
Thesis Structure

Through the Academic Eyes of GPN

By Jules Harris Danarson, Ph.D.

January 31, 2022

From Bachelor’s programs and on up through Master’s and Ph.D.’s, students are required to write theses and dissertations – elaborate experimental, design, or theoretical reports – at the culmination point of their studies, but many students are unaware of the most critical step required to kick off such an academic project: establishing a *thesis structure*.

Before you make your first step in academic life, you must know your destination. Yet, for many reasons, the journey is as important as your destination – if not more so. With this in mind, you should be fully aware of the correct steps on the path toward graduation as you stay focused on your goal. If you want to write a successful thesis, it is essential to understand the basic structure required for thesis writing. A well-established general outline can help focus your research and write the paper properly and efficiently, as well as help you come up with a finished product that you will be proud to present and defend upon reaching your destination – your graduation.

Following is a guideline of how your thesis should be structured, in easy-to-understand terms, starting with the “title page” of the *front matter* and following through all the way to the “appendices section” of the *end matter* – a survival toolkit including everything needed during your entire academic journey.

The Front Matter

The front matter covers the (1) title page, (2) confidentiality clause (if applicable), (3) dedication page, (4) abstract, (5) table of contents, (6) list of tables, figures, boxes, and (7) list of abbreviations and acronyms.

The title page includes *the title* of your work, which should be informative, contain keywords, and reveal the core meaning of the thesis. An indication of the problem being addressed and how it is solved in the thesis makes the best title.

In addition, this page should contain the following information:

- The name of the university/institution
- Name of Faculty (e.g. Faculty of Social Sciences)
- Name of Department/ School/ college

- Name of the degree to be obtained
- Major/ Specialization
- Title of Thesis
- Name of the author
- Thesis supervisor
- Date due

Note: Depending on the country, university, or department you are in, class and student ID numbers might also be required after the thesis title. Different locations may also require these points to be listed in a different order than they appear above, be sure to check with your supervisor for the specific requirements.

Confidentiality Clause:

This is sometimes included when the report contains commercially or politically sensitive material. A “release date” for the report may be specified here.

Dedication Page (optional):

The dedication normally isn't long, sometimes only a sentence or two, and is written in a sweet, heartfelt way to honor someone in the life of the author.

The Abstract is essential in a thesis, it contains a *text* overview and a list of *keywords*.

The text:

The abstract is a concise overview of the thesis, it is tightly focused and must not contain anything unrelated to the core meaning of the thesis. It should include:

1. The **background**
2. The existing **problem** to be solved
3. The **objective/purpose** of the research or paper
4. The **methodology** used to get to that objective
5. An indication of the **key results** obtained

- ❖ Generally, abstracts are between **150 to 250** words or in APA and MLA format can be 100. For the case of theses (as opposed to other types of academic papers), this might depend on the rules and requirements being set by your university or department, so it is always important to make sure you understand those rules and requirements before writing (ask your research supervisor or advisor, if you have one).

Keywords:

- You can enter up to 6 keywords for your thesis or dissertation, with a minimum of at least one keyword.
- Capitalize the initial letters of keywords. If your keyword is a phrase, capitalize only the first letter of the first word (e.g. *Business administration*); if your keyword is a proper name, capitalize the first letter of each word, e.g. *Mississippi River*.
- Use full phrases rather than acronyms or abbreviations (e.g., use *Health Maintenance Organization*, not *HMO*).

- Add a keyword if the concept or concepts cover at least 20% of your dissertation or thesis. Keywords should categorize your work as a whole, so focus on major concepts, and disregard minor aspects.
- Keywords should contain words and phrases that suggest what the topic is about. This will help people locate your thesis via search tools (library catalogs, search engines, etc.)

Note: You may find it practical to write the abstract last, or at least make sure you revise it after having finished. Among other reasons for doing this, the key results of your research must be included.

Table of Contents:

This should be on a separate page, an organized list of the key subject headings and subheadings referring to the page numbers where they appear in the thesis.

