

TITLE

Author

Declaration of Originality

I herewith certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been properly acknowledged. It has not been previously submitted, in part or whole, to any university or institution for any degree, diploma, or other qualification.

Student Name:

Signature:

Date:

Abstract

The abstract is a short summary of the thesis which includes all the aspects of the thesis including conclusions. The abstract may be 200 to 300 words long depending on whether it is a master's degree or doctorate.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements are usually written on a new page and comprise statements of gratitude by the student for assistance received for the study and in the preparation of thesis. These may be academic, financial or other assistance and support.

Table of Contents

The table of contents starts on a fresh page. These contents are generated automatically using Microsoft Word or other software packages. Students must get familiar with using style sheets in Word during the course of their writing theses.

List of Figures

Each of these also appears on a fresh page. They are required only if there are many tables or figures, say more than 10.

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

List of Appendices

1 Introduction

This is a general outline guide for the thesis of PostGraduate (PhD/Master's) students at MNU. Students are requested to use the guidelines and modify this template as required.

As a general rule, the PhD thesis, exclusive of any appendices, shall be between 60,000 - 100,000 words in total. For theses in Dhivehi and in Arabic the text may be 60,000 words because of the nature of the word conjugation in these languages. For Masters level, the word limit shall be between 30,000 – 40,000 words. And for thesis submitted in Dhivehi or Arabic, it may be between 20,000 – 25,000 words.

There may be special instances where, with the permission of the Committee on recommendation of the principal supervisor, the thesis may exceed these limits. In special cases, with the permission of the Committee on the recommendation of the principal supervisor, the thesis may be written or presented, at least in part, in a multi-media format.

The first three chapters of the PhD / Master's thesis is part of the Proposal Defence, required for the confirmation of candidature. The word count for the first three chapters for the proposal defence should be at least 10,000 words for PhD and 7000 words for Masters. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that all key areas outlined are adequately addressed, so that the examination committee is satisfied with the comprehensiveness of the work.

1.1 Finding a research topic

Finding a research topic is never a single moment of inspiration it is a gradual narrowing of curiosity into a question that is both meaningful and doable. The most productive starting point is to explore a broad area you genuinely care about, then slowly carve out a gap where your work can make a real contribution. This usually begins by surveying the existing scholarship, noticing patterns, contradictions, or silences, and asking yourself where the field still struggles. Many strong topics emerge not from what is known, but from what remains uncertain, contested, or poorly measured. This is why early-stage reading should feel like wandering: you are mapping the intellectual terrain before deciding where to build.

As you read more deeply, the next step is to identify a researchable gap something neither too broad to be unmanageable nor too narrow to be trivial. A good topic sits at the intersection of three things: what the field needs, what you can realistically investigate, and what sustains your motivation. This is where feasibility becomes crucial. You must consider data availability, methodological tools, ethical constraints, and the time required to complete the work. Many students fall in love with questions that are conceptually exciting but practically impossible. The strongest topics are those where ambition is balanced with methodological clarity.

Once you have a potential direction, the refinement process begins. This involves transforming a general interest into a precise research problem a shift from “I want to study climate impacts” to “I want to analyse how short-duration rainfall extremes have changed in Malé since 1993.” This sharpening of focus often requires iterative conversations with supervisors, peers, and experts. Their feedback helps you test whether your question is original, whether it aligns with current debates, and whether it contributes something that others will recognise as valuable.

Finally, a strong research topic should be framed as a problem that matters. It should address a real-world challenge, a theoretical puzzle, or a methodological gap. When you can clearly articulate why your question is important not just to you, but to the field and society you know you are close to a viable PhD topic. The goal is not to find the “perfect” topic, but one that is intellectually meaningful, feasible, and capable of sustaining your curiosity over the journey ahead.

1.2 Writing the statement of intent

All PhD candidates at MNU begin their journey with the submission of the statement of intent. A statement of intent is your opportunity to explain not only what you want to study, but also who you are as a researcher and why this path matters to you. It is a space where you connect your academic background, your experiences, and your intellectual motivations into a coherent narrative. Rather than simply listing achievements, the strongest statements show how your interests developed over time and how they have led you toward a specific research direction. This is your chance to demonstrate that your curiosity is genuine and that your commitment to the field is grounded in thoughtful reflection.

A well-crafted statement of intent also shows that you understand the academic landscape you are entering. This means explaining the questions that drive you, the themes that fascinate you, and the gaps in knowledge that you hope to explore. You are not expected to have a fully formed research proposal at this stage, but you should be able to articulate the broad area you wish to investigate and why it is important. When you can show that your interests align with the strengths of the department or potential supervisors, your statement becomes more compelling and purposeful.

Another important element is demonstrating readiness for doctoral-level work. This involves reflecting on the skills you have developed, the challenges you have overcome, and the experiences that have shaped your academic identity. Whether it is previous research, professional work, or personal encounters with the subject matter, these experiences help the reader understand how you think and how you approach complex problems. A strong statement shows that you are prepared for the intellectual independence and sustained focus that a PhD requires.

