

Master's Thesis Structure Template

CHAPTER OUTLINE + READY-TO-ADAPT SENTENCE FORMULATIONS

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How to use this template

This template gives you two things:

1. **A complete chapter-by-chapter structure** for a standard master's thesis (60–120 pages), with target lengths and required components.
2. **Sentence formulations** — copy-and-adapt openers, transitions, and framings for each section. Replace the bracketed placeholders (e.g. [research topic], [author, year]) with your specifics. Treat them as scaffolding, not finished text.

The structure assumes a research-based thesis. STEM, social science, and humanities theses vary in chapter naming and emphasis — annotations flag where to adapt.

Complete structure

#	SECTION	TARGET LENGTH
—	Title page	1 page
—	Abstract	150–300 words
—	Table of contents, lists	2–4 pages
1	Introduction	5–10%
2	Literature review / theoretical framework	20–30%
3	Methodology	15–20%
4	Results	15–20%
5	Discussion	15–20%
6	Conclusion	5–10%
—	References	—
—	Appendices	—
—	Declaration of authorship	1 page

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1. Introduction (5–8 pages)

Purpose. Establish the topic, justify its relevance, identify the gap, state the research question(s), and outline the thesis.

Required components.

- Research context and significance
- Research gap
- Research question(s) and objectives
- Scope and delimitations
- Thesis outline

Sentence formulations — opening the topic

- "In recent years, [phenomenon] has emerged as a central concern within [field], driven by [trend / event / shift]."
- "[Topic] has been the subject of growing scholarly attention since [year/event], largely due to [reason]."
- "Few questions in [field] have proven as persistent as [research problem]."
- "Despite [decades / years] of research, the relationship between [variable A] and [variable B] remains poorly understood."

Sentence formulations — establishing the gap

- "While [author, year] and [author, year] have examined [aspect], the literature has paid limited attention to [under-studied dimension]."
- "Existing studies have largely focused on [population / setting], leaving open the question of how [phenomenon] operates in [different context]."
- "Although the theoretical foundations of [concept] are well established, empirical work in [specific area] remains scarce."
- "Prior work has tended to treat [variable] as a control rather than as the central object of analysis."

Sentence formulations — stating the research question

- "This thesis investigates the following question: *How does [X] influence [Y] in [context]?*"
- "The central research question guiding this study is: *To what extent does [factor] explain variation in [outcome]?*"
- "This thesis addresses one primary question and two sub-questions: *RQ1: ...; SQ1: ...; SQ2: ...*"

Sentence formulations — objectives and contribution

- "This thesis contributes to the literature in three ways. First, ... Second, ... Third, ..."
- "The objective of this study is twofold: (1) to [analytical aim], and (2) to [practical / theoretical aim]."
- "By drawing on [data / theory], this thesis offers a [novel / refined / contextualised] account of [phenomenon]."

Sentence formulations — outlining the thesis

- "The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on [topic] and develops the theoretical framework. Chapter 3 describes the methodology. Chapter 4 presents the results. Chapter 5 discusses the findings in light of prior research. Chapter 6 concludes and offers directions for future research."

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2. Literature Review / Theoretical Framework (15–30 pages)

Purpose. Map the existing scholarship, identify the conceptual scaffolding you will use, and position your own contribution.

Required components.

- Conceptual definitions
- Thematic / chronological review of prior work
- Theoretical framework
- Hypotheses or conceptual model (if applicable)

Sentence formulations — defining concepts

- "Throughout this thesis, [concept] is understood as [definition], following [author, year]."
- "Several competing definitions of [concept] coexist in the literature. This thesis adopts [chosen definition] because [reason]."
- "Three constructs are central to this study: [A], defined as ...; [B], defined as ...; and [C], defined as ..."

Sentence formulations — synthesising prior research

- "The literature on [topic] can be grouped into three broad strands: [strand 1], [strand 2], and [strand 3]."
- "Early work by [author, year] established that [finding]. Subsequent studies extended this by showing [extension]."

- "While some scholars argue that [position A] ([authors]), others contend that [position B] ([authors])."
- "A consistent finding across this body of work is that [pattern]."

Sentence formulations — identifying gaps

- "Two limitations stand out across this literature. First, ... Second, ..."
- "Few studies have examined this question outside of [context], raising the question of whether the findings generalise."
- "The mechanisms linking [X] to [Y] have been proposed but rarely tested empirically."

Sentence formulations — building the theoretical framework

- "This thesis draws on [theory] as its primary theoretical lens, because it offers the most direct account of [phenomenon]."
- "[Theory] provides three useful constructs for this analysis: [A], [B], and [C]."
- "Based on the literature reviewed above, this thesis proposes the following hypotheses: H1: ...; H2: ...; H3: ..."

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3. Methodology (10–20 pages)

Purpose. Explain *what* you did and *why*, with enough detail for the work to be replicated or critically assessed.

Required components.

- Research design and justification
- Data source(s) and sampling
- Data collection procedure
- Operationalisation / measures
- Analytical approach
- Ethical considerations
- Limitations of the method

Sentence formulations — justifying the design

- "A [qualitative / quantitative / mixed-methods] design was selected because the research question requires [type of evidence]."
- "Following [author, year], this thesis adopts a [case study / survey / experimental / hermeneutic] approach."

