

# Thesis & Report Writing

for  
Research Students  
Louise Baron  
BSc, PhD

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## Objectives



- Learn to **plan**, **organise** and **control** production
- Tackle the writing process and make ourselves clear

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## Talk about...



- Things you do well
- Things you could improve
- What you like doing in report writing
- What gives you the most grief

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## Defining the Task

Scope  
Objectives  
Readers

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## Scope

- What limits scope?
- Factors:
  - Audience
  - Purpose
  - Time (and money)
  - Your resources

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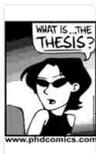
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## What is a thesis?



A statement of your position on a question, supported by the story of how you got there.

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## Objectives



- Quality
- Delivery on time



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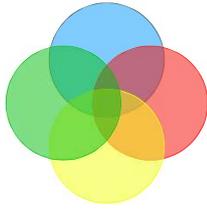
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## Readers?



How many?

Limitations?



Types?

Needs?



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## Reading your Thesis



- The Examiners will:
  - be on your side (keep them that way!)
  - be busy (don't be wordy, obscure or repetitive)
  - appreciate a logical and coherent story

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## Managing the Task

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## Who?



- Roles:
  - Author(s)
  - Typist
  - Editor
  - Reviewer
  - Draftsperson
  - Manager

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## When?

- Task dependencies
- “Think of a time-scale, then double it!”
- Realistic milestones
- Contingencies
- Submission Deadline?

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## Don't!

total	words per day	days to complete
75000	200	375
	300	250
	400	188
	500	150
	600	125
	700	107
	800	94
	900	83
	1000	75

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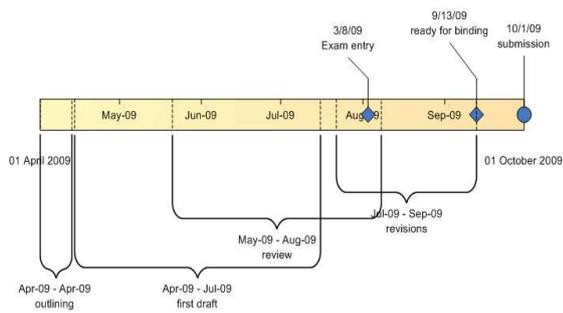
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## Timeline planning




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## Try it!

- The task: write and **submit** a thesis
  - Break down into sub-tasks
  - Draw a *realistic* timeline
  - Where do you lack control?




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## Doing the Work



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## Be thankful!



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**PLEASE DO NOT SPEAK TO OR  
OBSTRUCT THE DRIVER'S VISION  
WHILE THE BUS IS IN MOTION.**



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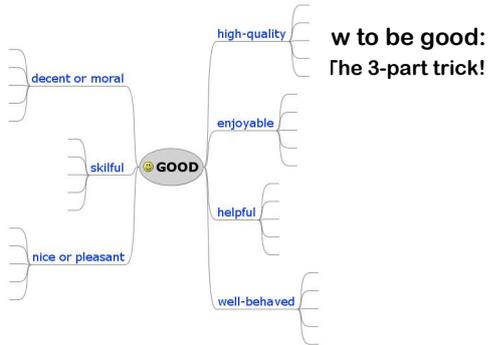
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## Better Writing



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## Style



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## Dangerous!

not present

never/always



prove(n)

generally

statistically significant

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## Horrible!

due to the fact that at this moment in time  
penetrate into large numbers of  
subsequent to utilize  
two equal halves

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## Tighten and clarify

### 2.2.3.1 Dorset

Five principal sections were studied on the South Dorset Coast in the area around the seaside town of Weymouth. The Dorset Coast displays one of the best Jurassic successions in the world and has played a significant role in the establishment of a biostratigraphical scale for the Jurassic, with almost all of the Dorset rocks yielding fossils

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## Tighten and correct

### 2.2.3.1.1 The Fleet

Along the shore of the Fleet, more specifically near Tidmoor Point (SY 643787), exposures of the Oxford Clay Formation are found. House (1989) describes the locality as "this unpromising exposure is the type section for the Furzedown Clays" and although not magnificent in any terms, small cliff sections are present from where samples were taken.

Chapman (1997, 1999) uses the ammonite fauna from Tidmoor Point and the surrounding areas to help to the Callovian/Oxfordian boundary. The access to the section is good with Haven Holiday Park occupying the land immediately to the north with parking (and refreshments) available nearby.

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## Rewrite

Distilled water (buffered) was used to soak the samples instead of 'normal' tap water as the 'normal' tap water in Plymouth (where the processing was undertaken) is slightly acidic and thus a dissolution risk to the samples. It was, therefore, decided to remove this risk by using buffered distilled water.

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## Useful stuff...

