

Handbook for BA and MA Thesis in English Literature

GUIDE FOR UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE
STUDENTS

Contents

1. Stages of the Thesis

2. Stylesheet

3. Abstract

1. Stages of the Thesis

BA thesis: approximately 40–50 pages

MA thesis: approximately 120–150 pages

The page count is intended merely as a general guideline. **What matters is that the thesis be a written work in which the student demonstrates the ability to address the chosen topic in a scholarly, autonomous, and original way.**

Therefore, **the use of Artificial Intelligence tools is not permitted** (see the following slide).

1. Using AI Tools

The act of writing is primarily a human pursuit. **The writing that students submit must consist exclusively of their own cognitive, creative, and interpretive processes.**

The purpose of writing a thesis also includes developing writing skills. Therefore, **using Artificial Intelligence tools or other automated methods**—including, for example, tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, or Bard—**to produce text directly contradicts this objective.** Thesis work generated by AI, whether or not mediated by human revision, demonstrates that the learning objectives of the thesis were not achieved. Additionally, the use of AI in academic writing carries the risk of generating seemingly plausible but nonexistent references, undermining the scholarly basis of the work.

If the use of generative AI is suspected, the text will be examined to ensure it was produced by the student.

1. Stages of the Thesis

1. Topic, freely chosen by the student and agreed upon with the instructor (preferably in line with the lecturer's research interests).

Once the thesis topic has been assigned, the student is expected to keep the instructor regularly informed about the progress of the work.

2. Preliminary Bibliography, submitted in Word format, including a list of primary texts and studies.

3. Analysis and in-depth study of the materials collected in the bibliography in order to identify the key aspects to be developed.

4. Provisional Table of Contents, submitted in Word format.

1. Stages of the Thesis

5. Writing and revision of the chapters: at each stage, the thesis must be written and submitted **following the guidelines provided in the Stysheet below.**

6. The candidate chooses a thesis title so that the lecturer **can sign the title page**. The lecturer's signature is possible **only after the final version of the thesis chapters has been reviewed.**

7. Writing of the Introduction and Conclusions.

8. Abstract (writing and revision) for the dossier to be submitted for the thesis defense. The dossier must include: **the unsigned title page, the numbered table of contents, the abstract, and the bibliography.**

9. Thorough final revision of the entire thesis according to the suggested corrections, and submission in Word and PDF format of the following sections: **title page (unsigned), numbered table of contents, chapters, bibliography.**

2. Stylesheet


Style Sheet for BA and MA Theses

<https://www.docenti.unina.it/irene.montori>

BA theses should be 50 pages in length.

MA theses should be about 120-150 pages in length.

General Layout

- Please use Times New Roman, size 12 pt for the main text; 14 pt for the titles (chapters and sections); 11 pt for long citations and 10pt for footnotes.
- Line spacing: 1.5 cm
- Please set the text with **justified**. This is easily done in Word by using the right-hand button in this range of buttons: 
- Page: 3 cm margin on right-hand side, top and bottom; 3.5 cm on left-hand side.
- The first line of each paragraph should be indented by 1 cm, apart from that of the first paragraph of a chapter or subsection, which should not be indented.
- The pages are to be numbered consecutively.
- Please include a **table of contents**.
- Always include a **bibliography** at the end of your thesis. This should contain every source you have referred to or cited in your essay or thesis.
- Use either British or American spelling, but be consistent.

Italics and quotation marks

Italics are used for

- letters, words, and sentences cited as examples (e.g. OE *spēd*)
- expressions taken from foreign languages (e.g. *laissez-faire*)
- book titles, journal titles, and titles of individual works (e.g. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*)

Single quotation marks ‘ ’ are used for

- meanings of words or sentences (e.g. OE *spēd* ‘success’)
- quotes within quotes (e.g. “‘I’m terribly sorry,’ said Philip.” (Lodge 110)).
- technical terms and specific concepts (e.g. This instance represents ‘romantic irony.’)
- translations (e.g. *Errare humanum est* ‘To err is human’)

Double quotation marks “ ” are used for

- shorter quotes (up to three lines)
- titles of poems and parts of a larger work (e.g. Chaucer’s “Knight’s Tale”)

Note: Make sure to use typographically correct quotation marks: apostrophes (’). Use en dashes (–) to mark parenthetical insertions (e.g. Vowels – both lax and tense ones – exhibit distinct characteristics.).

Referencing

- When referring to another person’s writing (a source), make sure to be precise!
- When quoting verbatim, you must place this quote within quotation marks “”.
- Use square brackets to indicate all additions or changes (including omissions [...]) to the quoted text.

