



## THESIS-WRITING FORMAT

**For MPhil English Literature Candidates  
Department of English and Literary Studies**

*Institute of Liberal Arts*

*This document aims at recommending a standardized practice for writing the compulsory thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Philosophy in English Literature at the Department of English and Literary Studies, Institute of Liberal Arts, UMT, Lahore.*

### **1. Manual of Style:**

The officially sanctioned manual of style for formatting and referencing the content of relevant theses is the latest edition of MLA (i.e., the eighth edition), which, compared with its earlier editions, has especially been designed to allow the researchers / supervisors sufficient freedom to set their preferences about certain issues.

#### **Recommended Font Style:**

Times New Roman

#### **Recommended Font Size:**

12 (excepting chapter titles, headings and supplementary material like endnotes, for which the supervisor may provide guidance in accordance with MLA rules). It is preferable that the thesis title is 16 and chapter headings are 14.

### **Recommended Page Layout:**

All the basic MLA rules for page layout should be followed assiduously. For example, the text should be double-spaced, left-aligned, with one-inch margins on all four sides, the page number and researcher's surname should be inserted in the upper right-hand corner of the page, etc. The preliminary pages should be paginated in i, ii, iii... style; while Chapter 1 onwards 1, 2, 3... style should be followed.

### **2. Documents Denoting Declarations:**

Copies of the following three documents must be attached in the final, hard-bound version of the thesis submitted to the relevant authorities after the candidate has successfully defended his/her thesis before an external examiner:

- (i) Anti-plagiarism Report for the thesis, generated by a software in accordance with UMT rules and duly signed by the Chief Library Officer,
- (ii) Certificate of Approval, duly signed by the relevant competent authorities, in accordance with the Department's rules,
- (iii) The researcher's declaration, duly signed by him/her, that the research is his/her original work, and has not been submitted elsewhere for the acquisition of any other degree, etc.

### **3. Dedication and Acknowledgements (optional):**

Most researchers like to dedicate their theses to someone, and also acknowledge the assistance of different people in the course of different stages of completing the thesis.

### **4. Table of Contents:**

The table of contents should be designed in an easy-to-read style. For this purpose, a researcher may improvise with respect to font size, italicization, etc., in accordance with the guidance of the supervisor.

## **5. Abstract:**

The maximum length of the abstract should be one printed side of a page with 12 font size of Times New Roman style and double line spacing. It should constitute a single paragraph. Its content should summarize the aim of the study, the method/approach to analysis/interpretation it uses, the theoretical framework it employs, and its contribution to the field of study it deals with, followed by five to eight keywords that may help future researchers in locating, cataloging and consulting the research as required.

## **6. List of Abbreviations:**

A list of abbreviations used, if any, in the thesis by the researcher should precede the 'Introduction.' This list should include only abbreviations operationally devised by the researchers for the purpose of the thesis.

## **7. Introduction:**

The first chapter should be titled 'Introduction.' Its opening paragraphs should incorporate the thesis statement and provide an elaboration of the abstract, together with any other relevant information that may comprehensively introduce the topic of the research to the reader. In most cases, it should throw some introductory light on author(s) whose works constitute the study's primary resources.

The introductory chapter should have some sub-divisions, of which the most important are:

### **(i) Research Objectives / Research Questions:**

The statement of Research Objectives is essential for ascertaining that the researchers do not at any stage lose their focus in the long winding task of writing one chapter after another. The supervisor should especially check Research Objectives to ensure that the researcher has not unnecessarily repeated a point and that each of the stated objectives is precisely phrased. Even though international practices vary immensely about whether or not these objectives should be stated in a numbered list / bullet points, this style is recommended in the light of the fact that most Pakistani examiners are likely to favour it.

A separate subsection titled ‘Research Questions’ may follow ‘Research Objectives’ in case the supervisor feels the former are conceptually distinct from the latter to the degree of adding something meaningful to the reader’s clarity of vision and for setting the direction of the study along clearer lines for the researcher’s own benefit. The practice of replicating ‘objectives’ as ‘questions’ by converting their statement into interrogative sentences is discouraged.

**(ii) Significance of the Study:**

Every researcher needs to clearly establish the importance of the study s/he undertakes, the contribution it makes to the existing body of similar work, and the need it serves for a desirable addition to the literary canon. Such data should be elaborated in this section.

**8. Review of Literature:**

The next chapter should be titled ‘Review of Literature,’ which should provide a critical summary of existing literature the research draws on. Depending on the discretion of the supervisor, it may in some cases be followed by a subtitle reflecting the focus of the chapter.

Review of Literature may in most cases be an amalgamation of three strands of publications: [i] critical works on the author(s) of primary resource(s), [ii] analyses of literary works other than the primary resources that may be thematically or structurally similar / relevant to the research in

question, and [iii] works on critical theory that may provide the foundation or serve as role models for the researcher's application of theory/-ies on the chosen primary resource(s). Given the abundance of material that can potentially be quoted in any research, it is advisable to stick, as far as possible, to publications from reputable academic fora. Further, judging the relevance of the contents of this chapter in the light of research questions/objectives would be helpful for the researcher in editing out superfluous material.

At the end of the 'Literature Review', the researchers should be aware of the 'research gap'.

