

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

GUIDELINES FOR PRESENTATION OF FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES MASTERS AND PHD IN A PUBLICATION FORMAT

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This document aims to provide guidance to University of Pretoria (UP) Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) students and supervisors regarding theses/dissertations obtained through publication. This will also be useful to guide examiners.

These guidelines must be read in conjunction with the UP General Academic Regulation G53 Doctoral degree by virtue of publication. In the current guideline, a thesis/dissertation by publication is defined as “supervised research component of all PhD/Masters degrees that are presented in a manuscript format and comprises a general introduction, literature review, account of the methodology and selection of manuscripts (a mixture of published and unpublished) as well as a discussion and conclusion. The manuscripts or publications presented in a given thesis/dissertation should address the original objectives stated in the general introduction/chapter one of the thesis/dissertation”.

The traditional Doctoral thesis and Masters dissertation are being phased out in many research-intensive universities globally. UP’s FHS encourages this progression as it promotes rapid and increased dissemination of research findings produced from Masters and PhD research projects. The traditional PhD format poses the risk of losing valuable research findings as it is not published in the public domain. Most postgraduate students find it difficult to publish such work after graduating. Continued use of the traditional thesis/dissertation approach denies the research institutions additional productivity units (PUs) emanating from publications generated from dissertations and theses. Thesis/dissertation by publication has the potential to improve timely dissemination of research findings and helps to reduce research waste. It also helps students build their research profile and improve the institution’s/faculty’s research productivity.

The traditional thesis format option should ultimately be phased out for the stated reasons. UP FHS students and supervisors are encouraged to present their theses/dissertations in a publication format. **Thus, this document does not provide guidelines for the standard thesis/dissertation.**

Thesis/dissertation by publication

The option of a thesis/dissertation by publication ensures that students make efforts to start publishing as soon as possible as they are required to submit all manuscripts to journals for review before submitting the dissertation/thesis for examination. Thesis by manuscript can provide the opportunity for publishing without putting the student at risk of delayed graduation when some of the manuscripts are not published/accepted.

B. STRUCTURE OF THESIS/DISSERTATION BY PUBLICATION

Format for thesis/dissertation by publication

Below are subheadings for thesis/dissertation by manuscripts/ publications.

1. Preliminary pages

- I. Title page
- II. Declaration

- III. Acknowledgements
- IV. Abstract
- V. Table of contents
- VI. List of figures, tables and acronyms/abbreviations (separately presented)

2. Main Text

- a. **Chapter 1:** General introduction
- b. **Chapter 2:** Literature review
- c. **Chapter 3:** First manuscript/publication
- d. **Chapter n:** Second manuscript/publication (if applicable)
- e. **Chapter n+1:** General discussion and conclusion

3. References

4. Appendices

Description of thesis/dissertation main text subheadings

Title page

The dissertation and thesis title must match the dissertation/thesis title approved by the UP FHS Masters/Doctoral and Research Ethics Committees and must be presented at the top of the dissertation/thesis cover page. In addition to the student and supervisor details, it is important to ensure that the cover page also states the formats of the presented thesis. For example: 'This thesis is presented in a publication format' Cover page must be presented in the format approved by the FHS.

Reference style

Each chapter should have its own reference section. The references in the introduction and synthesis section should be presented in the same referencing style. The data/results chapters, presented in the manuscript/publication format should be formatted in line with the target journal.

Chapter 1/ Introduction chapter

The sections should be presented as follows:

- i. Background and rationale of the study
- ii. Description of the core research problem and its significance
- iii. A coherent problem statement highlighting the nature and magnitude of the research problem, the discrepancies, knowledge gaps and factors influencing the research problem.
- iv. Clear and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely) research questions, objectives and hypothesis and/or theoretical framework as well as a research question that fits into the PICO (population, intervention, comparison and outcome) OR PEO (population, exposure and outcome) nomenclature.
- v. A conceptual framework (optional)
- vi. Description of the study area and general methodology (inform the examiner/reader that the comprehensive account of the methodology is presented in the subsequent chapters presented as manuscripts). A standalone methodology section is not needed as the methods are adequately described in each manuscript/publication.
- vii. Layout of the thesis/dissertation (see thesis/dissertation structure) indicating what chapters are presented in the thesis and how they address each of the objectives.

