

# WRITING GOOD THESIS

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25 July 2019

# Writing a thesis

Four basis questions ask:

1. What is a thesis ?
2. What is thesis content and the information needed?
3. What examiner is looking for ?
4. Writing style ?

# Writing a thesis

- o Quality writing : drafts and revisions
- o Specific, measurable, realistic simple, meaningful, responsible
- o Productive writing : structure
- o Disciplinary differences : social science and science



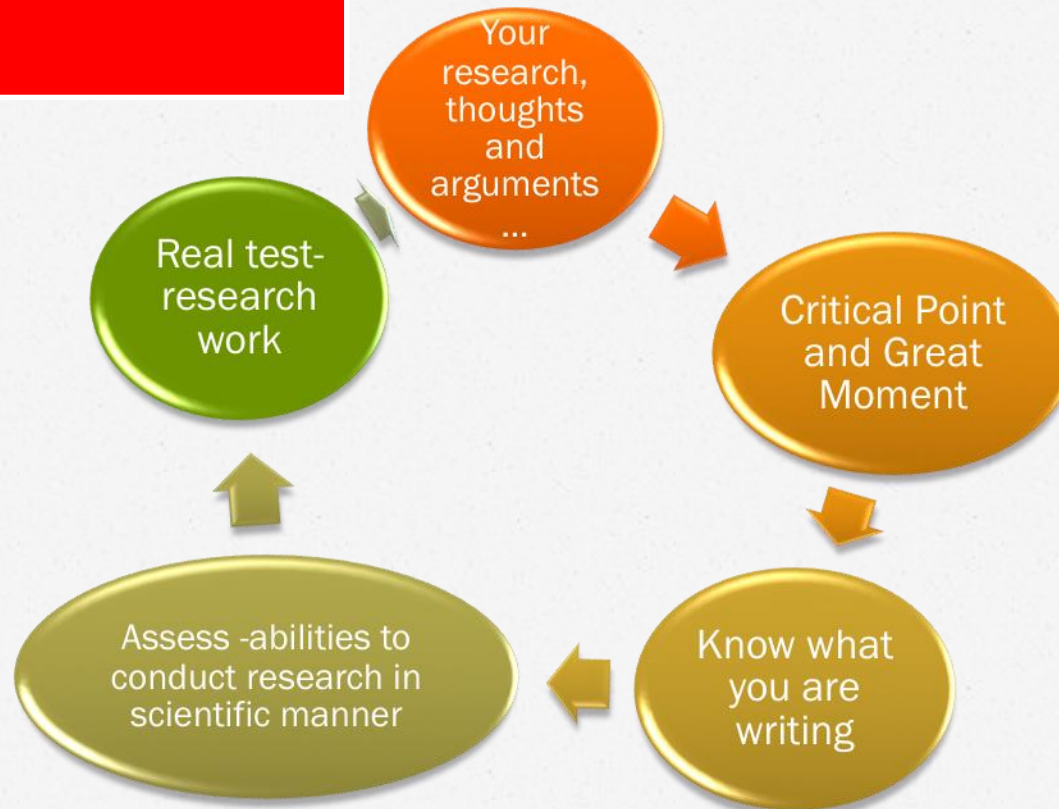
# Learning outcomes

- o Familiar with Graduate Thesis and characteristic of good thesis –key features of writing thesis -length of thesis, chapter content, presentation and duration
- o It is not about “how to” to write a thesis but .... Also “what to include in each chapter...”
- o Useful guidelines completing the thesis and key words in writing
- o Recognise writing style, develop checklist and presentation of thesis
- o Identify key technical and language issues in writing thesis
- o Develop appropriate citations and referencing format
- o Discuss issues -plagiarism, proof reading and editing

# Writing thesis - Final stage of postgraduate study

Hardest part + time consuming → strong determination and hard work

most frustrated stage



# Writing a thesis

Different from other form of writing:

- o A) Style
- o B) Chapter content
- o C) Requirements

know what the examiners are looking for .. especially the content of each chapter

