

Academic writing: finishing your thesis

These slides can be found at <https://adrianholliday.com/handouts/>

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The finished thesis

A single document

Received by examiners

Their only evidence of your research and you

From the first page

A **unified** storyline

Evidence that you have thought through, designed and completed a **coherent** research project

Getting writing done

Times, places, devices and rhythms

Where, when and how to write

Devising the best **environment** and **devices**

Desktop, laptop, tablet, phone - ensuring good charging, saving, backup and syncing

Home, library, café

While driving?!

A daily rhythm that allows you always to **keep your thesis at the front of your mind**

Half hour spurts, making use of every single spare moment of the day

Not waiting for long undisturbed periods

Time of day - daily schedules

There will never be a better, longer time in the future

Stopping in the middle of something that can be picked up in the next sitting

Sharing - writing friends - community

Document technicalities, formatting, referencing and editing

A lot of **busy work** you can be doing that will save mountains of time later

The document

Devising **styles** for paragraphs and headings

Checking and applying them

Automatic headings (outline mode) for moving text

Getting the details of the **referencing** style right all the time

Never leaving page numbers until later

Having a good personal method for recording literature **notes** and research diary

Good researchers keep meticulous records

Editing

Going back and editing what you have written will help you about what to write next

Always **syncing** what you write now with what you have already written

Always thinking about what the reader needs to know and when

The totally synced thesis

The whole thesis is a **single moment time**

The chapters are **not chronological**

The entire research process is in some respects **present in every part** of every chapter

The thesis grows out of a conflict between ... and which ... This **conflict** will therefore be the main focus of the first literature review chapter.

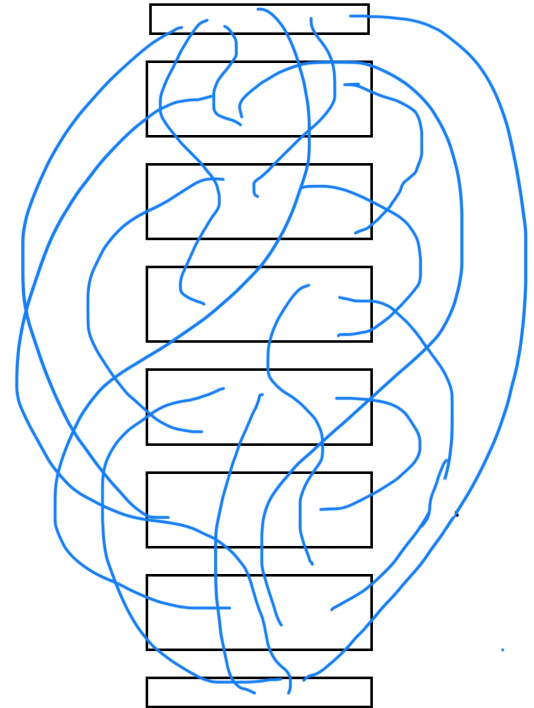
The main finding, that ... contributes to an explanation of this **conflict** by ... Exactly how this emerges from ... will be demonstrated through ... in the data chapters

The choice of a ... methodology also emerges from this **conflict** in that This will be demonstrated in detail in chapter ...

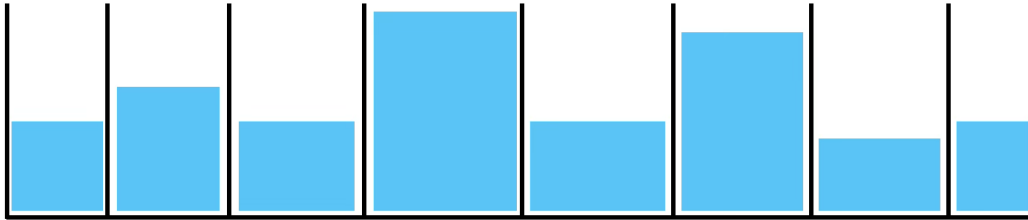
...

The theme of **conflict** has been evident **throughout** the thesis. This can be seen in ...

Making sure that 'conflict' appears in every chapter and section



Working on the whole document



Put everything you have into a **single thesis document**

A **holistic** view of the whole thing

Growing it gradually

Perhaps moving things to other places

Constantly editing beginnings and endings to reflect changes

1. What the thesis is about - the issues, the study, the setting, the questions, the discussion, the structure
2. The issues and the discussion
3. The methodology and how the data was collected, analysed and organised
4. What the data is telling us
5. What it all means - referring back to remind the reader

