

Sketching a (PhD thesis) Project Proposal: from Research Question and reading to submission

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1. Introduction: Science (=) writing

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_BI54mLpgQ

<https://www.proofreading.co.uk/blog/8-tips-for-effectively-proofreading-and-editing-a-thesis/>

2. Expectations

2.1. What universities and examiners expect of theses and dissertations

- an awareness and understanding of relevant previous research on the topic;
- a critical appraisal of previous research on the topic;
- a clearly defined and comprehensive investigation of the topic;
- the appropriate application of research methods and techniques;
- a thorough presentation and interpretation of results;
- appropriately developed conclusions and implications that are linked to the research framework and findings;
- a high standard of literary quality and presentation;
- a contribution to knowledge on the particular topic.

(cf. Paltridge & Starfield 2007: 17f)

2.2. Thesis Evaluation Schema

1. → Please comment on the thesis' topics and research methods. Are the topics raised in this research interesting/innovative? Are the methods applied convincingly/appropriately? (around 80 words)
2. → Please give your opinion on the quality of the research data and their analysis. (around 80 words)
3. Are references appropriate? Does the thesis show adequate command of the relevant literature? (around 80 words)
4. Is the argument solid and convincing? → Would you advise the student to re-write some parts? (around 80 words)
7. Conclusion (between 200 and 300 words). Please elaborate upon your evaluation with reference to the above-mentioned criteria in the box below. In case you would like to suggest that certain limited corrections should be made in the final manuscript, please specify. You can of course attach a file with corrections and suggestions.
8. Please tick as relevant:
 - The reader signed comments that the candidate can defend the thesis.
 - The thesis is incomplete or not convincing → 6 months allowed to improve the result.

Criteria for assessing research proposals

In an article titled 'English for academic possibilities: the research proposal as a contested site', Cadman (2002) surveyed and interviewed supervisors to ask them to prioritize the particular features they expected to see in a research proposal. She found supervisors gave most value to:

- the logic of the student's argument;
- a well-focused research question, set of research objectives, or hypothesis;
- the width and depth of the student's reading;
- the feasibility of the student's project;
- a critical approach to the literature;
- justification of the project through the literature;
- understanding of current issues on the student's topic;
- matching of methodology and methods to the research questions.

(cf. Paltridge & Starfield 2007: 62)

2.4. The purpose of a project/thesis proposal

- to demonstrate that your project/thesis addresses relevant topic/issue
- to convince your supervisor/reader that your topic is significant and you know "how to solve the problem"
- to outline the topic and give background information
- to show that an organized plan (e.g. for collecting or obtaining data) exists
- to demonstrate that methods of data analysis have been identified (and are appropriate to the data set)
- to train you in the art of proposal writing

2.5. General Proposal Structure (IMRaD for Empirical Projects)

Title Page, Abstract, Preface/Acknowledgements, Table of Contents, List of Tables/Figures

1. Introduction
 2. Theoretical Background/Literature Review
 3. Methodology
 - 3.1. Hypothesis/Research Question(s)
 - 3.2. Data (collection)
 - 3.3. Data Analysis (qualitative or quantitative?)
 - 3.4. Methods of Investigation (procedure, programs, concept, equipment, ...)
 4. Expected/ Preliminary Results; Current State of Research
 - 4.1. ...
 - 4.2. ...
 5. Conclusions: summary, contextualization; limitations, further studies, ...
- References (Bibliography)
Appendix

3. Scaffolding: The writing process

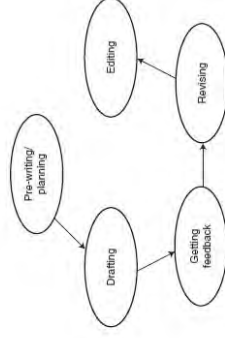


Figure 3.1 A simplified model of the writing process
Source: Adkinson and Curtis, 1998

(cf. Paltridge & Starfield 2007: 46f)

