

Research Capacity Building Workshop

Writing a Thesis Part 3



Online Forum

An online forum has been set up at the following web address: <http://dutmoodle.dut.ac.za/moodle/>

Click on category *Research and Postgraduate Support*, and click on course *Research Matters*.

Materials are posted there online after workshops, including useful articles and books.

To log in:

User ID: staff or student number

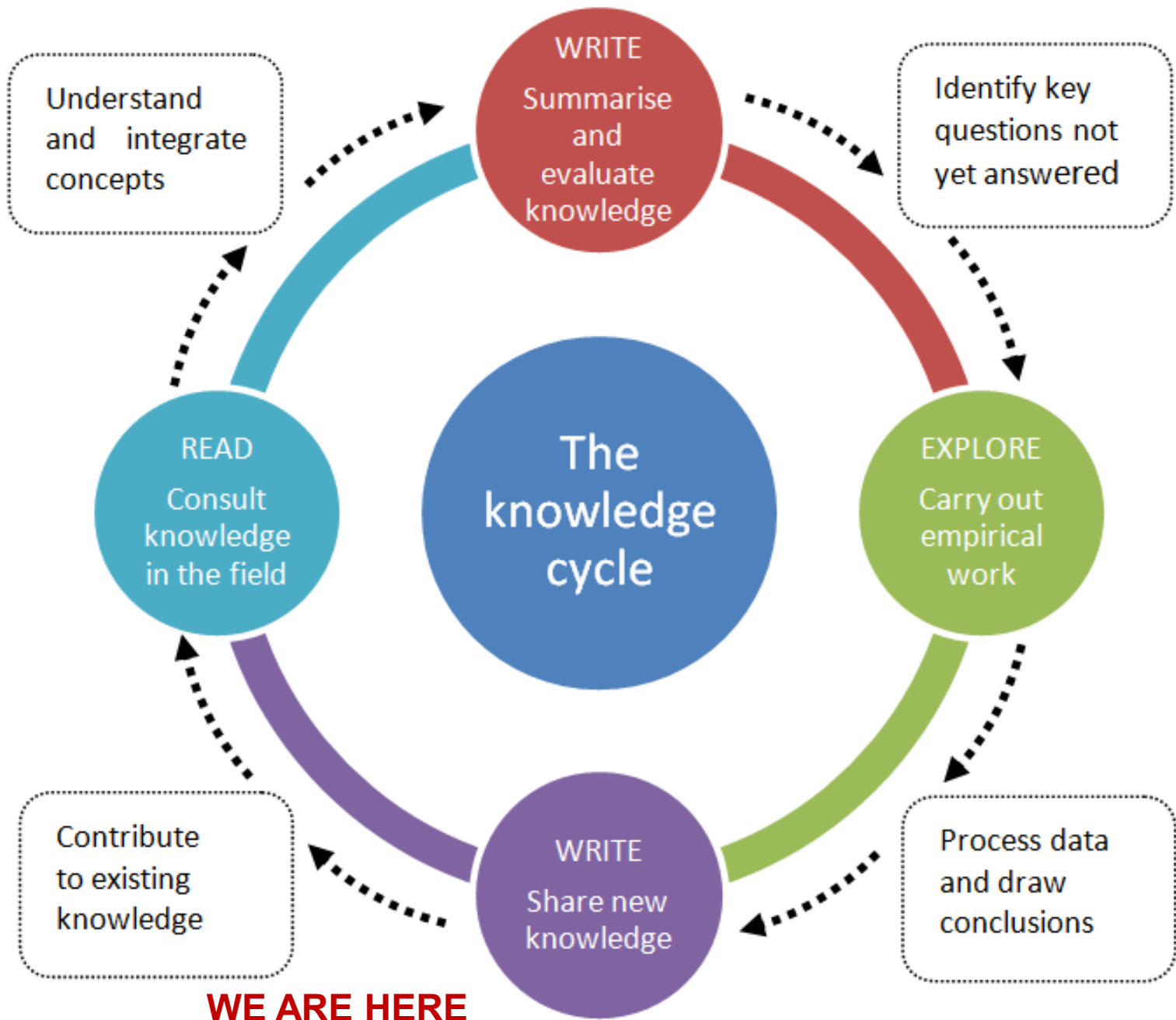
Password: research

Once on *Research Matters*, go to the “Postgraduate Research Forum”, and respond to the message **WRITING A THESIS PART 3 (2014)**.