This table outlines the:

- Main sections / subsections listed
- List of tables, figures and boxes
- List of unfamiliar terms, symbols, acronyms and their meanings --- referred to as “Nomenclature” (optional).

List of Tables, Figures and Boxes:

This should be presented clearly, identifying the numbers, titles and page number where each table, figure or box appears.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms:

List any abbreviations and acronyms used in the report and specify their meanings. The definitions should be presented on a separate page.

The Body

The thesis is written in a problem-method-results-discussion structure, and has a body generally covering seven chapters or sections: (1) introduction, (2) literature review or conceptual framework, (3) research methodology and design (4) findings or results (5) discussion and (6) conclusion, as described in the table below.

Section	Requirements	Length as a percent of the total work
Introduction	<p>This chapter introduces the topic, presents your thesis statement, and informs the readers of your objectives, your research methods, and your findings.</p> <p>The introduction is a developed form your abstract. Here you convince your reader that the problem you</p>	5 %

	<p>intend to address is compelling and worthy of their attention, and you begin citing the sources of knowledge and inspiration that put you under the obligation to find a solution.</p> <p>For a clear introduction, you need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a general background (the context and importance of the study) • Give an account of the research problems / issues / gaps/ flaws which still exist despite the existence of the previous work being cited. • Demonstrate knowledge or expertise of the issue(s) being investigated and addressed. • Define the specific terms used – if there are any • Show your hypothesis (if there is any) and give a thesis statement to clarify your points right from the get-go. • Enumerate your research questions and indicate the approaches used to address them • Indicate your personal contributions to this field of study • Show the research rationale behind the choice of topic, or the purpose of your work • Describe the scope (the extent of the subject matter being covered) • Set some criteria for your study’s success --- if possible. • Give a clear thesis outline (show how your work will be organized). 	
<p>Literature Review</p>	<p>A literature review is the presentation, classification, and evaluation of what other researchers have written on the particular subject you’ve chosen.</p> <p>This section presents all the information that is currently available about your topic. However, it is not simply a list of what others have said. It does not and cannot refer to every piece of literature in the field. Rather, a literature review is organized according to your research objective.</p> <p>If applicable, this section may also develop the theoretical basis for your design or experimental work, including any governing equations (detailed calculations go in the appendix.)</p> <p>This is a conceptually organized synthesis which ultimately justifies the further research you are engaged in.</p>	<p>10%</p>

	<p>In sum, a literature review has several purposes in addition to basic description. It may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logically include a sequenced discussion of key literature • Compare and contrast different authors' views on an issue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ group authors who draw similar conclusions ○ note areas in which authors are in disagreement • Highlight exemplary studies • Highlight gaps/ flaws in literature • Show how your study relates to the literature in general and to the highlighted literature. • Show your personal contribution by means of your own work -- with specification. 	
<p>Research Methodology & Design</p>	<p>In this section, you tell your readers exactly what methods you've used to gather data.</p> <p>If applicable, list and describe key materials and apparatus. Then, describe the procedure in enough detail that others can use it as a model.</p> <p>For design studies, this section includes component design, fabrication, assembly, and testing procedures. Use illustrations where appropriate.</p> <p>Any other research should be able to reconstruct your experiments after reading this section.</p> <p>Generally, this section should explicitly (or implicitly) show the used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Qualitative and/or quantitative ○ Main research variables • Data collection methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sampling method and sample size ○ Respondents and responsiveness • Research instruments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tools for data collection ○ Triangulation of data (if applicable) • Data analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stages of the experiment / dates ○ Collation and tabulation of results • Methodological scope and limitation 	<p>5%</p>
<p>Results / Findings</p>	<p>In this section, you present your findings and results in a clear and objective manner, usually with</p>	<p>35%</p>