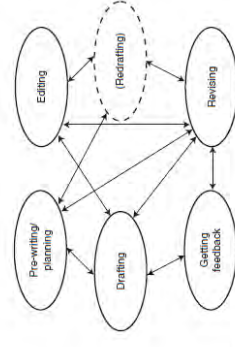


Figure 3.2 A more realistic model of the writing process
Source: Adkinson and Curtis, 1998

3.1. Scaffolding = section breakdown

(cf. Paltridge & Starfield 2007: 61)

Table 4.1 Purpose of each section of a research proposal

Section	Purpose
Title	To summarize, in a few words, what the research will be about
Summary	To provide an overview of the study which you will expand on in more detail in the text that follows.
Overall purpose	To present a clear and concise statement of the overall purpose of the research.
Relevant background literature	To demonstrate the relationship between the proposed study and what has already been done in the particular area that it, to indicate the 'gap' that the study will fill.
Research question/s	To provide an explicit statement of what the study will investigate.
Definitions of terms	To provide the meaning of the key terms that have been used in the research questions.
Research methodology	To give an illustration of the steps the project will go through in order to carry out the research.
Anticipated problems and limitations	To show awareness of the limitations of the study, what problems may be met in carrying it out, and how they will be dealt with.
Significance of the research	To say why the study is worth carrying out.
Resources required/budget	To say what resources the research will require – and what other costs may be anticipated in carrying out the study.
Ethics	To provide a statement as to how participants will be advised of the overall nature of the study, and how informed consent will be obtained from them.
Proposed table of contents	To give an overview of the scale and anticipated organization of the thesis or dissertation.
Timetable	To give a working plan for carrying out, and completing, the study.
References	To provide detailed references and bibliographic support for the proposal.
Appendix	To provide examples of materials that might be used, or adapted, in the study.

3.2. Writing steps

<https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/CARS>

the original Swales study on introductions

<https://thesishub.org/writing-a-research-article-in-40-steps/>

expanded to the entire PhD project – almost half are on revising/polishing, etc. (see below)

4. Rewriting/Editing/Proofreading

revising
rewriting
editing
proofreading

4.1. Ask



What is the difference between rewriting, editing, proofreading a thesis?

Understanding the differences between rewriting, editing, and proofreading is essential for producing a polished thesis. Here's a breakdown of each process:

- 1. Rewriting**
 - **Definition:** Rewriting involves making substantial changes to the content of your thesis. This can include rephrasing sentences, reorganizing paragraphs, or even altering the overall argument or structure.
 - **Purpose:** The goal of rewriting is to improve clarity, coherence, and flow. It often addresses deeper issues in the writing, such as unclear arguments or poorly structured sections.
 - **When to Use:** Rewriting is typically necessary after receiving feedback that indicates significant weaknesses in the thesis or when you realize that parts of your work do not effectively communicate your ideas.
 - 2. Editing**
 - **Definition:** Editing focuses on improving the overall quality of writing without changing the fundamental content. This includes refining sentence structure, enhancing word choice, and ensuring consistency in tone and style.
 - **Purpose:** The aim of editing is to enhance readability and clarity while ensuring that the writing adheres to academic conventions.
 - **Editors will look for issues such as:** awkward phrasing, repetitive language, and logical flow between ideas.
 - **When to Use:** Editing should be done after the rewriting phase and before proofreading. It's a critical step to ensure that your thesis is articulate and professionally presented.
 - 3. Proofreading**
 - **Definition:** Proofreading is the final step in the writing process, focusing on surface-level errors such as spelling, grammar, punctuation, and formatting inconsistencies.
 - **Purpose:** The goal of proofreading is to catch any remaining mistakes before submission. It ensures that the document is polished and free from typographical errors that could detract from its professionalism.
 - **When to Use:** Proofreading should be conducted after editing has been completed. It serves as a last check to ensure that your thesis is ready for submission or publication.
- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>Summary Table</p> <p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rewriting: Content and structure Editing: Quality of writing Proofreading: Surface-level errors <p>By understanding these distinctions, you can approach each stage of your thesis writing process effectively, ensuring a comprehensive review that leads to a high-quality final product.</p> | <p>When to Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After initial drafts or significant feedback After rewriting After editing |
|---|--|

4.2. Ask

What do I have to do when revising my PhD thesis?

