

Thesis or Memoir

According to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (FGPS), "a thesis is a significant original body of work produced by a student during his or her studies at the University. A good thesis is thoroughly researched, demonstrates rigorous critical thinking and analysis, presents a detailed methodology and accurate results, and includes tenacious verification of knowledge claims."

Like for any other paper, you can follow the steps of the writing process to carry out your research project: following the instructions, defining the topic, doing research, making an outline, writing the paper and editing the paper.

Your thesis supervisor should be available to discuss the expectations of both parties and to define the terms of collaboration as well as the requirements of the thesis. Your academic unit should be disposed to provide access to a number of theses that may serve as examples in your field of study. The FGPS should be able to answer your questions regarding academic standards and general regulations.

Writing at the graduate level

Critical thinking and project management are key aspects of writing at the graduate level. On the one hand, critical thinking helps to identify original contributions that can be made to a field of study, thus helping you to define the research question that will drive your paper. On the other hand, project management helps to break down a large, overwhelming task into a series of smaller, more manageable steps, thus helping you to avoid procrastination.

Why should you develop your critical thinking skills?

- To show a deep understanding of the topic that goes beyond restating information.
- To express an informed opinion on the quality and significance of existing research on the topic.
- To make connections between the ideas in the literature and your own ideas.
- To formulate a clear and insightful research question.

Why should you develop your project management skills?

- To determine the order in which each step must be done.
- To establish short-term goals.
- To set immediate and easier-to-meet deadlines.
- To keep your focus.

Research at the graduate level

Information management allows you to sort all the source material compiled through research and to make sense out of it. Develop your own information management system in order to be actively engaged in your research, to organize the information that you have gathered and to avoid plagiarism.

Subject librarians at the University of Ottawa library can give you information management tips that will help you to conduct your research. Do not hesitate to contact them and to consult the writing resources listed on the next page.

Suggested readings

- Beaud, M. (2006). *L'art de la thèse : comment préparer et rédiger un mémoire de master, une thèse de doctorat ou tout autre travail universitaire à l'ère du Net* (nouv. éd.). Paris, France : La Découverte.
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- Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., & Williams, J. M. (2008). *The craft of research* (3rd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Browne, M. N., & Keeley, S. M. (2011). *Asking the right questions: A guide to critical thinking* (10th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Buckley, J. (2013). *Checkmate: A writing reference for Canadians* (3rd ed.). Toronto, ON: Nelson Education.
- Diestler, S. (2012). *Becoming a critical thinker: A user-friendly manual* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Fragnière, J.-P. (2009). *Comment réussir un mémoire* (4^e éd.). Paris, France : Dunod.
- Giroux, A., & Fourgette-Giroux, R. (1989). *Penser, lire, écrire : introduction au travail intellectuel*. Ottawa, ON : Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa.
- Laurencelle, L. (2005). *Abrégé sur les méthodes de recherche et la recherche expérimentale*. Sainte-Foy, QC : Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- Northey, M. (2007). *Making sense: A student's guide to research and writing* (5th ed.). Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.
- Orna, E., & Stevens, G. (1995). *Managing information for research: Practical help in researching, writing and designing dissertations*. Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.
- Roberts, C. M. (2010). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing and defending your dissertation* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Translation Bureau. (1997). *The Canadian style*. Ottawa, ON: Public Works and Government Services Canada. Also available at <http://www.btb.termiplus.gc.ca/tpv2guides/guides/tcdnstyl/index-fra.html?lang=fra>
- University of Ottawa. (2012). *Preparing a thesis or a research paper at the University of Ottawa*. Retrieved from http://www.grad.uottawa.ca/Portals/29/theses/Guide%20Preparing%20a%20a%20Thesis%20or%20a%20Research%20Paper_En_%20final.pdf
- University of Ottawa. (2014). *Regulation on academic fraud*. Retrieved from <http://www.uottawa.ca/about/academic-regulation-14-other-important-information>
- University of Minnesota. (n.d.). *Dissertation calculator*. Retrieved from <http://www.lib.umn.edu/help/disscalc/>