Writing a thesis Part 3

This workshop will look at the “endgame” of writing a thesis, where it is crucial to tie up all the loose ends, finalise the reading, and ensure that the examination copy is printed on time and formatted correctly.

It will also look at the administrative aspects of submitting a thesis for examination.



WE ARE HERE

Critical path for thesis submission

- PG 7 – The Intention to submit gives a rough guide as to when the student will submit.
- PG 8 – The Nomination of Examiners is done so that the HOD can appoint Examiners.
- PG 9 – Clears the thesis examination copies for submission so that these can be posted to the Examiners.
- PG 10 – The Examiner's report accompanies the Examination copy of the thesis. It contains the ASSESSMENT CRITERIA for dissertations/theses.

Critical path contd.

- Examination copies of thesis: If neither the main or co-supervisor is willing to sign off these, and the student insists on submitting, the HOD must sign.
- PG 11 – A composite of the Examiners' reports is prepared by the HOD and sent to the FRC and then the HDC. The student may see and start any necessary corrections or revisions after FRC approval, provided that it is an uncomplicated pass.
- PG 12 – Declaration to say corrections have been carried out. *Library copies must be submitted.*

Finishing off

Up to now we have been “looking back” again and again to revise various aspects of the thesis.

Now we have to “look forward” to the end product. We have moved from a process to a product view. But the *process* to be used for achieving this end product is still important.

Finishing off contd.

This involves:

- tying up all the loose ends,
- finalising the reading, and
- ensuring that the examination copy is printed on time and formatted correctly.

Assessment criteria

Requirements in respect of a Masters dissertation and a Doctoral thesis:

The difference between a Masters dissertation and a Doctoral thesis is mainly in the size, scope, sophistication and originality of the research.

Other assessment criteria are provided in “Guidelines to Examiners”, as follows.

Guidelines to Examiners (PG10)

Content:

1. Title
 - Clear, concise, contains all necessary key words.
2. Research problems and aims
 - Clear, specific, relevant to the topic.
3. Literature review
 - Comprehensiveness and relevance of the literature review.
4. Research methodology/design
 - Appropriateness, explanation and application of the research design used to investigate the problem; correlation with the research question (or problem).
5. Analysis and interpretation
 - Data analysis methods, arguments presented logically and relevant.
6. Relevance of the research area and delimitation of the field investigated.
7. Conclusions that suggest satisfactory personal insights in the field.

Guidelines to Examiners contd.

Technical aspects:

- Layout (chapters) and flow of information.
- Language (syntax, writing style) and presentation (language editing, layout, use of appendices).
- Consistency of referencing style (in-text and bibliography).
- Functionality of figures and tables.
- Specific matters (if any) which, in your opinion require correction, revision or further development. Please furnish a list on an additional page/s or indicate in the ring bound examiner's copy and return to the Supervisor/HoD.

Overall impression: *(If a distinction is awarded, your motivation should be given here.)*

Difference between a master's ...

Master's dissertation

Candidates are not generally expected to make an original theoretical or fundamental contribution to their field of knowledge, but through the provision of new data or information they should demonstrate proficiency in research methods and the ability to work independently. Master's graduates are expected to exhibit mastery of research methodology and evidence of understanding scholarly processes at work, as evident through a novel project.

... and a doctoral thesis:

Doctoral thesis

The necessary and defining requirement for the award of a doctoral degree is an original contribution to a field of study, the originality needing to lie more at a theoretical, conceptual or analytic level than at the level of producing new data. In addition, proficiency in research methods and the ability to think and work independently must be demonstrated.

Fixing content

Content:

1. Title

- Clear, concise, contains all necessary key words.

Any changes to the title must be approved by the FRC and HDC before examination submission.

2. Research problems and aims

- Clear, specific, relevant to the topic.

Does your thesis solve the research problem (or answer the research questions) and achieve the aims of the research?

Is it clear which findings answer which research questions?

3. Literature review

- Comprehensiveness and relevance of the literature review.

Does the literature review satisfactorily review research in the field/area?

Have you Googled for the latest theses/ publications on your topic?