Clearly  
understand  
what a thesis is  
and required  
format

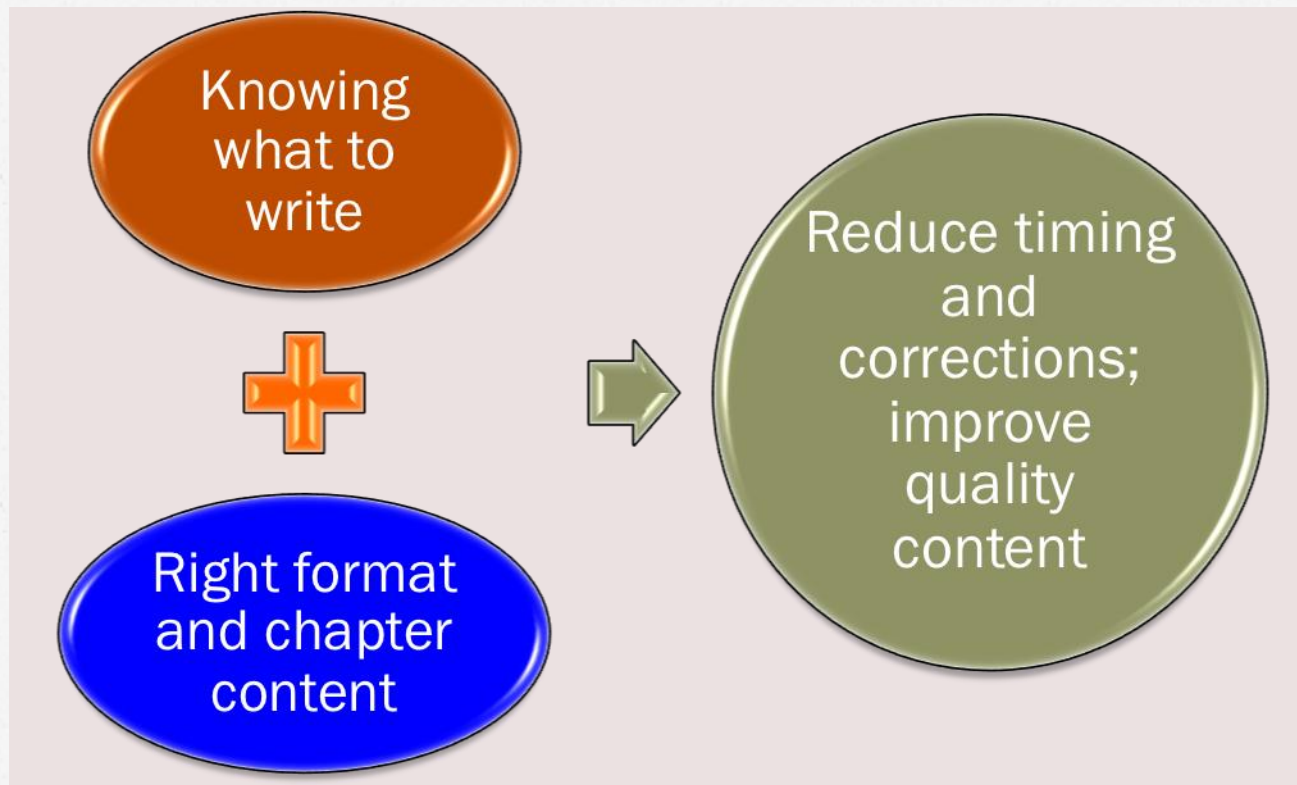


# Graduate Thesis

- o Academic document, reference materials and public access -
- o a discrete, complete piece of research work on a particular subject by the postgraduate research student.
- o piece of scientific document presenting the research findings that have been conducted through a **vigorous scientific, systematic approach of research methodology**.
- o **scientific academic** document to be evaluated for postgraduate degree award.
- o different from research proposal where the thesis confirms the findings and its contributions.
- o Have been verified and examined by expert/s

