

Writing your Ph.D. thesis

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Department of Mathematical Sciences
University of Bath

Postgraduate Away Day
University of Bath
29th January 2010

- 1 The purpose of a thesis
- 2 University regulations
- 3 Content and structure
- 4 Presentation and writing process
- 5 Make your life easier - some helpful \LaTeX
- 6 The defense

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A Ph.D. shall be awarded to a candidate who shall have

- 1** pursued a programme of study as prescribed under Regulation 16.5(b)
- 2** presented a thesis on the candidate's advanced study and research which satisfies the Board of Examiners as:

- 3** and passed a viva voce examination conducted by the examiners on the broader aspects of the field of research in addition to the subject of the thesis...

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 - **containing material worthy of peer-reviewed publication**
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 - being satisfactory in its literary and/or technical presentation and structure with a full bibliography and references
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 - **containing material worthy of peer-reviewed publication**
 - being satisfactory in its literary and/or technical presentation and structure with a full bibliography and references
 - demonstrating an understanding of the context of the research: this must include, as appropriate for the subject of the thesis, the scientific, engineering, commercial and social contexts
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- These are pretty boring.

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- For details see

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/grad-office/docs/index.html>

This website also includes the HD1 and HD2 forms.

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This website also includes the HD1 and HD2 forms.

- Number of copies and submission procedure:
 - about two months before submission - HD1 form.
 - 3 soft bound copies to Wessex House 2.12c - HD2 form.
 - Hard bound copies and electronic submission to library only after the viva.

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- Paper and layout - double or single sided
- Typeface and spacing - 11pt or 12pt, easy readable font
- Numbering of pages
- Title page and copyright declaration
- Table of contents and abstract/summary

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- Just give it to the printing unit - they know what to do.

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WRITING YOUR THESIS OUTLINE

NOTHING SAYS "I'M ALMOST DONE" TO YOUR ADVISOR/
SPOUSE/PARENTS LIKE PRETENDING YOU HAVE A PLAN

STEP 1 Aim for a respectable number of chapters:

THESIS OUTLINE

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
5.  chapter #s
- 6.
- 7.

5 = "That's IT??"
6-7 = "Not bad"
8+ = "Are you crazy??"

STEP 2 Fill in the "freebies":

THESIS OUTLINE

1. INTRODUCTION
2. LIT REVIEW
3. METHODOLOGY
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
7. CONCLUSIONS

You're half way done!

STEP 3 Make up titles for the "meat" chapters:

2. LIT REVIEW
3. METHODOLOGY
4. (THAT STUFF YOU DID YOUR FIRST YEAR)
5. (STUFF YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DOING NOW)
6. (MAKE STUFF UP)
7. CONCLUSIONS

(It'll be years before you actually have to work on that later chapter, and by then your thesis topic will have changed anyway)

STEP 4 Voilà! You just bought yourself another two years



So, how's your thesis going?
i have an outline!

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www.phdcomics.com

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■ Self-contained.

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- Self-contained.
- May include more than one topic.

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- It is like a book. **It should tell a story.**

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- Most important are its readers (your supervisor(s), internal and external examiner). **Who are you writing for?**

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- Include more details than in a paper.
- No unnecessary material. Most theses are too long (It is not the length that counts).

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- If you copy text put it in quotation marks and cite the source.

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- Your examiners will be particularly alert to plagiarism.

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■ Use spell checkers!

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- Use spell checkers!
- Ask a friend/fellow student or family member to read through parts of your thesis.

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Clear communication of original ideas is most important!

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Do not waffle!

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- **Tell a story** (Explain to someone in 2-3 minutes what your thesis is about).

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- Conclusions: What have you done? Identify future research directions/open problems.

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- **Introduction** Define what your research is about; justify why it is important; explain your thesis structure.

Structure (more detailed)

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- **Background/Literature Review** Put your research into context; give literature.

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- **Methods** Explain methods; theoretical approaches.
- **Analysis/Results** This will include your results. Experiments. Comparison to other methods. Proofs of theorems.

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- **Interpretation/Discussion** Justify your interpretations. Put them into context.

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- **Interpretation/Discussion** Justify your interpretations. Put them into context.
- **Conclusions** Short conclusion. Future research.

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Make your thesis clear and enjoyable to read! Do not waffle! You do not want the reader to get angry or bored.

