convert exactly to *MSOffice*.)

NEVER use a template you have obtained from somewhere else (e.g. DUT Library) for your thesis. However, you may use an *MSWord* copy of a thesis recently passed in that discipline, *and* acceptable to your Supervisor, as a template.

### **File names**

Thesis/dissertation drafts should be saved with a file name which shows the date it was last changed (but not for very small changes), and the same date should also appear in the right hand side of the header.

### **Composite files**

In the early stages of writing a thesis we recommend that you save each chapter as a separate file; when most of your thesis content is drafted, you should combine the chapters (and front pages and appendices) and save them in a composite file. This makes it much easier to smooth out formatting faults before the last minute, as well as to consolidate your references. It also helps you to see the size of the complete thesis file and do something about compressing it, if it is too large.

### **Page layout**

Ensure that the page size and margins are set **before** you start typing! Check regularly that the page size and margins have not changed.

Page size: A4

### *Margins*

Top: 2.5 cm

Bottom: 2.5 cm

Left: 3.5 cm OR 4 cm

Right: 2.5 cm

### **Graphics**

Figures and tables should be inserted directly after where they are first mentioned in the thesis text. Ensure that you use the “in line with text” options for graphics, which means that they can be spaced and aligned as text (i.e. easily). All figures and tables must be mentioned in the body text of the thesis. Figures should be explained in the text (no matter how briefly), but tables should not need to be explained, just referred to (the whole point of using a table is that it provides a brief, clear explanation!)

Figure and tables are numbered by chapter and number: make sure that you *renumber* figures and numbers referred to in the text when the numbers in the captions change.

Figure captions are placed *under* the figure; table captions are placed *above* the table.

### **Numbering**

Decimal numbering should be inserted only after you have written out rough drafts in full, and have started to re-structure them.

### **Printer**

You should try to print out your exam and library copies of the thesis/dissertation on the same printer, as different printers (even of the same make) can result in very different font and page appearance (we don't know why: just trust us!)

### **Fonts and spacing**

*Eradicate 10 pt multiple from your document* before starting, and erase it every time it re-appears (and get rid of all traces of Calibri font style, while you are about it.)

Use **Arial 12** point font for body text, **1.5** line spacing.

Use **black** font colour only.

Do *not* use different font styles or sizes (except when absolutely essential, as in fitting fonts into a figure or table).

There are two spaces after a full stop, and one space after a comma, semicolon or colon. *Never* leave a space before a full stop, comma, semicolon or colon.

New paragraphs are signalled by pressing the “enter” key twice (i.e. leaving a complete blank line – do **not** use “before” and “after” spacing to indicate paragraphs).

Long citations (i.e. more than three lines) form a separate paragraph in **single** spacing, and are indented 1 cm left and right (it works best if you use single spacing for the line left before the long citation, and 1.5 for the line left after the citation: do *not* use “before” and “after” spacing.) Do not start a long citation with an incomplete sentence or “...” Do not use too many long citations: it suggests that you have not understood most of what you have read and/or that you cannot express ideas in academic prose (the Examiner does not need to suspect that you cannot read or write!)

Where you **can** use “before” and “after” spacing:

6 pt “after” spacing should be used after headings

6 pt “after” spacing can also be used to space bullets and numbered points.

12 or 18 point “after” spacing can be used in the References list: **never leave a line** between Reference entries.

## Headings

Do not use colour to show hierarchy in your headings: use different sizes of the *same* font, e.g.

**2. CHAPTER HEADING** - 16 point Arial (bold or unbolded as you choose, and it does not have to be in caps.)

**2.1 Main headings** – 14 point Arial bold, 6 point “after” spacing

**2.1.1 Subheadings** – 12 point Arial bold, 6 point “after” spacing

**a. Sub subheadings** - Lower level headings should run a., b., c. in bold italics (6 point “after” spacing optional at this level).

Avoid capitalising all words in headings (apart from proper nouns): it makes your thesis look like a school report.