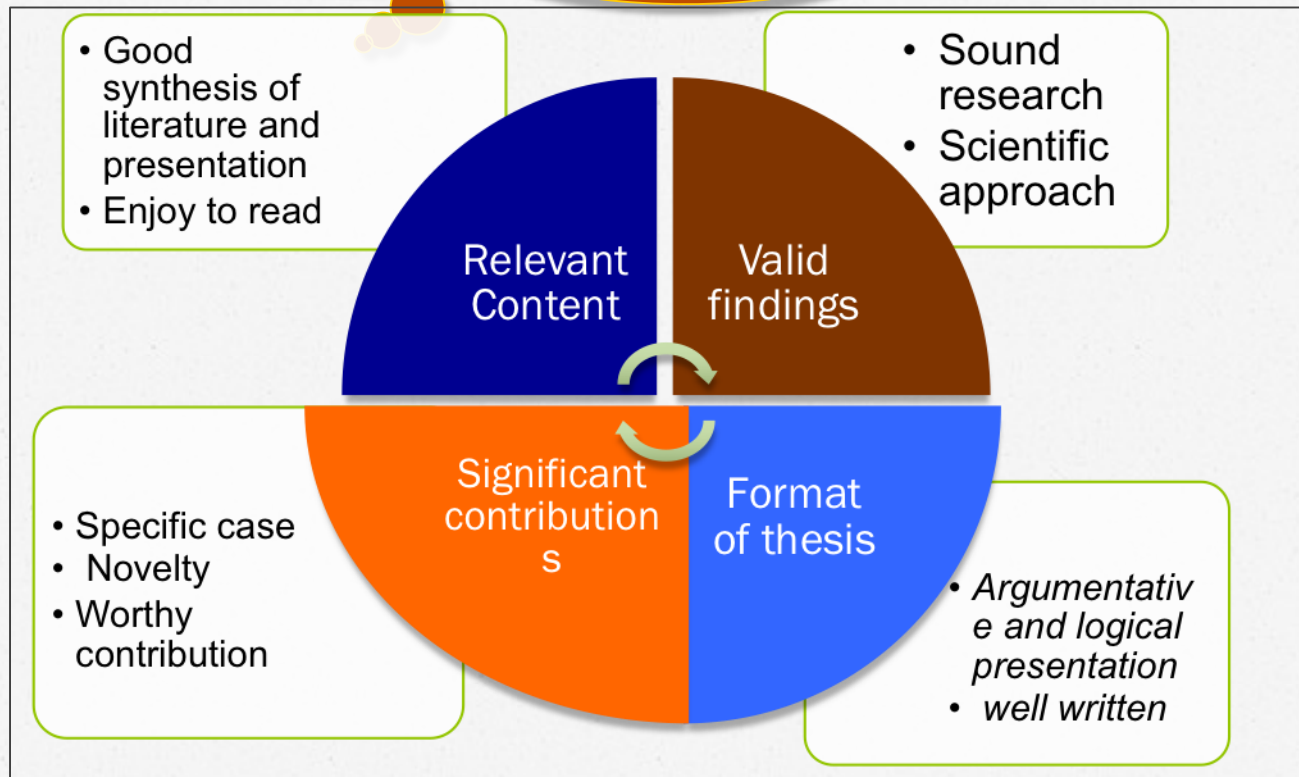
*A formal document and access to public → scientific work conducted in professional manner and with proper format and error free*

# Writing Strategies





# Writing Good Thesis



# Useful Referencing Points

1. What to write:.....
2. My research questions are .....
3. Researchers who have looked at this subject were :
4. They argues that .....; researchers like Smith and John state.....
5. Debate centres on the issues of....
6. There is still work to be done on.....
7. My research is similar or different from ....
8. My contributions include .....

## General key questions to address when getting start in thesis writing

1. What is a thesis ?
2. What is the required format?
3. What technique and skills are required ?
4. How do examiners examine the thesis?  
What are they examining ?
5. How do I organize the references ?
6. How can I complete the writing on time?



# Presentation of thesis

1. The content- number of chapters required and its relevant content
2. Language use-consistency of tenses -> Research methodology chapter : Past tense
3. Every chapter must have a chapter introduction and chapter conclusion to summary the chapter and link briefly to next chapter
4. The right format – UMS thesis writing format
5. Graphs , charts and figures – readable and color

# Master and PhD Thesis

- o Different expectations for Master's theses and for Doctoral theses.