- "The choice of [method] reflects the exploratory nature of the research question and the limited prior empirical work in this area."

Sentence formulations — describing the sample

- "The sample comprises [N] [units] selected through [sampling strategy]."
- "Participants were recruited through [channel] between [date] and [date]."
- "Sampling continued until theoretical saturation was reached, at [N] interviews."

Sentence formulations — describing data collection

- "Data were collected through [semi-structured interviews / a survey / archival sources] between [date] and [date]."
- "The instrument consisted of [N] items measuring [constructs], adapted from [author, year]."
- "Each interview lasted between [X] and [Y] minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' written consent."

Sentence formulations — describing analysis

- "Data were analysed using [thematic analysis / OLS regression / structural equation modelling / discourse analysis] in [software]."
- "Coding proceeded in two stages: an initial open coding phase, followed by axial coding to identify higher-order themes."
- "Model assumptions ([normality / homoscedasticity / multicollinearity]) were tested and are reported in Appendix [X]."

Sentence formulations — addressing ethics and limitations

- "Ethical approval was obtained from [committee] (reference: [number])."
- "All participants provided written informed consent and were free to withdraw at any point."
- "Two methodological limitations should be noted at the outset. First, ... Second, ..."

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4. Results (10–20 pages)

Purpose. Present findings clearly and neutrally. Interpretation belongs in the discussion.

Required components.

- Descriptive overview of the data
- Findings organised by research question or hypothesis

- Tables and figures (numbered, captioned, referenced in text)

Sentence formulations — opening the chapter

- "This chapter presents the findings in three sections, each addressing one of the research questions outlined in Chapter 1."
- "Descriptive statistics are reported first, followed by the results of the [main analysis]."
- "Table [X] summarises the characteristics of the sample."

Sentence formulations — reporting findings

- "The analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between [X] and [Y] ($\beta = \dots$, $p < \dots$)."
- "Three themes emerged from the data: [theme 1], [theme 2], and [theme 3]."
- "Contrary to expectations, [variable] showed no significant effect on [outcome]."
- "Across all interviews, participants described [observation] in remarkably consistent terms."

Sentence formulations — referencing tables and figures

- "As shown in Table [X], ..."
- "Figure [X] illustrates the distribution of [variable] across [groups]."
- "The pattern depicted in Figure [X] suggests that ..."

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5. Discussion (10–20 pages)

Purpose. Interpret the findings in light of the literature and the research question.

Required components.

- Summary of key findings
- Interpretation in relation to prior research
- Theoretical implications
- Practical implications
- Limitations
- Future research directions

Sentence formulations — summarising key findings

- "Three findings stand out from the analysis. First, ... Second, ... Third, ..."

- "Returning to the research question posed in Chapter 1, the analysis suggests that [answer]."

Sentence formulations — interpreting

- "This finding is consistent with [author, year], who report similar effects in [context]."
- "In contrast to [author, year], the present results suggest that [alternative interpretation]."
- "One plausible explanation for this pattern is that [mechanism]."
- "The unexpected absence of an effect on [variable] may be due to [reason]."

Sentence formulations — implications

- "Theoretically, these findings extend [theory] by showing that [extension]."
- "Practically, the results suggest that [stakeholders] should consider [recommendation]."

Sentence formulations — limitations and future work

- "Three limitations should be acknowledged. First, ... Second, ... Third, ..."
- "Future research could build on this study by [extension 1] and [extension 2]."

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6. Conclusion (3–6 pages)

Purpose. Restate what was done, what was found, and what it means. No new evidence.

Sentence formulations

- "This thesis set out to investigate [research question]. Drawing on [data and method], it found that [headline finding]."
- "Three contributions emerge from this work. First, ... Second, ... Third, ..."
- "The findings have implications for both [theory] and [practice]."
- "While this thesis answers some questions, it raises others. In particular, ... remains an open avenue for future inquiry."

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Formal elements

Abstract (150–300 words)

A complete abstract typically follows this five-sentence skeleton:

1. **Context:** "[Topic] has become increasingly important because ..."
2. **Gap:** "However, [aspect] remains under-studied."
3. **Aim:** "This thesis investigates ..."
4. **Method:** "Using [data] and [method], ..."
5. **Findings & implication:** "The analysis shows that ... This contributes to ... by ..."

Declaration of authorship (template)

I hereby declare that this thesis has been written by me without any external unauthorised help, that it has been neither presented to any institution for evaluation nor previously published in its entirety or in parts. Any parts, words, or ideas of the thesis, however limited, including tables, graphs, maps etc., which are quoted from or based on other sources have been acknowledged as such without exception.

[Place], [Date] — [Signature]

Final checklist

- Title page contains thesis title, your name, programme, supervisor, university, submission date
- Abstract under 300 words, no citations, contains aim/method/result
- Every chapter opens with a roadmap paragraph and closes with a short summary
- Every table and figure is numbered, captioned, and referenced in the text
- All claims based on others' work are cited; reference list is consistent in one style
- Research question stated in Chapter 1 is explicitly answered in the Conclusion
- Limitations are stated honestly and bounded (not exhaustive)
- Declaration of authorship is signed and dated
- Page numbers, headers, margins follow your university's guidelines

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