- Revising your PhD thesis is a critical step in ensuring that your final document meets academic standards and effectively communicates your research findings. Here are the key steps to follow when revising your thesis:
- Divide into Sections:** Break your thesis into manageable sections or chapters. Focus on one section at a time to maintain clarity and prevent overwhelm.
 - Create a Timeline:** Establish realistic deadlines for each editing phase to ensure thorough proofreading and revision before submission.
 - Review Structure and Content:** Check for coherence. Ensure that each chapter flows logically into the next. Each section should contribute to the overall argument or narrative of the thesis.
 - Evaluate Arguments:** Critically assess your arguments and evidence. Ensure that all claims are well-supported by data and literature.
 - Acknowledge Limitations:** Be honest about the limitations of your study. This demonstrates maturity and helps preempt potential criticisms during your defense.
 - Focus on Clarity and Precision:** Language Precision: Use clear and concise language to convey your ideas effectively. Avoid jargon unless necessary, and define terms where appropriate.
 - Read Aloud:** Reading your thesis aloud can help identify awkward phrasing, repetitive sentences, or grammatical errors that might have been overlooked during silent reading.
 - Seek Feedback:** Peer Review: Request feedback from colleagues or peers familiar with your field of study. They can provide insights into the clarity of your arguments and overall readability.
 - Final Proofread:** Ask for a final read-through of the entire thesis to catch any remaining errors or inconsistencies. Pay special attention to formatting and citation styles.
 - Prepare for Submission:** Use Checklists: Develop detailed checklists for grammar, punctuation, formatting consistency, citation accuracy, and adherence to style guidelines (e.g., APA, MLA).
 - Editing Tools:** Utilize writing enhancement software to improve sentence structure and readability. However, do not rely solely on automated tools; manual review is essential.
 - Final Read-through:** Conduct a final read-through of the entire thesis to catch any remaining errors or inconsistencies. Pay special attention to formatting and citation styles.
 - Prepare for Submission:** Ensure that all required elements (e.g., title page, abstract, acknowledgments) are included and formatted correctly.
 - Double-check submission guidelines:** Double-check submission guidelines from your institution regarding formatting, length, and any additional requirements.

4.2. Ask

What do I have to do when revising my PhD thesis?

- Understand Feedback**
 - Review examiner comments:** Break down the feedback into actionable points. Identify major revisions (e.g., structural issues, methodology changes) and minor revisions (e.g., typos, formatting errors).
 - Clarify ambiguities:** If any feedback is unclear, reach out to your supervisor or examiners for clarification.
- Plan Your Revisions**
 - Create a revision checklist:** Categorize changes by priority and complexity.
 - Set a timeline:** Allocate specific time slots for addressing different sections or issues.
 - Discuss with your supervisor:** Share your plan and get approval for your approach.
- Address Major Revisions**
 - Content Updates:** Revise your arguments, analysis, or interpretations as needed. If new data or research is required, incorporate it.
 - Structural Improvements:** Ensure your thesis has a logical flow, with clear chapters and sections. Revist your introduction and conclusion to reflect revised content.
- Address Minor Revisions**
 - Polish Writing:** Fix grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors. Improve clarity and conciseness.
 - Ensure Consistency:** Check formatting, citation style, and consistent terminology.
 - Figures and Tables:** Verify the accuracy of captions, labels, and references.
- Verify Academic Standards**
 - Check Guidelines:** Ensure the thesis adheres to your institution's formatting and submission requirements.
 - Citations:** Use proper citation tools to confirm all references are accurate and complete.
- Respond to Feedback**
 - Revision Report:** Some institutions require a document detailing how you addressed examiner feedback. Be precise and courteous in explaining the changes.
- Proofread and Review**
 - Self-review:** Read your thesis as if you were an examiner.
 - External Review:** Ask a colleague, friend, or professional proofreader to review the document.
- Prepare for Resubmission**
 - Check Formatting:** Ensure the document meets submission requirements.
 - Update Abstract and Title:** Reflect any changes made in the content.
 - Supervisor Approval:** Get final approval from your supervisor before resubmitting.
- Tips for Success**
 - Stay Organized:** Use tools like spreadsheets or task managers to track revisions.
 - Maintain Communication:** Regularly update your supervisor on your progress.
 - Take Breaks:** Avoid burnout by working in manageable sessions.

