



**Guidelines for
Advanced Marketing Research:
Report 4 (AMRR402)
Bachelor of Philosophy (B Phil)
Honours in Marketing Management
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Guidelines for Writing a Thesis

This learner guide is a compilation of data from various renowned sources on thesis writing which are acknowledged in the text and in the list of references.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is a thesis and why write one? *[Chandrasekhar, 2002] and [Guidelines for writing a thesis or dissertation. [Online]]*

Students are inclined to think that a thesis is a document they must submit to get a degree. This is the most common, and often only, reason why a thesis is written; however, there are other reasons for writing a thesis.

A thesis is a written record of the work that has been undertaken by a student. It constitutes objective evidence of the student's knowledge and capabilities in a particular field of study and is therefore a fair means by which to gauge them. Although thesis writing may be viewed as an unpleasant obligation on the road to a degree, the discipline it induces may have lifelong benefits.

Most of all, a thesis is an attempt to communicate. Any academic venture begins with curiosity, is followed by experiment and analysis, and leads to findings which are then shared with the larger community of academicians and the public. The thesis is therefore not merely a record of academic work, but is also an attempt to communicate it to a larger audience.

The difference between the undergraduate and postgraduate theses is one of degree rather than kind. They share a common structure and need for logical rigour. It is only in the substance and the emphasis placed on it that differences arise.

An undergraduate thesis is, at present, graded on the quality of research, the significance of the contributions and the style of presentation. Thus, the postgraduate thesis is judged on a similar basis to the undergraduate one.

Indeed, the three most commonly cited qualities that earn any thesis a first class grade are **originality, independence, and mastery.**

Students writing a postgraduate thesis are required to present their research in the context of existing knowledge. This means a thorough and critical review of the literature, not necessarily limited to the narrow topic of research, but covering a generally wider field. The student should also show clearly what original contributions have been made. These requirements also apply to postgraduate work: the candidate should demonstrate familiarity with previous relevant work in his or her thesis.

In short, a thesis – whether undergraduate or postgraduate – is evidence of the student’s capacity to carry out independent research under the guidance of a supervisor, and to analyse and communicate the significant results of that work. The postgraduate student must demonstrate, in addition, mastery of the literature and indicate clearly which is his or her original work, and why it is significant.

So, a thesis is supposed to demonstrate an ability to take a project and bring it to a genuine conclusion – very different from the usual undergraduate assignment that is not revised after the examiner sees it and that is usually done during the last week before it is due. A thesis then should provide a new body of work and frequently a new kind of skill. For example, the topic for the thesis must be chosen professionally. Employers will sometimes ask about your thesis or even want to see it. Your choice of thesis can help you get a job or hold one.

Pick a topic that you are happy to talk about at a cocktail party. People will often ask you, in conversation, “What is your thesis about?” A good test of your wisdom in picking a topic is the amount of pleasure you get in answering because a thesis project often involves much frustration. Your personal interest in your topic is your best motivation for getting through that frustration.

A thesis should be useful. You’ll be happier about doing a thesis and do a better job at it if you feel that somebody will read and use it. It is even better if the thesis is useful and relevant at completion time as well as potentially in the future. It should not be a

snapshot of information that immediately becomes dated; the thesis should ideally be something with information you can talk about and that people can use for years.

Finally, a thesis is a demonstration of your ability to conduct original research and present the written results. It is not a class that you simply take and get credit for. Nor is it a glorified assignment that you can wait to the 'eleventh hour' to finish. Your thesis is a research project on which you have spent considerable time in **preparatory research** (*literature review*), **project design** (*formulation of a hypothesis*), **data collection** (*field and or laboratory*), **analysis** (*statistical examination of the data*), and finally **presentation and synthesis** (*examination of the statistical results in the context of your hypothesis and literature review*). Each of these individual parts will consume considerable time and effort.

1.2 The importance of quality writing [Chandrasekhar, 2002]

The overall quality of your written work is directly proportional to the final result you will receive from your examiners. A better quality thesis will mean that you are more likely to receive a better final mark. Remember that the results you present are only part of what is evaluated. Excellent results can seem a lot less impressive if they are presented haphazardly or obscurely.

A thesis that is poorly written will take longer for your supervisor to read and return for comments. If there is a great deal wrong with your writing and structure, it is also very likely that your work will be returned to you with only comments on the initial parts. This will slow down your own progress, and may delay the final submission date of your thesis (and, consequently, your graduation date). Your work is more likely to be cited by other researchers if they can easily understand what you have written.

The dynamics of writing a thesis generally consist of two phases, namely:

1. Developing the **content** of the thesis
2. Writing the content into a thesis **structure**

These two phases are the core of this learner guide.

2. DEVELOPING THE CONTENT OF THE THESIS

The following steps can be followed to develop the content of your thesis: *[How to write a strong thesis statement. [Online]]*

- Understand the academic writing task
- Become familiar with the various types of thesis statements
- Formulate a research question
- Formulate a tentative thesis statement
- Examine a contradiction
- Test the thesis statement
- Conduct the research.

2.1 Understand the academic writing task

You can begin to formulate a good thesis statement only after you have acquired a solid grasp of the purpose of the assignment. If you're asked to write a paper in response to a specific assignment question, then your first task is to make sure that you clearly understand the academic writing task. Determine which of the following critical thinking skills you are primarily being asked to apply to your object(s) of study:

- **Analysis:** Is the process of breaking a complex topic or substance into smaller parts to gain a better understanding of it. *[<http://www.google.co.za/>]*
- **Comparison:** Is comparing one thing to another by seeking similarities among subjects. *[<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>]*
- **Evaluation:** Is the systematic determination of merit, worth, and significance of something or someone, using criteria against a set of standards. *[<http://www.google.co.za/>]*
- **Argument:** Is the interdisciplinary study of how humans should, can and do reach conclusions through logical reasoning, that is, claims based, soundly or not, on premises. It includes the arts and sciences of civil debate, dialogue, conversation, and persuasion. *[<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>]*

- **Interpretation:** Is the practice of ascertaining the meaning or semantic content of an occurrence, statement, text, subject matter, development, words, etc. [<http://google.co.za/>]
- **Reflection:** Comprises those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to gain new understanding and appreciation. [<http://www.google.co.za/>]

Your thesis statement, then, should take a form that reflects the writing task.

2.2 Become familiar with the various types of thesis statements

Almost all forms of academic writing conform to a thesis-support structure – a structure in which we find the main claim near the beginning of the essay, followed by evidence and analysis in support of this claim in the body of the essay. Your thesis statement serves as the main argument that drives your paper forward. Students are for the most part well-accustomed to writing essays that follow this top-down structure; however, they usually have a much harder time adapting their thesis statements to match the purpose of the specific writing task. Never assume that you don't need a thesis statement just because you're not asked to write a traditional academic essay. The following table lists some of the most common assignments and their corresponding thesis forms:

Type of Assignment	Form of the Thesis Statement
Analytical Essay	Statement of main claim about the topic in relation to the object of study
Book Review	Statement of critical evaluation about the book
Critical Review (i.e. review of an academic journal, article)	Statement of critical evaluation about the journal article
Position Paper	Statement of position + reasons
Comparative Essay	Statement of main argument + main points of comparison
Research Paper	Statement of main claim about the topic, issue, or problem
Research Proposal	Tentative statement of main claim about the topic, issue, or problem
Personal Reflection	Statement of main focus or direction
Case Study	Statement of problem recommendations
Lab Report	Statement of main purpose

2.3 Formulate a research question

Students often have a hard time distinguishing between the thesis statement and the research question. These two components of an academic paper are closely related, but not interchangeable. Sometimes the research question is given to you as a part of the assignment question; at other times you will have to come up with the research question on your own. The research question can be defined in the following ways:

- The question that focuses your research on a significant problem, issue, controversy or contradiction
- The main question outlined in your assignment, or the final question you have arrived at after having asked questions to narrow your topic down
- The question that your thesis statement will answer, in the form of a specific claim.

Example of research question:

“What was the most important cause of America’s increased involvement in the Vietnam War during the 1960s?”

Example of a thesis statement in response to a research question:

“The escalation of the Vietnam War during the 1960s was caused primarily by America’s anti-communist foreign policy.”

Tips on coming up with a good research question:

- Ask the journalistic questions (who, what, when, where, why) about your topic until you get down to a single question that is both specific and substantive.
- Consider how your question relates to published literature on your topic.
- Use a purpose-statement prompt to help you come up with a research question: “The purpose of this paper is to...”

2.4 Formulate a tentative thesis statement

Coming up with a good thesis statement can seem like a very perplexing task in the early stages of the writing process, particularly if you’re asked to submit a research proposal that requires a tentative thesis statement. Remember that a *tentative* thesis statement is not something set in stone; rather, it is something meant to help you focus your analysis and research so that the writing task becomes manageable. You should not attempt to start collecting and analysing evidence until you have an idea of the main argument you would like to make in your paper. Generating the thesis statement

can be thought of as a recursive process. In the early stages of planning and writing, the tentative thesis statement helps you focus on the evidence in a certain way, but as you get further along in the writing process, the analysis of evidence should also help you clarify the thesis statement.

