THE MASTER'S DISSERTATION
AND DOCTORAL THESIS

A Guide to Research and the Organization
of Material

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Unisa-publication
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA
Issued to students
PREFACE

This guide is intended as a supplement to the Preliminary Guide issued to you when you made your initial enquiries regarding Master's or Doctoral studies. It covers various aspects of MA/DLitt et Phil research and the writing of a short dissertation (if you are registered for the coursework MA), dissertation or thesis, and you are advised not only to read, but constantly to refer to it in the course of your work. For the sake of convenience it is divided into chapters dealing with different aspects of postgraduate research.

The guide will help you to avoid some of the more common mistakes which the inexperienced research student is liable to make; it is not intended to replace or in any way limit the exchange of ideas between student and supervisor/promoter. Problems not dealt with in the guide – problems peculiar to your particular topic or the nature of your material – should be discussed with your supervisor/promoter.

The difference between a Master's dissertation and a Doctoral thesis

A Master's dissertation is an advanced research project of defined scope and length (±120 pp., one and a half spacing, A4 paper). The short dissertation for the MA by coursework is about half this length, i.e. 60 pp. The criteria are: Technical competence, evidence of scholarly research, critical ability, understanding of relevant theoretical issues, lucidity and coherence. A dissertation should have a theme or 'thesis', usually stated in the title, and the success with which MA candidates sustain that theme, thereby presenting a unified, cumulative argument, is an important consideration. A dissertation is not required to be ‘an original contribution to knowledge’, though it may be. It is given a mark and the degree can be awarded with distinction.

A Doctoral thesis, is a still more demanding research paper. There is no strict limitation on length, but ±250 pages (one and a half spacing, A4 paper) are usually sufficient. The general criteria applied in assessing an MA dissertation are applied in assessing a doctorate, but much more rigorously. Similarly, the thesis is subjected to further critical
assessment, specifically against the basic requirement, that a doctorate be 'an original contribution to knowledge'. Usually the doctorate covers a wider field, or at least shows a greater sense of perspective, than does the MA, and one would expect a candidate to show an awareness of basic theoretic problems directly or indirectly relevant to his or her particular topic. The authority underlying the thesis – the extent to which candidates reveal an extensive as well as intensive knowledge of their subject – is another criterion implicit in one's assessment of a doctoral candidate and a pointer to the quality of such a candidate's scholarship. Marks are not awarded, the assumption being that if a doctorate is accepted it is worthy of 'distinction'.

The doctoral student is expected to be far more independent than the MA student. While your supervisor may read as much as you yourself do in your field of research for a master's degree, in the case of a doctorate you are expected to become the expert. The following paraphrase of an entry in the University of Oxford 1992/3 Prospectus makes a useful distinction:

The masters is essentially the degree of the skilled craftsperson: the proof that the candidate knows the tools of the literary trade and can use them satisfactorily.

For the doctorate, candidates must present 'a significant and substantial piece of research'; this will be interpreted as requiring some stature, breadth, and conviction in literary argument.

Examination

In the Department of English, most of the components of the Masters degrees by coursework are examined, and 50% of the final mark is earned by the short dissertation. In the Masters degree by dissertation and the DLitt et Phil examination is based on a thesis or dissertation only, although any candidate can also be called up for an oral examination or viva voce, if the examiners feel this is necessary. This very rarely happens. As candidates thus stand or fall by the quality of their
thesis/dissertation, the stress we place on an academically sound, stylistically acceptable and error-free piece of work, is understandable. The regulations concerning submission procedures are fully set out in Part 1 of the University Calendar, as well as the closing dates of which there are two.

The following points need to be mentioned here: The usual recommended period of registration is two to two and a half years for an MA by coursework, three years for an MA, four for a DLitt et Phil. Deferment of study is possible, but this is usually subject to strict conditions. When the thesis/dissertation has been completed to the satisfaction of the supervisor/promoter (usually only after the supervisor has seen the complete final draft), you have to inform the Registrar (Academic), by a given date, that you intend submitting your work for examination. The supervisor/promoter has formally to give permission for the study to be submitted: this does not mean he or she regards it as necessarily pass-worthy; merely that it has reached the stage where it can be handed in for examination. A panel of examiners (usually three, of whom at least one is from outside the University) is appointed, under a non-examining Chairman – hence the need for you to submit at least three copies. The reports and findings are collated and submitted by the Chairman to the Executive Dean, for approval by the Executive Dean in the case of a master's dissertation and the Chairman of Senate in the case of a doctoral thesis. Before the results are finalized, you may be asked to make certain necessary corrections in the remaining copies of your dissertation/thesis so that if it is accepted, the copies which go to the University library and other institutions will be as presentable as possible. A dissertation/thesis may be accepted (an MA can also be awarded with distinction) or rejected: in the latter case, it may be failed outright, or it may be referred to the candidate for, usually, fairly extensive revision. If this happens, the main findings of the examiners are conveyed to the supervisor, who will discuss the revision of the dissertation/thesis with the candidate. It has to be resubmitted for examination within a year.
Regulations and Submission Dates

(i) Candidates wishing to submit their dissertations/theses in time for the April graduation, have to

(a) notify the Registrar (Academic) of their intention to do so by 30 September of the preceding year (permission for this must be obtained from the supervisor/promoter) and

(b) hand in the required number of copies of the dissertation/thesis by 30 November together with a statement that it is their own work. Any dissertation/thesis handed in after 30 November runs the risk of not being examined in time for graduation in April, in which case successful candidates will have to wait until September. (Students who submit after the closing date will have to reregister for the following year.)

