

# Finishing your thesis

Congratulations! You are almost at the finish line after a long research journey. Below are some tips to stay focused and plan your successful completion.

## Acknowledge your efforts

Talk to yourself positively about your thesis to change how you view your work. For example, instead of seeing a flaw, refer to a limitation. Instead of being incomplete, refer to your work as ongoing.

Remember that not all theses have an end point, so not all require absolute language such as “proves” or “solves”. You may wish to suggest in your conclusion, how your current thesis will lead to future research.

Things may have changed in your discipline over the years in which you were writing your thesis. You may need to make adjustments, but don’t add a new element that shifts your established argument. Instead, explain to the reader where you have drawn the line.

## What needs to be done?

Write yourself a clear list of the steps you need to take to finish your thesis. Be as specific as possible and set a realistic and achievable timeframe for completing these steps. Think about things such as:

- New writing
- Writing the final chapter
- Adding new literature
- Revising all chapters for cohesion and clarity
- Putting it all together
- Making explicit links to the research question in each chapter
- Pages to fix
- Questions to ask your supervisor

Once you have your plan and you know what steps to take, you can get on with completing the final tasks and submitting your thesis for review.

## Finishing your writing

Make a daily, weekly, and monthly plan. Use a calendar to plot your daily routine and your commitments. Then you can prioritise; let go of what you can—think about what you can reduce or remove from your daily to-do list, and work around the things that you need to do.

## Editing

There are different ways to edit. Each way of editing has a specific focus, so you'll need to know your purpose for editing. Some ways of editing include:

**Structural edit** – This is where you revise the structure and development of an argument. You need to look at your chapters and thesis as a whole. Does your argument make sense? Do your points flow logically from one to the next? Have you built upon your ideas throughout your thesis?

**Copy edit** – This is where you check your paragraphs and sentences for coherence. Does everything make sense? Are your sentences structured in a grammatically correct way? Have you seamlessly incorporated your evidence?

**Proof edit** – Do this at the end. Check your text is formatted correctly, aligned properly and that your spelling and punctuation is correct. Beware of common words that may have been missed by your spell checker.

Some other questions to ask yourself are:

- What is the main theme of each chapter?
- How does each chapter relate to the one before & after? Have you explained these relationships?
- Where can links be clarified & strengthened?

## Final Tips

Ensure you allow enough time for editing. It may take days, weeks, or months. Read your work aloud and listen for errors in flow, grammar, and rhythm. Be the reader of the text (not the writer)—stop to question the writing by asking 'why?' or 'what does that mean?' Give your thesis to family or friends to read and ask them to be honest with their feedback. Lastly, consider reading from the page, not the screen as this can be helpful in identifying small errors.

Academic Learning Support offer free individual consultations and group workshops for HDR students. For more writing, study, and academic support contact [learningsupport@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:learningsupport@newcastle.edu.au) or call 02 4921 5350.