SECOND DRAFT OF A THESIS

A Practical Guide to Revising and Strengthening an Educational Research Manuscript

From first-draft feedback to a coherent, evidence-based second manuscript

Focus areas
Supervisor feedback • chapter alignment • literature synthesis • methodology accuracy • results and discussion • referencing • final quality checks

Adapt this guide to your university's thesis handbook, supervisor's instructions, approved research plan, ethics requirements, and actual data.

How to Use This Guide

A second draft is a revised working manuscript. It should respond systematically to first-draft feedback, improve the logic and evidence of the thesis, and make unresolved issues visible. It is not automatically the final submission.

Core principles

- **Revise before polishing.** Fix research logic, missing evidence, and chapter alignment before spending time on minor formatting.
- **Keep a record of changes.** Track each supervisor comment, the action taken, and any question that still needs clarification.
- **Protect research integrity.** Never invent participants, findings, quotations, statistical results, citations, permissions, or ethics approval.
- **Make uncertainty visible.** Use clear notes such as [VERIFY SAMPLE SIZE] or [SUPERVISOR TO CONFIRM] while drafting; remove them only when resolved.
- **Follow local requirements.** The university handbook and supervisor's directions take priority over this general guide.

A second draft should be stronger in three ways

Dimension	What improvement looks like
Substance	Claims are supported by verified sources or actual data; the research gap and contribution are clearer.
Structure	The problem, objectives, research questions, methods, findings, and conclusions align.
Presentation	Writing is clearer, tables are readable, citations are consistent, and the document follows institutional rules.

Important: this is a revision guide, not a completed thesis. Replace illustrative examples and placeholders with your own approved study details and verified evidence.

1. Start with the First-Draft Feedback

Do not begin by rewriting every paragraph from page one. First identify the revisions that most affect the quality and credibility of the whole study.

A practical revision sequence

Priority	Revision task	Reason
1 — Critical	Resolve research questions, objectives, design, ethics, and data-integrity issues.	These determine what the thesis can legitimately claim.
2 — High	Correct gaps in chapters and improve alignment across chapters.	A polished chapter cannot compensate for a study whose parts do not connect.
3 — Medium	Strengthen literature synthesis, analysis explanations, and discussion.	These sections show how the work relates to existing knowledge.
4 — Final pass	Improve wording, layout, headings, tables, citations, and page formatting.	Presentation matters once the argument is sound.

Build a feedback-to-action matrix

Copy each supervisor comment into a separate row. Be specific about what changed and where the change appears. If you disagree with a comment or cannot complete it, explain why and ask for clarification rather than silently ignoring it.

Feedback/comment	Action planned or completed	Location	Status
_____	_____	_____	Open / Done / Ask
_____	_____	_____	Open / Done / Ask
_____	_____	_____	Open / Done / Ask
_____	_____	_____	Open / Done / Ask

Tip: maintain a dated copy of Draft 1, Draft 2, and the feedback log. Use tracked changes or another agreed method if your supervisor wants to see edits.

2. Recheck the Thesis Logic

Before revising chapters, write one sentence for each element below. The sequence should form a coherent chain from problem to conclusion.

Element	Check yourself
Problem	What specific educational issue requires investigation? Is it supported by evidence?
Purpose / aim	What does the study seek to describe, understand, compare, or examine?
Objectives	Are the tasks specific, achievable, and answerable with the available data?
Research questions / hypotheses	Does each question correspond to an objective and an appropriate method?
Methods	Can the proposed or completed procedures answer those questions?
Evidence / findings	Does each result come from the actual dataset or documented qualitative analysis?
Conclusion	Does each answer follow from the evidence, without unsupported causal or general claims?

Alignment test

- If an objective has no corresponding result, explain why or revise the structure in consultation with your supervisor.
- If a result does not answer any research question, decide whether it belongs in the thesis and justify its relevance.
- If the conclusion makes a claim that the design or data cannot support, narrow the claim.
- If the study is still at proposal stage, describe methods as planned and do not present a fabricated Results chapter.

Example topic carried over from the first-draft guide

The original guide used the illustrative topic “Mobile Learning Use and Study Engagement among Grade 9 Students in a Selected Secondary School in Bangladesh.” Treat this only as an example unless it is your actual approved topic. The example does not provide real research results or verified citations.

3. Revise Chapter 1 — Introduction

The introduction should move from the wider educational context to the specific problem and show exactly what the study will investigate.