## Master level :

1. advancement of knowledge in specialized field
2. mastering skills of analysis and synthesis
3. evaluation of argument and data collection
4. strong theoretical framework

## Phd level:

1. contribution to knowledge
2. high level of analysis and synthesis
3. evaluation of argument and data collection
4. recognized as an authority within a particular discipline

## **Standards and assessment criteria for master level thesis (Madsen, 1983)**

- 1) Evidence of an original investigation or the testing of ideas
- 2) Competence in independent work or experimentation
- 3) An understanding of appropriate techniques
- 4) Ability to make critical use of published work and source materials
- 5) Appreciation of the relationship of the special themes to the wider field of knowledge
- 6) Publication potential



# Master level

1. Demonstrate continuing and additional knowledge and comprehension above that of bachelors degree and have capabilities to develop or use ideas, usually in the context or research;
2. Use the knowledge and comprehension to solve problems related to the field of study in new situations and multi-disciplinary contexts;
3. Integrate knowledge and manage complex matters;
4. Evaluate and make decision in the situations without or with limited information by considering social responsibilities and related ethics;
5. Deliver clearly the conclusion, knowledge and the rationale to expert and non-expert; and
6. Demonstrate study skills to continuously progress on their own with a high degree of autonomy to do so.

## Standards and assessment criteria for PhD level thesis (Madsen, 1983)

- 1) Evidence of an original investigation or the testing of ideas
- 2) Competence in independent work or experimentation
- 3) An understanding of appropriate techniques
- 4) Ability to make critical use of published work and source materials
- 5) Appreciation of the relationship of the special themes to the wider field of knowledge- Publication potential
- 7) Originality as shown by the topic researched or methodology used
- 8) Distinct contribution to knowledge