Ask yourself the following questions as you go through the process of generating a main claim for your thesis:

- What patterns or implications emerge when I look closely at my evidence?
- What evidence and support do I need to validate my thesis statement?
- What evidence cannot be adequately accounted for by my thesis statement?
- How can I explain the discrepancies between my thesis statement and my selected evidence?
- How can I rewrite my thesis statement in order to accommodate the evidence that doesn't fit?

So, a thesis statement is a summarised, brief and concise idea which provides the reader an exact point of argument, analysis, opinion or reason to envisage the paper.

In other words the following points can be made to get a clear picture of a thesis statement: [http://www.educationalwriting.net/resource_center/]

- The statement indicates how the importance of the subject being discussed will be interpreted.
- The thesis statement organises and develops the argument systematically.
- The thesis statement makes the reader expect what will be in the rest of the paper.
- It answers the question in brief which has been asked to you.
- It raises a controversial point on which others may disagree.

This practice of constantly readjusting the thesis statement to match the evidence and analysis will ultimately lead you to write a polished and defensible thesis statement in your final draft.

2.5 Examine a contradiction

Some thesis statements are more interesting than others. The choice of a boring or self-evident thesis statement has less to do with how brilliant you are as a writer than with how good you are at identifying a problem that is *significant* to you, as well as to your readers. If you get halfway through your thesis, and find yourself with nothing left to say, you can be fairly certain that your thesis lacks the intellectual vigour required to propel you through it.

One way that you can avoid writing a thesis statement that falls flat intellectually, is to formulate one that **focuses on an interesting contradiction, tension, or paradox between two things**. For example, a complex thesis statement might focus on the contrast between the popular interpretation of a marketing event and your own interpretation. By acknowledging the complexities and nuances of the topic at hand, complex thesis statements often come much closer to the reality of things.

2.6 Test the thesis statement

Test your thesis statement by asking the following questions:

- Does the thesis show analysis and depth of thought, or is it mainly descriptive?
- Does the thesis present an argument about the material, and is it worded as an argument?
- Is the thesis contestable? (Would someone potentially want to argue with you about it?)
- Is the thesis defensible? (Have you used qualifying expressions such as 'primarily' or 'for the most part' to make the thesis more defensible?)
- Does the thesis statement take into account the 'so what' question?

Frequently asked questions about the thesis statement

Q: *Must the thesis statement have a three-part structure?*

A: No. The three-part thesis statement is likely something you learned in high school that was intended to give you a basic sense of organisation and structure. When constructing your thesis statement, you should feel free to use as many, or as few, points as you need to make a suitably complex argument.

Q: *Can the thesis statement be more than one sentence?*

A: Yes. While you should always strive to make the thesis statement as clear and concise as possible, in some cases you will need more than one sentence to fully articulate your argument. By always trying to adhere to the 'one-sentence rule' for thesis statements, you may inadvertently reduce the complexity of your argument by restricting its expression to one sentence, or obscure the argument by cramming too many clauses into one sentence.

Q: *Does the thesis statement have to come at the end of the introduction?*

A: No, but by convention the reader will unconsciously expect to find the main claim of the paper somewhere near the end of the introduction. This placement makes sense from a genre or rhetorical perspective because the thesis statement will likely be more compelling or persuasive if you've already established some context for it in the opening parts of your introduction.

Q: *Should I use the first-person pronoun 'I' in the thesis statement?*

A: Generally speaking, the use of 'I' in the thesis statement is a matter of your personal preference and writing style. Some arguments are worded very explicitly, while others are expressed in a more neutral and detached way. In either case, a phrase such as "in this paper, I will argue that..." can serve as an excellent writing prompt that invites you to word your thesis statement as an argument. Whether or not you decide to keep this phrase in the final version of your thesis statement is up to you. The

stricture against the use of 'I' in high school essays was intended to teach you to avoid using subjective experience or personal conviction as the basis of your claim; thus, if your argument is grounded in solid evidence and analysis, then you should not be overly concerned about the use of 'I'.

2.7 Conducting the research

Once you have a thesis statement, you are ready to begin researching it.

2.7.1 The definition of research

The word research is composed of two syllables, [*re* and *search*]; [*re*] is a prefix meaning again, anew or over again; [*search*] is a verb meaning to examine closely and carefully, to test and try, or to probe. Together they form a noun *describing a careful, systematic, patient study and investigation in some field of knowledge, undertaken to establish facts or principles*. Research is a *structured inquiry that utilises acceptable scientific methodology to solve problems and create new knowledge that is generally applicable*. Scientific methods consist of systematic observation, classification and interpretation of data. Although we engage in such processes in our daily life, the difference between our casual day-to-day generalisation and the conclusions usually recognised as scientific method lies in the degree of formality, rigour, verifiability and general validity of these conclusions.

2.7.2 The characteristics of research

When you say that you are undertaking a research study to find answers to a question, you are implying that the process

1. is being undertaken within a framework of a set of philosophies (approaches);
2. uses procedures, methods and techniques that have been tested for their validity and reliability; and
3. is designed to be unbiased and objective. [www.ihmctan.edu/PDF/notes/Research]

Philosophies mean approaches, e.g. qualitative, quantitative and the academic disciplines in which you have been trained.

Validity means that correct procedures have been applied to find answers to a question.

Reliability refers to the quality of a measurement procedure that can be repeated and is accurate.

Unbiased and objective means that you have taken each step without preconceptions and drawn each conclusion to the best of your ability and without introducing your own vested interest. (*Bias is a deliberate attempt to either conceal or highlight something.*)

Adherence to the three criteria mentioned above enables the process to be called 'research'. However, the degree to which these criteria are expected to be fulfilled varies from discipline to discipline and so the meaning of 'research' differs from one academic discipline to another.

In all disciplines however, research is a process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information to answer questions. This process must be controlled, rigorous, systematic, verifiable, empirical and critical.

Controlled: The concept of control implies that, in exploring causality in relation to two variables (factors), you set up your study in a way that minimises the effects of other factors affecting the relationship. This can be achieved to a large extent in the physical sciences (cooking, baking), as most of the research is done in a laboratory. However, in the social sciences it is extremely difficult as research is carried out on issues related to human beings living in society, where rigid controls are not possible.

Rigorous: You must be scrupulously strict in ensuring that the procedures followed to find answers to questions are *relevant, appropriate and justified*. Again, the degree of

rigour varies markedly between the physical and social sciences and within the social sciences.

Systematic: This implies that the procedure adopted to undertake an investigation follows a certain logical sequence. The different steps cannot be taken in a haphazard way. Certain procedures must follow others.

Verifiable: This concept implies that whatever you conclude on the basis of your findings is correct and can be proven by you and others.

Empirical: This means that any conclusion is based upon hard evidence gathered from information collected from real life experiences or observations.

Critical: Critical scrutiny of the procedures used and the methods employed is crucial to a research inquiry. The process of investigation must be foolproof and free from faults. The process adopted and the procedures used must be able to withstand ruthless examination.

For a process to be called research, it is imperative that it has the above characteristics.

2.7.3 The research process

The research process is similar to undertaking a journey. For a research journey there is an important decision to be made: **How do you go about finding answers to your research question(s) reflected in your thesis statement?**

There are practical steps through which you must pass in your research journey in order to find answers to your research questions. The path to finding answers to your research questions constitutes *research methodology*. At each operational step in the research process you are required to choose from a multiplicity of *methods, procedures and models* of research methodology which will help you to best achieve your objectives. *This is where your knowledge base of research methodology plays a crucial role.*

Steps in the research process:

1. Formulating the research problem (dealt with in the thesis statement)
2. Extensive literature review
3. Developing the objectives
4. Preparing the research design including sample design
5. Collecting the data
6. Analysis of data
7. Generalisation and interpretation

Your research will result in a multiplicity of data, information, facts and references which must be processed. Processing and analysing data involves a number of closely related operations which are performed with the purpose of summarising the collected data and organising these in a manner that they answer the thesis statement and research questions (objectives).

2.7.3.1 The data processing operations

The following data processing operations can be identified.

1. Editing – a process of examining the collected raw data to detect errors and omissions and to correct these when possible.
2. Classification – a process of arranging data in groups or classes on the basis of common characteristics depending on the nature of phenomena involved.
3. Tabulation – the process of summarising raw data and displaying the same in compact form for further analysis. It is an orderly arrangement of data in columns and rows. Tabulation is essential because:

- a) It conserves space and reduces the explanatory and descriptive statement to a minimum.
- b) It facilitates the process of comparison.
- c) It facilitates the summation of items and the detection of errors and omissions.
- d) It provides the basis for various statistical computations.

2.7.3.2 Data analysis methods

Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a very personal process with few rigid rules and procedures. For this purpose, the researcher needs to go through a process called *content analysis*.

Content analysis is analysis of the contents of an interview in order to identify the main themes that emerge from the responses given by the respondents. This process involves a number of steps:

Step 1. *Identify the main themes*: The researcher needs to carefully go through the descriptive responses given by respondents to each question in order to understand the *meaning* they communicate. From these responses the researcher develops broad themes that reflect these meanings. People use different words and language to express themselves.

