

How to Structure a Graduate Research Work: Typical Contents of a Thesis or Dissertation

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1. Frontal pages
 - a. Accurate title. This can be a major title, then a subtitle separated by a colon: as above.
 - b. Abstract
 - c. Acknowledgements
 - d. Table of Contents
 - e. List of Abbreviations
 - f. Illustrations
2. Chapter One: Brief introduction to the topic
 - a. The what, where, when, and who of your chosen topic
 - b. Why this topic is chosen
 - c. Why this study is significant
 - d. Brief overview of the following chapters
3. Chapter Two: Questions, theories, concepts, modes, methods, and literature review
 - a. Explicit statement of the research question(s), followed by subsidiary questions as appropriate.
 - b. Choice of your aim or approach: analysis, diagnosis, prescription, or prognosis.
 - c. Choice of mode(s) of analysis: Descriptive, Inductive, Empirical, Deductive, Comparative, Chronological, Hierarchical, Evaluative, Causal, Theoretical, or Critical-Constructivist*
 - d. Introduction of the overarching theories or hypotheses or analytical framework to be employed or principal theme to be developed
 - e. Identification and specification of the key concepts or variables and how they are related, e.g. by causal hypotheses or derived from overarching theories or taxonomies.
 - f. Literature review of prior academic and official work on the topic, the theories, and the research methods
 - g. Specification of research design and analysis methods; how concepts or variables are to be measured or otherwise assessed by the author; the research plan; time table of the phases of research and writing
4. Chapter Three and following chapters: Application of the above to the substantive topic in logically structured and sequenced chapters (this is the body of the work)
5. Summary (can appear at end of each chapter as well as at the end of the work)
 - a. how satisfactorily the research questions were answered,
 - b. how credibly the hypotheses were proved or disproved,
 - c. how well the findings fitted the theoretical or analytical framework
 - d. how appropriate the chosen theory or analytical framework was to the topic
6. Conclusion
 - a. what implications the findings have for scholarly knowledge, public understanding, or policy improvement
 - b. how the findings shed light on comparable phenomena outside the topic
 - c. author's critical reflections and acknowledgement of limitations of the study
 - d. suggestions for further research
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices

*Principal modes of analysis (may be cast as hypotheses to be validated or refuted):

- Descriptive, inductive or empirical (A exists and displays certain characteristics)
- Deductive (A is a logical derivative of theory B)
- Comparative (A is comparable to B along selected dimensions of space or time)
- Chronological (A occurred prior to B)
- Hierarchical (A is subordinate to, or a sub-element of, B)
- Causal (A causes B; A intervenes to change B into C)
- Evaluative (A is 'better' than B as assessed by explicit criteria)
- Theoretical (A validates a chosen theory, concept, taxonomy, or hypothesis)
- Critical or Constructivist (A and B are not 'given' but 'constructed')

For further guidance on how to write a thesis or dissertation:

Guides developed by leading universities may be accessed by **Google-ing:**

How to Write a Political Science Thesis

or

Research Methods in International Relations

(or similar phrases).

In our Library see also for politics and international relations essays:

Scott, Gregory M. and Stephen M. Garrison. *The Political Science Student Writer's Manual*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, Prentice-Hall, 2000. *General Library 808.06632 S42*

Schmidt, Diane E. *Writing in Political Science: a Practical Guide*. 2nd ed. New York:, Longman, 2000. *General Library 808.06632 S34*

Biddle, Arthur W., Kenneth M. Holland, and Toby Fulwiler. *Writer's Guide: Political Science*. Lexington, Mass., D.C. Heath, 1987. *General Library 808.06632 B58*.

Shively, W Phillips. *The Craft of Political Research*. Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005. *Gen Library 320.072 S55*

Van Evera, Stephen. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Cornell UP. Google it.

Pierce, Roger. *Research Methods in Politics: A Practical Guide*. Sage, 2008. Available on line.

A **Voyager search** will identify more guides, such as *Doing dissertations in politics: a student guide* by David M. Silbergh, available on line.

For social sciences essays:

Galvan, Jose L. *Writing Literature Reviews: a Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 2nd ed. Glendale, Pyczak Publishing, 2004. *General Library 300.7 G18*

Cuba, Lee, *A Short Guide to Writing about Social Science*. 4th ed. New York, Longman, 2002. *General Library 808.0663 C96 2002*

Northey, Margot, Lorne Tepperman, and James Russell. *Making Sense: Social Sciences: a Student's Guide to Research and Writing*. 2nd ed. Don Mills, Ont., Oxford University Press, 2002. *General Library 808.0663 N87*

Redman, Peter. *Good Essay Writing: a Social Sciences Guide*. 2nd ed. London, Sage, 2001. *General Library 808.0663 R31*