

## 2. Thesis Structure and Presentation

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Early in your thesis research, you should discuss and decide with your supervisor(s) if your thesis will take the traditional, the manuscript, or the portfolio style of presentation. The key word here is STYLE. What follows are general guidelines and best practices but many of your questions will be specific to your research area/discipline and need to be worked out with your supervisor(s) and in accordance with all departmental or academic unit guidelines.

No matter which style you decide to use, you should make it clear in your Introduction what your style is so that your examiners know what type of document they are about to examine. This same information should be conveyed to potential examiners by the Head of your academic unit when they are in the process of recommending examiners.

No matter the thesis style you use, your thesis must meet the requirements of your degree as prescribed by the appropriate calendar regulations and policies.

While you can change your mind about the style while in the writing process, a clear understanding of which style you want to use will save time later.

## Traditional Style

This style of thesis presentation is sometimes called a “proto-book” and that’s the best way to think of the traditional thesis: it is written as a single, unified document that could be revised into a book length publication. The Traditional Style thesis must have an Introduction, a series of linked and integrated chapters that address a central thesis statement and/or research question, and a Conclusion.

## Manuscript Style

This style of thesis includes a series of “chapters” that have appeared in, are under review with, or will be submitted to peer-reviewed publications. The Manuscript Style thesis must use a consistent citation style throughout no matter what the published version of some chapters might have used. The Manuscript Style also requires an Introduction or Overview section that provides all of the following information:

- a comprehensive review of relevant literature
- how your research fits into the larger context of your field(s) or discipline(s)
- the objectives of your thesis research
- a statement that makes clear the coherence of the chapters to follow

The chapters of a Manuscript Style thesis are “stand-alone” in the sense that they have been prepared for separate publication to one or more peer-reviewed outlets. However, each chapter still requires the following:

- an introduction
- a methodology section (if applicable)
- a discussion section
- a concluding section

It is expected that you will be the principal/primary author for every chapter. Because each chapter is stand alone, you should have a co-authorship statement for every chapter (if needed). Please see section 5 of this guide for more details.

At the end of the Manuscript Style thesis, you must also include a Summary or Discussion/Conclusion that unites all the material presented in the chapters in a cohesive way.

## Portfolio Style

The Portfolio Style allows you to engage in different or new ways of engaging diverse audiences for your work. Crucial to the Portfolio Style, because it is comparatively new, is an early agreement with your supervisor(s) and committee members and the Head of your academic unit on the presentation, formatting, and general outline for your Portfolio thesis.

You need to be prepared that a Portfolio Style thesis will require, perhaps, an awareness of potentially unexpected challenges in compilation. The Portfolio Style requires an Introduction or Overview section that provides: a) a comprehensive review of relevant literature; b) a discussion of how your work fits into the larger context of your field(s) or discipline(s); c) the objectives of your thesis work; and d) a statement that makes clear the coherence of chapter or sections to follow. At the end of your thesis you must also include a Summary or Discussion/Conclusion section that unites all the material presented in a cohesive way.

A Portfolio style thesis can present a variety of research efforts, including (but not limited to): applied work(s), creative work(s), digital work(s), experiential work(s), entrepreneurial work(s), or any combination thereof.

Some examples of content (but these are not the only ones) include:

- Policy reports and/or papers
- Knowledge mobilization to the media, communities, or other groups standing to benefit from the research
- Publicly available resources (e.g., novels, comics, web tools, apps, music, art, documentaries)
- Inventions, prototypes, or business plans
- Patents or other technology licenses
- Educational programs, course materials, or assessment measures
- Translations
- Oral histories
- Cultural creations
- Creative work from festivals or exhibitions
- Digital artifacts (e.g. animations, webpages, interactive portals, software)
- Special issues that result from curating/managerial editing practice (e.g. oral history archives, literary magazines)
- Special issues resulting from original production of objects or events (e.g. performing arts, galleries, museums, archives)
- Traditional academic publications or works in progress toward publication
- Traditional style thesis chapters

## FAQs

1) **How many chapters should my thesis have?**

The minimum is 3 chapters: introduction, body, discussion/conclusion.

2) **How many pages should my thesis be?**

As with the number of chapters, the length of your thesis is a question for your supervisor according to your discipline's expectations.

3) **What if part my thesis has been published in an altered version?**

Note this in the acknowledgements, in the introduction, and as a footnote in the chapter that has published content. Depending on publishing agreements, you may need to get copyright permission from the publisher.

4) **What if I've co-authored part(s) of my thesis?**

Note this in the acknowledgements, in the Introduction, and as a footnote in the chapter that has published content.

5) **Can the chapters be in different stages of publication?**

Yes, but you want to alert your examiners to these stages (in your acknowledgements and introduction and as a footnote to the relevant chapters).

6) **What if my methodology is the same for more than one chapter?**

You should note this in your introduction so examiners are aware of the fact and you should also attempt to vary your language so as to tailor the information to the specific content of each chapter.

7) **What if my publication status changes during the examination process?**

Not a problem. You will make changes to the thesis before final submission and after the examination process and that is the time to update any publication status.

8) **Can I include peer-reviewed conference papers as a chapter?**

Not as presented at the conference; rather, material that has been presented as a conference paper can be noted as such but the text of your thesis must conform to the expectations of academic writing for your discipline.

9) **What if an examiner asks for revisions to something I've already published?**

You should always consider examiners' requests for changes with your supervisor and make all revisions that are relevant and helpful in improving your thesis.