It is important that the researcher selects wording of the theme in a way that accurately represents the meaning of the responses categorised under a theme. These themes become the basis for analysing the text of unstructured interviews.

Step 2. *Assign codes to the main themes*: In order to count the number of times a theme has occurred in an interview, the researcher needs to select a few responses to an open-ended question and identify the main themes, continuing to identify these themes from the same question until a saturation point is reached. These themes are assigned a code each, using numbers or keywords.

Step 3. Classify responses under the main themes: The themes having been identified, the next step is to go through the transcripts of all the interviews and classify the responses under the different themes.

Step 4. Integrate themes and responses into the text of your report: Having identified responses that fall within different themes, the next step is to integrate them into the text of your report. While discussing the main themes that emerged from their study, some researchers use verbatim responses to keep the feel of the response. There are others who count how frequently a theme has occurred and then provide a sample of the responses. It depends entirely upon the way the researcher wants to communicate the findings to the readers.

Integrating the themes and responses into the text of the report will be dealt with in the next section on writing the content into the thesis structure.

Quantitative data analysis:

This method is most suitable for large well-designed and well-administered surveys using properly constructed and worded questionnaires. Data can be analysed either *manually* or with the help of a *computer*.

However, it is not the intention of this learner guide to discuss the research process in detail. For this purpose students are referred to the following sources:

1. IMM GSM. 2010. Learner guide for the Advanced Marketing Research: Theory 4 course.
2. Kolb, B. 2008. *Marketing Research: A Practical Approach*. SAGE.
3. Beekman, L., Dube, C., & Underhill, J., 2011. *Academic Literacy*. 1st ed. Juta. (Optional)

3. WRITING THE CONTENT INTO THE THESIS STRUCTURE

Writing the report is the last, and for many, the most difficult step of the research process. The report informs the world what you have done, what you have discovered and what conclusions you have drawn from your findings.

3.1 General advice on thesis writing *[Guidelines for writing a thesis or dissertation. [Online]]*

Find a special place to write. Make it a place where you can spread out papers. Get everybody to agree that you don't have to clean it up until the thesis is done.

Then, use three techniques that have helped generations of students: segmenting, scheduling, and rewarding.

Segment the whole thesis into small chunks. Tackle just one at a time. Avoid fixating on doing the entire thesis all at once. Instead, focus clearly on just one small piece at a time. One way to begin to segment is to write a detailed subject outline of the thesis. Get right down to the subsection level – the part that takes only a page or two. First make a topic outline for the entire work.

Then make a thesis outline; tell what your thesis (argument) will be for each subsection. Don't worry now about being totally and perfectly accurate in the outline. Certainly the structure will change as you move along through the thesis but having the detailed outline will prove a great help to finishing the thesis – especially when combined with scheduling and rewarding.

Schedule your thesis writing. (The days don't have to be consecutive.) Plan on completing one small subsection each day. After finishing the writing each day, research those nagging minor points that cropped up while you were writing – find the exact spelling of a name, for example, when it's been cited differently by your sources, or check out the correct page numbers for an article.

Reward yourself: Now comes the crucial technique. To many thesis writers, the actual writing looms as the hardest part. Such students may be able to breeze through

a newspaper article or TV script with no problem, but a multi-page manuscript blocks them like a ten-foot granite wall across the path. You can make that wall crumble in front of your eyes – by rewarding yourself. Find something that gives you pleasure. Make it small, easy, inexpensive. Then, at the end of each day’s writing, treat yourself! Tell yourself that you’ve done well! Acknowledge your progress to yourself! Feel good about it all! Some treats: Candies, soaking in the tub, a phone chat with a friend, a donut, a five-kilometre run. Find something you enjoy. It will help.

3.2 Page format and layout

You are required to write your thesis according to the following page format and layout.

a. Font

A single font (Arial 12) must be used throughout the thesis or report, the only exceptions being in tables, graphs, and appendices. Headings may be bolded and no more than 2 points larger than the rest of the text.

b. Margins

All theses and reports must have consistent margins of at least 1.25 inches at the top, bottom, left, and right edges of the page. Page numbers must be placed at least one inch from and in the middle of the bottom of the page. Margins which are larger than those required are acceptable, but smaller margins are not.

c. Spacing

The thesis must be 1.5-spaced. Single spacing may be used only in the table of contents, footnotes and end-notes, charts, graphs, tables, quotations, captions, glossary, appendices, and bibliography. Prose quotations over three lines long should be in block quote, double or single-spaced, and indented on the left. Do not use quotation marks in the block quote except when indicating quotations within the block quote.

d. Numbering of pages

Beginning with the first page of the acknowledgments or preface, if used, all preliminary pages preceding the actual text must be numbered in lower case Roman numerals; e.g., iii, iv, v, etc. These numerals must be centered under the text with at least one inch of space between the number and the bottom of the page. If no optional pages are used, the page numbers must begin on the abstract. Do not number the acknowledgments and table of contents, but do include each of them in the pre-text page count.

The first page of the text begins at Arabic numeral 1. All pages within the text must contain an Arabic page number, bottom-centered, at least one inch from the bottom edge of the page. The first page of every major section (chapters, appendices, bibliography, etc.) must begin on a new page.

e. Tables and illustrations

Pages carrying illustrative material must be given page numbers appropriate to their place in the document. Illustrative material may not be inserted after the document has been numbered and given numbers such as '10a.'

All tables, figures, illustrations, and other types of examples included and referenced in the text of the dissertation should be numbered for identification. There should be no duplication of these numbers; i.e. no two tables should be assigned the same number. Figures may be numbered in one of two ways: consecutively throughout the document (Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, etc.), or double-numbered so that illustrations' numbers reflect their locations in the document (Figure 9.3 is the third figure in Chapter 9, or Figure A2 is the second figure in Appendix A.)

Captions and legends must be placed on the same page with the figure, graph, table or illustration they describe. In order to fit both figure and caption on the same page, captions may be single-spaced, margins may be decreased to one inch, and figures may be reduced in size to fit. If the figures are reduced from their original size, then the page number must be added after the reduction so as not to alter its size. If there is no

other way to manage the amount of material to be shown, the caption and figures should be side-by-side in continuous view. This method should only be used in the rare instance where all of the pertinent material will not fit on the same page. Figures, captions, and page numbers must be easily readable when the electronic document is viewed at 100 percent.

f. Referencing

Follow the IMM GSM's requirements in this regard. [IMM GSM, 2011. Referencing. [Online].

Available at: <http://www.imm.co.za>]

g. Word count

The text of the thesis must be between 8,000 and 10,000 words. This excludes the title page, abstract, acknowledgments, table of contents, appendices and references.

3.3 Recommended format (structure) for the thesis [Cunningham, 2004]

The following is a generic outline and discussion of the structure and provides food for thought. However, for a specific structure see Appendix A.

The recommended format is:

- Title page
- Abstract
- Acknowledgments
- Table of contents
- The research report itself (see Appendix A).

The various parts of the structure are explained briefly:

➤ **Title page**

The title page should include the following information:

- Title of the thesis – usually centered on the page and in upper case letters
- Your full name and qualifications
- The name of the institution to which the thesis is being submitted
- The degree for which the thesis is submitted and the year of submission.

➤ **Abstract**

The abstract is placed immediately following the title page and is generally short (up to a side of A4 usually). The abstract should include a brief introduction and statement of the thesis statement, as well as a summary of the methodology, findings and conclusions.

➤ **Acknowledgments**

It is important to acknowledge your supervisors, statistical advisers and others who have helped (e.g. colleagues who have offered support or provided data). In addition, any funding bodies should be mentioned. It is also customary to refer to those who have had to 'put up' with you during the process of writing the thesis – usually family and friends!

➤ **Table of contents**

Conventionally, there should be a table of contents, followed by a list of tables and a list of figures. The table of contents includes all the major divisions of the thesis, including subsections. The relationship between major divisions and minor subdivisions should be shown by the appropriate use of capitals and indentations. The preliminary pages (abstract, acknowledgments and contents) are numbered using Roman numerals (i, ii, iii...) and the remainder of the thesis is numbered using Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3...). The title page is not numbered. It is sensible to start writing a table of contents as you write the thesis; however, the page numbers can only be added when you have completed the final draft. At this stage, always cross-check the page numbers between the table of contents and the main body of the text – and ask someone to double check them for you. The list of tables or figures follows the same format, with each table/figure number in Arabic numerals, the exact title as it appears in the main text and also the page number.

➤ **Review of the literature (See point 6.2.2 of the report in Appendix A)**

Beginning this section can be a daunting task, particularly if your research area is extensive. This should be one of the first things you do and if the majority of this work is undertaken relatively early in the project, it makes later stages very much easier. The review of the literature should be as comprehensive as possible in the space available. Include only material that gives an appropriate background to your study and avoid the temptation to include everything you have ever read on the subject! Obviously, this review must be constantly updated to ensure you do not miss important additions to the literature and a final search should always be undertaken immediately prior to submission.