N.B. There cannot be a “**2.1.1**” unless there is at least a “**2.1.2**” as well, nor can there be an “**a.**” without – at least – a “**b.**”. (Think about it: if you can’t work out the reason, you should not have undertaken to do a masters or doctorate.)

**Never** leave a line between a heading and the first paragraph under it: this is a case where “after” spacing should be used (6pt is recommended).

## Table of contents

Use of automatically generated TOCs is **not** recommended unless you are an advanced MSWord user. Rather use a conventional table, insert headings manually and remove the border (i.e. from showing in black) when finished (you can always “show gridlines” for any additions.)

A complete table of contents per thesis chapter should be completed well before final structuring and editing as this is a very good way of spotting structural faults and correcting them in time.

## Citations

### *EndNote*

When using *EndNote*, do not insert the author's name in the text as a field (insert it as a field only **in** the brackets, where **needed**). Inserting the author's name in the text as a field will cause complications when you need to move the text, as quite often style requires that the author's name is separated from the date and page number of a reference. The programmers who offered this stupid option (because they could) do not actually know anything about writing style. A more serious consideration is that your file becomes so large with the unnecessary field entries that *EndNote* no longer works properly and the thesis "hangs".

### *Author*

Give the author/s for all works you cite (if you cannot find the author, which may even be a committee or company, do not use the citation.)

### *Internet citations or in documents without page numbers*

It creates a very good impression of your thoroughness and credibility if you give page numbers in all your citations, not just for direct quotation. According to Hofstee (2006: 252):

If the original document does not have page numbers, readers should still be told on what page the information can be found, if possible. Count the pages from the front and then include that number in an in-text reference, but indicate that the original pages were not numbered by placing the page count in square brackets ([ ]). Alternatively, you could give the chapter or heading above the reference and/or its paragraph number.

### Example:

The key research issue revolved around the option of migrating existing e-learning solutions to a portal, as suggested by Shaw (2003:[1]).

A note about this should be put in the Preface, as follows:

CITATION CONVENTION USED FOR TEXTS WITH NO PAGE NUMBERS:  
Where page numbers were not available, as in many Internet texts, Hofstee's (2006: 252) convention of using square brackets to indicate the approximate page location of the citation has been used.

Hofstee, E. 2006. *Constructing a good dissertation: a practical guide to finishing a master's, MBA or PhD on schedule*. Sandton: EPE.

### *Wikipedia*

References from *Wikipedia* (and from blogs generally) have no standing in academia, and therefore should not be used in theses or journal articles. *Wikipedia* may, however, be used to track down more authoritative sources (note that peer-reviewed journal articles and books have more authority with Examiners than theses, although the latter may be very useful, and should be used to cite previous research in the field).

## References/Bibliography

Find out how References are set out and punctuated, and ensure that this is done correctly. *EndNote* will generate a correct list of References only if the correct information has been fed into it in the correct format without any spelling, punctuation, spacing or typing errors.

References should be in 1.5 spacing with about 18 point “after” spacing used to separate the entries.

Give the author/s for all works in the References (even if it is a government, committee or company).

Give dates for all for all works in the References (or use “n.d.”)

Make sure that you give cities/towns as well as the publisher for all books listed in the References (N.B. “England” and “Canada” are not cities!)

DUT Harvard style for *Endnote*: the latest version uses “and” throughout, instead of “and” in the text and “&” in brackets and Reference lists. This is a very sensible option, and we suggest that you stick to it.

## Printing and binding

This is to be done at your own expense at a Print or Copy shop of your choice (you may claim for the amount you have included in your proposal budget).

Theses/dissertations are printed **on one side only** on white A4 paper.

Examination copies should be **loose bound** (e.g. sprocket) with a cover page on the outside.

Two loose bound examination copies are required (this differs per Faculty).

When the Examiners’ revisions/corrections to the thesis/dissertation have been carried out to the supervisor’s satisfaction, **two hard bound library copies** must be submitted, one for the library and one for the supervisor (this may differ per Faculty). Any extra copies required for the NRF or you yourself - or your family - should be made at this time, as multiple copies are usually cheaper.