

GRSC6021 Introduction to Thesis Writing (The Sciences & Related Disciplines)

Aim:

The course aims to develop students' systematic knowledge of how to write about their research and apply such knowledge to their writing both within and beyond the course.

Content:

The course will consider all aspects of writing a thesis. It will look at the overall content and organization of the thesis and the concerns particular to each stage of the work, focusing on how the language used in each chapter makes the writing communicatively successful.

Lessons will cover the following topics related to the thesis itself: identification of a research gap and making the gap explicit; the subsequent formulation of a research problem or research questions; acknowledging the work of others and commenting on the literature in the field along with discourse features and language used in reviewing literature; reporting and discussing the writer's own research results as well as findings; the writing of abstracts, introductions and conclusions; the use of verbal signposts and verb tenses across the thesis; and issues of language delicacy, along with citation practices and bibliographic formats.

There will be critical analyses of texts selected by teachers and students and short language exercises to support some of the discussions. Outlining/writing of short texts will be used to demonstrate aspects of a thesis and peer/teacher feedback will be provided. Texts and other resources will be recommended for out-of-class learning and self-reflection on writing.

Organization:

This is a 24-hour course, consisting of two 3-hour lessons each week for four weeks. Each lesson will consist of brief input sessions from the teacher followed by small group discussions of texts which illustrate the learning focus covered in the input sessions.

Enrollment:

This course is compulsory for all MPhil and 4-year PhD students, but it is open to all research postgraduate students up to a maximum of 30 per class. It is not necessary for students to take this course in the first semester of their studies and very often students find it more beneficial if they take it in their second semester or third semester of their studies.

For students who have been notified individually by the Graduate School to take Intensive English for Postgraduate Students, enrollment on this course is restricted to those who have passed that course. This is a firm requirement with no exceptions.

Students will find it helpful to take **Writing Right: Writing Clearly and Accurately** before taking this course.

After taking this course, students will find it useful to take **Getting Published in Academic Journals (The Sciences & Related Disciplines)** to enhance their academic writing skills and learn about publishing their research.

Assessment:

Assessment will take the form of a 1600-word portfolio related to the students' research area. The portfolio should consist of a literature review and a critique. The topic should be chosen by the student, preferably in collaboration with his/her supervisor, and the portfolio must be submitted to the Centre for Applied English Studies for assessment within two weeks of completion of the course. The student will be graded Pass or Fail on the basis of this portfolio.

Students are encouraged to use inclusive or gender-neutral language in their assignments. Information of inclusive language can be found in resources such as *Nine techniques for achieving gender neutrality* (<https://edwardseducationblog.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/the-chicago-manual-of-style-online-5-225-nine-techniques-for-achieving-gender-neutrality.pdf>) and *Stereotypes and biased language* (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/608/05/>).

Outcomes:

At the end of the course, participants' awareness of the various skills at different stages of writing a thesis will be enhanced and they will be able to move forward in their thesis writing systematically. More specifically, students will be able to:

- demonstrate awareness of the overall communicative purpose and argumentative structure of a thesis (or part of a thesis);
- identify and apply language features, rhetorical devices, and the citation and referencing format used by academics in writing up research in their discipline; and
- apply knowledge of overall communicative organization in a thesis as well as linguistic and rhetorical features when writing about their own research.

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