Make sure you acknowledge which paper something is cited in if you did not actually read it yourself. An examiner may find it hard to believe that you managed to get a copy of a 1932 Russian orthodontic journal, let alone managed to translate it yourself!

Great care is required in the way the references are quoted in the text, especially with respect to punctuation, etc. If several papers are quoted at the same point, they should always be in chronological order.

➤ **Research design, materials and methods (See point 6.3.2 of the report in Appendix A)**

Full details should be included in the materials and methods so that the reader could repeat the study if desired. For this reason, details should also be provided of any equipment and materials used. These can be placed in a separate appendix if necessary. It is also useful to start writing this section as you undertake your research, not only will everything be very fresh in your mind at this stage, but it will also mean you have less to do at a later stage.

This section allows readers to understand the objectives of the study and to judge whether the methods used were appropriate. The methods may actually be modified during the process of the study, in which case, the final form of the method is discussed (unless advised otherwise by your supervisor). The most serious error in this section is to omit important information required by the reader to see the logic of the study and to judge the

adequacy of the method. Everything to do with the validity of the method should be included in this section, including design, instrumentation, analysis, etc. This section should also contain evidence of the reliability of the method.

There is a great deal of individual variation in the subheadings used in this section, often depending on the type of research undertaken. However, possible examples include:

- Subjects
- Design
- Materials, apparatus and procedures
- Statistical analysis
- Validity and reliability of method.

Subjects

There are two particularly important aspects to be considered here, both of which determine the generality of the findings:

- The number of subjects at each stage (this establishes the statistical power).
- Freedom from bias in the way the subjects are obtained/recruited. In clinical studies, we frequently fail to achieve random selection for obvious reasons and it should be acknowledged if this is so. At this stage it is also important to consider that, particularly when comparing two groups, the groups may not be balanced. If this is the case, you will need to take this into account and select an appropriate statistical analysis.

Full details of subjects should be included: number, age group, gender, where they were recruited from, inclusion and exclusion criteria, how many subjects were asked to take part and how many agreed, drop-out rate, etc. It is also important to discuss power and sample size at this point and explain how you arrived at the estimated number of subjects/samples, etc.

Design

This section describes exactly what type of study was undertaken.

Materials, apparatus, models and procedures

This section includes all procedural elements that will allow the reader to understand what happened. It may be worth using diagrams or photographs. Likewise, a flow chart can make a complex procedure seem much more straightforward. Some aspects may be included in an appendix.

Validity and reliability

The reliability and validity of any method should be addressed at this stage. At this point it is also appropriate to include any threats to the validity of the method. Limitations of the method should be discussed fully in the discussion section. It is better to be honest and acknowledge any issues, rather than to allow the examiner to point them out to you. There are problems associated with all studies and examiners do realise that.

➤ **Statistical analysis**

It is a failing of many research studies that statistical advice was obtained too late to be of any real use and the writing-up stage is certainly not the time to consult your statistician for the first time! They should have formed part of the research team from the outset, and this is the time for them to provide support as you undertake the necessary analyses and to offer advice regarding interpretation of data. The statistical tests should be discussed fully, along with any criteria that were fulfilled in order to use these tests.

➤ **Results and discussion (See point 6.4 of the report in Appendix A)**

The **results** should be presented in a clear, concise manner and the temptation to present in more than one format (e.g. in both tables and graphs) must be avoided. It is often helpful to precede each subsection of results with a summary paragraph but avoid duplication. Tables and figures should be as simple as possible and the use of very complicated graphics or obscure colour combinations must be avoided – the examiner will not thank you! The table or figure should not repeat information covered in the main text, it should

augment it. Every table and figure should have a title that is a concise explanation of what is being presented. If abbreviations are used, it is important that they are explained fully.

Researchers often find the **discussion** the most difficult part to write – it really is the ‘thinking part’ of the thesis. The examiner wants to know several things when reading this section:

- What did you find? Do you understand why you found this and can you suggest reasons why?
- Why is it important to you? Is it likely to affect current clinical practice?
- How do your findings compare with previous studies, particularly with those which have been mentioned in the review of the literature?
- Did you encounter any problems with the methodology (for example, problems with recruitment/retention of subjects that meant the study was under-powered)? Were the reliability and validity of the method acceptable?

It is also customary to follow the discussion with a small section on ‘suggestions for further study’. This allows you to make suggestions on continuation of the study or amendments to the existing methodology.

➤ **Conclusions (See point 6.4 of the report in Appendix A)**

Finally, the salient conclusions from your work should be summarised and these frequently have more impact if they are presented in bullet format. Try to avoid repetition and making this section too long; it is supposed to represent the most important findings – not every single finding!

➤ **Appendices**

The appendices do not form part of the main word count, but avoid using them just to put data in because you run out of space! They can, however, be used for data that is not required in the main body of the text or for questionnaires that were used, consent forms and information sheets given to respondents, etc. If you have a great deal of data that is

not required in the main text, but you wish the examiners to have access to it, consider using a CD or disk, and putting it in the back of the thesis.

➤ **References**

When commencing research for the thesis, ensure you enter all references on a computer-based reference manager. This minimises errors, although it does not completely eliminate them. If you do not have access to a computer-based system for any reason, keep index cards of all the references you have read so that you can go back and double check them. This avoids a great deal of work at a later stage. Always get someone else to double check your references and cross-check that all those in the text are in the references and *vice versa*. Be consistent with the style of the references, for example, either abbreviate all journal titles with correct abbreviations or write them all in full.

Plagiarism is something that the IMM GSM takes very seriously.

➤ **Publications**

Include details of any papers, and the paper itself if already published, that may have been accepted from the study. This reflects well on your research, and shows that it has already been peer reviewed and judged to be of a standard that is acceptable to a national/international journal.

3.4 Other aspects to consider

- **Consistency of style**

Consistency of style is important (the style of tables; headings of sections, etc.). It may seem a small point, but it does make the thesis look better if you have obviously paid attention to detail.

- **Additional points**

If you include diagrams or data from other publications, acknowledge them as such.

With the increased use of desktop publishing, colour printing, etc., theses can be very professional. If colours are used, choose sensible combinations and avoid making it too garish! With the availability of spell check, there is absolutely no excuse for spelling

errors. However, do make sure you choose the correct language (e.g. either US or UK English) to check against!

- **Dealing with your supervisor**

Try to make the supervisor/postgraduate relationship as easy as possible during your research and throughout the writing-up phase. Remember that, although your thesis is the most important thing to you, your supervisor may well be involved with several others as well!

Always keep to deadlines that are set for you and, equally, attempt to set your supervisor a deadline on returning drafts. It is also sensible to keep a copy of the supervisor's corrections, so that when they are done the supervisor is not tempted to ask for more! Most supervisors will also appreciate being given the thesis in sections as they are written, as this breaks up the workload. They will obviously want to see the entire thesis at a later stage, but most of the corrections should have been done by that stage.

- **Final checking**

The following should prove useful as a final check-list:

Readability

Always ask someone else to read the thesis to check for readability, grammar, etc. This does not necessarily have to be someone who fully understands it. Indeed, family members can often be willing volunteers!

Page numbering

Check the numbering of the pages to ensure it is consecutive. Likewise, also check the numbering of tables and figures.

Margins

Check that all margins are in accordance with the regulations. Also ensure that the right margin is justified throughout as it looks much neater.

Headings and subheadings

Check that all chapter headings and subheadings in the main text match those in the table of contents, and ensure that all headings and subheadings are formatted consistently throughout the thesis.

Tables

Have the data been checked for accuracy? Are sufficient details given to interpret the data? Is a consistent format used for all tables? Are units of measurement stated? Are all abbreviations explained?

Figures

Has the accuracy of the figure been checked? Is the figure self-explanatory? Is the zero position shown on the axes of graphs? Are the units of measurement clearly shown on the axes? Are all abbreviations explained?

Appendices

Is the appendix warranted? Is it referred to in the text? Are sufficient details given to make the appendix useful? Does each appendix start a new page?

Reference list

Has every work cited been included in the references? Have the rules for alphabetical and chronological ordering of references been followed? Does each *book* reference include the author(s) and/or editor(s), date of publication, title, chapter number and title, publisher and place of publication? Does each *journal* reference include author(s), date of publication, title, name of journal, volume number and inclusive page numbers?

Binding of the thesis

Three hard bound copies of the thesis must be submitted after examiner comments have been incorporated.

So, you have got to the final stage and the thesis is ready to go to the binders. Getting to that point is something to be proud of – nobody can ever underestimate the amount of effort that has been expended in the process. However, following the steps in this learner guide should make that effort as pain-free as possible.

[See **Appendix A** for a discussion on how the thesis structure can be translated to chapters, and **Appendix C** for a sample report: “Evaluation of market readiness for radio advertising education program for WKLM”]

4. CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING THE THESIS *[Guidelines for the master’s thesis: Criteria for evaluating and comment. [Online]]*

The thesis is the culminating experience in graduate level education. The IMM GSM expects the research and writing of the thesis to be rigorous and the completed product to have both breadth and depth. For the candidate, the thesis should be both a learning activity and one that is stimulating and engenders a sense of pride and accomplishment.