(ii) Candidates wishing to submit their dissertations/theses in time for the September graduation, must

(a) notify the Registrar (Academic) of their intention to do so by 15 April (permission for this must be obtained from the supervisor/promoter) and

(b) hand in the required number of copies of the dissertation/thesis by 15 June together with a statement that it is their own work. Any dissertation/thesis handed in after 15 June runs the risk of not being examined in time for graduation in September, in which case successful candidates will have to wait until the following April.

(iii) Students registered for the MA and DLitt et Phil are expected to submit work regularly and make steady progress towards completing the degree. Applications for renewal of registration at the end of each year are approved only if the
supervisors/promoters can report favourably on progress made.

You should work out a suitable submission schedule, in consultation with your supervisor/promoter, and stick to it as closely as you can. MA (coursework) students should follow the timetable provided in their Tutorial Letter 101 or by their tutor.

(iv) Consult the Calendar for the current year (Part 1 of the University Calendar) to ascertain precisely what will be required of you, as well as the form in which your dissertation/thesis should be submitted. It is not your supervisor's/promoter's duty to remind you of closing dates and other requirements or regulations.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF DISSERTATION AND THESIS WRITING

Logical arrangement of material

One of the most important aspects of a thesis is the ordering of a mass of heterogeneous material into a logical whole ('thesis' will be used in the rest of this guide to signify the short Masters (coursework) dissertation, the Master's dissertation and the Doctoral thesis). What is more, internal logic must be sustained throughout. Some subjects lend themselves to a logically developing argument, while others require the treatment of separate elements in different chapters. It is necessary, therefore, to have in mind the aim of each chapter in its relation to the whole work; to appreciate that disparate elements will have to be related, perhaps in a concluding chapter, or that arguments will have to be related, in sequence, to the conclusion.
Preface and Introduction

A Preface is usually a combination of disparate elements, necessary for the clarification of aspects of the work, but not necessarily concerned with the development of the argument as such. In a preface special acknowledge-ments (oral sources of information in research on a contemporary figure, letters or unpublished material) should be made; your subject, scope, and approach should be justified; the relevant bibliographical information (such as essential texts you are using, and any remarkable aspect of the texts that might be of help to a future researcher) should be supplied. As you will not know what information might be necessary to include in the preface until you have completed your thesis, it is as well to keep a separate book or file to note down any points, appropriate to a preface, as they occur during your researches.

An Introduction introduces the argument, and is more concerned with the body of the thesis than a preface. It might be necessary to survey the field of study, and mention your main objectives. You should also discuss the theoretical approach adopted, and the method or line of argument you intend following.

You may wish or need to supply such information as historical or literary background, intellectual climate, and biographical material relevant to a fuller understanding and appreciation of the research material. Often a separate preface proves unnecessary, and the first part of the Introduction is devoted to an outline of the nature, scope, and purpose of the thesis.

The Chapter

Each chapter will deal with some section of the work, possibly complete in itself, or separated from the whole for purposes of special study. The chapter will, however, be related to other chapters in such a way as to show contrasts, affinities, parallel developments, chronological developments, special qualities and/or techniques, or whatever special concentration may be required by the subject matter comprehended as a whole. The concentration will be on the specific, but should send feelers
out into the other chapters. Although divisions are artificially made for convenience, sections should not be completely isolated from the whole. A thesis is a comprehensively organized and sustained piece of academic research. We stress the importance of ‘sign-posting’, especially in fairly lengthy chapters: The logical structuring of the argument should always be apparent.

**The Conclusion**

Conclusions are not always necessary, and you should not feel compelled to rehash what has already been clearly expressed in the body of the work. However, it may be necessary to gather together, in the form of a final coherent conclusion, the various findings you have made. Or, if the thesis develops as an argument from a premise, the final statement should appear in a conclusion that reveals both the logic of the progression, and the complexity of the ideas; a thesis is nearly always concerned with complexities, which is why there is a need for order and coherence in its writing.

**Structure**

A chapter encompasses a section of a thesis that may, for convenience, be separated for particular study. Within the chapter, however, you may well find so many interrelated points that require analysis, that your material would find better shape in a series of further sub-divisions. Again, you might use dots or asterisks to show that you have extracted a piece of related material for the focus of your attention. A concluding section could draw the various threads together. Sub-headings and line breaks are useful ways of signalling changes of direction and/or subject-matter in fairly lengthy chapters; they are merely distracting in chapters of fewer than ten pages.
Some material, though related and deserving mention, will not be sufficiently relevant, or, perhaps, important to deserve a separate section or even incorporation in the main body of the work. You might feel that by incorporating the material in the body of the work, you would destroy the force or logic of an argument. Consider whether such material could not be incorporated in the general Introduction to the whole thesis, a more special introduction to the chapter, an appendix, or a footnote/endnote.