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Finally, a statement of intent should convey a sense of direction and aspiration. You are not only explaining what you want to study, but also the kind of researcher you hope to become. When you can express how your work might contribute to your field or address a meaningful problem, your statement gains depth and purpose. The goal is to leave the reader with a clear sense of your motivation, your potential, and the thoughtful intention behind your decision to pursue a PhD.

1.3 Writing the Master's Thesis

The process begins with choosing a topic that is both manageable and meaningful. Unlike a PhD, a Master's thesis does not need to break new theoretical ground, but it should demonstrate that you can engage critically with existing scholarship and contribute a thoughtful perspective of your own. This early stage involves reading widely, identifying a clear research question, and understanding how your work fits within the broader academic conversation.

Once the topic is defined, the next step is to design a research plan that is realistic within the time and resources available. This includes selecting appropriate methods, identifying data sources, and outlining the structure of the study. A Master's thesis rewards clarity and focus. It is better to explore a well-defined question thoroughly than to attempt something overly ambitious. This is also the stage where students begin to appreciate the discipline required to manage a long-term project. Regular writing, consistent data collection, and ongoing discussions with supervisors help keep the work on track.

As the research progresses, the thesis becomes a space where you learn to think and write like a scholar. You begin to interpret your findings, connect them to the literature, and shape them into a coherent narrative. This is often the most rewarding part of the process, because it is where your ideas take form and your voice becomes clearer. A strong Master's thesis does not simply present results. It explains why those results matter, how they relate to existing knowledge, and what they suggest for future work.

In the final stages, the focus shifts to refining the argument, strengthening the structure, and polishing the writing. This involves revisiting earlier chapters, tightening the logic, and ensuring that the thesis reads as a unified whole. The conclusion should leave the reader with

a clear understanding of what you have discovered and why it is significant. Completing a Master's thesis is not only an academic achievement. It is a demonstration of perseverance, intellectual maturity, and the ability to carry a complex project from idea to completion. It often becomes the foundation for future research, professional growth, or even the decision to pursue a PhD.

1.4 Sample Organizational Structure

The thesis can be organized in a variety of ways. A sample organizational structure is given below for reference. The next subsection will discuss in detail the content that could be under these subsections. Students are to structure the sections and subsections of the thesis in such a way as to best present the work to the reader. Note: Chapters 5 and 6 could be combined and in that case, the chapter heading should reflect the combined nature.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Background of the Study
- 1.3 Problem Statement
- 1.4 Purpose Statement and Research Objective
- 1.5 Research Questions and Hypothesis (If applicable)
- 1.6 Significance of the Study
- 1.7 Scope of the Study and Limitations
- 1.8 Definition of Key Terms
- Chapter Summary

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Theoretical Framework
- 2.3 Conceptual Framework
- 2.4 Empirical Literature Review
- Chapter Summary

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Research Philosophy and Paradigm (optional for Master's)
- 3.3 Research Approach and Design
- 3.3 Population and Sample
- 3.4 Data Collection Instruments / Tools
- 3.5 Reliability and Validity (for Quantitative) / Trustworthiness (for Qualitative – this covers Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Conformability)
- 3.6 Ethical Considerations
- 3.7 Data Collection Strategy(ies)
- 3.8 Data Analysis
- Chapter Summary

Chapter 1: Introduction

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS (FOR QUANTITATIVE) / FINDINGS (FOR QUALITATIVE)

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Data Screening and Preparation (if applicable)

4.3 Demographic Information

4.4 Research Results / Research Findings

Chapter Summary

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction / Preview of the Study

5.2 Summary of the Results / Findings

5.3 Discussion of Results / Findings

5.4 Contribution of the Study

5.5 Implications of the Study

Chapter Summary

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Conclusion

6.3 Recommendations

6.4 Future Research Directions

Chapter Summary

REFERENCES

APPENDICES

1.5 Sample Content

The following is a description contents that the sections and subsections that a thesis could contain.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 introduces the study by outlining the background of the topic, identifying the core problem that needs investigation, and explaining the purpose and objectives that guide the research. It presents the main research questions—and hypotheses if required—and clarifies why the study is important for theory, practice, or policy. The chapter also defines the scope and limitations to show what the study will and will not cover, and provides clear definitions of key terms to ensure consistency throughout the work. Together, these elements establish the foundation for the research and prepare the reader for the detailed literature review that follows in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 provides a structured review of all relevant literature by first introducing the focus of the chapter and then outlining the theories or theoretical framework that guide the study. It examines historical literature to show how knowledge on the topic has developed over time, followed by an empirical review that summarises findings from previous studies. The empirical literature matrix and meta-analysis organise these studies to highlight patterns, gaps, and methodological trends, which are then summarised in a concise review table. The chapter also includes a theoretical literature matrix and meta-analysis to compare and evaluate the main theories used in the field, followed by a summary that highlights the strengths, weaknesses, and relevance of each theoretical perspective. Together, these components ensure a comprehensive coverage of all relevant literature and provide a strong foundation for the research.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological foundation of the study by first introducing the overall approach and explaining why the selected research design is appropriate for addressing the problem and objectives. It then describes the sampling design, including how participants or data sources were chosen and the rationale behind the sampling strategy. The data analysis process is explained to show how the collected data will be examined, interpreted, and linked to the research questions or hypotheses. The chapter also presents the

