

Writing your
thesis

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Outline

The purpose of a
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University
regulations

Content and
structure

Presentation and
writing process

Make your life
easier - some
helpful LATEX

The defense

Writing your Ph.D. thesis

Melina Freitag

Department of Mathematical Sciences
University of Bath

Postgraduate Away Day
University of Bath
29th January 2010

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3 Content and structure

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5 Make your life easier - some helpful L^AT_EX

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The defense

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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 - 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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- These are pretty boring.
- 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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The defense

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

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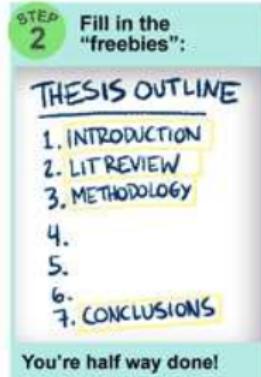
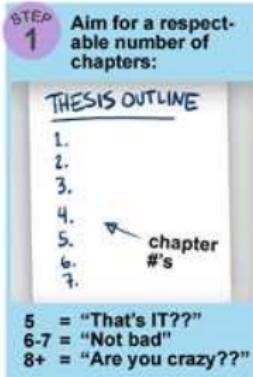
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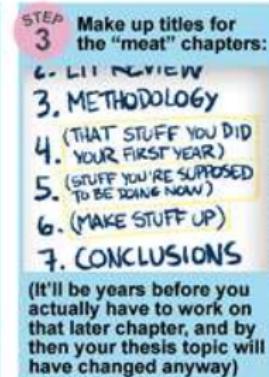
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WRITING YOUR THESIS OUTLINE



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



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■ Self-contained.

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

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The defense

- Self-contained.
- May include more than one topic.
- It is like a book. **It should tell a story.**

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The defense

- Self-contained.
- May include more than one topic.
- It is like a book. **It should tell a story.**
- **Organisation and structure is important.**

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- Self-contained.
- May include more than one topic.
- It is like a book. **It should tell a story.**
- **Organisation and structure is important.**
- Most important are its readers (your supervisor(s), internal and external examiner). **Who are you writing for?**

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- **Organisation and structure is important.**
- Most important are its readers (your supervisor(s), internal and external examiner). **Who are you writing for?**
- Include more details than in a paper.

- Self-contained.
- May include more than one topic.
- It is like a book. **It should tell a story.**
- **Organisation and structure is important.**
- Most important are its readers (your supervisor(s), internal and external examiner). **Who are you writing for?**
- Include more details than in a paper.
- No unnecessary material. Most theses are too long (It is not the length that counts).

No Plagiarism

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

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- If you copy text put it in quotation marks and cite the source.
- Do not copy proofs of theorems unless it is really necessary for the thesis.

No Plagiarism

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- If you copy text put it in quotation marks and cite the source.
- Do not copy proofs of theorems unless it is really necessary for the thesis.
- Your examiners will be particularly alert to plagiarism.

Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation

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■ Use spell checkers!

Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation

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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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Clear communication of original ideas is most important!

Do not waffle!

Structure

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

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The defense

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

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The defense

- **Tell a story** (Explain to someone in 2-3 minutes what your thesis is about).
- **Make an outline!**
- First chapter(s): describe the problem clearly; put it into context.

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- **Tell a story** (Explain to someone in 2-3 minutes what your thesis is about).
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- First chapter(s): describe the problem clearly; put it into context.
- Demonstrate a sound knowledge of existing work, give a critical survey (Literature review).

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- **Make an outline!**
- First chapter(s): describe the problem clearly; put it into context.
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- What is new/original in your thesis? This should be the main part of your thesis (3-4 Chapters).

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- For computational projects, normally a comparison with other methods is required.

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- **Make an outline!**
- First chapter(s): describe the problem clearly; put it into context.
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- What is new/original in your thesis? This should be the main part of your thesis (3-4 Chapters).
- For computational projects, normally a comparison with other methods is required.
- Conclusions: What have you done? Identify future research directions/open problems.