An appendix may be used to elaborate on some point allied to the concern of the work, but not, strictly speaking, a part of the argument. If you use an appendix for some such purpose, it should be referred to clearly, either in the body of the work, or in a footnote. Appendices are also used as repositories for ancillary material, e.g. translations of passages cited in the original language (Latin or Greek, for example) in the text, or the texts of poems which are out of print and unlikely to be available to the reader or examiner.

**Quotations**

Quotations must observe the grammatical structure of the sentence of which they are a part: verbs must agree in person, number and tense, and pronouns must observe the grammatical structure of the whole. Example:

> Another disembodied twentieth-century voice cries out that he 'saw one [he] knew', and so reveals....

Quotations at the end of a sentence take a full-stop outside the closing inverted comma:

> T.S. Eliot, however, is not merely criticizing an abstract twentieth-century society, he is also judging himself and the 'hypocrite lecteur'.
But where the quotation forms a complete sentence on its own, or is isolated by a colon or dash from the main sentence structure, the closing stop comes inside the closing inverted comma.

Walter Benjamin wrote: 'We remain an inevitable part of the rubble of a catastrophic history.'

It has become general practice in theses to use single inverted commas, and double inverted commas only when a quotation occurs within a quotation.

A long (indented) quoted extract not embodied in the structure of a paragraph should not be placed in quotation marks unless the original is either in direct speech, or in quotation marks for some other reason. A space should be left between the paragraph and the beginning of the quotation. The quotation should be indented and typed in single spacing, and another space left before the paragraph continues, or a new paragraph starts. (Poetry and verse drama should be quoted in the verse, stanzaic, blank-verse, etc., form of the original.)

Where a quotation is broken by the omission of a phrase, three dots should be inserted to indicate the break. Where a complete sentence or series of sentences is omitted, four dots should indicate the break.

Where a long indented quotation is started in the middle of a sentence, three dots should precede the first word to indicate the omission of the first part of the sentence.

Where the last part of a long, indented, quoted sentence is omitted the last word should be followed by four dots: three to indicate the omission of words, the fourth to indicate the full stop at the end of the omitted part.

Where one or more lines of a poem are omitted, the omission should be indicated by a line of dots between the two parts of the quotation. Any word(s) inserted or changed by you in a quotation, for whatever purpose, should be placed within square brackets, to indicate that it is not the
author's own bracketed parenthesis. If you underline or italicize any word(s) in the quoted passage, a bracketed acknowledgement, (my emphasis), should follow the quotation (or be included in your footnote/endnote reference).

Where possible, short quoted phrases and single lines should be embodied in the paragraph, and indentations left for longer quotations. The reverse, however, does not always hold. Long quotations need not always be separated from the paragraph, as they might be an integral part of the structure of the paragraph.

**Layout and Typing**

Double (one and a half spacing is also permissible) spaced type, on one side only of A4 pages; quotations and footnotes in single spacing; pagination in sequence throughout the thesis, not chapter by chapter. Leave at least two centimetres for the left-hand margin. End notes numbered from one in each chapter.

**Binding and title page**

Consult Section B of Part 1 of the *University Calendar* for the requirements of the title page and the binding of your thesis.

**Proofreading**

At this point we wish to trigger off every alarm bell and set every warning light flashing in your mind. Research students often underestimate the importance of proofreading. You must read the final draft of your thesis with the utmost care, correcting all typing errors (or copying errors in quotations) before you present your final draft for the final typing, and before you present the completed thesis to the Registrar (Academic). Remember, you are not an academic unless you are accurate, and are able to eliminate errors by meticulous proofreading. Your thesis may be excellent in argument and content, but it will be referred back for revision if it shows evidence of careless proofreading.
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCING FOR MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL STUDENTS

Introduction

Some postgraduate students are inclined to dismiss bibliography as a plodding routine, fit only for the dull and the fussy. Such dismissal will find little favour in this Department, and MA and DLitt et Phil students who have only the haziest, the untidiest notions of bibliographical and research procedures, and who think such matters beneath their notice, will find their problems great, if not insuperable. Brilliance such students may well possess, but the thesis is not simply a test of raw talent. It is a test of insight, but it is also a test of probity, of care in matters of detail, of the force of verification. In a thesis we do not expect students to play safe all the time and produce colourless opinions culled from critics and completely lacking in original thought. Theses are largely an expression of individuality and perception, but they must carry evidence of more than personal assertiveness. They must form a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject and afford evidence of originality, shown either by the discovery of new facts or by the exercise of independent critical opinion. They must provide evidence that the theories and opinions of others have been sifted and tested. Examiners can quickly detect the range of a thesis's cross-referencing – and therefore its ambit of research – by looking at both the bibliography at the end of the thesis and the parenthetical references to other works in the text (when the Harvard system of referencing is used), or the footnote/endnote references in the text (when the MLA system of referencing is used).

The bibliography must provide a list which should show the thoroughness of a student's research, and in its arrangement – whether it be alphabetical, or chronological, or by subject or area – it should clearly declare its logic. The argument of the thesis itself should not be pretentious and, similarly, honesty and intelligence must be manifested by the bibliography and the footnotes.
The bibliography must be a firm recording of the presence of the book, or article, or pamphlet, and that is why we require certain signposts that clearly direct us to that book. We must be given every pointer that will enable us, if we so wish, to examine the evidence for ourselves.

