



# Thesis Format Guide

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# 1. Introduction

This document is intended as a guide for all UNSW Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidates to assist them in the preparation of their thesis for examination and should be read in conjunction with the [Higher Degree Research Examination Procedure](#). It outlines the requirements for the format, length and submission process.

## Important to consider prior to thesis submission:

- It is important to keep in mind that all HDR theses must be made publicly available in the UNSW Library once the degree requirements are met. No redactions to the final thesis are permitted. You and your Supervisors must carefully consider ahead of time what may be appropriate in terms of project design, thesis structure, and inclusion of sensitive material to plan for this.
- Before the thesis is submitted for examination, you must obtain written permission to reproduce any third-party material that is being included in the thesis. Arrange this well ahead of time. Contact [copyright@unsw.edu.au](mailto:copyright@unsw.edu.au) for assistance with copyright or to arrange a copyright information session with the Library: [Copyright and your thesis - Copyright at UNSW - Library guides at UNSW Library](#)
- The Dean of Graduate Research offers a number of workshops to help you understand the requirements. These include a Thesis Submission Seminar, Using Publications in an HDR Thesis, and Oral Examinations for HDR programs. You can find out more about them on the HDR Hub: [Candidate Workshops](#)

In some disciplines, creative or other work may form part of the thesis material. Faculties will provide guidance on any discipline-specific requirements. Accessibility and readability need to be at the forefront of decisions about choice of file format when including any material other than the PDF of the thesis.

## 2. Thesis Format

A major consideration in the presentation of the thesis is the ease with which an examiner can read your thesis. It must be a coherent, scholarly body of work that meets the requirements outlined in the [Higher Degree Research Examination Procedure](#).

Length and Style of the thesis will vary depending on the discipline. You should consult with your supervisors on what is considered appropriate for the discipline.

### 2.1 Thesis length

The word length of a thesis will vary according to the degree and the discipline.

In general:

- The PhD thesis should not exceed 100,000 words.
- The Professional Doctorate thesis should not exceed 100,000 words.
- The Master by Research thesis should not exceed 75,000 words.
- The Master of Philosophy thesis should not exceed 40,000 words.

Examiners may consider an excessively long thesis unsatisfactory in terms of quality of expression. Word limits are inclusive of chapters and footnotes (the body of the thesis), but exclusive of thesis preamble, tables, maps, bibliographies, and appendices.

## 2.2 Thesis style

The thesis should be well written in an acceptable style for the discipline. You should consult with your supervisors regarding any disciplinary formatting conventions.

## 2.3 Font size and spacing

- The text should be in either 1.15 or 1.5 line spacing.
- The font size should be no less than 11 point (use 10 point for footnotes) in a legible font.

## 3. Thesis Contents

It is important to arrange the thesis material in a way that presents well to the reader, and so it should be arranged in the order described below.

### 3.1 Title page - required

The title page must be the first page. It must include:

- UNSW Sydney logo (latest version)
- Thesis title
- Candidate's full name as it appears in the student record
- The degree for which the thesis is being submitted
- Faculty and School name
- Month and Year of Submission
- The name of the jointly awarding institution (if the degree will be jointly awarded)

#### Optional:

- Candidates may include the logo of the research centre or industry partner that their research is affiliated with
- Candidates may include their preferred name, in brackets, next to their full name.

Please visit the HDR Hub to download a template.

### 3.2 Table of contents - required

The table of contents must include sections, chapters and main headings with page numbers. Please visit the HDR Hub to see an example.

### 3.3 Acknowledgements

You can include acknowledgements for supervisors, colleagues, friends or family, if desired. This should not exceed one page. Keep in mind that the information included here will be publicly available once the final thesis is deposited in the Library repository.

The following sections are required in the acknowledgements:

#### **Scholarship and/or Funding - Required:**

Candidates in receipt of an Australian Government RTP stipend or RTP fees offset must acknowledge the Australian Government's contribution during and after completion of the HDR program. The acknowledgement must include the mention of support through the Australian Government Research Training Program as follows:

This research was supported by the Commonwealth through an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship [DOI: <https://doi.org/10.82133/C42F-K220>]. This acknowledgement

should be included in any publications arising from the thesis as well as the thesis itself. It should be included in the front matter of the thesis and/or in the thesis acknowledgements section.

If you received other sources of funding, you must acknowledge the Funder's contribution. Suggested text is as follows:

This research has been supported by an [insert scholarship name].

### **Editorial Assistance - Required:**

You must acknowledge any editorial assistance received and clearly disclose the type and extent of its use. This includes but is not limited to any professional editorial assistance, any editorial changes made by a publisher, and any use of AI and Large Language Models. All thesis editing must comply with the guidelines provided by the Institute for Professional Editors and by UNSW. You can find out details of this on the HDR Hub: [AI, Large Language Models, and the Responsible Conduct of Research at UNSW](#)

Some examples of disclosures for AI usage could be:

Generative AI was used to create diagrams xx, yy. The prompts and applications used for the generation of these diagrams are noted in the footnote of each image.

AI tools were used to generate the data visualisation shown in diagram xx. I have confirmed that the visualisations are an accurate reflection of the data. The tool used was yy on date zz.

Generative AI was used in this thesis to improve clarity and expression. Logs of use including dates and input text are available on request.

