

PGR Tips on writing your thesis

Most doctorates result in a thesis. The requirements for theses vary by university and by subject and you should make sure you are familiar with the formal requirements early on. In addition, it is worth [looking at previous theses and analyse them](#), particularly others from your department/subject specialty. The process of writing will also vary by subject. In some Arts and Humanities subjects the writing is part of the process of enquiry. In contrast, in the Physical and Life Sciences, theses will describe experiments, their outcomes and the conclusions drawn from the results. You can find general advice on writing up in the '[Completing your doctorate](#)' section of the Vitae website.

Practise your writing skills

Writing is a skill which will improve the more you do it. It is therefore really important to start writing early in your doctorate (for example for every supervisory meeting) and [get feedback](#) from your supervisors on the style and the content. Using this can help you improve to the standard you will need for your thesis.

Start writing early on

There are more reasons to [start writing as you go](#): Writing will help you to make sense of your findings, analyse your results and make connections. In addition, a doctoral thesis is a long document, which is better to tackle in small chunks. Reports, funding applications, notes you have written after reading papers, presentations, can all make valuable starting points.

Structuring your thesis

Decide early on what your main chapters or sections are likely to be, perhaps in discussion with your supervisors. [Look at these conventional structures](#). Consider creating computer folders relating to each of your chapters into which you can organise the material that you have already written.

Avoid procrastination

As writing up is a huge task, requiring different skills, not all of which are going to be your favourites, some procrastination is almost inevitable. There are [different approaches to try](#) when you feel you are not making progress.

Consider your audience

Often you will know or have a good idea who your examiners are going to be. Bear this in mind when writing, from the background you might need to cover and which references to cite. (You don't want examiners to be in a negative frame of mind because you have failed to mention their work...)

Proofreading and reviewing

It may be helpful to think of [the process of writing your thesis as the production of a series of drafts](#), each requiring a different style of proofreading. It is also vital to let other people read drafts and incorporate their feedback. It is always useful to tell them what kind of [feedback](#) you are looking for.

Know when to stop writing your thesis and submit

Don't be [too much of a perfectionist or unrealistic in your expectations](#)! It only has to be good enough to pass: it doesn't have to be better than the best. Ask your supervisors the important question: 'is it good enough to pass?'

Keep healthy

When writing up it is easy to lose sight of the priority of staying healthy and taking breaks. Look at the section [staying healthy](#) of the Vitae website to remind yourself!