**What should a bibliographical entry include?**

The surname of the author should be recorded, together with his or her full forenames, or, if these are not easily available, initials.

If the book is the work of two authors, both names should be given, but in the case of three or more authors, the first writer should be mentioned followed by 'and others' (sometimes *et al.* – Latin: *et alia* – is used). In the case of a work containing separate contributions by several different people the name of the editor or compiler should be cited, followed by the abbreviation 'comp.' or 'ed.' (Compilers usually are no more than collectors of contents; editors usually direct and introduce material, though the distinction between the two terms is becoming more and more blurred.) The title – and sub-title – must be supplied, followed by the place of publication, the publisher, and the date of publication.

**The Harvard System of Referencing**

We recommend that you adopt the Harvard system, although if you wish you may use the older MLA system, in which case you should consult *The MLA Style Sheet* (New York: Modern Languages Association, 2nd ed. 1970).

While the MLA method is remarkably detailed and systematic, it can become cumbersome and difficult to use. The Harvard method is comparatively simple: it proposes a few general rules to be applied in all cases and relies on the common sense of the user to make decisions concerning final points of presentation, footnoting, bibliographical layout, etc.

There are many variations of the Harvard method, but all of them rely on the following procedure: the name of the author, the year of publication of the text, and the page number of the quotation or reference appear in the text. This simple operation replaces the need for asterisks or small numbers in the text as well as the corresponding footnotes at the bottom of the page (or endnotes at the end of the chapter, or the book). Here are two examples:

a. Blake was undoubtedly a mystical writer: ’Blake owed a great deal to the neo-Platonic mystics of the eighteenth century’ (Jones 1980:61).

b. Jones makes it clear that Blake must be regarded as a mystical writer (1980:33 and elsewhere).

In example (a), you have made a statement and wish to validate it by quoting from an authority (Jones). After the quotation, three pieces of information appear in brackets:

(i) the surname of the author. If you are referring to, or quoting from, two authors who have the surname of Jones, distinguish them by means of an initial, for example, A Jones 1980:61. If a work has two authors, mention both surnames in the text, for example, Jones and Smith 1980:61.

(ii) the year of publication of the book or article. If Jones wrote two books in 1980, both of which are referred to or quoted from in your thesis, then you will need to differentiate them by means of lower case letters, for example, Jones 1980a:61 and Jones 1980b:204. (If Jones had published three books in
1980, the third will become Jones 1980c.)

(iii) **the page number**. If you are referring indirectly to Jones, you may wish to point to a whole chapter, or a series of pages which validate your observation, for example, Jones 1980:Chapter 3, or Jones 1980:33 and 35-38.

This information in the text is supplemented by the information which appears in the bibliography, or works cited, at the end of the thesis. Both examples (a) and (b) above would refer to the following bibliographical entry:


In this entry, the surname is followed by an initial (or first name), the date of the publication, the full title, the place of publication and the publisher.

The above procedures constitute the basic (and very simple) rules of the Harvard method. These rules will probably suffice for most referencing situations. The Harvard method has a number of procedures for more complicated situations, some of which will be discussed below. However, the best advice one can give is that once you have mastered the basic rules of the Harvard method, if you have the need for a more complicated procedure, simply devise one which suits your needs, as long as you use this procedure consistently throughout the thesis. For example, if you are repeatedly quoting from the study by Jones in one section of your thesis, there is no need to repeat the name Jones every time. Similarly, if you preface a quotation with the words, ‘Jones says:’ you need not repeat the name Jones in the reference at the end of the quotation (see example b above). The date and page number (1980:61) will suffice, or, if it is very clear which work of Jones you are quoting from, the page number alone (61) will be sufficient.
If you wish to refer to a number of studies for the reader to consult, separate them by semi-colons, for example:

(a) Many scholars have explored Blake's mystical connection (see Jones 1980; Smith 1962; Brown 1986).

(b) Many scholars have mentioned Blake's debt to Thomas Taylor (see Jones 1980:63; Smith 1962:30-31; Brown 1986:280 and 291).

Whereas the first rule of the Harvard system involves mentioning the surname of the author, the date of publication of the work, and the page number (where necessary), the second rule specifies that there must be a listing in the bibliography which corresponds to the mention in the text. So, for example, for (a) or (b) above, one must include bibliographical listings of these three particular works by Jones, Smith and Brown. While this is obvious and clear, some special cases of bibliographical listing can present problems. Presume, for example, that Johnson has edited a volume of critical essays on Blake. Davis and Carter both have articles which appear in this volume. I have made the following statement in my thesis:

Both Davis (1982) and Carter (1982) give attention to the hermetic elements in Blake's writings.

The bibliographical entries are as follows:


It is sufficient, in the cases of Carter and Davis, simply to mention that they appear in Johnson 1982 (as well as the relevant page numbers) as long as one includes full bibliographical information on Johnson (1982).

Within the Harvard-system bibliography, you may adopt whatever style of presentation for various kinds of material that you wish, as long as you use such a style consistently. The only essential requirement in terms of style is that the date of publication appear after the name of the author.

Here are some examples of different kinds of bibliography entries in the Harvard system:

Atmore, A. & Marks, S.
1974 The Imperial Factor in South Africa in the Nineteenth Century: Towards a Reassessment. *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 3(1): 105-139

This is referred to as (Atmore & Marks 1974) in the text.