## **9. Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework:**

### **(i) Research Methodology:**

A detailed discussion on research methodology, once again, is a key to the retention of a researcher's / reader's focus. This section, besides talking about the approach to research adopted by the researcher, and various tools facilitating it, should also comment in suitable detail on the rationale for the selection of the said method / tools. The researcher should feel encouraged to chart out the procedure employed to conduct the research for which it may prove very helpful to select a method of analysis such as thematic, content, discourse, textual, etc., analysis.

### **(ii) Theoretical Framework:**

Any specific theories in the light of which the researcher may be analyzing chosen text(s) should be introduced in some detail in this section. However, since the content of this section is by its very nature bound to be partly unoriginal in most cases, it is perhaps advisable to refer to standard books instead of burdening the thesis with unnecessary repetitions of background theory.

*NOTE: 'Research Methodology' and 'Theoretical Framework' may constitute a separate chapter if the supervisor feels their content is expansive enough to justify it without undesirable / unnecessary insertion of background jargon that may easily be available in a number of textbooks on literary theory, etc.*

## **10. Data Analysis:**

By far the most important part of a thesis in literary studies, in almost all cases the longest one, is data analysis, in which the researcher analyzes the chosen text(s) following the direction of the study's basic contention. Structurally, there can be two ways of presenting it in the larger body of the thesis.

[i] The researcher may design multiple chapters in accordance with the needs of the thesis statement. For example, each of the chapters may focus on one specific theme of chosen text(s), or one specific dimension of the basic arguments driving the research. Or the researcher may divide the chapters on account of different sections in a text (e.g., a chapter may deal with the analysis of specified chapters of a novel or scenes of a drama). Or, again, the division may follow from adherence to some chronological pattern (e.g., one chapter may analyze poems authored by a poet in the 1980s, followed by a chapter analyzing those written in the 1990s). In short, the rationale for chapter division will vary from one thesis to another.

[ii] A second way of presenting this analysis is to contain it all within one chapter, with subdivisions following the same rationale as outlined in the preceding point. This structure necessitates a more complex hierarchy of multiple level headings (i.e., instead of 1.1, 1.2, subsections will have to be numbered as 1.1.1 and 1.1.2). Depending on the number of multiple level subsections within one primary sub-section, the indexing may become unnecessarily arduous to follow in some cases.

However, it is quite obvious that the substitution of the first method with the second one cannot make any difference to the nature of the data being analyzed or the content of the thesis except in the indexing process. It is also to be noted that the specific nature of the research may or may not require separate sections on analysis.

## **11. Conclusion:**

The Conclusion should sum up the trajectory of the research in brief and precise terms, invoking a reappraisal of discoveries to which the researcher / reader has been led by the objectives of the research. However, in doing so, the researcher should avoid presenting a plain rehashing of parts of the first chapter's content as far as possible, so that the conclusion may not

appear structurally redundant. In studies qualitatively analyzing literary texts, researchers would in many cases be able to foresee their ‘findings’ to a considerable extent, but that does not alter the principle for the requirement of presenting those findings in a summative manner showing the reader how the researcher has been led to his/her conclusions.

Besides, ‘Conclusion’ should have the following two subsections:

**[i] Limitations of the Study:**

A statement about the limitations of the study is of cardinal importance as a disclaimer that the researcher should not be expected to have done something that is intrinsically beyond the scope of the present research. Therefore, instead of being regarded as a note on the fallibility of the research, such a statement is meant to clarify how its strength should be judged.

**[ii] Guidelines for Future Researchers:**

Finally, guidelines for future researchers, e.g., comments on how others can expand the scope of the present study, etc., can serve two purposes: on the one hand, they obviously facilitate those intending to take up similar research, but at the same time, this very process can also serve the present researcher by being instrumental in making his/her study the initial reference point of other studies. As such, these guidelines can serve an important role in placing the thesis in a historically continuous process of building the literary critical canon.

**12. Endnotes:**

In accordance with MLA rules, all endnotes should follow the conclusion. It is recommended to keep the number of endnotes to the minimum for the sake of keeping the reading process as smooth as possible.

**13. Works Cited:**



Complete indexical reference to all works cited in the entire body of the thesis should be presented in the Works Cited list in accordance with the rules of the latest edition of MLA.

#### **14. Works Consulted (Optional):**

MLA makes a further provision for referencing works that may be of vital interest to keen readers but have not been actually cited in the thesis. However, with endless archives of all kinds of bibliographies accessible to anybody on the internet in today's world, such a list, unlike that of Works Cited, does not serve any definite purpose in either demonstrating the researcher's mastery of his/her field, or in facilitating future researchers. In case such a list is desirable, the supervisor should ensure it is the researcher's original compilation (and not a plagiarized assemblage of sections from bibliographies at the end of earlier published sources).

#### **15. Appendix:**

An appendix / appendices should follow the preceding sections in case the researcher needs to present some supplementary data for a clearer understanding of his/her analyses. For example, a research may benefit from the interview of a literary author but the suitability of incorporating such material should be carefully judged by the supervisor in the light of how indispensable it may be for understanding the research. Copyright permissions must be sought in writing by the researcher for reproducing data (other than short quotations) protected by relevant laws. In case such material is used, a section on "Ethical Considerations" may be added in the chapter on Research Methodology.

Please follow the Library of Congress guidelines for the transcription of texts of non-English languages used in the dissertation: <https://loc.gov/>