findings from the pilot study, highlighting any adjustments made to improve the reliability, clarity, or feasibility of the main study. Together, these components provide a clear and systematic explanation of how the research will be conducted and conclude with a summary that connects the methodological choices to the goals of the study.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS (FOR QUANTITATIVE) / FINDINGS (FOR QUALITATIVE)

Chapter 4 presents the results of the study by first introducing how the analysis is organised and then outlining the steps taken to prepare the data for accurate interpretation. It begins with data screening to ensure the dataset is clean, complete, and suitable for analysis. The chapter then describes the sample characteristics to show who participated in the study and the key demographic or contextual features of the respondents. Descriptive statistics are provided to summarise the main patterns in the data, followed by an examination of the dimensions of the variables to confirm how each construct behaves and how its items group together. Structural Equation Modelling is then used to test the relationships proposed in the conceptual framework, leading into hypothesis testing, where each research hypothesis is evaluated based on statistical evidence. The chapter concludes with a summary that highlights the major findings and prepares the reader for the discussion in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the study by summarising the key results and interpreting their significance in relation to the research objectives, research questions, existing literature, and theoretical framework. The chapter highlights the contributions of the study to knowledge, practice, and policy, while also examining the practical and theoretical implications of the findings. It concludes with a summary of the major insights discussed and their overall relevance to the study.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 6 concludes the study by presenting the overall conclusions drawn from the findings and explaining how the research addressed the study objectives and questions. The chapter provides recommendations for practice, policy, and implementation based on the evidence generated, and identifies directions for future research by highlighting remaining gaps and emerging issues. It ends with a summary that reinforces the significance and contribution of the study.

REFERENCES

The References section provides a complete list of all sources cited throughout the study, including books, journal articles, reports, policy documents, and other relevant materials. The references are presented in accordance with the required citation style to ensure academic integrity, acknowledge the work of other scholars, and allow readers to locate the original sources used in the research.

APPENDICES

The Appendices section contains supplementary materials that support the study but are not included in the main body of the thesis. These may include research instruments, questionnaires, interview guides, consent forms, additional tables or figures, ethical approval documents, and other relevant supporting information used during the research process.

2 Styling Guide

This section presents a styling guide for the thesis. Students and relevant faculties are requested to modify the styling of the thesis in such a way as to best present their work.

2.1 Paper size and margins

The theses should be written on ISO A4 (297 mm x 210 mm) paper. Depending on the direction of writing, the starting direction should have at least a 35 mm margin and the other sides must have a 25 mm margin. You may write on both sides of the paper.

2.2 Fonts and line spacing

In the preparation of theses written in English, Times New Roman font should be used. The body texts should be in 11 or 12 points. If writing in Thaana, the font should be A-Faruma; body text is to be in 12 points. The line spacing should be 1.5. For those writing in Arabic, students must write in Traditional Arabic.

2.3 Pagination

Pages must be numbered consecutively and clearly. Large sheets of paper as insertions or appendices must be folded to open to the top and right.

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2.4 Binding

A thesis is submitted for examination temporarily bound. The thesis must be bound for permanent use after any amendments suggested by the examiners have been brought about. It should be bound in an appropriate colour, with thesis title, student name on the cover. The binding should be sewn or hot-glued and covered in thick board. The title, student name and year must appear on the spine. Two copies of bound theses and a soft copy of it must be deposited in the library as a requirement of graduation.

The specifications for the bound copy are as follows:

	<i>Cover</i>	<i>Spine</i>
Colour	Black* if PhD	Black* if PhD
Title of thesis	Full title	Short title
Student name	Full name	Name with initials
Year		Year of submission

The copies required and the nature of the electronic copy are included in the form, "Submission of Final Version of Thesis."

Theses of students will be made available on MNU's on-line library resources unless students expressly disallow it.

2.5 Referencing

All PhD theses should strictly follow the University referencing guidelines. Authors are referred to these guidelines on the University website.

There are many books and references on theses preparation. Some good literature are as follows:

Chapter 2: Styling Guide

- Cone, J.D., Foster & Foster, S.L. (2006). *Dissertations and theses from start to finish: psychology and related fields* (2nd Ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Booth, W.C., Colomb, G.G., & Williams, J.M. (2008). *The craft of research* (3rd Ed.). Chicago: The University of Chicago