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- Typical:
 - 1 Title page (listing author, title, department, type of degree, year and month of submission).**
 - 2 Declaration that work has not been used in another degree.**
 - 3 A copyright statement.**
 - 4 A list of notation.**
 - 5 A brief statement of author's research career.**
 - 6 Acknowledgments and dedications.**
 - 7 Table of contents.**
 - 8 List of Figures.**
 - 9 List of Tables.**
 - 10 Abstract/Summary.**

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 - 9 List of Tables.
 - 10 **Abstract/Summary.**
- Opening pages: indication which parts have been published.
- Optional: index.

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- Start as early as possible.

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- Publish papers during your time as a graduate student - so you just have to edit them and put them together.

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- A sooner rather than later writing also helps you to become familiar with \LaTeX .

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- If you have not written up as you go along - plan at least 6 months for writing up.

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- **Make a timetable.**

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- **Make a timetable.**
- What have you done? What do you still need to do?

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- If you have not written up as you go along - plan at least 6 months for writing up.
- **Make a timetable.**
- What have you done? What do you still need to do?
- Fill in the gaps.

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- **Make a timetable.**
- What have you done? What do you still need to do?
- Fill in the gaps.
- Thoroughly read and check before submission - have as many people read it as possible.

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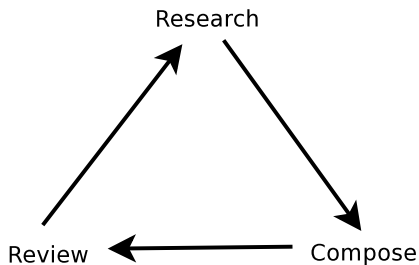
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- Try to analyse the work of writers/researchers you like.
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- Keep what you have written for a couple of weeks and then re-read it.

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■ \LaTeX and text editors

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- \LaTeX and text editors
- `baththesis.sty`

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- MakeIndex

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- A useful template for writing a thesis which follows the University of Bath regulations:

<http://www.maths.bath.ac.uk/~mamamf/baththesis>

- A useful template for writing a thesis which follows the University of Bath regulations:
<http://www.maths.bath.ac.uk/~mamamf/baththesis>
- Feel free to download the template and change it to use it for your own thesis. It follows all the necessary University of Bath requirements.

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- collect your references for your bibliography at an early stage of your studies - it will be difficult to hunt them down later

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thesisUniversity
regulationsContent and
structurePresentation and
writing processMake your life
easier - some
helpful L^AT_EX

The defense

- collect your references for your bibliography at an early stage of your studies - it will be difficult to hunt them down later
- BIBTEX - a wonderful L^AT_EX program for collecting references in .bib files which then can be used in L^AT_EX

Writing your
thesis

Melina Freitag

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The defense

- collect your references for your bibliography at an early stage of your studies - it will be difficult to hunt them down later
- BIB \TeX - a wonderful \LaTeX program for collecting references in .bib files which then can be used in \LaTeX
- MathSciNet, Google Scholar, CiteSeer and others

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The defense

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- In the UK: normally you are asked questions.

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- In the UK: normally you are asked questions.
- You might be asked to give a short talk.

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- In the UK: normally you are asked questions.
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- **Best advice: Read your thesis.**

- In the UK: normally you are asked questions.
- You might be asked to give a short talk.
- **Best advice: Read your thesis.**
- A perfect opportunity to tell interested people about your research.

Know your work cycle!

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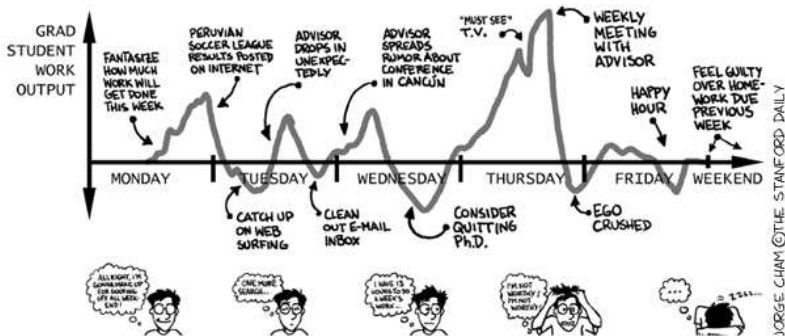
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N. J. HIGHAM, *Handbook of writing for the mathematical sciences*, Society for Industrial Mathematics, 1998.

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