The intent of the thesis is to provide an opportunity for students to refine, and in some cases acquire, a range of skills at an appropriate level to do capable and competent research. A successful thesis is evidence that the student has acquired the minimum level of research skills required by the IMM GSM and can therefore be accredited. Skills required of thesis writers are those associated with research design, data collection, information management, analysis of data, synthesis of data with existing knowledge and critical evaluation of the writer’s own ideas and those presented in the literature reviewed. The guidelines presented below are designed as a framework for thesis evaluation.

4.1 General evaluation guidelines (See also Appendix A for more specific evaluation guidelines)

Criteria for assessment

➤ **Context**

The motivation to study the central subject includes a description of which knowledge domain it applies to, omissions in existing literature, theoretical starting points, assumptions, and explanation of scientific and societal relevance.

➤ **Goal**

The research proposal provides a clear description of the research goal, research question(s), and main deliverable(s). The goal is also an indicator of the ambition level and scope of the thesis project.

➤ **Approach**

The proposal includes a description of the main theories, the theoretical framework (concepts and variables), and the research methods that are applied to study the subject. In addition, there will be a project outline with tasks, dates and deliverables.

B. Results of the research

Criteria for assessment

➤ **Theoretical framework**

The thesis provides a clear overview of (international) literature stating the current situation ('state-of-the-art') with respect to relevant theories and theoretical concepts (and their interrelation) in the research field.

➤ **Scientific quality**

A research method is selected that fits the defined theoretical framework and results in answering the research questions. Moreover, the research method is verifiable, valid and reliable.

➤ **Results**

The thesis provides a coherent, understandable, and correct overview of results including a reflection on the results. The formulated research questions are answered clearly and systematically, based on rigorous analysis and not on speculations.

➤ **Scientific paper**

The student is able to contribute to the scientific body of knowledge. If appropriate one or more scientific papers could be written based on the thesis.

C. Presentation of the results

Criteria for assessment

➤ **Argument**

The thesis is original, objective, conscientious and understandable. The thesis provides the reader with coherent insight into the defined research questions, choices and results, and discussion.

➤ **Writing**

The thesis is readable and uses appropriate language to address both scientific and practical issues. In addition, the rules of style, grammar and spelling are applied correctly.

➤ **Layout**

The thesis is appropriately bound, and attention has been paid to a cover. The format of the entire document is according to the required style. The document contains a thoughtful foreword, contents page, lists and bibliographic references in addition to the content itself.

D. Attitude and motivation of the student

Criteria for assessment

➤ **Analytical capabilities**

The student is aware of the relevant methodological and practical criteria, why they are important and when they are met. The student shows insight into the strong and weak points of current research and practice, and searches for creative solutions to contribute to omissions in these fields.

➤ **Attitude**

The student participates actively in meetings and reworks the thesis using feedback from the supervisor(s). The student works hard, is meticulous, independent and eager to learn.

➤ **Research process**

The student adheres to the research plan but is also prepared to change or adapt the plan if necessary. The student hands in material on time, and keeps appointments. The student is able to reflect on the theories and results.

➤ **Collaboration**

The student is able to comply with the demands from the university as well as the organisation in which the research was conducted. The student has the social capabilities to bring different interests together, while managing the thesis project successfully.

E. Overall evaluation

4.2 General criteria *[Thesis evaluation guidelines. [Online]]*

In examining a student's thesis the following general criteria will be kept in mind, not necessarily in this order:

Focus: Relevance to research problem and argument. It is crucial that the thesis retain a focus on the stated research problem and the proposed argument. It should develop a clear sense of core arguments, establish their relationship to the question or research problem being posed, and sustain a focused development of the argument throughout the thesis. For every paragraph of a thesis there should be an answer to the question: So what?

Reading: Thorough and critical use of a wide range of literature and theories. It is necessary to provide clear evidence of the range of literature, care taken in selecting the

texts most relevant to the thesis topic, efforts made to find independent sources and attempts made to follow up references. It must also be clear that the student has a good understanding of the literature.

Research: Adequacy of research design and execution, consistency of interpretation. Examiners will scrutinise the research design, its appropriateness to the thesis, and the adequacy of its execution. They will look for evidence of an appreciation of the range of different methodologies and of how the chosen research design suits the topic, as well as its possible limitations. It is also essential that the data generated and discussed are consistent with and support the arguments and interpretations put forward.

Argument: The presentation of a thesis and its reasoned defense. It is essential that a distinguished thesis takes up an independent position in relation to the relevant literature on the topic. The thesis must clearly demonstrate a depth and breadth beyond merely a literature review, to establish a clear relationship between the literature and the research, drawing conclusions and making connections not immediately evident in the existing literature itself. It must pursue analysis in addition to description, and the production of a line of reasoning going beyond mere reading and a descriptive account of data (where relevant). In other words, the thesis must present a coherently organised argument. The thesis must clearly identify a formulated position on the topic and support this with arguments, deal with arguments against as well as for it, and arrive at some sort of conclusion. This is particularly important in a thesis: By definition a thesis needs to actually have a ‘thesis’!

Presentation: Competence in the mechanics of essay writing and expression. Spelling, grammar, correct use of citations and construction of a bibliography must be impeccable. The bibliography must accurately represent all sources and reading. Material contained in tables or graphs must be clearly and adequately presented, and sources provided. The quality of expression is also very important. The thesis must structure and organise the topic well. The thesis must have *coherence* – successive sentences should relate to each other, as should successive sections of the essay, and the grammar should make sense; and *unity* – everything should be clearly related to the thesis topic and to the propositions discussed.

The thesis must be structured in an appropriate academic style, containing those sub-sections required to organise the material with suitable subheadings to signify the progression and structure of its arguments. The contents page must correspondingly give a clear indication of the structure of the thesis.

The thesis must be more than a collection of manuscripts. All components must be integrated into a cohesive unit with a logical progression from one section/chapter to the next. In order to ensure that the thesis has continuity, connecting texts that provide logical 'bridges' between different sections/chapters are recommended.

5. CONCLUSION

It's not the physical act of typing that takes so long, it's the fact that writing the thesis requires the complete organisation of your arguments and results. It's during this formalisation of your results into a well-organised thesis document capable of withstanding the scrutiny of expert examiners that you discover weaknesses. It's fixing those weaknesses that take time.

So, do not delay in getting your thesis started. A thesis started in time results in less frustration for you and your advisor. A thesis well done is a life changing experience.

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APPENDIX A

Supplement to Bachelor of Philosophy (B Phil) Honours in Marketing Management Advanced Marketing Research: Report 4 (AMRR402)

THE RESEARCH REPORT AND APPROACH

1. Introduction

This manual provides an overview of the aim and objectives of the IMM GSM as well as establishing the outline and practical tips in completing the final research report.

2. Aim and objectives of the IMM GSM

The IMM GSM Research Board is committed to initiating and maintaining a high standard of marketing research in an African context. The dual focus of the IMM GSM and thus also inherent in the research report context, are high standards and cutting edge development of both marketing and research practice and theory.

The **marketing focus** is developed through directing students to explore and exploit cutting edge marketing theory and is covered in Chapter 2 of the research report (Theoretical considerations). Students are therefore encouraged to explore the newest marketing theory and practice within the framework of their research.

The **research focus** is developed through ensuring that students demonstrate a clear understanding of the theoretical and academic demands of research as well as to gain

practical experience in initiating and completing meaningful marketing research outcomes.

A further objective of the IMM GSM is to ensure that the research project follows a well-managed process and time scale. Furthermore **critical analytical reflective analysis** is considered an integral, even basic, component of business and marketing management. The IMM GSM Research Committee thus supports the development of this approach at all stages of the research process.

3. IMM GSM research approach

The research approach taken here is a unique one and one that has been developed with due consideration to the demands for a high standard of marketing research together with an understanding of the pressures and time constraints that befall students. It is also aimed at reducing the 'procrastination syndrome' often experienced at the start of the research project. This is especially important given that the research report must be completed within a given time frame. The approach taken in response to these challenges is to set demanding yet logical milestones for supervisors and students. Full details of the milestones are given below (Section 6).

The underlying philosophy of this approach is that student's motivation takes place through the achievement of logical milestones. The approach taken here is therefore to identify, and more clearly establish, start up milestones that are common within the context of the student's 'business reality'. It is also argued that a marketing research approach should positively support the development of a business case based on the application of marketing theory (theoretical considerations). A further motivation in the underlying philosophy is to ensure that a **formative approach** is followed throughout the draft development stage. The feedback documents provided thus encourage supervisors to provide valid formative comments.

The research approach, and thus the responsibility of both supervisors and students, is to encourage student/supervisor contact from 'day one' and through the dynamic

feedback principle grow the understanding of the research requirements and at the same time identify real practical research issues. The 'day one' approach has been coined to avoid the 'procrastination syndrome'. An advantage of this approach is that constructive feedback is received early in the study thus encouraging iterative participation of both student and supervisor.