- Grammarpedia
  - <http://languagetools.info/grammarpedia/index.htm>
  - Good article on information structure - <http://languagetools.info/grammarpedia/infostructure.htm>
  - Useful resources - <http://languagetools.info/grammarpedia/resources.htm>

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## The Writing Process



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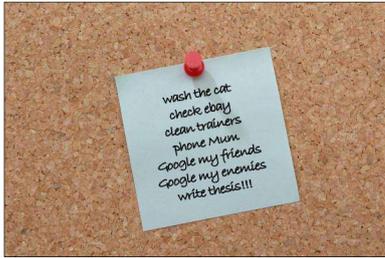
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## Getting started...



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## Think first!



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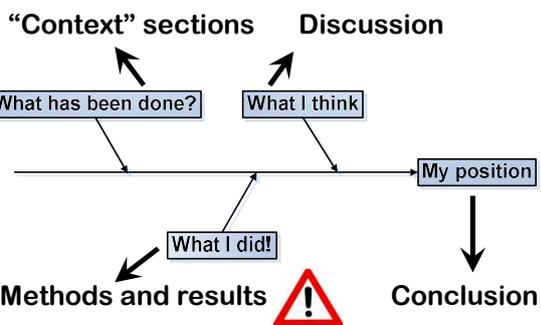
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## Thesis Framework



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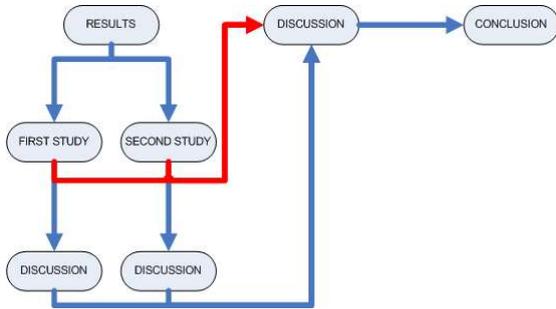
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## The storyline?



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## Statements of Intent



“In this section I will report the results of phase one.”

“Here I am going to talk about possible reasons for the anomalous results.”

“I’m now going to compare the two methods.”

Excellent for multi-authored reports

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## The 3-part trick!



What?



How?



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## The Rough Draft



- A nice room
- Get everything you'll need
  - Data
  - Records
  - Outline
- Write one section in a sitting
- Walk away!



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## The First Drafts



- Proofing
- Add figures
- Shorter?
- Clearer?
- Version control?

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## The Final Draft



- Check as hardcopy, not on screen!
- Finalise and ***Back Up!***

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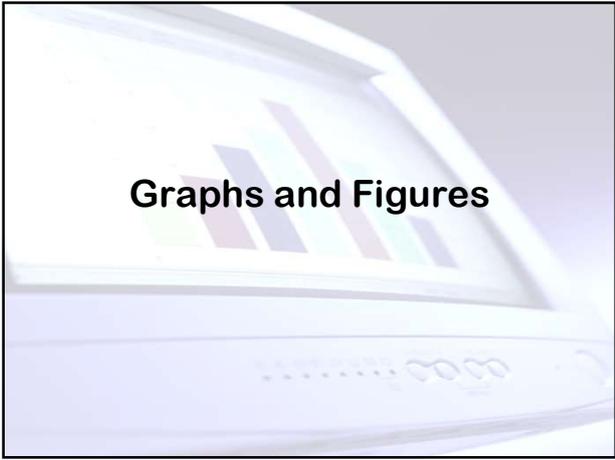
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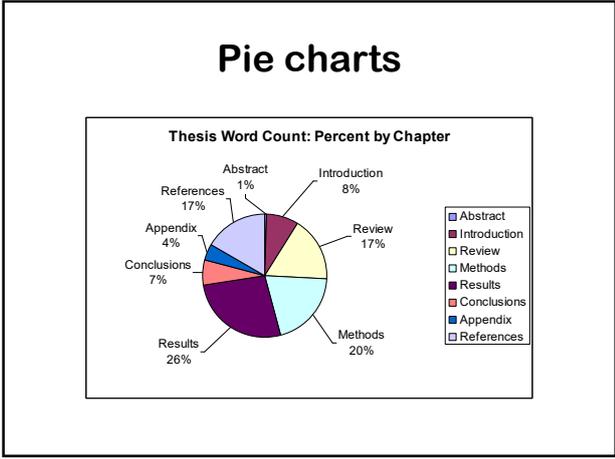
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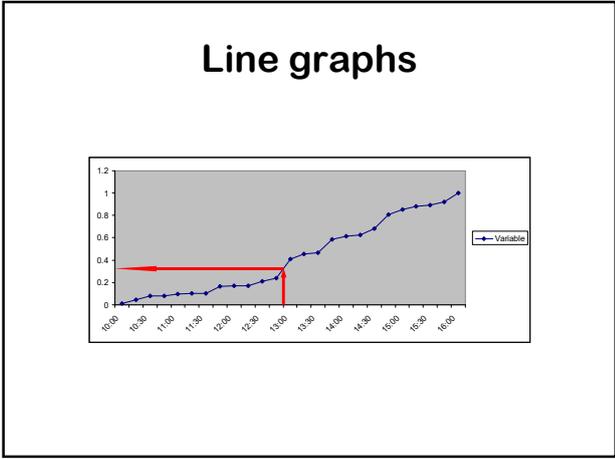
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## Tables