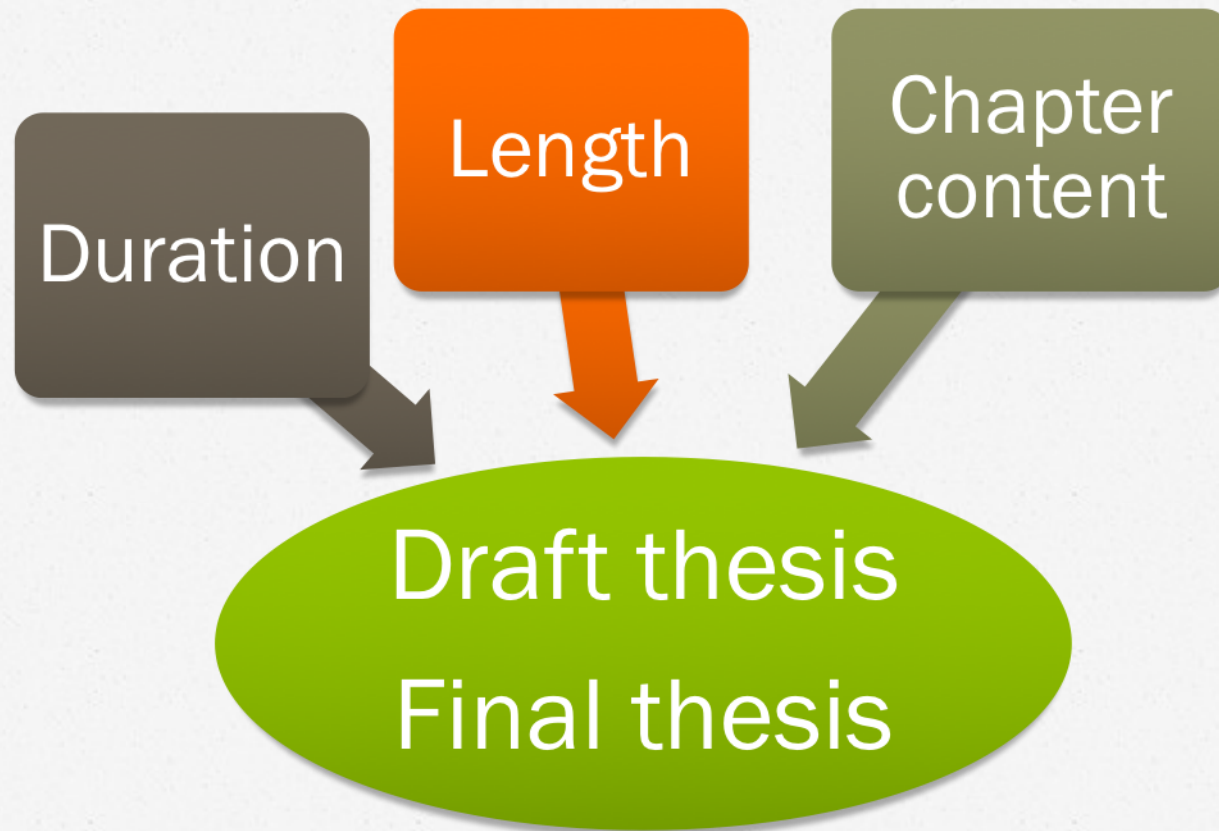


# PhD level

1. Show a systematic comprehension and in depth understanding of a discipline and mastery of skills and research methods related to the field of study;
2. Show capabilities to generate, design, implement and adopt the integral part of research process with scholarly strength;
3. Contribute to the original research that has broadened the boundary of knowledge through an in-depth dissertation, which has been presented and defended according to the international standards including writing in internationally refereed publications;
4. Make critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;
5. Communicate with peers, scholarly communities and society at large concerning the field of expertise; and
6. Promote the technological, social and cultural progress in a knowledge based society in the academic and professional contexts.



# Writing master and PhD thesis



# Chapter content

## Chapter 1 Introduction

1. This is an important chapter as it set the context for the research.
2. It outlines and explain the purpose and extent of the research and why you embarked upon it or why you are interested in the topic.
3. It must introduce it and provide sufficient background/context to tell the reader what it is about the issue you are researching. It must foreshadow why the research is important and then identify how it will be presented.
4. The introduction must identify clearly and explicitly the key research question to tell the reader and the writer (often more important for the writer!!) what the paper is all about.

# Chapter 2- Literature Review

- o This is a very important section of the research for it must place the research in a broader context of what already has or has not been written about the subject.
- o The literature review should foreshadow what will be discussed in the results and foreshadow the key issues or findings in the thesis.
- o Things should be included in the literature review are those items that are directly relevant to the research.
- o Synthesis of literature is an important of the chapter.
- o Trying to build a case. The literature review lays the foundation.
- o Do not present material that later argues against your case, unless you specifically intend to refute the literature to illustrate a knowledge gap.



# Purpose of the literature review

1. Provide an overview of the issues investigating
2. Select the relevant literature for the study
3. Evaluate and summarize other people's work
4. Provide context for the study
5. Identify gaps
6. Develop an understanding of theory and method

# Choosing theory

- One of the most crucial foundational steps in any research project surrounds understanding and choosing an appropriate theory to frame the research question. Theoretical frameworks don't just impact design, they impact how the entire study is interpreted, contextualized, and discussed.
- There are lots of resources about epistemologies and ontologies, but most focus on the philosophical and historical dimensions that can quickly overwhelm students.
- They need something quick that helps them understand the practical connection between theory and the purpose/nature of the study and, more importantly, decide which theory is best suited to their particular study.
- This ***Little Quick Fix*** covers questions like: What is theory? How does theory relate to research design? What is a theoretical framework? What is a theoretical contribution? How do I choose which theory (or theories) fits my research? What practical steps should I take to integrate theory into my research?



# Chapter 3 Research Methodology

- Presents research method in detail
- most important chapter to inform the readers how the research being carried. It shows how you have done about your research.
- The method must tell the reader what you did, how you did it and why you did it. It must be logical and pitched at the right level for the reader.
- The method must be seen to work within the confines of the method.
- The method defines the parameters by which the data were collected and therefore, by which the data can be analyzed.
- Make sure that what you intend to do in the research can actually be done using the method you have chosen.
- No method is perfect. That is acceptable and accepted.



- o no way of hiding a poor method
- o acknowledge the limits of the methodology up front than to have the reviewer question the method later
- o Always be truthful and always state the sample size, the sampling technique (be careful, most 'random' samples are really convenience samples), how the data were collected and the limitations of the collection process.

# Chapter 4

## 1. **Data Analysis, Findings and Discussion**

2. Data collected must answer the questions that have been posed and the analysis must be appropriate for the type of data collected.
3. Data analysis method ( quantitative and qualitative data analysis ) must be presented in detail.
4. Data analysis should be presented in a logical manner to address the issues, rather than to work through the questionnaire.
5. Results should present a synthesis of the data and not a repeat of the data.
6. Tables and graphics should support the argument. The text should be properly explain and analyze, but not repeat the table.
7. The overall findings must link to the research objectives and or research questions stated in chapter one.