	<p>accompanying tables and graphs. (Detailed data go in an appendix.)</p> <p>Do not discuss what your findings mean unless this section is combined with <i>the discussion</i> section, which is possible.</p> <p>In this section, the following should be displayed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results in numbered and captioned tables, graphs and diagrams (if applicable) • Appropriate references to visual information in the text. • Characterized patterns and quality of the results and indication of their accuracy and precision. • Clear description of main findings as related to the set objective(s) 	
Discussion	<p>In this section, you discuss the findings of your research, and state clearly what their significance is.</p> <p>Tell your readers how your research and your findings help you achieve the objective of your paper.</p> <p>This section should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to purposes / hypotheses of study • Review of key findings in relation to purposes / hypotheses • Comparison of the results with theoretical expectations and account for anything unexpected. • Possible explanations for, or speculations about findings. 	40%
Conclusion	<p>This is the section where you summarize your entire thesis and provide a strong call to action (if needed).</p> <p>Review the results in relation to the original problem statement and thesis statement.</p> <p>Assess the success of the study considering the criteria for success you gave in the introduction (if applicable).</p> <p>A good conclusion shows coherence with the given introduction; when the two are read consecutively, they should offer a clear understanding of the whole work.</p>	5 %

	<p>The following points should be included in this section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Summary of the whole work. • Answers to the research questions asked in the introduction (or other sections of the work) • Implications of the study • Major take-aways from the study including any lessons learned from the research as a whole • Highlights of personal contribution. • Limitations of the study • Suggestions for future research (this is the point where you tell your readers what areas of your thesis need further research). • Recommendations, if applicable, recommend directions for future work (what / how / by whom) 	
--	---	--

What's next?

The “end matter,” is outlined in the following section.

The End Matter

Anything that comes after the main body of the thesis falls into this section: the end matter. Here we see (1) a list of references, (2) acknowledgements, and (3) appendices. If a thesis is turned into a book, an (4) Index closes this section.

References make up an important part of this section, without references a thesis has no academic value and can even be considered an intellectual crime.

References can be referred to as either “Works Cited” or “Bibliography” depending on your particular requirements, so choose the heading that is relevant to your field of study while being aware of the slight nuances governing the use of each term vis-a-vis the others.

List alphabetically all the sources you’ve used in your writing in this section. Make sure everything is cited and referenced in a single style (APA, MLA¹) properly throughout the thesis. This will include:

- A comprehensive list of sources, usually in alphabetical order of the surname of the first author of each cited material, or in the form [1], [2] ... as the citations appear in the main text.
- Appropriate formatting
- Include all the materials cited in the paper. Do not include any sources which were not cited.

¹ Follow the reference and footnote requirements of your department or of a prominent paper or report published in your field.

Note: Be consistent in your choice of style whether you choose, APA, MLA or another, (depending on your research field). APA is generally used in scientific papers, laboratory reports and papers covering topics in the fields of psychology, education, and other social sciences, but MLA is usually for literary research as well as academic papers in the field of humanities.

Acknowledgements:

Acknowledgements are sometimes placed at the beginning of the thesis but can also be placed in the end matter (like it is in China, e.g., for Guangxi University of Finance and Economics). Acknowledge assistance from advisors, sponsors, funding agencies, colleagues, technicians, etc.

Appendices: (if applicable):

The appendices are a clearly titled and presented list of relevant appendixes. This is where you provide detailed calculations, procedures, and data in separate appendixes. Give each appendix a title, a letter (Appendix A, B, C), and an introductory paragraph.

In brief, the **Front Matter**, includes the Abstract or Executive Summary, appears before the Table of Contents, and is generally not numbered. The page numbers of this section are usually written in Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, ...) starting with the first page after the cover. The central section, the **Body**, forms the main text of the report, Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3 ...) are used throughout the body and the end matter. The **End Matter** is mainly referential material that is too detailed to fit well into the main narrative. This includes the *references, acknowledgements, and appendices.*

About the Author

Dr. Jules H. DANARSON is a former Journalist at *Madagascar News*, a biweekly newspaper in Madagascar, currently working at the School of International Education of Guangxi University of Finance and Economics, P.R. China, giving lectures and seminars as well as supervising students' thesis projects on International Trade, Business Communications, and International Business Negotiations.

He is the Founder and CEO of GPN (Global Polyglots Net.), an organization for language and communication services, business and management consulting, and education consulting -- headquartered in Wuhan, established in 2015, when he earned a Ph.D. degree in Administrative Management from the College of Public Administration of Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, P.R China.