Bakhtin, M.M.

Barker, Francis; Hulme, Peter; Iversen, Margaret & Loxley, Diana (eds)

This would be referred to as (Barker et al 1983) in the text.
Bhabha, Homi K.

Odendaal, André

Oliphant, Andries Walter

You will notice that this selection includes most variants of bibliographic entry: dual authorship, journal article, book, book edited and translated, book with multiple editors, one author with multiple entries, one author with more than one entry in the same year, theses, and newspaper articles. Take note, however, that this is an example from one recent student's bibliography, and that you may wish to cite certain items differently. That is your choice. You may, for example, wish to cite journals as in the following example:

The layout and style are different in this example; you are free to follow your own preference as long as you are consistent.

In conclusion, it is important to remember that the Harvard referencing system is not an elaborate set of restrictive rules which one has to follow slavishly. The basic system is simple to grasp and easy to use. If you find that it does not provide sufficient information to cover some special referencing problems particular to your thesis, do not cast around frantically in search of the correct rule – simply adapt the system to your needs. There are many variations from which to choose, but consistency is obviously essential.

**Internet Citations**

This is a rapidly changing field and there are many guides. A useful one is http://www.dartmouth.edu/~sources/contents.html.

**What should a bibliography include?**

A wide variety of different kinds of publication – books, pamphlets, journals, papers, Internet sites – could be included in the bibliography, and the nature of the subject must decide the nature of the material listed. The professional bibliographer aims at completeness; with the limits defined for the project one should try to account for every relevant work.

But thesis writers (particularly in the case of a Master's dissertation) should accept that theirs is no more than a select bibliography, though this confession of incompleteness should not be an excuse for skimpiness. Writers should try to check as much as possible of the material that is relevant to their subject, even though their primary concern must always remain the writing of the work itself. Personal insight and approach will always be of primary concern within the broader bibliographic frame of reference.
The following are the types of material that could be examined:

**Primary Sources**

Works by the writer or writers who are the subject of the thesis, or works falling within a particular area of research (the thesis may undertake the study of a specific subject or theme, for example). If you are studying the novels of a particular person, those novels will be the primary source of reference; but the writer's other work – criticism, for example – should also be examined and listed. Manuscripts should be regarded as primary sources for original research, and where these are available, published texts should always be checked against them. Even ‘complete’ and ‘scholarly’ editions contain errors and omissions but – at least at MA level – such editions can usually be used as your main source of reference. Online texts, if used, should be checked for accuracy and for the source of the text. Personal correspondence and/or interviews with an author who is the subject of your research, should also be documented here.

**Secondary Sources**

Works dealing with the writer, or the area of research specified (include any online works also):

1. Bibliographies
2. Biographies
3. Critical books
4. Pamphlets
5. Articles in journals

A thesis bibliography can be divided into these two main sections (primary and secondary sources), although it has become common practice in the Harvard system to dispense with these divisions in cases where they are not deemed to be necessary, since the Harvard bibliography is much easier to consult if it is one continuous list. Separate alphabetical lists mean that a reader must check each list for a
particular item.

In general, it is important to indicate in your final bibliography (by implication) that you have kept up with recent research in any particular field. A bibliography which lists works no more recent than five or ten years previously inspires little confidence. Articles, in particular, should be up to date.

**How to compile a bibliography**

Though it should eventually appear in list form, a bibliography should not be compiled in list form on sheets of paper: this makes it impossible, or an extraordinarily untidy process, to add the names of books at a later stage. As the thesis progresses it may also demand the rearrangement of the list. A bibliography should be compiled on cards (12.5 cm x 7.5 cm or 15.2 cm x 10.2 cm, depending on whether you wish to add descriptive notes or not; such additions, in the final bibliography, are usually inadvisable). Each card should have one entry only, so that this record may be rearranged, added to, or reduced, without difficulty. Alternatively, you could compile your bibliography in list form directly onto computer disc.

**Where is the student to search for relevant material?**

The Unisa library, one of the best equipped in the country, exists for the benefit of all Unisa students. The Subject Reference Department of the library has been created in order to assist postgraduate students and may be approached in person, by letter or by telephone, for reference assistance and for help in using the library. The present subject reference librarian for the Department of English is Mr Dawie Malan, tel. (012)429-3212, e-mail malandj@alpha.unisa.ac.za. He or his colleagues will guide you in your use of the library's many facilities, i.e.

(a) The computerized catalogue  
(b) Bibliographies, general and specific  
(c) Histories
(d) Indexes to periodical literature
(e) The tracing of books and articles
(f) The Inter-library Loan Service, both national and international
(g) Lists of registered theses in South African and abroad.
(h) CD-Rom and Internet searches

You may wish to commence your search by consulting some or all of the following sources, many of which are either already computerised or in the process of computerisation:

(a) The computerized catalogue of the Unisa library, for this is the guide to readily available material.

(b) Standard bibliographies such as the National English Literary Museum (NELM, Grahamstown), bibliographies on particular authors or the New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, edited by George Watson and Ian Willison.

(c) Bibliographies that are issued at regular intervals (usually weekly or monthly) and record the latest books and pamphlets. Two of the most important are the British National Bibliography (BNB), which follows the arrangement of the Dewey decimal classification (the system that also serves the University library), and the Cumulative Book Index (CBI), which is arranged under subject headings.