Quotations

- **Short quotations (up to three lines)**

Shorter quotations are incorporated into the text in correct grammatical form by double quotation marks “”:

Deirdre informed him that “[s]he’s not here.” (Lodge 110).

Direct speech within the quotation has to be demarcated by single quotation marks:

“‘I’m terribly sorry,’ said Philip.” (Lodge 110).

- **Long quotations (more than three lines)**

If you quote longer passages, you set this quotation off as a separate paragraph with **no double quotation marks**. Use **Times New Romans 11 pt** and **single line spacing**. No quotation marks are necessary, as the quotation is demarcated by being indented.

When quoting poems and plays, indicate line breaks in short quotations with a forward slash (e.g. Wordsworth’s lines “Of Him who walked in glory and in joy / Following his plough” ([1807] 2000: 1. 45-46) refer to Robert Burns.). In longer quotations, keep the original formatting of the primary text and put them in separate indented paragraphs.

Footnotes

Footnotes appear at the bottom of the page, not as endnotes. They contain important comments and additional information to support the line of argument. They appear as consecutive superscript numbers in the text, which generally follow punctuation marks unless they refer to an individual term that precedes a punctuation mark.

Material not reproduced verbatim

You must indicate your sources whenever you are using ideas, data, theories or any other kind of intellectual production which is not your own. This applies even if you are not quoting verbatim, e.g.:

Noel Coward praised Harold Pinter's exceptional achievement in drama technique in general as well as his implementation of the more comic elements of drama (Innes 279).

Plagiarism

Make sure you acknowledge and document all quotes and paraphrases!

“Plagiarism is the copying or paraphrasing of other people's work or ideas into your own work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition.” (“What is plagiarism?” University of Oxford. Web. 9 October 2012. <<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/goodpractice/about>>.)

Any form of plagiarism will be penalized.

References in the text: In-Text Citation

Use the parenthetical citation method specified in the *Modern Language Association Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th edn., widely known as ‘MLA’ (accessible online or in the student assistants' office). In this style of citation, cited or paraphrased works are referred to by a parenthetical reference. This means that the author's name, a short version of the title if using more than one work by the same author, and the relevant page numbers are put in brackets and are inserted directly into the text.

Please refer to the [Purdue OWL MLA Formatting and Style Guide](#) on how to cite sources using the current MLA edition.

e.g. (Stedman 144)
(Dannemann 184f.)
(Eisenberg, “Embedding Markets” 56-8)
(Eisenberg et al., *100 Years of Football* 12-18)

In this style, **footnotes** are used only where they contain additional comments and explanations that do not belong to the main text rather than for bibliographical information.

Bibliography

The bibliography at the end of your paper lists the complete bibliographical details of all works referred to in your paper in **alphabetical order** (by authors' or editors' last names).

NB: The *titles of publications* (books or periodicals) are set in italics, the ‘titles of sections’ (articles or chapters) are set in quotation marks (single or double, but be consistent).

You do not need to state if you have accessed an academic journal in print or online format.

For all other electronic resources (online databases, websites), please include the URL and the date of access in your bibliography. Do not list electronic sources in a separate list.

5. Examples for Bibliographical References

5.1 Monographs and Books in General

type	running text¹	References Section
monograph, one author	(Culler 1997: 56-59)	Culler, Jonathan. <i>Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. Last Name, First Name. <i>Title of Book</i> . Place: Publisher, Year.
monograph, more than one author	(Baugh and Cable 2002: 103)	Baugh, Albert C. and Thomas Cable. <i>A History of the English Language</i> . 5 th ed. London: Routledge, 2002.
edited volume	(Schabert, ed. 2009: 57)	Schabert, Ina, ed. <i>Shakespeare-Handbuch: Die Zeit – Der Mensch – Das Werk – Die Nachwelt</i> . 5 th , revised ed. Stuttgart: Kröner, 2009. Last Name, First Name, ed. <i>Title of Book</i> . Place: Publisher, Year.
more than three authors or editors	(Crenshaw <i>et al.</i> , eds. 1995: 15)	Crenshaw, Kimberlé, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, eds. <i>Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement</i> . New York: New Press, 1995.
multi-volume publication	(Hühn 1995: 2, 117)	Hühn, Peter. <i>Geschichte der englischen Lyrik</i> . 2 vols. Tübingen: Francke, 1995.

5.2 Articles in Books and Journals, Web Sources, and Other Sources

type	running text	References Section
article in a book	(Kastovsky 1992: 290-297).	Kastovsky, Dieter. “Semantics and Vocabulary”. <i>The Cambridge History of the English Language. Volume I: The Beginnings to 1066</i> . Ed. Richard M. Hogg. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992: 290-407. Last Name, First Name. “Title of Article.” <i>Title of Book</i> . Ed(s). Name(s) of Editor(s). Place: Publisher, Year: Pages of Article.