In terms of research work, his primary focus has been on political communications and business negotiations, but his research interests range from community development, development economics and management of organizational behavior to public policy and governance.

Citing the Paper:

This *white paper* was published on GPN's website (at www.gpn.services), and can be cited using the following information (plus the link which you take it from):

Danarson, Jules Harris (January 31, 2022) *Thesis Structure Through the Academic Eyes of GPN* [White Paper] P.R. China: Global Polyglots Net. (GPN)

ALSO BY THE AUTHOR:

White Papers

Danarson, Jules Harris (Nov. 2017) *Academic Writing: How to Find a Specific Topic and Research Questions*. [White Paper]. P.R. China: Global Polyglots Net. (GPN)

https://www.gpn.services/sites/default/files/ForDownload/2.2_academic_thoughts_-_experience_dr._d_gpn.pdf

Danarson, Jules Harris (Nov. 2017) *Signposts for a Fully-structured Presentation*. [White Paper]. Wuhan P.R. China: Global Polyglots Net. (GPN).

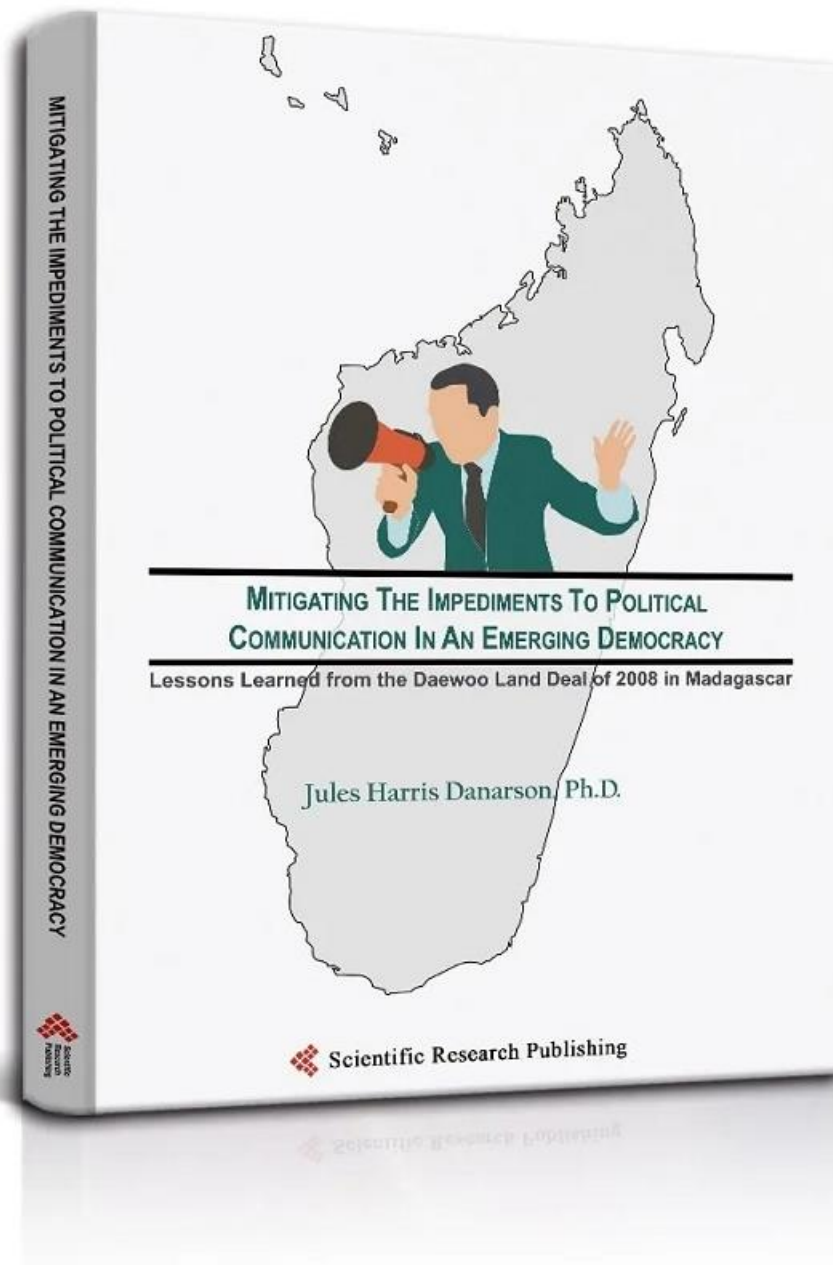
https://www.gpn.services/sites/default/files/ForDownload/4.2_communication_tips_dr._d_gpn.pdf

