

MA Digital Arts and Humanities Thesis Structure

The formal submission instructions for a dissertation (Taught Masters) at UCC are available at: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/graduatestudies/thesis/> These instructions augment the formal requirements specific to the Digital Arts and Humanities programme.

The following provides a generalised framework for the dissertation structure. They are meant to provide a guide and individual research project dissertations will vary based on specific project parameters.

Scholarly Apparatus

Acknowledgements/Dedication (100-200 words)

Abstract (250 words)

Table of Contents

This should be clearly laid out with accurate pagination

This should include an active link to the digital artefact you have produced to accompany the dissertation at the head of the page.

Declaration

Following the table of contents, a signed declaration should be included stating that the thesis submitted is the candidate's own work and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere.

Introduction (1000 – 2000 words)

The introduction should engage the reader with the topic you are studying and introduce the context of your exploration. It should summarise your approach, process and findings and reinforce the value of the research question you have devised.

It may prove helpful to revise this extensively once you complete the thesis.

Literature Review & Horizon Scan (2500 – 3000 words)

You should substantiate your research project with *at least* 5 - 10 key pieces of literature on which your work relies.

In a traditional humanities MA, this would draw entirely on existing scholarly work. However, in our field, it is also necessary to survey existing digital projects related to your topic and these should be presented here.

This is where you lay the foundation for your thesis. Work from the broad topic identifying the relevant themes and integrating supporting literature into the discussion. What critical concepts are foundational to your work? What key authors or theories are vital, and if you were to keep explaining them as you go would detract from the flow of your central thesis? Lay out the scholarly basis for your work here with especial focus on the digital aspects of your project and specific literature from digital arts and humanities that supports your methodological approach.

Hint: Don't present this as an annotated bibliography led by the specific authors and works, but instead identify the thoughts, themes and ideas and engage with contrasting opinions. In subsequent chapters you do not want to have to go into detail on the contribution of a particular author to your presentation - instead refer back to previously established points from this section.

The general structure of this chapter should proceed from the broad to the more specific - eventually reaching and establishing grounds for OR identifying the gap demanding the research you are undertaking as part of your own project.

Key disciplinary texts should be introduced here in conjunction with *your* understanding of them and how they inform your project.

Epistemological (the WHY) & Methodological Statement ... (1000 words)

Building on the literature review, this is a discussion that grounds and substantiates your perspectives and approaches chosen with relation to the field. This section addresses the reason why this project is a useful contribution to the field.

Why are you doing this – what is the need? Why you, why now, why ...?

Tools and Methods - the HOW (1000 words)

The method is the HOW! How are you going to do this?

Some basic aspects that you need to address include:

Quantitative or Qualitative or Mixed Methods?

Define your method – why you chose it, and how you will implement it. What tools will you use and how did you make these decisions - what alternatives did you consider?

“Understanding the difference between methods and methodology is of paramount importance. Method is simply a research tool, a component of research – say for example, a qualitative method such as interviews. Methodology is the justification for using a particular research method. <http://deborahgabriel.com/2011/05/13/methods-and-methodology/> May 13, 2011”

Process (2000 words)

The content here depends on the project. It could be a description of the actual application of the methods, a research or lab notebook. This is also where you would describe the key decisions you made in the design and building of the digital artifact, the problems encountered in building it, and how they were overcome.

Analysis & Discussion of findings (2000 - 4000 words)

Here you will document the outputs from the “experiment”/the digital artefact of the work: what results emerged from the methods used? This is where you explain your results in detail.

This where you will engage most directly with your digital artefact. Expose and explore the structure of your work, contextualising the topic and how and why the artefact and results emerged and are reflected in the project and specifically the artefact.

Conclusion (1000-2000 words)

Here, you highlight the key insights from the research. What was learned – is there any new knowledge? Have you identified new problems or possibilities? What are the directions for future research and development?

Bibliography (MLA or Harvard)

The recommended standard for referencing and citations at UCC Digital Arts and Humanities is either Harvard or Modern Language Association (MLA). Further information on usage is available at: <https://uccdh.com/referencing-styles-in-digital-arts-humanities/> We also advocate the use Zotero - or another reference manager - to automate the management of your sources. The citing of your sources needs to be very clear and consistent - the work of a professional researcher.

Additional Notes

The Research Process

An alternative, less formal way to see the process, from the Writing For Research Blog is through this template which may help you to develop a structure.

How to tell your research story

- I work in the field of:
- The disciplines, or sub-disciplines, that I most engage with are:
- My research topic is:
- Much is already known about my topic. For example:
- However, one thing that is not adequately understood is:
- It would be useful to remove this gap in our knowledge because:
- The particular question I asked myself was:
- The method I chose for answering this question was
- What I discovered was:
- The results suggest/indicate/show/demonstrate/prove that:
- I interpret the results in that way because:
- The main way in which my research has changed or added to the field is
- The value of this contribution is that it:
- Of course, my study has limitations. In particular:
- The main way in which we should behave differently as a result of this study is:
- The main way in which we should think differently as a result of this study is
- A next step is:

<https://writeyourresearch.files.wordpress.com/2016/05/telling-your-research-story1.docx>

Scholarly Writing Fundamentals

1. Structure of the paragraph:
 - a. Claim: Make your claim, state your argument → one paragraph has one central point
2. Data: Back it up with research, examples to support → Quotation/Reference
 - a. Warrant: How does my data make my claim evident? → Explain – how does the data/reference make the point as far as you are concerned? Remember it may not be clear to your reader - your job is to “get your point across”.
3. Follow those simple steps, not always in same order – and all will be well.
4. Keep a post-it of your title, your thesis focus, at the top of your laptop / screen. Try never to finish a paragraph without understanding how you are developing your thesis at every point as you proceed. This simple technique helps you to stay focussed.