Discipline	No. of Candidates	age of candidate		
		20-25	26-35	>35
Life Sciences	310	250	45	15
Engineering	450	415	25	10
Chemistry	360	320	35	5
Mathematics	210	185	20	5
Physics	135	95	30	10



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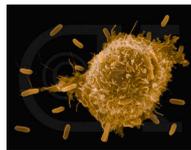
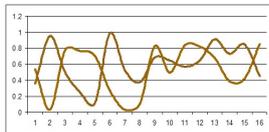
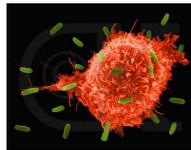
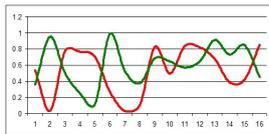
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## Colour deficiency



[www.vischeck.com](http://www.vischeck.com)

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## Raster -v- vector

*Vector*

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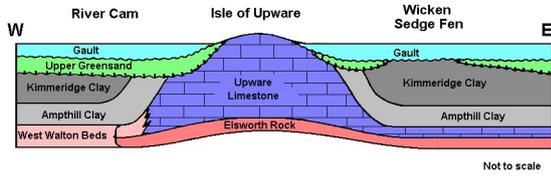
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Generalised cross-section of the Upware Structure showing the stratigraphic relationships of the sedimentary units




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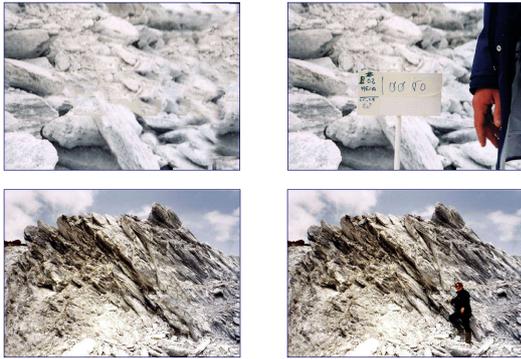
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### Scale




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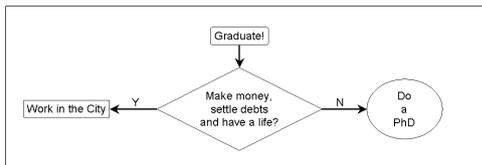
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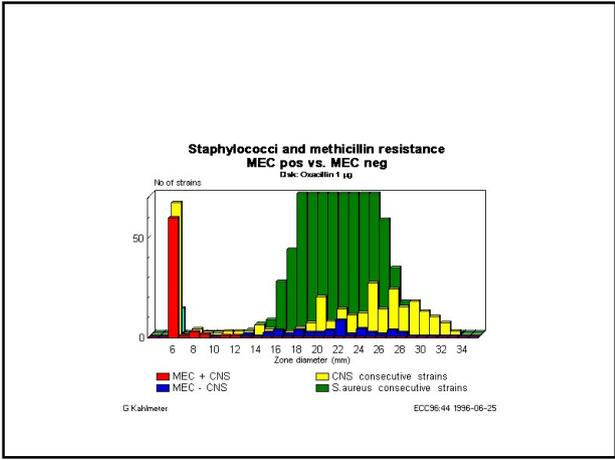
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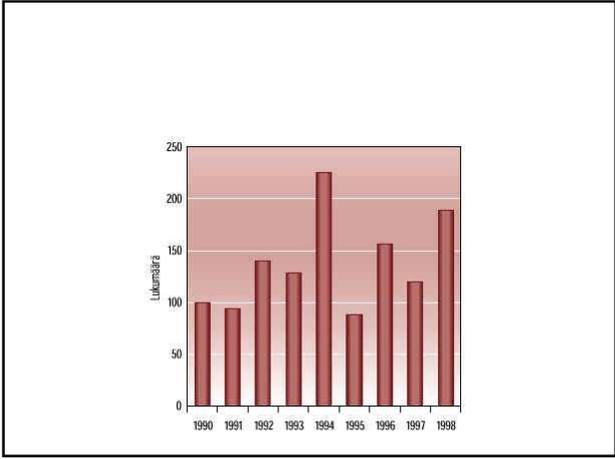
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**Preparing Abstracts & Summaries**

- What they are for
- How they are used
- What they should include
- When to write the abstract or summary
- How to get started?

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