Section	Second-draft revision checks
Background	Use current, relevant, credible sources for factual claims. Move logically from broad context to the local issue.
Problem statement	Distinguish the observed concern from the research gap. Avoid claiming that no research exists unless your review supports it.
Aim and objectives	Use clear verbs and ensure the objectives are achievable within the approved design and timeframe.
Research questions / hypotheses	Use precise wording; align each question with the objectives, measures, and analysis.
Significance	Identify realistic potential beneficiaries and explain how the study may help without promising outcomes.
Scope and definitions	State boundaries such as setting, population, variables, period, and operational definitions.

Common revisions

- Replace broad statements with specific, evidence-supported claims.
- Remove repetition between the background, problem statement, and significance sections.
- Use the same terms for the main concepts throughout the thesis.
- Check that the title describes the actual design. For example, avoid “impact” or “effect” if the study only examines association.

Chapter 1 is ready for review when the reader can identify the problem, why it matters, what the study asks, and what the study will not cover.

4. Revise Chapter 2 — Literature Review

A strong second draft should do more than list summaries. It should compare studies, evaluate their methods and limitations, identify patterns or disagreements, and explain how the reviewed evidence supports the present study.

Move from summary to synthesis

Weak approach	Stronger approach
One paragraph per source with no comparison.	Organize sources around themes, concepts, methods, findings, or debates.
A claim that a research gap exists without evidence.	Explain precisely what remains uncertain based on the sources actually reviewed.
A theory is named but not connected to the study.	Explain how the framework informs questions, measures, analysis, and interpretation.
Citation details copied from another source without checking.	Verify the original publication or a reliable bibliographic record.

Suggested paragraph structure

Topic sentence → evidence from multiple sources → comparison or critique → implication for the present study.

Second-draft checks

- Use relevant scholarly databases, academic books and journals, and authoritative reports.
- Record search terms, dates, inclusion criteria, and full bibliographic details where appropriate.
- Compare the contexts, samples, methods, measures, findings, and limitations of important studies.
- Define the research gap narrowly and defensibly; avoid sweeping claims such as “no study has ever…” unless demonstrably supported.
- Ensure every in-text citation corresponds to a real reference-list entry.

Do not use the illustrative “Study A / Study B / Study C” categories from a template as real citations. Insert only sources you have actually checked.

5. Revise Chapter 3 — Methodology

Methodology must accurately describe what was done in a completed study, or clearly label what is planned if data collection has not yet occurred.

Area	Questions to answer in Draft 2
Design and approach	Is the approach quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods? Is the design appropriate for the research questions?
Setting and population	Is the setting described clearly? Who was eligible to participate?
Sample and sampling	Is the actual or planned sample size stated accurately? How were participants selected or recruited?
Instruments	What does each questionnaire, interview guide, test, or observation schedule measure? Are scoring rules explained?
Quality of measures	What evidence supports validity and reliability, or qualitative trustworthiness? Report actual procedures accurately.
Procedure	What happened, in what order, and during what period? Who administered the tools?
Analysis	How were data coded, cleaned, summarized, compared, or interpreted? Are methods appropriate to the data?
Ethics	Are consent, permission, confidentiality, risk reduction, and data protection described truthfully?

Integrity checks

- Do not describe an approval, pilot, reliability test, or data-collection step as completed unless it actually happened.
- If the actual procedure differed from the approved plan, document the difference and consult your supervisor about how to report it.
- Keep participant identities and confidential records out of examples and appendices unless authorized and necessary.
- Ask a supervisor or qualified statistician when uncertain whether an analysis fits the measurement level, sample size, assumptions, or design.

Methodology is not stronger because it sounds more technical; it is stronger when it is accurate, transparent, and suitable for the questions.

6. Revise Chapter 4 — Findings / Results

Present findings in the order of the objectives or research questions. Begin with relevant information about the analyzed sample and any exclusions or missing data that affect interpretation.

Tables and figures

- Number and title every table and figure; mention it in the text.
- State sample size, units, category definitions, and relevant notes.
- Explain the main pattern in the text instead of repeating every cell.
- Check totals, percentages, decimal places, labels, and consistency with the analysis output.
- For qualitative work, explain how themes were developed and use anonymized quotations only when they are genuine and appropriate.

Use evidence, not invented examples

The first-draft guide included a fictional example with 60 students and illustrative percentages. Those numbers were included only to demonstrate table formatting. Do not copy them into your thesis as findings. Use your own verified dataset and analysis.

Report statistics responsibly

- Name the analysis used and provide the relevant statistic and sample size.
- Report uncertainty or effect size where appropriate and required by your institution.
- Do not select only results that support your expectations.
- A statistically significant association does not automatically establish causation or practical importance.

Before finalizing the chapter, trace each statement and number back to the data or analysis output.