Structure (more detailed)

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

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Presentation and style

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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.

Presentation and style

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- Follow the University regulations for margin sizes/line spacing/fonts/binding etc.

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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.

Writing Process - The iterative process

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■ Start as early as possible.

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- Start as early as possible.
- You can begin to draft the first chapters in your early months, when you start to become familiar with the problem - writing also helps to understand!
- Publish papers during your time as a graduate student - so you just have to edit them and put them together.

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- Use early reports (6 month/12 month) - of course they will probably be rewritten, but it is better to start with something rather than an empty page.
- Write background and survey material at an early stage - it keeps you enthusiastic!
- A sooner rather than later writing also helps you to become familiar with L^AT_EX.

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

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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?

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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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- 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.
- Thoroughly read and check before submission - have as many people read it as possible.

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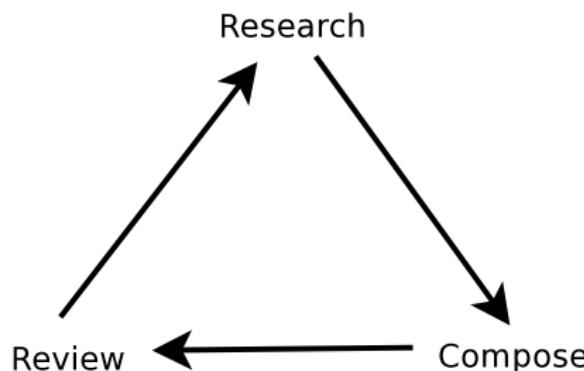
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Hints and tips for writing

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The defense

■ Try to analyse the work of writers/researchers you like.

Hints and tips for writing

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- Try to analyse the work of writers/researchers you like.
- Keep a notebook of ideas.
- Be constructively critical of your own work.
- Set yourself short term targets.
- 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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- `BIB\TeX`

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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>

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<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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- BIB \TeX - a wonderful \TeX program for collecting references in .bib files which then can be used in \TeX
- MathSciNet, Google Scholar, CiteSeer and others

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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.
- You might be asked to give a short talk.
- **Best advice: Read your thesis.**

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The defense

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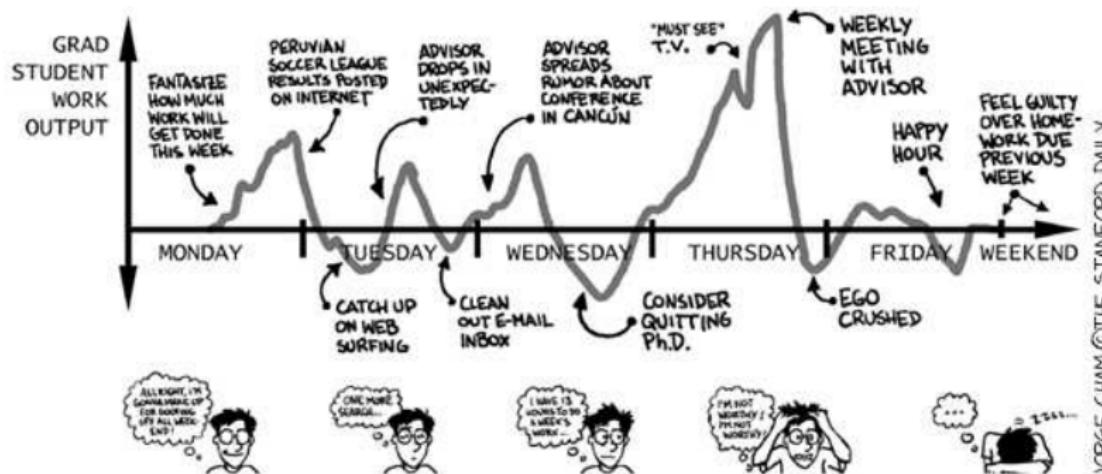
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N. J. HIGHAM, *Handbook of writing for the mathematical sciences*, Society for Industrial Mathematics, 1998.