Fixing content contd.

4. Research methodology/design

- Appropriateness, explanation and application of the research design used to investigate the problem; correlation with the research question (or problem).

Have you explained your research approach, and referenced it with relevant literature?

Have you shown why the approach chosen is appropriate to your topic and aims?

5. Analysis and interpretation

- Data analysis methods, arguments presented logically and relevant.

Have you described your methodology adequately, and is it appropriate to your research problem/questions?

Fixing content contd.

6. Relevance of the research area and delimitation of the field investigated.

Have you explained why/how your research is relevant?

Have you clearly identified your field or area and delimited the scope of your research?

7. Conclusions that suggest satisfactory personal insights in the field.

Do your conclusions suggest that you have a genuine understanding of the issue(s) investigated? Have you shown how your conclusions can be applied in your own work or in the work of other practitioners/researchers in the field?

At doctoral level you should be able to provide a self-critique in your Conclusions/Recommendations section. This shows a metacognitive awareness of the significance of what you have done.

Fixing technical aspects

- Layout (chapters) and flow of information.

Is your chapter structure clearly signposted with correctly numbered headings in appropriate font sizes?

Have you added introductions and preambles to assist the reader to follow your argument?

Does your explanation move from point to point, and are your points connected?

- Language (syntax, writing style) and presentation (language editing, layout, use of appendices).

Has your text been proof-read to correct grammatical, language, spelling, punctuation and style errors? Have spacing and layout been checked? Are appendices correctly ordered, numbered and organised?

N.B. Make sure the front pages, including acknowledgements, have also been proof-read, as well as the appendices and bibliography.

Fixing technical aspects contd.

- Consistency of referencing style (in-text and bibliography).

Are your references in the text written in the correct style, and are they consistent in details and punctuation?

Are all references cited listed in the Bibliography?

Is the style and punctuation of Bibliography entries correct and consistent?

- Functionality of figures and tables.

Do all figures and tables serve a research purpose?

Is every figure and table also mentioned in the text?

Are all figures explained in the text? (Tables must also be mentioned, but do not require explanation.)

Examiners' comments

Examiners are asked to comment, as follows, on:

- Specific matters (if any) which, in your opinion require correction, revision or further development. Please furnish a list on an additional page/s or indicate in the ring bound examiner's copy and return to the Supervisor/HoD.

Have you ensured that your thesis examination copy has been checked thoroughly after printing to ensure that there are no errors or weak areas in the thesis exam copy? Look in particular for words/sections left out (may not have been picked up by proof-reader, who checks only what is there). Also check for sections incorrectly repeated (pasted, but you forgot to cut!) or swapped around (i.e. text in the wrong place).

*Make sure the copy shop hasn't left out pages when printing or binding, and has printed the pages **on one side only**.*

Examination copies of the thesis

- 2 or 3 are required (Supervisor may ask for one): provide cheap sprocket-bound copies R50 - R70 *printed one side only*.
- These were posted to Examiners by the Faculty Officer: now it may be the Faculty Research Officer.

Overall impression

The Examiners are also asked to give their “overall impression” of the thesis.

Doctoral students must include a section on how/why their thesis is original: do not leave the Examiners to work this out, and do not make false/grandiose claims.

Master’s students must demonstrate the ability to use a research methodology; those who wish to gain a distinction should also mention any aspects of their work which are original.

Corrections to the thesis

The FRC usually rules that corrections/revisions must be done “to the satisfaction of the Supervisor” (rarely “the HoD”, and even more rarely, “the Examiner”).

The supervisor may judge whether all corrections/changes are necessary, but the HOD signs off on this. It is advisable to provide a check list as “evidence”.

The candidate may see - and start doing - any necessary corrections or revisions after the FRC have approved the Examiners’ reports, provided that it is an “uncomplicated pass”.

Library copies of the thesis

The candidate *is not deemed to have passed the examination* until the corrections have been signed off (on PG12) and one hard bound library copy of the corrected thesis, as well as an electronic copy¹, have been handed to the Faculty Research Officer.

Some faculties require the submission of a research article before the student is allowed to pass.

The results must be recorded by the Examinations Department before the student has officially passed the qualification.

¹ It is very easy to save a MSWord document to a .pdf file.

Congratulations!