(d) Histories of literature, such as the Companion to South African English Literature, edited by A D Adey et al, or the Cambridge History of English Literature, edited by A W Ward and A R Waller.
(e) Biographical articles, in encyclopaedias such as Chambers or the Britannica, and in biographical dictionaries such as the Dictionary of National Biography.

(f) Indexes to periodical literature, such as the International Index to Periodicals. (Now mostly available on CD-Rom).

(g) Specialist journals often publish annual bibliographies which will keep you up to date with recent publications in your particular field.

As researchers discover more and more material, so will they discover more and more sources of information; most books, for example, have their own bibliographies, and there are usually specialist bibliographies within defined areas.

**How does the student trace books and articles?**

Once you have established which material is to be consulted you may obtain it in the following way:

Should you wish to establish whether the material is available in South Africa or not (in which case it might be available online from another source), you may do so by consulting the English subject librarian at the Unisa library, who will point you to available resources.

It is important not to rely solely on published material. Often the author or his/her family, literary executors or descendants can provide first-hand information and unpublished material. Manuscripts are also kept by NELM and other libraries, archives, and museums. Recorded interviews, TV documentaries, municipal records etc. can all prove useful.

**SOME USEFUL BOOKS**

The following works will be valuable at the initial stages of your research:
Altick, Richard and John Fenstermaker.  

Fascinating, standard introduction to scholarly endeavours in general. Updated to include material on computers in research.

Goldstuck, Arthur.  

Harmon, Charles (ed.)  
*Using the Internet Online Services, and CD ROMS for Writing Research and Term Papers.* New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 1996.

As technology is advancing so rapidly, all three books mentioned above should be supplemented by the most recent sources. (Consult Mr Dawie Malan or his colleagues.)

Kennedy, Arthur G and Donald B Sands  

Works as listed, without comment, under headings such as the following: Periods of English Literature; Prose; Poetry; Criticism and interpretation; Periodicals and series; English language – special subjects; Folklore and forms of popular literature; Methods, style, and basic texts for research and writing.

Marcuse, Michael J  
This book is a guide to locating the appropriate reference tools for a specific question. It is designed for beginner researchers who are unfamiliar with the material and tools of their discipline. It offers a wide range of reference resources in contemporary English studies, and describes them from the point of view of the researcher.

Patterson, Margaret C


This is an evaluative, annotated bibliography of important reference books and periodicals on English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Commonwealth, American, Afro-American, American Indian, Continental, Classical, and world literatures, and sixty literature-related subjects including bibliography, biography, book-collecting, film, folklore, linguistics, little magazines, prosody, reviews, teaching resources, textual criticism, women’s studies. The purpose of this book is to enable and encourage students to do independent research. It outlines procedures for research and titles of books useful for theses, dissertations and examinations. It is also convenient for quick reference.

Vitale, Philip H


This book lists, among other things, guides (to reference works), dictionaries, encyclopaedias, literary handbooks, anthologies and histories of English literature, biographical dictionaries, indexes, serials (periodicals), bibliographies (including those confined to specific literary periods). The range of each work listed is briefly, but illuminatingly, indicated in a descriptive note.
We suggest the following useful local handbooks:

N. Visser

Johann Mouton

Other books which offer valuable approaches to generating ideas creatively, organising and writing them up include

Barnes, Rob.

Gibaldi, J.

Higgins, Robin.

Rudestam, K E and Rae R Newton.

Aimed at social science researchers, but contains many useful tips.

Turabian, Kate.
For further reference


**Abbreviation and footnotes/endnotes**

A general observation is that even within the Harvard system, which uses fewer abbreviations than other referencing systems, you may wish to adapt the style to accommodate a system of abbreviation to refer, for example, to one writer's novels where such novels are cited frequently. In such cases, you need only explain your system or abbreviations in a separate 'Note on Abbreviations' or in a Preface. For example, you may explain that the novels of Charles Reade will be cited as follows in the text:

PW ........................ Charles Reade. *Peg Woffington*.

CH ........................ Charles Reade. *The Cloister and the Hearth*.

If, to cite another example, your thesis frequently draws on the letters of Charles Dickens, then you could explain that the book *Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Walter Dexter (London: Tome Press, 1938), three volumes, will be cited in the texts as *Letters*, II, 42. Of course, the full details of such abbreviated titles should appear in the bibliography.

**Special Forms**

Passing references to well-known plays, such as those by Fugard, Shaw, Shakespeare, Sheridan, Oscar Wilde, etc., which are available in different editions, may be abbreviated thus:

Sheridan, *School for Scandal* IV. iii. 49-52
This means Act IV, Scene iii, lines 49-52. If your thesis is concerned with several plays by the same author, you may also indicate the play with standard abbreviations: for example, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice*:

*Romeo* II. i. 44-67.
*Merch.* II. i. 17-18

Similarly, passing reference to poems by poets may be abbreviated thus:


It is not necessary to use the abbreviation for lines (11) if the line number(s) are preceded by the book number:

*Iliad* XI. 119.

Most such references can be inserted within parentheses in your text immediately after quotations.