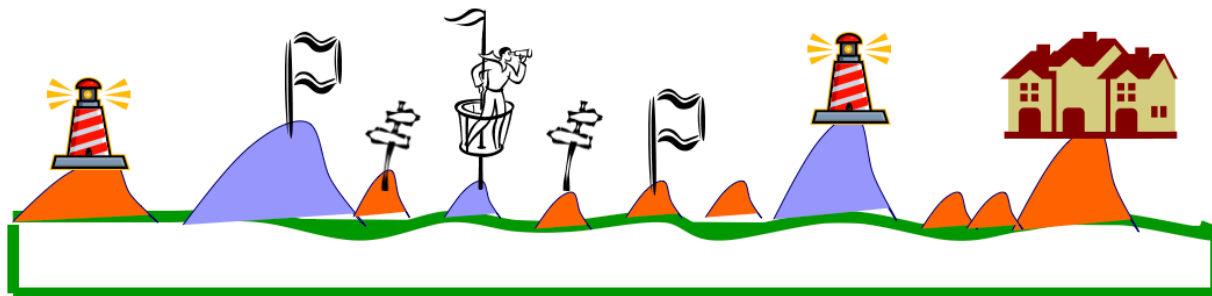
Checking key statements

Edit carefully all introductions and conclusions

Ensure that they tell the same story

Think about what examiners (readers) will look for to get the main message

How will they find their way around?



Message and storyline devices

Working out **key phrases** to express your core concepts

‘Separated cultures model’, ‘informal orders’

Used strategically throughout the thesis

When you change them, change them everywhere (‘find and replace’)

“Throughout ... will be referred to as ...”

Branding

Efficient referencing back and forth

“A good example of this is Helen talking about ... in chapter 6, ...”

“This is very different to the argument expressed by ... (...) and ... (...) in the discussion of ... in chapter 3”

This is not repetition

Just enough to remind the reader and **make the interconnection**

Putting off false rumours

'Everyone says that the research questions should be in chapter ...'

'... that the theoretical framework should be in chapter ...'

'... that you shouldn't cite your supervisor'

'... that you should read ... on ...'

'... that ...'

Following blindly versus working things out based on your own assessment of the bigger picture

E: Why did you only read ... on this topic?

S: Because that's the main reference

E: But don't you know that ... in your department has also ... and developed this further?

S: As I said, ...

Making use of all resources

Other students, researchers in **your community**

Referring to and building on each-other's research

Knowledge of what others are doing

Presenting, talking about your research

Attending the presentations of your peers

Every opportunity to discuss and develop ideas

Being connected

E: Isn't she aware that other researchers in her department have been looking at similar issues? Doesn't she know that ... is a leading theorist in this area?

E2: I don't understand why students these days don't get together and make use of their communities and their supervisors

E: Yes, and she seems to be one of those students who only reads things that have ... in the title

Chapter and section headings

Naming what you are writing helps you to work out what you are saying

Analysis and the ordering of the discussion and argument continues to develop through the process of writing about each theme

Version 1

It is also significant that what *it* terms 'epistemic danger' is not considered to be a 'hard safety' concern. In the field of intercultural studies, it has been recently been argued that AI communicates Western-centric cultural bias (e.g. O'Regan & Ferri 2025). What I get from the village-and-mosque photograph test is that this might be not only about content, but also mode of representation.

Version 2

It is also significant that what *it* terms 'epistemic danger' is not considered to be a 'hard safety' concern. At the same time, 'when challenged', ChatGPT can actually help with providing useful phrases. Hence, I will continue to use its phraseology here.

'Epistemic danger'

In the field of intercultural studies, the 'danger' that has been recently been associated with AI is that it communicates Western-centric cultural bias (e.g. O'Regan & Ferri 2025). What I get from the village-and-mosque photograph test is that this might be not only about content, but also mode of representation.

Deixis: micro-referencing

Version 1

That scribe wrote three scripts: One he could read but no-one else! The second both he and others could read. But the third neither he nor any-one else could read! That third is myself! (Saheb-e Zamani, 1972, citing Shams-e Tabrizi, saying 56)

Shams-e Tabrizi is often difficult to understand. He emphasises the self as the main interpreter. It is argued that there is a connection between the third script and the third space. Furthermore, there are multiple interpretations of the third space in the literature (MacDonald, 2019; Zhou & Pilcher, 2019). Moreover, the third space is dependent on the intersubjective understanding of the researcher and other people when engaging with the intercultural.

Version 2

That scribe wrote three scripts: One he could read but no-one else! The second both he and others could read. But the third neither he nor any-one else could read! That third is myself! (Saheb-e Zamani, 1972, citing Shams-e Tabrizi, saying 56)

Exactly what **this** means is difficult to ascertain, which is surely the intention, **and reflects** the multiple interpretations of the third space **in the literature** (MacDonald, 2019; Zhou & Pilcher, 2019). **However**, with humility, I wonder if **Shams's** reference to **'myself'** somehow places the onus for understanding on the intersubjective person of the researcher or whoever is engaging with the intercultural.

(9 words shorter)