Students should further note that supervisors are encouraged to generate an environment that is both challenging and supportive. In short the approach will be to encourage students from day one, to 'put pen to paper' as early as possible and then to maintain constant progress through the meeting of all deadlines. It is the 'pen to paper' principle from day one together with a commitment to meet deadlines that will ensure the success of the programme.

4. Responsibilities of supervisors and students

- A research workshop will be held at the start of the semester. These workshops will provide hands on experience in initiating the research project and 'putting pen to paper'. Students are encouraged, but not mandated, to attend such workshops.
- Continuous communication between student and supervisor is encouraged at all times.
- The IMM GSM supports forging closer ties and cooperation with marketing organisations. In support of this development students are encouraged to develop their research in the context of the business and marketing demands of their own organisations. It is however, understood that this will not always be possible.
- The quality of the research report content is the responsibility of the student. The supervisor focus will be the development of the logical flow and structure of the report. The supervisor may however, recommend content issues but the final content is the responsibility of the student.
- Students are encouraged to publish in appropriate journals. Supervisors must be co-authors and if need be first authors where additional supervisor input is needed to bring the article to publication standards.

- Supervisors are encouraged to participate and expand on the formative nature of the draft feedback.

5. Marketing research textbook

The recommended textbook for the research module (Theory and Report) is:
Kolb, B., 2008. *Marketing Research: A Practical Approach*. 1st ed. SAGE Publications Ltd.

As stated above the IMM GSM Research Committee wishes to direct students to modern approaches to marketing research and Kolb supports this approach (see Kolb, 2008, Table 1.1, p. 11). In getting to grips with what to research read also Kolb (2008, pp.20-22).

6. Milestones

The following sets out four draft stages for finalising the report. The first four drafts form the formative stages of the study and therefore only a nominal mark (10% per draft) has been allocated. Each draft will thus count 10% towards the final mark. Thus Drafts 1-4: $4 \times 10\% = 40\%$. Final submission (i.e. final full report) will count 60%.

6.1 Draft 1: Problem in context, problem review, problem statement, research objectives and theoretical considerations (3-5 pages)

Draft 1 is the precursor to Chapter 1 of the final research report (see below for an outline of the final research report).

The **problem in context** provides a contextual background for the research. The **problem review** translates this contextual background into theoretical and business issues (constructs) that need further elucidation. This requires a high level of reflective thinking in identifying key constructs emanating from the problem in context (see Kolb,

2008, pp.36-44). Issues of this nature will be discussed in depth in the research workshops.

The **problem statement** or hypothesis, presents the key focus area for the research. What is required here is a definitive or thesis type statement around which the final research conclusions will be made (see Kolb, 2008, p.33 for a definition of hypothesis).

The research **objectives** are a breakdown of the problem statement and form the focus for the research results. In the development of the questionnaire (data collection instrument) therefore, the right questions are asked in order to meet the requirement of the objectives.

Evaluation of Draft 1:

Please note that draft evaluation is a formative process. Only a nominal mark has therefore been accorded.

Student Name:	
Student No.	
Topic Title	

1. TOPIC, OBJECTIVES AND PROBLEM(S)

- Relevance of topic
- Limitation of the field of study
- Clear objectives set
- Achieving the objectives set
- Clear identification of problem(s).

Maximum mark:	10
Mark awarded:	

For all round constructive formative feedback, the following issues will also be commented on:

2. TECHNICAL ISSUES

- Language
- Style
- Structure of the dissertation (e.g. title page, contents page, etc.)
- Typing/spelling errors
- Tables, figures, graphs, etc.
- Bibliography
- Appendices

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Supervisor's Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	

6.2 Draft 2: Reviewed Draft 1 plus literature review and questionnaire

6.2.1 Reviewed Draft 1:

A reviewed Draft 1 will be an updated version incorporating all the supervisor's recommendations but in chapter format (Chapter 1). Supervisor feedback will be directed to ensuring the logical flow from section to section within chapters and between chapters is in place. For example the summary of Chapter 1 leads into the introduction of Chapter 2. Although the supervisor will guide you on this, the quality of the content remains your responsibility.

6.2.2 Literature review: (3-4 pages)

The literature review should be developed around the constructs or themes identified in the problem review. The literature review should provide a wide and diverse view of the underlying academic issues around the constructs or themes.

The link between Chapter 1 and the literature review (Chapter 2) would be provided in an introduction to the literature as follows:

Introduction:

The problem review has established and unravelled a number of research related business case issues. In the literature review, broad related academic issues of these identified constructs (themes) will be explored. Both the business and academic issues will be cross referenced, where appropriate, with the results obtained in this research.

Follow this introduction up with listing the themes (usually 4-6) and then using the themes as headings in the literature review. See Draft 2 for more specifics.

6.2.3 Questionnaire:

The questionnaire should be informed from both Drafts 1 and 2. Thus students are encouraged to document potential questions during the development of these sections. For example, reading an article on change management may stimulate the question: *Have change management concepts been considered in the new strategic marketing plan?* Students should also be encouraged to develop matrices of specific theoretical considerations, articles and related questions in the questionnaire.

Draft 2 Evaluation:

Student Name:	
Student No.	
Topic Title	

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

- Recent relevant sources used
- Knowledge of the subject
- Relevant theoretical issues (marketing and business)
- Reference technique
- Coverage of the subject
- Relevance of literature objectives
-

Maximum Mark	10
Mark Awarded:	

2. TECHNICAL ISSUES

- Language
- Style
- Structure of the dissertation (e.g. title page, contents page, etc.)
- Typing/spelling errors
- Tables, figures, graphs, etc.
- Bibliography
- Appendices
-

3. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Supervisor's Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	

6.3 Draft 3: Reviewed Draft 2 plus research design

6.3.1 Reviewed Draft 2

The outcome of reviewed Draft 2 will be Chapters 1 and 2 of the final report.

6.3.2 Research design (3-4 pages)

The basic rules of the research design chapter are:

Identify all the required headings (see Appendix 1 for outline of the full report).

For every heading open with 10-15-20 lines of well-referenced theory using 3-4 textbooks.

Follow through with 10-15-20 lines of what you have done specific to the theory you have just introduced.

Do this for every heading with no exceptions.

See outline of full report (Section 6.5) for the research design headings.

The outcome of Draft 3 is Chapter 3 of the research report.

Draft 3: Evaluation:

FINAL MARK (%)	
Student Name:	
Student No.	
Topic Title	

1. RESEARCH THEORY AND APPLICATION:

- Clear research objectives
- Appropriate research methodology
- Well-referenced research theory
- Clear stated application of research theory
- Sample size and sampling procedure
- Ability to conduct research
- Statistical analyses.

Maximum Mark	10
Mark Awarded:	

2. TECHNICAL ISSUES

- Language
- Style
- Structure of the dissertation (e.g. title page, contents page, etc.)
- Typing/spelling errors
- Tables, figures, graphs, etc.
- Bibliography
- Appendices.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Supervisor's Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	

6.4 Draft 4: Results, discussion, conclusions and recommendations (10-15 pages)

Draft 4 presents a guideline for documenting Chapters 4 and 5 of the final report. The guideline emphasises the presentation of results per objective. The discussion is also focused on the results per objective.

The conclusions are directed to a summary of the discussions but more pertinently to drawing conclusions with respect to the problem statement made in Chapter 1 (*see Draft 4 for more specific requirements).

Draft 4: Evaluation:

MARK (%)	
Student Name:	
Student No.	
Topic Title	

1. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Findings discussed per objectives
- Conclusions (clear and substantiated) speaking to the problem statement
- Sound recommendations (academic and business)

Maximum Mark	10
Mark Awarded:	

2. TECHNICAL ISSUES

- Language
- Style
- Structure of the dissertation (e.g. title page, contents page, etc.)
- Typing/spelling errors
- Tables, figures, graphs, etc.
- Bibliography
- Appendices.

Supervisor's Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	

6.5 Final report (8 000-10 000 words)

The final report will be a review of all 4 drafts with additional documentation to meet the requirements for a full report, i.e. 8 000 to 10 000 words.

The feedback from Draft 4 should provide sufficient support to complete the final report. For a full outline of the research report see below. See below for evaluation.

7. Student assessment and evaluation



Bachelor of Philosophy (B Phil) Honours in Marketing Management Advanced Marketing Research: Report 4 (AMRR402)

7.1 Mark allocation for the draft reports:

Task	Mark allocation	Actual Mark	Date
<i>Submission of problem in context, problem statement and research objectives (Draft 1)</i>	10		
<i>Submission of literature review (Draft 2)</i>	10		
<i>Submission of research methodology (Draft 3)</i>	10		
<i>Submission of results, discussion, conclusions and recommendations (Draft 4)</i>	10		
Final Report (see 7.2)	60		
FINAL MARK	100		

7.2 Mark allocation for final report

FINAL MARK (%)	
Student Name:	
Student No.	
Topic Title	

1. TOPIC, OBJECTIVES AND PROBLEM(S)

- Relevance of topic
- Limitation of the field of study
- Clear objectives set
- Achieving the objectives set
- Clear identification of problem(s).

