



Thesis Format Guidance

Purpose of Guidance

The guidance sets out standards for the format of postgraduate research theses to provide clarity and consistency. This applies to theses submitted for assessment under the University's [Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research degrees](#). This guidance is not relevant to MSc by Research students who submit a dissertation.

Scope: Guidance is not Mandatory

Postgraduate research students, supervisors of postgraduate research students, academic and professional support staff involved with postgraduate research thesis submission.

Contact

Students are asked to contact their School office with any queries about the format of a thesis that are not covered in this guidance note.

Document control

Dates	Version Approved: 26.04.12	Effective Date: 17.09.12	Equality impact assessment: 23.05.12	Last Reviewed: 30.05.22	Next Review: 2027/28
Approving authority	Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)				
Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations	Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students Glossary of Terms Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees				
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email academicpolicy@ed.ac.uk				
Keywords	Assessment, research assessment, thesis format				

Thesis Format Guidance

1. Thesis submitted for assessment

1.1 Students are asked to submit their thesis for assessment electronically.

1.2 Signed Declaration

Every student must incorporate a signed declaration* in the thesis submitted for assessment, stating:

- (a) that the thesis has been composed by the student, and
- (b) either that the work is the student's own, or, if the student has been a member of a research group, that the student has made a substantial contribution to the work, such contribution being clearly indicated, and
- (c) that the work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified, and
- (d) that any included publications are the student's own work, except where indicated throughout the thesis and summarised and clearly identified on the declarations page of the thesis.

* Signatures may be electronic, for example when sent from a University email address.

1.3 Published Papers

Where published papers are to be included as a thesis chapter these must include an introduction and conclusion and be incorporated into the thesis at the appropriate point*. It is in the interests of students to include any relevant published papers in their thesis. These should either be included as a chapter, an appendix or an electronic copy. If copies of published papers are to be included in the thesis, the publisher's formal permission should be obtained and, where appropriate, the permission of any joint authors. A note that permission has been obtained should be included in the thesis. (Permission from the publisher is not required for papers published in Open Access journals, or openly licensed, for example using Creative Commons licence).

*Further guidance on including publications in a thesis is available at:

[Including Publications in Postgraduate Research Theses](#)

2. Format of theses for assessment

2.1 Character Styles - fonts

Where there is a choice of character style or font, a sans serif font – for example Helvetica or Arial – should be used for the main text. Character size should be 12 points.

2.2 Word spacing and division

Text should be set to ensure an even spacing between words for any particular line. Word division at the ends of lines (hyphenation) should be avoided if possible. Further guidance on accessible formatting can be found at:

- [Creating accessible materials](#)

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2.3 Title Page

The title page should have:

- Title of thesis
- Author's name

And at the foot of the page:

- Name of degree
- The University of Edinburgh
- Year of presentation*

* The year of presentation refers to the year in which the thesis is submitted for assessment. In the case of a thesis which is resubmitted, the year in which the thesis is resubmitted should be shown as the year of presentation.

2.4 Abstract and lay summary

An abstract and lay summary should be included in the thesis after the title page. Further guidance on the lay summary is available at: [Lay Summary in Theses](#)

2.5 Diagrams, Maps, Illustrations, etc

Good quality, high resolution photographic illustrations and diagrams should be used.

If you use third-party material (images, photos, diagrams etc) within the thesis the use must be fair and the material correctly attributed. Third party material is any material that is not originally created by you and is borrowed from another source of origin. The use must be limited to what is necessary for the purpose of your work, and it must not negatively impact on the economic rights of the original work. This may mean limiting copying to shorter extracts of a work.

- [University copyright guidance](#)

We would recommend finding openly licensed content which can be freely shared online.

- [Finding open content](#)

Accessibility: provide an alternative text to images. Alternative text ("alt text") is a machine-readable tag that describes an image in words if the image cannot be displayed, for example for someone using a screen reader.

- [University accessibility guidelines, policy and legislation](#)

2.6 Notes, Bibliography and Contents Page

A consistent policy should be used, inserting the notes at the foot of the page, or at the end of each chapter, or at the end of the thesis. All separate sections, for example bibliography, list of abbreviations, should be identified on the contents page.

A full table of contents should follow the abstract and include a list of tables, photographs and any other materials.

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3. Portfolios of musical compositions

Portfolios of musical compositions should be submitted digitally. Further advice and guidance is available on the Scholarly Communications Team website:

- [How to submit the final version of your thesis](#)

Or by contacting: scholcomms@ed.ac.uk

4. Thesis and non-textual elements for Practice-led MPhil and Doctorates

The thesis should follow guidance at 1 and 2 above. Final copies lodged in the Library will contain a permanent record of the exhibit, attached to the thesis.

5. A note on Final Thesis Submission

The final version of the thesis is submitted electronically only. A signed declaration is not required in the final version.

- [How to submit the final version of your PhD thesis](#)

14 August 2023