Chapter 2: Presenting the literature review

This section must present a comprehensive, critical, coherent overview of the relevant literature presented in a form of a structured narrative review or rapid review leading to clearly defined knowledge gaps and possible publication.

Chapter 3+n: Manuscripts/publications addressing thesis objectives

A full publication or submitted manuscript should be presented as submitted or published in the journal. The actual published article should be inserted in the chapter. Proof of submission of the manuscript should be

presented in the annexure or appendices section of the thesis. There should be a separator page between chapters, which should consist of bridging text.

Bridging text for the chapters: Dissertations and theses are monographs that constitute elements of scientific communication addressing a single main research question. In most dissertations and theses, the main research question is broken down into three or four objectives/sub-questions. In the dissertation or thesis by manuscript, each of the manuscripts should address one research question to form a dissertation to answer the main research question. In a thesis/dissertation by publication, it is important to show the link between the chapters to remind the reader of the relationship between each of the chapters. This can be achieved by including at least half to one-page long bridging text to demonstrate the relationship between chapters that comprise one thesis/dissertation. The bridging text should provide a take away message from the previous chapter that links to the preceding chapter. The linking text should also provide details of the manuscript/publication presented in the current chapter indicating the name of the journal and publication status e.g. published/in press/under review. **The bridging text will only be applicable if there are more than one publication presented in one dissertation/thesis.**

Chapter n+1: General discussion and conclusion chapter

This chapter should provide a general discussion that demonstrates the logical thread that runs across the various manuscripts/publications. It should present key findings of the thesis or answer the main research question of the thesis/dissertation. Provide a discussion, comparing and contrasting the key findings with other published articles as well as limitations of the whole project. This discussion should be followed by a conclusion and recommendations for future practice and research.

Length of PhD thesis chapters

Table 1. Outline of the length of chapters

	Minimum	Maximum
Introduction/Chapter 1	2000 words	3000 words
Literature review/ Chapter 2	As per target journal authors' guidelines	As per target journal authors' guidelines
Chapter 3 +n	As per target journal authors' guidelines	As per target journal authors' guidelines
General discussion and conclusion	2000 words	3000 words
Bridging text	400 words	500 words

Table 2. Outline of the length of Masters Dissertation chapters

	100% Research Masters		50% Research Masters		<50% Research Masters	
	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Introduction/Chapter 1	1000 words	2000 words	1000 words	1500 words	750 words	1000 words
Literature review/ Chapter 2	As per target journal	As per target journal	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Chapter 3 +n	As per target journal authors' guidelines	As per target journal authors' guidelines	As per target journal authors' guidelines	As per target journal authors' guidelines	As per target journal authors' guidelines	As per target journal authors' guidelines
General discussion and conclusion	1000	1500	500	350	350	200
Bridging text	200 words	300 words	150 words	200 words	100 words	150 words

C. GENERAL RULES

All research objectives/research questions should be addressed and results should be presented in thesis/dissertation chapters prior to submission. It is advisable that each of the study objectives is addressed in a separate chapter/manuscript/publication. In cases where one research

objective/question results in two or three publications, all publications produced from one research objective/question should be presented in the chapter that addressed the respective research objective/question. It is possible that certain objectives may not be addressed, for a variety of reasons. Should this be the case, students will be expected to provide a short justification.

Please consider the following: should there for example be four chapters that could be transformed into chapters, but only two have been published by the time the dissertation/thesis is submitted, provision should be made for including the other two as draft manuscripts indicating that the intention is to submit them at a later date. It is unrealistic to impose the requirement for four accepted (published) manuscripts by the time of submission.

PhD/Masters by publication

All manuscripts must be submitted to a DHET accredited journal and proof of submission should be provided in the appendices section of the thesis/dissertation. The accepted/published articles should be based on the research that the student has conducted for the dissertation/thesis using data collected after obtaining full ethical approval for the PhD/Masters proposal. The accepted/published article should have been approved by the supervisor concerned. The student's affiliation on the publication should be with the department that they registered in. The supervisor shall be responsible for ensuring that the article has been taken through all the processes of revision and resubmission.