5. The time frame and timing

TIME is really essential for academic success!

- regular discipline
- construct your own specific activities and milestones
- regular feedback from peers, experts (conferences) and supervisors
- time management tools?

5.1. Time management

- From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
- A **Gantt chart** is a bar chart that illustrates a project schedule.^[1] It was designed and popularized by Henry Gantt around the years 1910–1915.^{[2][3]} Modern Gantt charts also show the dependency relationships between activities and the current schedule status.
- ### Definition
- A Gantt chart is a type of bar chart^{[4][5]} that illustrates a project schedule.^[6] This chart lists the tasks to be performed on the vertical axis, and time intervals on the horizontal axis.^{[4][7]} The width of the horizontal bars in the graph shows the duration of each activity.^{[7][8]} Gantt charts illustrate the start and finish dates of the terminal elements and summary elements of a project.^[1] Terminal elements and summary elements constitute the work breakdown structure of the project. Modern Gantt charts also show the **dependency** (i.e., precedence network) relationships between activities. Gantt charts can be used to show current schedule status using percent-complete shadings and a vertical "TODAY" line.
- Gantt charts are sometimes equated with bar charts.^{[9][10]}
- Gantt charts are usually created initially using an *early start time approach*, where each task is scheduled to start immediately when its prerequisites are complete. This method maximizes the float time available for all tasks.^[4]

5.1. Time management

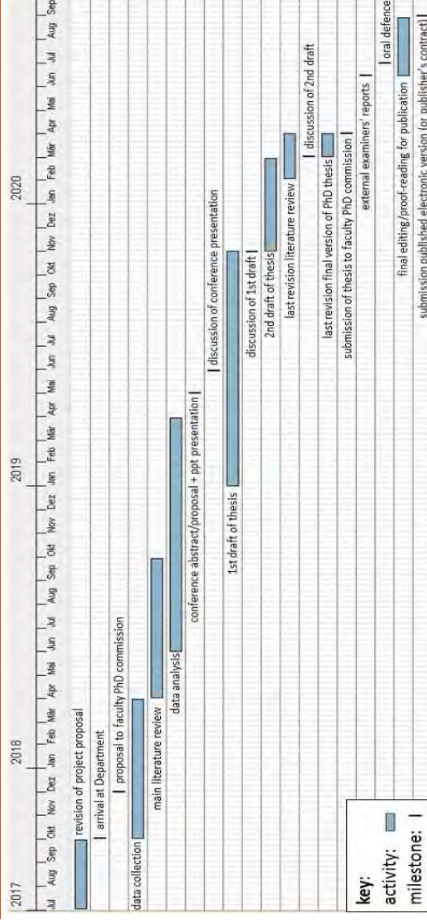
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6. Outlook

trends from social sciences into humanities:

- more specific – shorter?
- from monography to peer-reviewed papers plus frame??
- effective use of AI tools is expected?
- through AI/GPT more stereotypical structures?

5.2. Activities & Milestones



6.1. Ask

How can I effectively use technology to enhance my thesis writing?

1. Writing and Editing Tools

- **AI-Powered Writing Assistants:** Utilize tools like **Grammarly** or **Hemingway Editor** to check grammar, punctuation, and style. These tools provide real-time feedback on sentence structure and readability, helping you refine your writing.
- **Word Processors with Built-in Features:** Use advanced word processors (e.g., **Google Docs**) that offer spell check, grammar suggestions, and formatting tools. These features can help maintain consistency in citation styles and document formatting.

