

Writing up your thesis

- when writing up your thesis you should keep in mind at all times that a good thesis:
 1. has question(s) underpinning the whole thesis
 2. has a conceptual framework identifying key concepts to be problematised – producing a critical attitude and preventing over-use of straightforward/descriptive statements
 3. is written in such a way as to ensure all you say is underpinned by the research question(s) asked through the appropriate methodology(ies) and method(s)
 4. ensures that all claims about importance, meaning and the interpretation of data and literature are backed by appropriate evidence and engagement with theories

Writing in stages:

- a) some people prefer to write throughout, chapter by chapter through the period of the research**
- b) others prefer to write the whole thesis at end of the research**
- whether a) or b) much of what you introduce in your literature review/theoretical perspectives chapter (i.e. the theories behind your argument and your methodology and method choices) needs to be used in analysis of your data, and should underpin and back up your analysis**

Stages and phases/elements of writing:

- 1. *Descriptive and detailing*** – early work is often only descriptive – about context, previous work in the subject area, the data collected
- 2. *Narrative*** – telling the ‘story’ of your research is necessary in your introduction, discussing methodology(ies), method(s), choices and detail of the way you analysed your data, plus some conceptual and theoretical framework identification

3. Summarising:

- a) at start of each chapter summarise what you are going to say, and the arguments of others you are going to use/refer to
- b) at end of each chapter summarise what you have said, points you have made, how the work and arguments of others (referred to in the chapter) links conceptually and critically to you own research (how your research fits into a dialogue on the subject area of your research), where the discussion will develop in the next chapter
- c) Conclusion – summary of points and arguments of thesis, including conceptual conclusions (‘why does that matter?’ questions)

4. *Synthesising* – involves not only summarising what you have read, data used and produced, and what you have written, but also identifies key arguments and themes, key points, pulling them together (i.e. ‘so how does this all relate?’, ‘taken together what might it suggest overall?’)

5. *Contrasting and comparing* – alternative views and conclusions in the literature and theories, and from your own research information and data (i.e variations in, and patterns of, understanding and analysis – similarities AND differences - ***HOW, WHY, WHAT?***)

6. *Analysing* – literature, data (including your own), own research and writing (questioning, interpreting)

- how does this work?
- what was the question underlying this?
- how do these parts fit together?
- how do they lead one from the other?
- how do they add to/alter/develop each other?
- how does this element/data/argument fit into the pattern of several arguments or data?
- what does not fit in here – is the difference significant?

7. Criticising – (work/research in subject area and/or your own research) – two forms:

a) identifying flaws, shortcomings, problems

b) critique = analysis commenting how effective the data/argument/research is, **PLUS** suggestions for improvement or development

- both these approaches can be used when looking at literature review, theoretical perspectives, and the way your own research has developed and what your data appears to indicate

8. Conceptualising:

- ask questions of what seem to be established beliefs, ideas, theories and terms
- problematise what seems straightforward or obvious in order to clarify the terms of a particular topic or question upon which your research is based (i.e. ‘what is meant by/about that?’, ‘what are the key ideas here?’)

9. Evaluating and reflecting:

- evaluation of others’ research and your own
- reflecting on how well a piece of research (yours and others) has worked (clarity and effectiveness?)

Themes and theories run throughout

	BIBLIOGRAPHY AND APPENDICES (DATA)	
	CONCLUSION	
DATA, INFORMATION ANALYSIS DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS		
METHODOLOGY AND METHODS		
LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE		
INTRODUCTION		
ABSTRACT		

Thesis as a building