

Master's Dissertation Structure

Dissertation structure will vary and this structure is only general guidance. Your dissertation may contain *some* or *all* of these elements, but you should always check with your supervisor what to include.

Introduction

1. **State your task**, i.e. announce what this dissertation is about.
2. Explain the **importance** of your chosen topic.
3. **Background** information about the topic: 'paint a picture' for your reader.
4. **Literature review**: critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of research to date on this topic. Equally, you can provide a brief overview of research to date (if a formal literature review is not required).
5. Outline, explain, and justify the **theoretical frameworks, the methodological approach, and/or the materials used** in the research.
6. Summarise each of the **dissertation chapters** and what they accomplish or contribute to the dissertation.
7. Present your **central thesis/ key findings** for the entire dissertation.
8. Explain why/ how your thesis statement/ your dissertation is **original and significant**.

Chapters

Introduction to the Chapter

1. State your task: what is this chapter about?
2. Provide background information about the topic of this chapter, and what research says about that topic.
3. Outline of the main points that will be covered in this chapter.
4. Present the key findings of the chapter and/or the smaller claims made in the chapter, and how they support the central thesis of the dissertation.

Body Paragraphs of the Chapter

1. Point: Make your point/argument (topic sentence).
2. Evidence: Support what you are saying with evidence from sources, e.g. assigned texts, lab experiments, case notes, statistics, theory, etc.
3. Analysis: Expand on your point/argument, explain what you mean in full (what is happening, how + why?). Relate your analysis back to the central thesis statement/ key findings of both your chapter and dissertation.

Conclusion to the Chapter

1. Summarise the points/ highlights of this chapter
2. Outline the key findings of the chapter and how they support the overarching thesis of the dissertation (not verbatim).
3. Suggest broader significance of the findings (if relevant).
4. Write a transition paragraph that starts to direct reader towards the next chapter.

Conclusion

1. **Summarise** the points/ highlights of the entire dissertation
2. Outline the **key findings of each chapter** and explain how they support the overarching thesis/ key findings of the dissertation.
3. Suggest the **broader significance** of your thesis/ findings again, and why this study is so essential to your research area/ discipline/ field. Try to vary your language and syntax as much as possible, i.e. do not repeat material verbatim.