# Chapter 4 Discussion

1. The discussions section must present a discussion of what the results mean.
2. This section is often difficult to write, for it forces the author to look at the big picture and to talk about something other than the data.
3. This section really lets the reader know what the person's knowledge is of the issue being discussed and how well the student can think.



# Chapter 5 Conclusion

1. Conclusion should be made based on the empirical findings of the research objectives or research questions.
2. Do not introduce new material or ideas.
3. Inform what the question was and how the study answers the question.
4. It must focus on how the research adds to the body of knowledge of a particular discipline or field and or the implications to the industry or particular process, theory or practical in specific field.

# Thesis title

1. Make your title specific enough to describe the contents of the thesis.
2. Not more than 12 words
3. The title should be appropriate for the intended audience.
4. The title usually describes the subject matter; some title that summarizes the results is more effective.

# Abstract

1. An abstract, or summary, is published together with a research article, giving the reader a "preview" of what's to come.
2. It should summarize the purpose, methods, results and conclusions or contribution of the research.
3. It is not easy to include all this information in just a few words.
4. Start by writing a summary that includes whatever you think is important, and then gradually prune it down to size by removing unnecessary words, while still retaining the necessary concepts.
5. Don't use abbreviations or citations in the abstract. It should be able to stand alone without any footnotes.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1. This section is optional.
2. You can thank those who either helped with the experiments, or made other important contributions, such as discussing the protocol, commenting on the manuscript, or data collection and others.

# Chapter checklist

1. Useful for the students to ensure the relevant and expected content in the thesis and is free from grammar mistakes.
2. The research issue/s and research questions are relevant and clearly stated.
3. The literature review relates to the research question and identifies a need/gap in the literature.
4. Justification of research method, use of quantitative , qualitative or mixed method
5. The method used answers the research question.
6. Data analysis relates to the research question.
7. Discussion links the findings, research question and literature.

1. The 'so what' question is answered to make the thesis relevant to those who are not familiar with the specific case, but who can benefit from the broader themes/findings discussed in the thesis.
2. The thesis must be well written – clean, concise writing style, use of active sentences (not many that begin with there is / there are), intelligible and reader friendly (don't hide behind big words), little repetition.
3. Quality argument must be presented.
4. A case must be built in logically manner by integrating background material, presenting the evidence, synthesizing information and drawing the reader to make the same conclusion the author is trying to make. There must be no flaws or gaps in the logic of the argument.



1. The method must be workable and appropriate for the research and for the argument being presented.
2. The weaknesses in the method must be acknowledged fully (no method is perfect).
3. The method and the data collected must allow the author to do what he/she intends in the thesis . Analysis must be accurate and relevant.
4. Adopt an hourglass shape when writing a thesis.
5. The introduction and the literature review present the broad issue, with the research question, data collection and analysis narrowing it down to define how the issue is examined in a specific context.
6. The conclusions are then broad, showing how the research fits into the bigger picture of what is known/not known about the topic.

# References and format

- o Familiar with the referencing format
- o Consistency tense
- o Checking missing reference

# Appendices

- o Field work materials
- o Sample of instrument
- o Raw data and data analysis
- o Pictures or evidences



# RELATED READINGS

Bell, J. (1996). *Doing your research project*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Bell, J. (1999). *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education and social science*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

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Burns, R. (2000). *Introduction to research methods*. Pearsons Education.

Cryer, P. (2000). *The research student's guide to success*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Graziano, A.B. and Raulin, M.L. (2000). *Research methods: A process of inquiry*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition.  
Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

May, T. (1996). *Social research: Issues, methods and process*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

McNiff, J. (1992). *Action research: Principles and practice*. London: Routledge.

