

## Writing a Thesis, Paper or Research Proposal

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### Summary

Writing a thesis, paper or research proposal can be a daunting task. However with structured planning the task is made much easier and can even be enjoyable. The first consideration is time. It is very important to set apart units of time of a minimum of 90-120 minutes to write as this allows flow and development of ideas. The sequence of writing is crucial. The writer must remember that the reader or examiner will read a document expecting to see a logical flow and development of ideas from aims to conclusion. It is rare that the sequence of experiments will have been carried out in that order and the task of the writer is to ensure coherence and logical flow.

- 1) **LOGISTICS:**  
Obtain the specific requirements of the document to be written (e.g. University regulations for thesis, page and style of journal, format of grant).
- 2) **CLARITY OF THOUGHT:**  
Draw up a clear plan of flow and decide on structure, e.g. for a thesis - title, aims, summary, general introduction, specific chapter titles (with introduction, general methods and results), overall conclusions and future research arising from the thesis and finally appendices.
- 3) **SEQUENCE OF WRITING AND ASSEMBLING:**  
Never aim to write a thesis in the final order it will be presented. The best way to do it is:
  - i) Assemble figures and tables of data you will aim to present for each chapter.
  - ii) Write up materials and methods relevant to the figures and tables in each chapter.
  - iii) Write up conclusions relevant to data presented for each chapter.
  - iv) Write up a general conclusion at the end.
  - v) Write the general introduction LAST.
- 4) **CONSENSUS:**  
It is crucial that you discuss what you are writing with your thesis supervisor or research collaborators. It is very important that agreement is reached.
- 5) **SPEED AND REVIEW:**  
Some people write with ease, others find it very difficult. Writing is generally easier at each sitting if you start with simple tasks and gradually "warm up". Also, it is important to get into the habit of reviewing everything after a time lapse of at least 24 hours as this allows both logistic and style corrections to be made.



**St George's**

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Cellular and Molecular Medicine

**HOW TO WRITE  
A THESIS  
RESEARCH PAPER  
RESEARCH GRANT PROPOSAL**

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## **WRITING A THESIS**

### **General: Clarity of thought**

- \* Plan well ahead; get University Regulations, ensure registration
- \* Discuss with and involve supervisor or advisor
- \* Plan to work in 2 to 4 hour stints
- \* Always review writing after at least 24 hours
- \* Read thesis as a whole when complete

## **WRITING A THESIS**

### **Specifics**

- \* Make strategic plan of content  
(agree this with supervisor)
  
- TITLE
- Summary
- Aims
- General Introduction
- Chapter 1
- Chapter 2 etc
- Conclusions / Future work
- Acknowledgements
- Appendices

Statement of originality and contribution of collaborators

## **CONSTRUCTING A THESIS**

- \* **Individual chapter content**
  - Introduction
  - Strategic materials/methods  
(detail of these in Appendix)
  - Results
  - Conclusions
  
- \* **Sequence of writing**
  - **START WITH GRAPHS AND TABLES  
THEN NARRATIVE**
  - Write Introduction LAST
  - Make thesis a logical flow  
(you will not have performed  
experiments in this sequence)

## WRITING A PAPER

- Clarity of thought
  - What do you want to say?
  - Be succinct
- Decide on co-authors and get agreements
- Decide on journal and comply with their submission rules
- Do not despair if rejected!