### **3.4 Lists of tables, figures, abbreviations and symbols**

If tables, figures, specialised abbreviations or symbols are included in the thesis, then you should include the following as needed:

- A list of tables
- A list of figures
- A list of abbreviations
- A list of symbols

### **3.5 List of publications arising from the research**

If any relevant publications or presentations arose from the research during the period of enrolment in this degree, you should clearly declare it in this section, prior to the body of the thesis. This is in addition to the Inclusion of Publications section in GRIS.

### **3.6 Body of the thesis (main text) - required**

The thesis must include an introduction, thesis chapters, a discussion and a conclusion as described in the [Higher Degree Research Examination Procedure](#). You must also carefully consider how to best present any publications resulting from your research within the thesis, as it is critical to present a logical and coherent whole.

For full details, candidates should refer to the following seminars provided by the Dean of Graduate Research:

- Thesis Submission Seminar
- Using Publications in your HDR Thesis

You can register for upcoming seminars on the HDR Hub: [Candidate Workshops](#). The slides from previous seminars are available on the HDR Hub: [Previous Candidature Workshops](#).

### 3.7 Bibliography (list of references) - required

You should discuss with your supervisors and School the style of your bibliography, as this varies between disciplines.

Reference management software allows you to create a personal database or library of references and generate automatic bibliographies in a variety of referencing styles. UNSW IT provides access to EndNote for current UNSW staff and candidates. Other free reference management software is also available.

Further information on training and support for managing references can be found at the following page - <https://www.library.unsw.edu.au/research/support-for-your-research/managing-references>

### 3.8 Appendices in the thesis

Material can be included in the appendices if it supports the main argument of the thesis. Appendices may include peer reviewed material, reports, materials such as questionnaires or tabulations of data, published creative writing, catalogues, and documentation of public performances or exhibited work.

### 3.9 Abstract, Originality and Inclusion of Publications statements

All of the below certifications will be completed in GRIS as part of the submission process and therefore should not be included in the body of the thesis.

**Abstract** - The abstract should briefly outline the problem being investigated, the procedures followed, the general results obtained, and the major conclusions reached. It should not contain any information that is commercial-in-confidence, or legally or culturally sensitive. After the degree is awarded, the abstract will appear on the AHEGS and will be publicly available in the Library repository.

**Originality Statement** – this statement declares the work has been undertaken by the candidate and that any contributions to the research are explicitly acknowledged in the thesis.

**Inclusion of Publications Statement** – this outlines whether publications have been included in the thesis and the candidate’s contribution. Please visit the HDR Hub for further information.

## 4. Submission Process

The [HDR Hub](#) provides guidance for thesis submission and pre-submission processes, all of which are conducted via the Graduate Research Information System (GRIS). You need to lodge your Notification of Intention to Submit in GRIS at least two months prior to thesis submission to allow the University sufficient time to appoint suitable examiners.

### 4.1 Materials required for thesis submission

**One PDF of the entire thesis** must be submitted via GRIS along with the following certifications:

- **A thesis title and an abbreviated abstract** – See 3.9
- An **Originality Statement** which declares the work has been undertaken by the candidate and that any contributions to the research are explicitly acknowledged in the thesis.
- An **Inclusion of Publications Statement** which outlines whether publications have been included in the thesis and the candidate’s contribution. Please visit the HDR Hub to see what the options in GRIS will look like.

All of the above certifications will be completed in GRIS as part of the submission process and therefore should not be included in the body of the thesis. The thesis should not contain signatures of the candidate or any other person.

## 4.2 Extra materials – file formats

For any additional discipline-specific requirements, such as creative work, you should consult the School Postgraduate Coordinator regarding specific requirements. These materials can be uploaded as additional files in GRIS. Possible formats for these are: PDF, Excel, Word, PowerPoint documents, JPEG or PNG images, and compressed files (.zip, .rar or .7z). Other types of files such as audio or video files should be placed in a .zip archive and then uploaded as a .zip file. In all cases, the maximum size for each document uploaded to GRIS is 500MB.

It is important that you clearly signpost within the PDF thesis the extra material that needs to be examined. For disciplines where creative work is not required, carefully consider whether it is appropriate to include any extra materials, taking into consideration the examiner experience.

You should avoid using any formats that require proprietary/commercial software, so that the material is accessible and easy for the examiner to read.

To ensure the integrity of the examination process, all materials need to be hosted on UNSW-managed platform. You **must not** include a material that is on an externally hosted site such as a website or digital app. If the extra material is in a format that cannot be hosted in GRIS, prior approval is required from the Graduate Research School.

For creative or practice-based theses that include works which are the property of the candidate or a third party (e.g. film, sculpture, painting) you must provide a complete visual record (e.g. photos of the sculpture taken from all angles) in an approved digital format.

- All exhibited works must be fully catalogued, with documentation of the process, overall presentation, and each individual piece.
- For three-dimensional or time-based works (e.g. video, installation), provide multiple views to adequately capture the full work.

## 5. Final Copy of the Thesis for Deposit to the UNSW Library

At the completion of the examination, every candidate who has satisfied the requirements for the award of the degree must submit a digital copy of their final UNSW approved thesis for deposit and preservation in the UNSW library.

Once all necessary corrections have been made in response to examiners' comments, you must submit the following documentation in GRIS:

- a clean copy of the revised thesis in PDF format, and
- the version of the revised thesis with changes highlighted or shown using track changes, and
- the response to examiners form (word format), listing and addressing the examiners' comments

Once approved for award of degree, the clean PDF copy is the one that must be deposited, along with the mandatory statements from GRIS. Detailed instructions for how to do this are found on the Library website: [Depositing your thesis](#).

This library copy must be deposited before your degree can be conferred.