¹ General rule: The author’s name is always given in parentheses unless it already appears in the running text: e.g. Smith claims that “German is an inflecting language” (2002: 45).

article in a journal	(Edwards and Meale 1993: 102-113)	Edwards, A. S. G. and Carol M. Meale. "The Marketing of Printed Books in Late Medieval England". <i>The Library</i> 15 (1993): 95-124. Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." <i>Title of Journal</i> Volume.Issue (Year): Pages of Article.
article in a magazine with multiple issues per year	(Styrt 2015: 287)	Styrt, Philip G. "'Continuall Factions': Politics, Friendship, and History in <i>Julius Caesar</i> ". <i>Shakespeare Quarterly</i> 66.3 (2015): 286-307.
article in a magazine	(Jones 1989: 5)	Jones, Mick. "My Life with the Stones". <i>Time</i> Nov. 14, 1989: 1-20.
unpublished PhD dissertation	(Eble 1970: 67)	Eble, Connie Clare. "Noun Inflection in Royal 7 C. XII: Ælfric's First Series of Catholic Homilies". Unpubl. PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1970.
web source	(Willey 2003)	Willey, David. 2003. "Italy Gets Globe Theatre Replica". <i>BBC News</i> Oct. 14 < http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3190268.stm > (accessed January 18, 2016). Last Name, First Name. "Title." <i>Title of Publication</i> . Publication date. Web. <URL>. Access date.
dictionary entry	(<i>OED</i> s.v. <i>speed</i> , n.)	<i>OED</i> = <i>The Oxford English Dictionary</i> . 2000-. Ed. John A. Simpson. 3 rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. < http://www.oed.com > (accessed January 18, 2016).

5.3 Literary Texts, Text Editions, Plays, Movies, and Television Series

type	running text ²	References Section
novel	(<i>The Sea</i> 35) or (Banville 2005: 35)	Banville, John. <i>The Sea</i> . London: Picador, 2005.
text edition	(<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> 56) or (Austen [1813] 1999: 56)	Austen, Jane. <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> [1813]. Ed. William Trevor. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
anonymous author	(<i>Beowulf</i> l. 72) ³	<i>Beowulf: With the Finnesburg Fragment</i> . Eds. C. L. Wrenn and W. F. Bolton. 5 th ed. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996.
short story	("Conversation" 100) or (McEwan [1975] 2003: 100)	McEwan, Ian. "Conversation with a Cupboard Man" [1975]. <i>First Love, Last Rites</i> . New York: Anchor, 2003: 97-114.

² When referencing literary works, short titles may be used. Again, the general rule applies: The author's name is always given in parentheses unless it already appears in the running text. The same goes for short titles of literary works.

³ References to poems or epic texts include verse numbers (l. = *line* or *lines*) instead of page numbers.

⁷ References to poems or epic texts include verse numbers (l. = *line* or *lines*) instead of page numbers.

⁸ Format of reference: act.scene.verse.

poem	(“Journey” l. 11–16) ⁷ or (Eliot [1927] 2000: l. 11–16)	Eliot, T. S. “Journey of the Magi” [1927]. <i>The Norton Anthology of English Literature</i> . Ed. M. H. Abrams <i>et al.</i> Vol. 2. New York: Norton, 2000: 2386-2387.
play in a single edition	(<i>Hamlet</i> 1.5.189-190) ⁸	Shakespeare, William. <i>Hamlet</i> [c. 1601]. Ed. Elizabeth Story Donno. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
play in a complete edition	(<i>Hamlet</i> 1.5.189–190) ⁴	Shakespeare, William. <i>Hamlet</i> [c. 1601]. <i>The Riverside Shakespeare</i> . Eds. G. Blakemore Evans, J. J. M. Tobin, <i>et al.</i> 2 nd ed. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 1997: 1183-1245.

⁴ Format of reference: act.scene.verse.

3. Abstract

- ▶ The abstract (1000–1500 words) provides a synopsis of the thesis and must be written after the introduction and conclusions have been written.
- ▶ Its main purpose is to provide clear information about the content of the thesis to the Examination Committee.

3. Abstract

- ▶ Start with a brief sentence (max. 3 lines) explaining the topic.
- ▶ Then describe how your thesis relates to the field, outlining research questions and theoretical approaches.
- ▶ The central section summarises the thesis structure, key authors/works, theoretical and methodological approaches, and short examples if needed.
- ▶ Finally, illustrate the results and conclusions.

Good luck!



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