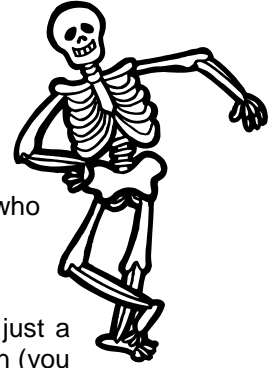


THE BONES

THE MAP PROJECT PROPOSAL OR THE GENERIC THESIS STRUCTURE



The common structure for the advanced project or thesis helps guide the content, provide standard formatting, and easier readability by those who must judge the quality and viability of the work.

1. Introduction

This is a *general* introduction to what the thesis is all about -- it is *not* just a description of the contents of each section. Briefly *summarize* the question (you will be stating the question in detail later), some of the reasons why it is a worthwhile question, and perhaps give an overview of your main results. This is a birds-eye view of the answers to the main questions answered in the thesis (see above).

2. Background Information (optional)

A brief section giving background information may be necessary, especially if your work spans two or more traditional fields. That means that your readers may not have any experience with some of the material needed to follow your thesis, so you need to give it to them. A different title than that given above is usually better; e.g., "A Brief Review of Stalled or Plateaued Churches."

3. Review of the State of the Art (Literature Review)

Here you review the state of the art relevant to your thesis. Again, a different title is probably appropriate; e.g., "State of the Research (Literature) in Plateaued Church Revitalization." The idea is to *present* (critical analysis comes a little bit later) the major ideas in the state of the art right up to, but not including, your own personal brilliant ideas. You organize this section *by idea*, and not by author or by publication.

4. Research Question or Problem Statement

Engineering theses tend to refer to a "problem" to be solved where other disciplines talk in terms of a "question" to be answered. In either case, this section has three main parts:

1. Concise statement of the question that your thesis tackles
2. Justification, by *direct* reference to section 3, that your question is previously unanswered (or how previous work failed to address crucial issues)
3. Discussion of why it is worthwhile to answer this question.

Since this is one of the sections that the readers are *definitely* looking for, highlight it by using the word "problem" or "question" in the title: e.g. "Research Question" or "Problem Statement", or maybe something more specific such as "The Tendency to Plateau Problem."

5. Describing How You Solved the Problem or Answered the Question

This part of the thesis is much more free-form. It may have one or several sections and subsections. But it all has only one purpose: to convince the examiners that you answered the question or solved the problem that you set for yourself in Section 4. So show what you did that is *relevant* to answering the question or solving the problem: if there were blind alleys and dead ends, do *not* include these, unless specifically relevant to the demonstration that you answered the thesis question.

6. Conclusions

You generally cover three things in the Conclusions section, and each of these usually merits a separate subsection:

1. Conclusions
2. Summary of Contributions
3. Future Research

Conclusions are *not* a rambling summary of the thesis: they are *short, concise* statements of the inferences that you have made because of your work. It helps to organize these as short numbered paragraphs, ordered from most to least important.

All conclusions should be **directly related to the research question** stated in Section 4. Examples:

1. The problem stated in Section 4 has been solved: as shown in Sections ? to ??, an method capable of kick-starting a plateaued or stalled church in a reasonable time has been developed.
2. The principal mechanism needed in the improved activity and motivations is the GIT-UP-AND-GO mechanism (method, approach, etc) outlined in section ?
3. Etc.

The **Summary of Contributions** will be much sought, and carefully read, by the examiners. Here you list the contributions of *new* knowledge that your thesis makes. Of course, the thesis itself must substantiate any claims made here. There is often some overlap with the Conclusions, but that is okay. Concise numbered paragraphs are again best. Organize from *most* to *least* important. Examples:

1. Developed a much quicker method for large-scale stalled church problems.
2. Demonstrated the first use of the GIT-UP-AND-GO mechanism (method, approach, etc.) for stalled churches.
3. Etc.

The Future Research subsection is included so that researchers picking up this work in future have the benefit of the ideas that you generated while you were working on the project. Again, concise numbered paragraphs are usually best.

7. References (Works Cited)

The list of references connects closely to the review of the state of the art given in section 3. Most examiners scan your list of references looking for the important works in the field, so make sure they are listed, and referred to, in section 3.

All references given *must* be referred to in the main body of the thesis. Note the difference from a Bibliography, which may include works that are not directly referenced in the thesis. Organize the list of references either alphabetically by author surname (preferred), or by order of citation in the thesis. Significant works used but not included may be added as additional resources recommended for the broader subject (a help to researchers following you).

8. Appendices

What goes in the appendices? Any material which impedes the smooth development of your presentation, but which is important to justify the results of a thesis. Generally it is material that is of too nitty-gritty a level of detail for inclusion in the main body of the thesis, but which should be available for perusal by the examiners to convince them sufficiently. Examples include program listings, samples of materials, immense tables of data, lengthy mathematical proofs or derivations, etc.

Source: Adapted for SCU Graduate program from resources at "How to Organize Your Thesis" at <http://www.sce.carleton.ca/faculty/chinneck/thesis.html> (accessed 5 April 2010).