Skrivnatt February 2019 – “Crafting your Master’s Thesis from Start to Finish”

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A thesis is an **individual**, in-depth research study of a subject of interest to **you** in your discipline.

**You** should gain experience in planning, designing, executing and reporting a piece of **individual** research, and of the processes involved in conducting research.

**You** will have a supervisor for general guidance **but** responsibility for the thesis is **yours** alone.
Why is a Thesis different from a report...

» **Purpose**
  » *Understanding* versus solution or plan of action

» **Structure**
  » Primary data - *formal evidence*
  » Secondary data – use of *past literature* & ideas

» **Validity & Rigour - (methods)**
  » *Tailored* to the problem and justified
  » *Repeatable*, structured

» **Outcomes**
  » *Evidence based*
  » *Justified* versus opinion
A process map for the Thesis...

- Literature Review
  - consists of
  - Investigation of your
  - Research Problem as defined by
  - Research Topic via
    - Systematic Review which includes
      - Process of
        - Step 1: Identifying the Keywords used for
          - Previous Studies consists of
            - Secondary Data Sources of
              - Step 2: Searching the Existing Literature followed by
                - Step 3. Evaluating Search Results all the while
                  - Documenting Your Findings
                    - An Integrated Analysis of What is Already Known About Your Topic
    - Research Question
    - Research Design
      - useful for
        - Methods
          - for
            - Concepts related to
              - Theory
                - for
                  - Concepts useful for
                    - Framework & Hypothesis Development
                      - for
                        - Significance
                          - establishes
                            - Credibility
                              - informs your
                                - Research Design useful for
                                  - Data Collection
                                    - for
                                      - Data Analysis
                                        - for
                                          - Operationalization
                                            - for
                                              - More Recent
                                                - for
                                                  - Library
                                                    - for
                                                      - Online
                                                        - for
                                                          - Bibliography
                                                            - for
                                                              - Mind Mapping
                                                                - for
                                                                  - Note Taking
                                                                    - for
                                                                      - Electronic Databases accessed
                                                                        - for
                                                                          - Gaps
                                                                            - for
                                                                              - Quality
                                                                                - for
                                                                                  - Relevance
                                                                                       - for
                                                                                         - Consensus or Disagreement
                                                                                             - for
                                                                                               - Electronic Databases
                                                                                                   - for
                                                                                                     - Older and/or
                                                                                                         - for
                                                                                                             - More Recent
                                                                                                               - for
                                                                                                                   - Quantitative
                                                                                                                        - for
                                                                                                                            - Qualitative
                                                                                                                                - for
                                                                                                                                    - Conceptual
                                                                                                                                        - for
                                                                                                                                             - Empirical
                                                                                                                                                - for
                                                                                                                                                        - More Recent
The research question Ch 1. (5%)  
*The How, What or Why you are seeking to understand or explain*

Literature review Ch 2. (25%)  
*What is already known or is uncertain: key ideas and features you will need to test to answer our research question.*

Research methodology Ch 3. (20%)  
*How we will find the information you need to answer the questions & features identified.*

Review of Findings Ch 4. (40%)  
*This is what you have found out about what is done, could be done, “just the facts m’am”*

Discussion Ch. 5. (in above)  
*How does what you found support or differ from what you expected. How do things seem to work, what are the relationships, issues & difficulties still to be overcome.*

Conclusions Ch. 6. (10%)  
*This is what you now know and understand about your questions, your contributions and any limitations to the study*
Choosing a topic...

» Can be the most difficult part of the exercise
» Choose a ‘do-able’ project - perfection v optimality
» Consider:
  » your personal interests & expertise
  » timing/geography/cost
  » information access/availability/confidentiality
» Look at previous theses (Caution!)
» Your topic will:
  » not be trivial
  » answer a perceived need
  » allow you to reveal knowledge of literature
The literature review and argumentation

- Literature review allows you to sharpen your project specification
- Reveals your familiarity with topic and relates study to work of others
- Allows you to adopt a critical approach
- Develops integration of materials; a key scholarship element to make connections between ideas, theories and experience

# A Thesis argument template...

## Thesis Argument Map Template

### Research Question / Aims:

**Argument:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Chapter 1: Title</th>
<th>Chapter 2: Title</th>
<th>Chapter 3: Title</th>
<th>Chapter 4: Title</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Opening hook</td>
<td>Broad purpose:</td>
<td>Broad purpose:</td>
<td>Broad purpose:</td>
<td>Broad purpose:</td>
<td>Summary of argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Context</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td>Implications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gap in the literature</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Research question or aims</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Argument</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Signposting/outline of logic</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td>Section I will argue:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The research question to be answered...

- Easier to think of as issues or series of related questions
- Each segment of a dissertation is an answer to a minor question
- Remember you are writing this for intelligent people who are not familiar with your subject, avoid jargon (can you explain it to your Mum?)
- Avoid merely describing or ‘looking at’ something, must engage and critique
Writing the Thesis...

» Plan the structure, with draft chapter titles, ASAP
» Open a folder for each chapter - add material as soon as it comes to hand
» Write the easier parts first, but write as you go along!
» Keep it simple, be conscious of word limit
» Integrate tables & diagrams - use appendices if necessary
» Re-writing, polishing and proofing are very important
» Back-up your electronic files in several places!

It Will Always Take Longer Than You Think It Will!!