7. Revise Chapter 5 — Discussion and Conclusion

The discussion interprets findings; the conclusion answers the research questions. Keep the distinction clear unless your university requires a combined chapter.

Section	Revision target
Discussion	Explain what the findings mean in relation to the questions, framework, and previous studies. Note agreement, differences, and plausible explanations.
Conclusion	Answer each research question directly. Introduce no new data and avoid claims broader than the design permits.
Recommendations	Give realistic, specific recommendations for a clear audience and connect each recommendation to evidence.
Limitations	Discuss sampling constraints, self-report bias, missing data, instrument weaknesses, time limits, or restricted generalizability when relevant.

Language to check

Avoid unless justified	Prefer when accurate
“X caused Y.”	“X was associated with Y.”
“All students…”	“In this sample…”
“The study proves…”	“The findings suggest…”
“This solution will…”	“This may help…; further evaluation is needed.”

A good discussion distinguishes evidence from speculation. A good conclusion is proportionate to the study’s design, data, and limitations.

8. Improve Academic Writing and Referencing

Revise for clarity and consistency after the major content revisions are stable.

Writing checks

- Keep one main idea per paragraph and begin with a clear topic sentence.
- Define abbreviations at first use and use technical terms consistently.
- Prefer precise wording. Avoid unsupported claims, overly broad generalizations, and unnecessary repetition.
- Paraphrase in your own sentence structure while preserving the source's meaning, and cite the source.
- Use direct quotations sparingly and follow your institution's quotation and citation rules.

Reference audit

- Verify each author, year, title, journal or book, volume, issue, page range, DOI, or stable URL as applicable.
- Check that every in-text citation appears in the reference list and every listed reference is cited in the text, unless your style guide says otherwise.
- Use one referencing style consistently, such as APA if required by your department.
- Never invent a reference or leave unverified placeholders in a submitted draft.

Front matter and appendices

- Check title page, acknowledgements, contents, lists of tables/figures, abbreviations, references, and appendices against the university template.
- Update the table of contents after changing headings or page order.
- Include only relevant supporting materials and protect confidential participant information.

9. A Four-Week Second-Draft Plan

Adjust this example schedule to your deadline, data readiness, and supervisor's availability.

Week	Main tasks	Deliverable
1	Organize supervisor feedback; resolve major alignment and structure issues; revise Introduction and Methodology.	Revision matrix and corrected chapter drafts.
2	Strengthen literature synthesis; verify sources; revise Results/Findings against actual data.	Revised Literature Review and evidence-checked results.
3	Revise Discussion, Conclusion, Recommendations, and Limitations; cross-check all chapters.	A coherent full manuscript with aligned claims.
4	Edit academic language; audit citations and tables; format; check appendices; prepare questions for supervisor.	Second draft ready for supervisor review.

Final second-draft checklist

- The title accurately reflects the study.
- The problem, aim, objectives, questions, methods, results, and conclusions align.
- The literature review synthesizes verified sources and supports a defensible gap.
- The methodology accurately distinguishes completed procedures from plans.
- Ethics, consent, permissions, and confidentiality are described truthfully.
- Every result is traceable to data or documented analysis.
- Tables and figures are numbered, titled, accurate, and explained.
- The discussion compares findings with relevant literature without overstating them.
- Limitations and unexpected findings are acknowledged.
- Citations and references are cross-checked.
- Formatting follows the university's rules and all unresolved questions are clearly marked.

10. Supervisor Review Log and Meeting Questions

Use this page to prepare for a focused discussion about the second draft.

Date / section	Supervisor comment	Action taken	Status / question
_____	_____	_____	Open / revised / ask
_____	_____	_____	Open / revised / ask
_____	_____	_____	Open / revised / ask
_____	_____	_____	Open / revised / ask
_____	_____	_____	Open / revised / ask

Questions to ask

- Does the chapter structure match departmental requirements?
- Are the research questions focused and answerable with the current design and data?
- Is the literature review analytical enough, and is the research gap defensible?
- Are the sample, instruments, and analysis appropriate for the research questions?
- Which claims need stronger evidence or more cautious wording?
- Which revisions are essential before the next draft, and which can wait?
- What referencing style, word count, formatting rules, and submission date apply?

Final reminder

A successful second draft is not simply longer or more polished. It is more coherent, better supported, more transparent about limitations, and responsive to feedback. Resolve the argument and evidence first; refine the presentation after.

Prepared as a practical educational-research guide based on the uploaded “First Draft of a Thesis” document. Illustrative content in the source is not real study evidence and should not be presented as such.