Academic Papers:

- July 2020 **“The Impact of Management Characteristics on Overseas M&A Performance: A Comparative Analysis of Two Chinese Enterprises.”** *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 11 (7):85-92
http://www.ijbssnet.com/journals/Vol_11_No_7_July_2020/10.pdf
[Co-authored]
- Aug 2020 **“Reliability and Survival Analysis of Mobile OS Via Weibull Model.”** *International Journal of Information Systems Management Research and Development (IJISMRD)*, 10(2):1-15
<http://www.tjprc.org/publishpapers/2-33-1596786231-absIJISMRDDEC20201.pdf> [Co-authored]
- June 30, 2015 **“Sustaining Conflict-Free Team Leadership in a Cross-Cultural Project Management Setting: Observational Evidence from China”** *European Journal of Business and Management (EJBM)*, 7(18):155-190 <http://iiste.org/Journals/index.php/EJBM/article/view/23199>
- May 2014 **“The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Curbing Workplace Violence.”** *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 4 (5): 159-171
http://www.aijcrnet.com/journals/Vol_4_No_5_May_2014/16.pdf
- Oct. 2012 **“Perceptions of Policy Outcomes as a Motivational Factor in Promoting Environmental Sanitation: Lessons Learned from The Yibin Local Government, China.”** *2012 Proceedings of International Conference on Public Administration*, 3(1): 3-20.
ICPA, organized & sponsored by the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China (UESTC)
<http://icpa.uestc.edu.cn/indexEn.html>

A Book he Recently Published:

- ❖ June 17, 2021. *Mitigating the Impediments to Political Communication in an Emerging Democracy: Lessons Learned from the Daewoo Land Deal of 2008 in Madagascar*. U.S.A: Scientific Research Publishing.
URL: <https://www.scirp.org/book/detailedinforofabook.aspx?bookid=2769>



This book can be accessed through:

SCIRP's Website:

<https://www.scirp.org/book/detailedinforofabook.aspx?bookid=2769>

Amazon:

https://www.amazon.com/dp/1649971494?ref=myi_title_dp

Google Book:

https://books.google.com.hk/books/about?id=foszEAAAQBAJ&redir_esc=y

Google Play:

<https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=foszEAAAQBAJ>

OTHER(S)

<https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/Y4hG1Qxygg2VaCHT5bhyiA>

About GPN

GPN specializes in such services as translation, editing and writing assistance serving students, professors, and professionals from different fields and with a wide scope of needs.

The company is headquartered in Wuhan, where it is officially known as “GPN Education Consulting (Wuhan) Co. Ltd.,” but has an office in the capital of Madagascar, Antananarivo where it legally carries the name “GPN: Language Services & Management Consulting, Ltd.”

The company also excels in offering an array of specialized consulting services for people in various fields of work, endeavoring to solve day-to-day problems and achieve successful ends.

Despite being a private organization, GPN offers some free services and internship opportunities for students. For more information, get in touch with its office by e-mail at info@gpn.services (for the China office) or info.mada@gpn.services (for the Madagascar office). Also, you can call at 0086-1810726 1550 or log on to the company’s website www.gpn.services to learn more about the company.



GPN Headquarters - Wuhan Jiang Xia Cang Long Dao, Heng Ji Industrial Park,
Building 2, Apartment 802, Wuhan, Hubei 430074 P.R. China

Phone: +86(0)27-87219719 | Mobile: 86-181 0726 1550 | Email: info@gpn.services | Website: www.gpn.services