Maximum Mark	15
Mark Awarded:	

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

- Recent relevant sources used
- Knowledge of the subject
- Reference technique
- Coverage of the subject
- Relevance of literature to objectives.

Maximum Mark	15
Mark Awarded:	

3. RESEARCH AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Clear research objectives
- Appropriate research methodology
- Well-referenced research theory
- Well-structured research theory applications
- Sample size and sampling procedure
- Ability to conduct research
- Statistical analyses.

Maximum Mark	10
Mark Awarded:	

4. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Findings speaking to the research objectives
- Conclusions (clear and substantiated) speaking to the problem statement
- Sound recommendations (academic and business related)

Maximum Mark	15
Mark Awarded:	

5. TECHNICAL ISSUES

- Language
- Style
- Structure of the dissertation (e.g. title page, contents page, etc.)
- Typing/spelling errors
- Tables, figures, graphs, etc.
- Bibliography
- Appendices.

Maximum Mark	5
Mark Awarded:	
Total Available Marks	60

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

FINAL RECOMMENDATION SUPERVISOR AND EXTERNAL EXAMINER:

Please indicate which one of the following you recommend:

No corrections need to be made to the research report	
Minor corrections should be made	
Further work should be done to revise and then submit for a re-examination	
Further work should be done to extend the research and then resubmit for a re-examination	

Should corrections, revisions or extensions be required, please indicate if they should be done to the satisfaction of the:

Supervisor/Internal Examiner	
Head of Department	
External Examiner	

Indicate with an "X"

Distinction	
Good	
Average	
Fail	

Name: Supervisor/External	
Signature:	
Date:	

Recommendation of Academic Research Committee

Repeat	
Continue with changes	
Continue – no changes	
Fail	

Signed: Chairperson: IMM GSM Research Committee

Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	

8. The research report

Submission requirements and marking:

The completed research report soft copy in (MS WORD ONLY NO PDF) must be submitted after final corrections have been made, on the online facility (uploads) on the www.immgsm.ac.za website.

Any issues related to uploading must be sent to estherc@imm.co.za or phone 011-6282000 and speak to Esther.

- The final report will be marked by the supervisor and the external examiner.
- When the report is marked and corrected a hard bound copy must be submitted to the library.
- Where appropriate an article should be prepared for possible publication.

The research report format:

The word count should be 8 000 to 10 000 words.

General outline:

Title page

Declaration of own work/plagiarism

Acknowledgements

Executive summary

Table of contents

Glossary

List of tables

List of abbreviations

The research report

Title page example (should be a full page):

TITLE

Presented to

The IMM Graduate School of Marketing

In partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the

B. Phil (Hons)

By

Jonathan Buthelezi

November 2008

Supervisor: Dr Stephen Jones

Tip:

Do not use excessively large letters (font) for the title page as it can look unprofessional; you should view your front page as the window of what is inside, thus a professional view is a good start.

Declaration (separate page):

Own work – this must specifically state the dangers of plagiarism.

Please note we take this matter very seriously and any form of plagiarism will be dealt with severely.

Executive summary: (2 pages maximum). Will include:

What (problem in context)

Why (importance)

Where (scope)

How (methodology)

Aim and objectives (research problem and objectives)

Limitations

Results

Conclusions

Recommendations

The chapters are as follows:

Chapter 1: The problem in context, problem statement, and objectives

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

Chapter 4: Results and discussion

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

6. References

7. Appendices

The chapter breakdowns with possible sub-headings are as follows:

Chapter 1: The problem in context, problem statement and objectives

1.1 Introduction

This is an introduction not an executive summary. For example open this section with:

This study will investigate (say what will be investigated) then add 5-6 lines plus why.

Get the reader immediately into what you are going to be reporting on.

1.2 Problem in context

In short what you need to do in this section is to provide a wide background to the issues and events leading up to the recognition of the need for this research.

It is recommended that you first do a brainstorming around the provisional topic you intend to research. Weave a logical story around these ideas, i.e. discuss developments within the company that provide a contextual review of the research problem (topic). This generally takes the form of an historic review. Also consider marketing issues of the past and how they might have changed.

Open up the issues in an unbiased manner, i.e. **do not make conclusions, recommendations** or state unsubstantiated personal opinions, etc., etc., i.e. leave all options open.

1.3 Problem review

The problem in context has provided a contextual background for the research. The problem review translates this contextual background into a theoretical framework. This requires a high level of reflective thinking by the student in identifying key constructs emanating from the problem in context. Issues of this nature will be developed in depth through appropriate workshops. The problem review is also a key section in that it provides through the identified constructs, the theoretical and academic framework for the research.

1.4 Problem statement

Having explored a range of possible research questions above, you now need to select what you consider to be a main question and write this as your thesis or research statement. This is where you make a specific statement as to what you are going to research. This must take the form of a testable (thesis) statement or hypothesis (null hypothesis and alternate hypothesis). Open with a preamble (4-6 lines) as to how the problem statement has arisen from a reflective

view of the research questions, then conclude with the problem statement that will be at most 2-3 lines, e.g.:

The problem statement is:

The current marketing strategy is not aligned to brand value enhancement.

or if you chose to go the quantitative research route then state the hypothesis, e.g.:

Ho:

Ha:

Do the statement in bold and give it space to make it clearly visible as this also helps the reader or marker to refer back to it from time to time (see example above).

1.5 Research questions:

Bullet list as many logical research questions that emanate from a review of your research title or from your brainstorming session.

1.6 Objectives:

- Subject your list of research questions to a SMART analysis (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic and Timeous). Select 3-4 of the questions that meet the SMART criteria and write them as research objectives.
- Your objectives must be a breakdown of your research statement, i.e. if you meet your objectives you will be able to make conclusions on your research statement.
- State the objectives as follows: The objectives of this research are:

Objective 1: To identify current market strategies

Objective 2: To review brand enhancement theories

Objective 3: To identify gaps in current strategies and brand value enhancement theories

Reflect shortly on the implications of each objective. In this reflection, e.g. measurability, reflect on what you will measure (unit of analysis) and whether this measurement will be qualitative or quantitative based.

1.7 Importance of the research

- Think of this as convincing your CEO of the value of this project.
- Include who will benefit, etc.
- You should demonstrate importance not just say it.
- Add new thoughts, i.e. do not simply repeat your earlier pages.
- Anybody reading should feel inclined to support its funding or at least want to support the project.
- Keep in mind this is a marketing research project thus specific marketing benefits should be explored.

1.8 Assumptions, limitations (weaknesses) and delimitations (scope)

Although this area will be more fully explored in Chapter 4 – Research theory and design, you need to demonstrate to the reader that you are aware of potential weaknesses in the research, e.g. Sample size and sampling technique. Here practical considerations for such weaknesses can be opened up.

1.9 Summary

- Reflect on the major issues identified around the problem.
- Use this summary to continue the golden thread to Chapter 2.

Each chapter will start on a new page:

Chapter 2: Literature review

The literature provides the opportunity to read widely (get the bigger picture).

Possible subheadings for Chapter 3:

2.1 Introduction

- Few lines of theory around a literature review
- Re-statement of the golden thread from previous chapter
- Re-statement of the major themes.

Chapter 3 will have a further 3-5 subheadings depending on the number of themes identified: This chapter should also open up some theoretical considerations underpinning the research.

2.2 – 2.6 Subheadings as defined by the themes

2.7 Summary

- Highlight the most important aspects of the review
- Lead into Chapter 3 – Research design

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

The demands of this chapter are twofold.

Firstly you must demonstrate a broad grasp of the essential theory underlying a research approach. This theory must be supported by appropriate references.

Secondly the practical application of the research must meet the theoretical requirements presented above. **Thus for every heading there will be 8-10 lines of theory followed by 8-10 lines of application of how the research was done, i.e. theory first followed by what you have done in line with the theory.**

The what, why, where, how, who, when, etc. must be fully covered.

In this chapter a full exposition of your own investigation must be given. The following aspects require special attention:

The sample(s): You must clearly indicate how the sample or samples were selected. If you used an experimental design, the details of the design of the experiment should be clearly given. The population from which the sample(s) were selected must be clearly described and characterised. Aspects such as size, age, language, socio-economic status, educational level, must be explicitly mentioned.

Give the sampling frame used to select the sample. Also provide details of how the sampling turned out, by giving the data collection method (personal interview/postal survey) and what the response rate was.

Measuring instruments: You must fully account for the choice of your measuring instruments. The metrical properties of each measuring instrument must be clearly specified. If you are going

to determine the reliability and validity of the measuring instrument, you must give the results here.

Data analysis: You must give a full account of the analysis techniques that you apply in your research. If you have used statistical techniques/procedures, you must justify the use of each technique/procedure. Elementary statistical techniques/procedures need not to be described in detail and formulas are not necessary. A reference to an authoritative textbook is sufficient. More information should be given if the technique/procedure is not well-known.