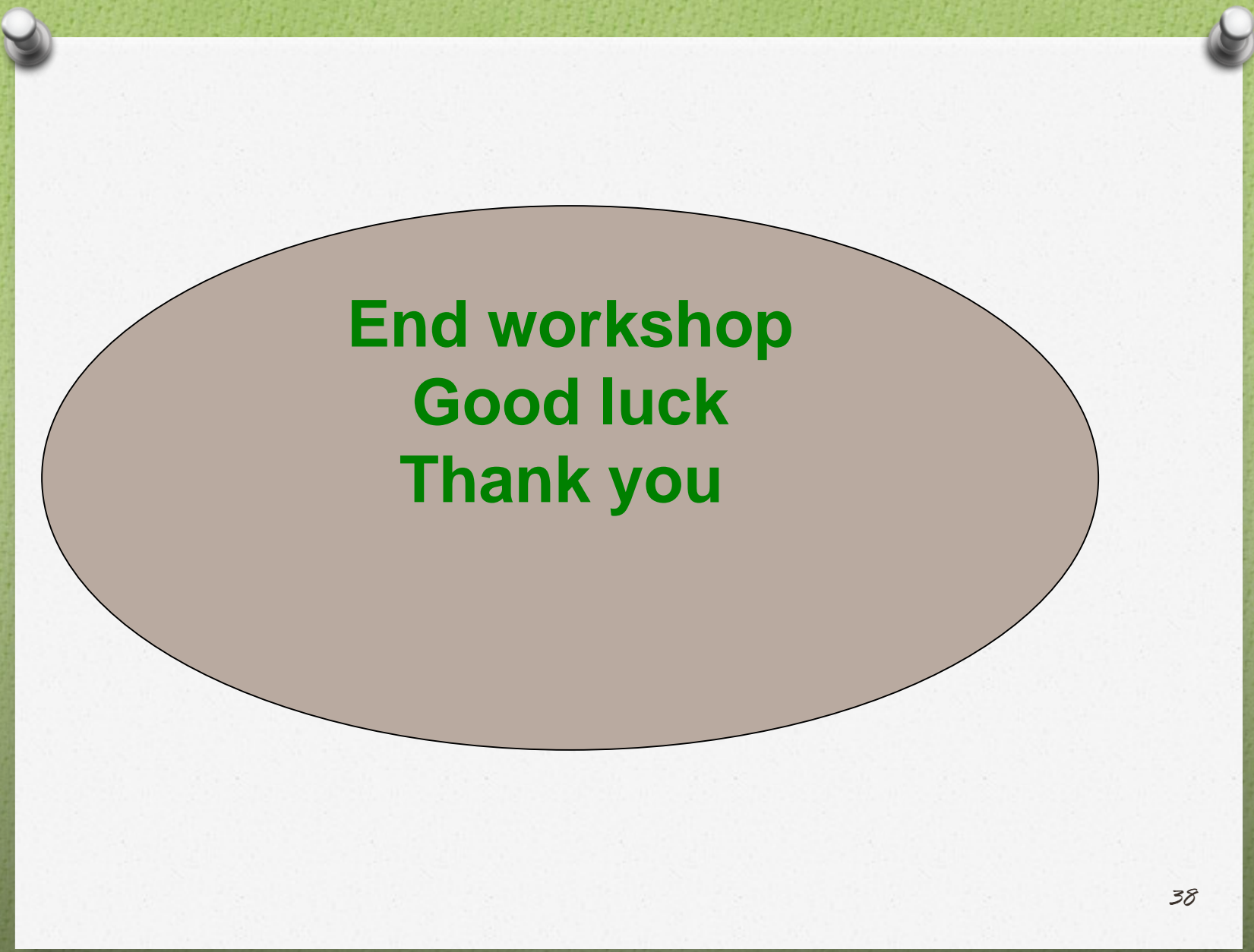
Noorzan Mohd Noor and Page, Glenys M. (2009). *Writing your thesis*. Prentice-Hall Pearsons Education: Malaysia.

Noorzan Mohd Noor (2010). *Writing research and thesis proposals: Guidelines and examples*. Pusat Penerbitan Universiti (UPENA). Shah Alam.

Robson, C. (1993). *Real world research: A resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers*. Oxford: Blackwell.

# Group Discussion

1. Technical issues –language, grammar, citations , referencing format, table of content, page numbering
2. Issues -plagiarism, proof reading and editing services
3. Prepare an acceptable draft thesis based on your research
4. List the key elements for each chapter



**End workshop  
Good luck  
Thank you**