In scriptural references the name of the book is used, but is neither italicized (underlined) nor placed in quotation marks. It is followed by numbers (usually Arabic) indicating the chapter and verse, separated by a colon:


References to manuscripts should indicate their location, title or number, and (if you are referring to or quoting a specific passage) the page number:

Pierpont Morgan Library MS. 819, fol 17.
References to letters should mention the name of the writer, as well as his or her official position, if desirable, and date.

There are other abbreviations that should be noted:

- **cf**: _confer_ : compare. Do not use ‘cf’ when ‘see’ is intended.
- **ch, chs**: chapter(s)
- **comp**: compiler or compiled by
- **ed**: editor, edited by
- **eds**: editors
- **e.g**: for example. Not normally used in the text, though acceptable in footnote/endnote references.
- **et al**: ‘and others’
- **et passim**: ‘and here and there’ throughout a work. Used when it is desirable to offer more support for a particular statement or assertion you have given.
- **f, ff**: and the following page(s) or line(s).
- **fol, foll**: folio(s) – mainly in the case of manuscripts.
- **i.e**: that is. Again, not used in the text, but in footnote/endnote references.
illus : illustrator, illustration, illustrated by.

infra : below. Used to refer to something to be discussed later in the chapter, or thesis. Many editors consider 'see below' preferable.

introd : introduction or introduction by.

l, ll : line(s) – mainly in the case of poetry

MS, MSS : manuscript(s)

n d : no publication date given.

n p : no place given for publication.

p, pp : page(s)

q v : quod vide: 'which see'

rev : revised or revised by

sc : scene (in a play)

sup or supra : above: used to refer to something mentioned earlier in the chapter, or thesis. Again, as in the case of infra, the English translation is often preferred.

trans : translator, translation, translated by
vide : see. Like infra and supra, vide is gradually being replaced by the English translation.

Footnotes/endnotes

In the Harvard system, footnotes or endnotes (you may choose which you prefer, perhaps depending on your computer programme) are not needed for bibliographic details, since these are incorporated in abbreviated form in your text. Footnotes or endnotes can therefore be devoted exclusively to explanatory material. Here the function of the foot- or endnote is to develop, or to suggest a development of the argument, especially if it is relevant, but not central, to the argument put forward in the body of the thesis.

Such notes can also be used to suggest further references, so as to avoid lengthy parenthetical interruptions in your text. You may even wish to discuss briefly the quality of these other sources in a foot- or endnote. If your notes are on the long side, endnotes will be preferable, because they do not clutter the actual page of your text.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

You may be surprised to learn that ethical considerations count for quite a lot in the writing of a thesis, and that they do not devolve solely on the question of whether or not the finished product is ‘all your own work’. From your reading of the great critics it should be clear to you that the quality of a person's scholarship is finally as dependent on his or her moral integrity as a researcher and critic, as on his or her knowledge and insight. The writing of a thesis should not be seen simply as an opportunity to display one's wit and wisdom; it should also be regarded as a necessary discipline in clear and sustained thinking. In the course of your studies you will become aware of what is, and what is not, sound academic practice. And again your reading of the best critics will tell you that this tag is not synonymous with dull pedantry, or pretentious
exclusiveness.

The following comments may help you to avoid some of the pitfalls, both moral and technical, that lie in the path of the unwary researcher.

**The scope of your thesis: quotations and the use of sources**

Although you will be guided in this by your promoter, it is part of your duty to indicate not only the scope and purpose of your thesis, but also what parts of the field have already been covered by other critics, and why, or in what way, you can claim to be offering a fresh approach to or new insights into your subject. In the field of literary criticism it is not common that startling discoveries are made, and few students for the MA degree are in the position to advance revolutionary new theories. But a sensitive and scholarly reappraisal of a lesser author, or of a work that has not had due recognition, can be as much an individual and original contribution to literary criticism as the discovery and publication of a First Folio, or a comparative study of Middle English dialects.

The insights you offer must, however, be your own; if you are developing a line of thought suggested by another writer, you must acknowledge the fact. The best critics are usually well aware of the debt they owe to their predecessors; their own claims to originality of approach or novelty of treatment are generally modest.

This is not to say that you will be expected to hedge every statement with such reservations and disclaimers as ‘it is generally accepted’, ‘perhaps one could say’, ‘it would seem that’ and ‘it is not part of my purpose’. You will be expected to acknowledge the more obvious debts and, for the rest, to write with a sensitive awareness of a whole literary – and critical – tradition behind you. Generally, however, you should be moderate in references to and quotations from critics and other authorities (and remember that quotations should never be regarded as a substitute for argument: even where you are in full agreement with the author you cite, you should attempt to apply, develop, or give a new dimension to his or her thesis). In some theses, though, you may need
to cite sources of information generously, particularly in studies with a historical content.

Authorities must be quoted ‘at first-hand’. In other words, you must consult the actual work from which the statement was originally taken. Citations which have no more authority than 'Leavis quotes Coleridge as saying that ...' or 'The following remarks by Aristotle are quoted by ...', are hardly likely to escape the examiner's blue pencil. Standard translations of works in other languages may be used, provided no niceties of interpretation are involved. Remember, too, that your researches and studies should be based on the texts most generally accepted by leading scholars, that you should, where possible, use 'variorum' editions, and that 'popular' works should be used circumspectly and never cited as the sole authority. Avoid window dressing (list in your bibliography only works you have personally consulted) and name-dropping (the too-familiar, elaborately casual reference to fashionable critics).