Also indicate the **statistical techniques** that you have used for testing each hypothesis and/or proposition. If you use qualitative research methods, your procedure for analysing your qualitative data should also be discussed.

The **limitations** of the study could be given here, since the limitations of a study are very often the result of the chosen research design or response rates.

Possible subheadings for Chapter 3:

3.1 Introduction

Give 8-10 lines of theory around research design and methodology. The textbook offers great material for this.

3.2 Research design and approach

3.3 Population and sample/sampling method

- Describe the population
- Describe the sample size and sampling technique
- Inclusion/exclusion criteria.

3.4 Data types/unit of analysis

3.5 Data collection techniques

- Measuring instrument must be included (appendix)
- Relationship of questionnaire to objectives (i.e. 1:1 Relationship)
- Time and duration, issues, etc.
- Resources used, etc.

3.6 Validity, reliability, generalisability

Discuss and demonstrate understanding. Also discuss issues such as threats to validity and reliability.

3.7 Bias

Give definition (theory) and discuss possible ways for bias to creep into your research.

3.8 Data analysis techniques

Where appropriate (quantitative study) give theory of statistical analysis and issues around the underlying relationships between the data.

3.9 Limitations and delimitations

Must be briefly discussed and an understanding of the concepts demonstrated.

3.10 Ethical issues/confidentiality

Discuss and demonstrate your understanding and how it might influence your research.

3.11 Pilot study

Give an outline of what you have done in your pilot study and why it was done, i.e. to enhance validity reliability, etc.

3.12 Summary

- What has been done in this chapter, and
- golden thread to the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Results and discussion

- Results should be linked to appropriate objectives – i.e. give the objective and then discuss the corresponding results appropriate for that objective.
- Link discussion with related literature review.

Possible headings for Chapter 4:

4.1 Introduction

- Short (3-5 lines theory) plus golden thread
- List research objectives for convenience to the reader.

4.2 Demographics

Provide background information such as response rate, and relevant demographics of the participants, e.g. position, marketing experience, etc.

4.3 Individual headings as per objectives, i.e. 4.3- 4.5.

- Presentation and discussion of all results pertaining to specific objective
- Use of golden thread matrix or mind map to relate to appropriate literature.

4.6 Summary

- What has been done in this chapter, and
- golden thread to next chapter.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

Possible headings:

5.1 Introduction – theory and golden thread

Where appropriate provide the research statement and direct conclusions to this. Cut and paste the research statement from Chapter 1 as an easy reference.

5.2 Conclusions

Provide an integrated view of all the objectives then focus on the research statement and direct your conclusions to this statement. This will also be a good time to refer back to your discussion of generalisability in your research design chapter. Reflect on the generalisability of your results to your original population (this will include some reflection on validity). In short:

- Discuss directly with respect to problem statement or hypothesis
- Give implications of the results
- Strategic ramifications of the study
- Must be in line with what was found in the study (i.e. not own conclusions).

5.3 Recommendations

- Practical and theoretical
- In line with research results
- Further research, etc.

5.4 Summary

6. References

7. Appendices

APPENDIX B

REFERENCES FOR STUDENT'S OWN PERUSAL

[Writing and presenting your thesis or dissertation. [Online]]

✔ If you are already on **Facebook** here's a great way to connect with others who are working on their thesis or dissertation. Just [click here](#) and you will be connected with the '**Writing and Presenting Your Thesis or Dissertation**' Facebook Fan page. Become a fan of **Writing and Presenting Your Thesis or Dissertation** and share your ideas, suggestions, frustrations – or just say hello to others.

✔ If you only have time to visit a single website for help with your thesis go directly to the [Thesis Handbook](http://www.tele.sunyit.edu/ThesisHandbook.html) (<http://www.tele.sunyit.edu/ThesisHandbook.html>) maintained by the Telecommunications Program at SUNY Institute of Technology. Especially helpful are the accompanying Thesis Workbook and Frequently Asked Questions where you will find a wealth of clearly written and helpful information. (Selecting a topic; developing a search strategy for going after relevant literature: deciding which tense to use in your writing; etc.)

✔ An extensive set of hints and ideas on how to improve your dissertation/thesis writing. [How To Write A Dissertation or Bedtime Reading For People Who Do Not Have Time To Sleep](http://www.cs.purdue.edu/homes/dec/essay.dissertation.html) (<http://www.cs.purdue.edu/homes/dec/essay.dissertation.html>) lays out suggestion after suggestion in direct and non-confusing form. A great list to bring out after you've completed the first draft of your writing, are rather tired of your topic, and you are not sure where to begin your fine tuning.

✔ An excellent website with lots of highly specific information (especially if the focus of your work is in a scientific or technical area) has been developed by Joe Wolfe at The University of New South Wales (Australia). [How to Write a PhD Thesis](http://www.phys.unsw.edu.au/~jw/thesis.html) (<http://www.phys.unsw.edu.au/~jw/thesis.html>) provides a variety of very useful suggestions on how to get from the beginning to the end of your thesis project – and survive the process!

✔ Wouldn't it be great if there were a bunch of theses/dissertations available for reading right on the web? Well, there are some resources you should be aware of that will let you see what the finished product could look like. You can always purchase a copy of most US dissertations/theses. These are available from ProQuest's (formerly UMI) website - [ProQuest's Online Dissertation Services](http://www.umi.com/hp/Products/Dissertations.html)

(<http://www.umi.com/hp/Products/Dissertations.html>). [Theses Canada Portal](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/thesescanada/) (<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/thesescanada/>) provides access and search of the full text electronic versions of numerous Canadian theses and dissertations. You should also be aware of the various Electronic Dissertation/Thesis (ETD) projects that are currently underway. A good access to this area is via the library at the University of Virginia which has a page dealing with [Electronic Theses and Dissertations in the Humanities](http://etext.virginia.edu/ETD/) (<http://etext.virginia.edu/ETD/>).

✔ Another website that's worth visiting is maintained by Computer Science & Electrical Engineering at the University of Maryland Baltimore County and also the Computer Science Department at Indiana University-Bloomington. [How to Be a Good Graduate Student/Advisor](http://www.cs.indiana.edu/how.2b/how.2b.html) (<http://www.cs.indiana.edu/how.2b/how.2b.html>) "attempts to raise some issues that are important for graduate students to be successful and to get as much out of the process as possible, and for advisors who wish to help their students be successful."

✔ Prof John W. Chinneck at Carleton University (Ottawa, Canada) has created a very practical and well written web page on the preparation of your thesis. [How to Organize your Thesis](http://www.sce.carleton.ca/faculty/chinneck/thesis.html) (<http://www.sce.carleton.ca/faculty/chinneck/thesis.html>) starts with a description of what graduate research/the graduate thesis is all about and then moves point-by-point through a 'generic thesis skeleton'.

✔ Mike Hart, Professor of Business and Informatics at King Alfred's College, has put together a very helpful website focused on successfully completing the 'final year project'. [Final Year Projects](http://final-year-projects.com/) (<http://final-year-projects.com/>) is loaded with numerous ideas and suggestions for helping the student get started in the project and then to keep going until the project is finished.

✔ Don't let the title scare you away. [Discussion On Ph.D. Thesis Proposals in Computing Science](http://john.regehr.org/reading_list/proposal.html) (http://john.regehr.org/reading_list/proposal.html) has lots of excellent suggestions to assist in creating a meaningful proposal in just about any academic discipline. The ideas will serve to not only get you started on your research project but also establish a foundation for actually completing it.

✔ Confused about what tense to use in writing the different sections of your dissertation or thesis? Need some help in identifying the different sections you will include in your writing? This '[Original Research](http://www.writing.ku.edu/guides/original.shtml)' (<http://www.writing.ku.edu/guides/original.shtml>) website from the K U Writing Center at the University of Kansas is excellent. It is concisely written with good examples. It will be especially helpful after you've written the first draft and need some feedback on how you are doing.

✔ Not sure of all the administrative steps at your university that are required to successfully complete a dissertation? Check out this well thought through website from [Pepperdine University's Graduate School](http://gsep.pepperdine.edu/studentservices/dissertation/education/) (<http://gsep.pepperdine.edu/studentservices/dissertation/education/>). Everything seems to be included from a definition of exactly what a dissertation is, all the way to exactly how many spaces between the title and your name.

✔ If you're having problems putting together your literature review chapter you may want to check out this blog on [How to Write a PhD Thesis](http://sciplore.org/blog/2010/03/02/how-to-write-a-phd-thesis/) (<http://sciplore.org/blog/2010/03/02/how-to-write-a-phd-thesis/>) by Professor Jöran Beel (UC Berkley). Professor Beel looks at how to search for literature with academic search engines and then focuses on software tools that can help in managing the literature (using PDF's, creating summaries with bookmarks, and making 'mind maps' of everything that you feel is important to be included).

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE PROJECT REPORT

(pdf document)

[Cooper, D.R. & Schindler, P.M., 2005. *Business Research Methods*. 1st ed. McGraw-Hill.]

EVALUATION OF MARKET READINESS

FOR RADIO ADVERTISING

EDUCATION PROGRAM

FOR WKLM