2. Research Management Software

- **Reference Management Tools:** Programs like **Zotero**, **Mendeley**, or **EndNote** can help you organize your references and citations efficiently. They allow you to create bibliographies automatically in various citation styles, saving time, reducing errors.
- **Literature Review Tools:** Use software like **RefWorks** or **Paperpile** to manage your literature reviews. These tools can help you annotate articles, track your reading progress, and synthesize information more effectively.

3. Collaboration and Feedback Platforms

- **Cloud-Based Collaboration:** Platforms like **Google Docs** enable real-time collaboration with advisors or peers. You can share your document easily for feedback and make edits collaboratively.
- **Feedback Tools:** Use tools like **Microsoft Teams** or **Slack** for structured feedback sessions with your advisor or research group. These platforms facilitate discussions around specific sections of your thesis.

4. Project Management Software

- **Task Management Tools:** Utilize project management applications like **Trello**, **Asana**, or **Notion** to organize tasks, set deadlines, track progress on various sections of your thesis. This helps keep you accountable and ensures you stay on schedule.
- **Version Control Systems:** Implement version control software (e.g., **Git**) to manage changes in your thesis document. This allows you to track edits over time and revert to previous versions if necessary.

5. AI for Idea Generation and Structuring

- **AI Writing Assistants for Brainstorming:** Use AI tools like **ChatGPT** to generate ideas or outlines for specific chapters of your thesis. You can ask for summaries of key concepts or assistance in structuring arguments logically.
- **Content Structuring Tools:** Mind mapping software (e.g., **XMind**, **MindMeister**) can help visualize the relationships between different sections of your thesis, aiding in the organization of thoughts and arguments.

6. Proofreading Services

- Consider professional proofreading services that utilize AI technology to enhance the quality of your writing. These services can provide a fresh perspective on clarity, coherence, and overall presentation of your thesis.

Conclusion

By integrating these technologies into your thesis writing process, you can enhance the quality of your work while improving efficiency and organization. Embracing these tools not only aids in producing a polished final document but also supports a more collaborative and engaging writing experience.

Ask



Give me references for textbooks phd writing

1. **"How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing"** by Paul J. Silvia This book provides practical strategies for developing consistent writing habit, overcoming procrastination, and effectively managing time for writing tasks.
2. **"Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks"** by Wendy Laura Belcher A structured guide that helps researchers plan, draft, and revise journal articles, making it particularly useful for early-career academics seeking to publish their work.
3. **"The Craft of Research"** by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, and William Fitzgerald This comprehensive resource covers the entire research process, from formulating research questions to presenting findings effectively, emphasizing clear communication.
4. **"Destination Dissertation: A Traveler's Guide to a Done Dissertation"** by Sonja K. Foss and William Waters This handbook uses a travel metaphor to guide students through the dissertation process, providing concrete strategies for each stage.
5. **"Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process"** by Ujjell Erik Rudestam and Rae R. Newton This guide addresses common challenges faced during the dissertation process and offers insights into effective scholarly writing.
6. **"How to Write a Thesis"** by Umberto Eco Eco's classic book provides timeless advice on selecting a topic, organizing research, and structuring a thesis, making it a must-read for graduate students.
7. **"From Dissertation to Book"** by William Germano This book focuses on the transition from dissertation to published book, discussing the differences in audience and style between the two formats.
8. **"Writing for Social Scientists"** by Howard S. Becker Becker's book offers practical guidance on writing within the social sciences, addressing both the technical aspects of writing and the emotional challenges faced by researchers.
9. **"Thesis and Dissertation Writing in a Second Language: A Handbook for Students and their Supervisors"** by Brian Paltridge and Sue Starfield This resource is aimed at non-native English speakers and discusses key issues in thesis writing while providing practical examples and advice.
10. **"On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction"** by William Zinsser Although not exclusively focused on academic writing, this classic guide emphasizes clarity and simplicity—essential qualities for effective academic communication.

Ask



Give me references for textbooks phd writing



Perplexity did not show the most influential textbook, maybe because it do not do a "semantic search" (PhD was not in the book title, but academic + graduate = PhD)