Make a careful note of the necessary bibliographical information when you copy out (or, in the case of a long passage, preferably photostat) a passage from an author or critic: quotations must be accurate, and they must not read out of context (that is, used in such a way as to alter the meaning of the original passage, or to attribute to the author cited views he/she never subscribed to). A quotation can, by means of clearly indicated deletions and/or interpolations, be woven into the grammatical context of your sentence or paragraph, but again you must be careful not to pervert the meaning of the original, and to give a clear reference to the source.

Remember that scrupulous honesty (with yourself, as well as others) is as important in small matters as in large: the way in which you use and interpret the data at your disposal (and this applies as much to secondary as to primary sources) will be a measure of your probity and sensitivity as a researcher and critic. One can achieve a happy medium of scholarship without being over-punctiliously pedantic, on the one hand, or carelessly casual, on the other.
Please note, too, that your promoter cannot be expected to check all your references or to be aware of all the sources you have drawn upon. It is your responsibility to draw attention to passages which rely on the work of other critics (even where there is no direct citation), and indeed to any instance of your indebtedness to others.

Bear in mind that insofar as you are intensively researching a particular topic that falls within the general research field of your promoter, you become the specialist and bear responsibility for the probity of your research and the validity of your conclusions.

**Your promoter and you**

Once your title and scheme have been approved, a promoter – generally a senior member of staff who has a specialized knowledge of the field covered by your thesis – is appointed to guide your researches and comment on the quality of your work (in the case of master's dissertations, a ‘supervisor’ is appointed.) To her/him you will submit a provisional bibliography (he/she may be able to suggest additional works) and the first draft of each chapter of your thesis.

Should you wish to amend your 'scheme' (this sometimes happens when candidates come to make a closer study of their subject) or attempt a new approach to a specific problem or should you have any doubts or difficulties in connection with your studies, consult your promoter. She or he will advise you and, if necessary, refer the matter to the Higher Degrees Committee, the Head of Department or Executive Dean of the College. I can hardly overemphasize the importance of a right understanding of the respective responsibilities of the candidate and the promoter, and of the relationship between them. In consultation with your promoter, you should draw up a progress chart or list of dates by which successive chapters should be submitted. Allow time for revisions and the resubmission of drafts. Your promoter can only recommend your registration for a following year if there is sufficient evidence of progress on your part.
In conception and execution the thesis must be entirely the candidate's own work (and you are required to submit a statement to this effect when the thesis is complete). The promoter can suggest changes in the arrangement of the material, in the presentation of the argument, or in the wording of specific statements, but the factual content, the logical development of the argument, and the conclusions arrived at, are entirely the responsibility of the candidate, and will determine the success or failure of the thesis.

You should in the first place discuss your work and ideas with your promoter: you should refer your researches to others only with the knowledge and consent of your promoter. It has happened that work submitted to a promoter has, without his/her knowledge, already been discussed with and revised by others. Such practices are not acceptable. Candidates can certainly ask friends and colleagues to help them with their final proofreading, but the nature of such assistance should be strictly limited to the correcting of typographical errors and the querying of obvious errors, omissions and obscurities. Advice about improved wording, the redrafting of faulty sentences, comments on the factual content, the argument or the presentation of the thesis do not fall within their scope. In certain cases you may need outside advice or assistance in connection with a particular aspect of your thesis: this should only be done with the prior approval of your promoter, and, of course, the nature and extent of such advice or assistance must be duly acknowledged. As already mentioned, when you submit your thesis, you have formally to certify that it is your own work.

Usually the promoter will go through each chapter once, commenting in some detail on style and content. Except in cases where there can be no doubting the validity of the emendations, you are free to adopt, adapt or reject – but not to ignore – the promoter's suggestions. Most promoters prefer also to see the completed final draft of the thesis, before giving the candidate permission to submit it for examination. In giving permission for a thesis to be submitted, the promoter is merely signifying that it has been completed and meets the requirements governing the submission of such work for examination: she is not expressing an opinion on its
passworthiness. The importance of careful proofreading has already been stressed: it is not the promoter's duty to proofread your thesis or to check whether you have carried out instructions or heeded advice and admonitions. Not all problems can be resolved by correspondence. If you think that questions of approach or differences of opinion need to be cleared up, by all means arrange for a meeting with your promoter.

Once the thesis has been submitted, the Higher Degrees Committee will nominate a panel of examiners including at least one external examiner from another university, each member of which submits a separate, written report on the thesis. The names of the examiners are not divulged to candidates and the contents of their reports are not usually made public or divulged to candidates (except in referral cases, where certain criticisms and recommendations will be conveyed to the candidate so that the thesis can be revised). In the case of master's dissertations, work of exceptional merit may be awarded a distinction.

University regulations governing the presentation and submission of the thesis are set out in Section B of Part 1 of the Calendar. It is your duty to acquaint yourself with these regulations and procedures and to ensure that you comply with them. Permission must be obtained from the University before a thesis or any part of it can be published elsewhere, and the promoter's permission must be obtained before material already published can be incorporated in a thesis. The University's Publications Committee will also consider publishing theses of particular merit and interest.