FINAL DRAFT OF A THESIS

A Practical Guide to Finalizing an Educational Research Manuscript

From supervisor-approved revisions to a submission-ready thesis

Finalization checklist
Research integrity • chapter alignment • verified findings • references • formatting • appendices • submission checks

Use this guide with your university's thesis handbook, approved research plan, supervisor's final instructions, and actual research data.

How to Use This Guide

The final draft is the version prepared for formal submission after substantive feedback has been addressed. It should be complete, internally consistent, evidence-based, and formatted according to institutional requirements. A final draft may still require corrections after examination or supervisor review.

Final-draft principles

- **Accuracy first.** Verify every claim, result, quotation, citation, table, and appendix.
- **Consistency throughout.** Use the same terms, sample details, variable names, and research questions across chapters.
- **Transparent reporting.** Distinguish what was planned from what was actually done, and report limitations honestly.
- **Institutional compliance.** Follow the current department handbook and required template over generic advice.
- **Research ethics.** Protect participant privacy and ensure permissions and consent are accurately reported.

Important distinction

This document is a guide to preparing a final thesis; it is not a completed research thesis. The uploaded first-draft guide used illustrative examples, including fictional numbers. Do not present those examples as real findings or citations.

1. Confirm All Required Revisions

Before formatting the manuscript, review the latest supervisor comments and confirm that every required change has been completed or explicitly discussed.

Review item	Final check
Supervisor comments	Each comment is marked resolved, partly resolved, or awaiting clarification.
Research design	The design, objectives, research questions, measures, and analysis agree.
Evidence	Claims are supported by verified literature or actual research data.
Ethics	Permissions, consent, confidentiality, and data handling are reported accurately.
Institutional rules	Required chapters, word limits, referencing style, margins, and file format are confirmed.

Keep a final change log

Comment / issue	Correction made	Where checked	Status
_____	_____	_____	Done / Ask
_____	_____	_____	Done / Ask
_____	_____	_____	Done / Ask

Do not assume that a comment has been addressed just because the relevant paragraph was edited. Check whether the underlying issue is actually resolved.

2. Audit the Thesis Structure and Logic

Check that the thesis reads as one connected argument rather than a set of separate chapters.

Element	Final consistency question
Title	Does it accurately describe the topic, population, setting, and design where relevant?
Problem and aim	Does the study address the problem introduced in Chapter 1?
Objectives and questions	Are they stated consistently and answered in the findings and conclusion?
Literature review	Does it establish the relevant background, framework, and research gap?
Methodology	Does it explain the procedures actually followed and the analysis actually used?
Results	Can every reported finding be traced to the dataset or documented analysis?
Discussion	Are findings interpreted in relation to the questions and previous research?
Conclusion and recommendations	Do they follow from evidence and acknowledge limitations?

Alignment rule

Every research question should be answered, or its unanswered status should be explained. Every major conclusion should be traceable to a result. Do not add claims at the end that were not established by the study.

3. Final Review of the Five Main Chapters

Chapter 1 — Introduction

- The background moves logically from the broad context to the specific research problem.
- The problem statement and research gap are clear and supported by evidence.
- The aim, objectives, research questions or hypotheses, significance, scope, and definitions are consistent.

Chapter 2 — Literature Review

- The review synthesizes and evaluates relevant sources rather than listing summaries.
- The theoretical or conceptual framework is explained and connected to the study.
- The research gap is justified by sources actually reviewed; all references are verified.

Chapter 3 — Methodology

- The approach, design, setting, population, sample, instruments, procedure, and analysis are sufficiently detailed.
- Validity/reliability or qualitative trustworthiness procedures are accurately described.
- Ethics, consent, permission, confidentiality, and data protection are documented truthfully.

Chapter 4 — Findings / Results

- Findings are organized by objective or research question and supported by actual data.
- Tables, figures, sample sizes, percentages, statistics, and quotations have been checked.
- Results are reported neutrally and are not fabricated or selectively presented.

Chapter 5 — Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

- The discussion compares the findings with relevant literature and distinguishes evidence from speculation.
- Conclusions answer the research questions without overstating causality or generalizability.
- Recommendations are realistic, specific, and proportionate to findings and limitations.

4. Finalize the Abstract and Preliminary Pages

Write or revise the abstract only after the main chapters and findings are stable. Follow the word limit and structure required by the institution.

An abstract commonly includes

- The research problem or purpose.
- The design, setting, participants or data source, and instruments.
- The main analysis approach.
- The principal verified findings.
- The evidence-based conclusion or implication.

Abstract template

“This study examined [purpose] among [population] in [context]. A [design] was used. Data were collected using [method/instrument] and analyzed using [analysis]. The findings showed [main verified findings]. The study concludes [evidence-based conclusion] and recommends [practical implication].”

Preliminary pages to check

- Title page and any required declaration or approval page.
- Acknowledgements, abstract, table of contents, and lists of tables/figures if required.
- Abbreviations or glossary, where required.
- Page numbering, heading levels, and contents-page entries.

Replace every bracketed placeholder with accurate information before submission. Never invent findings to make an abstract sound complete.

5. Finalize Tables, Figures, and Appendices

Tables and figures should clarify the evidence, not decorate the manuscript. Confirm that each is cited in the text and follows the required style.

Item	Quality check
Number and title	Every table/figure has a unique number and a clear descriptive title.
Accuracy	Values match the analysis output; totals, percentages, labels, units, and rounding are correct.
Readability	Text and labels are legible; formatting is consistent; unnecessary visual effects are avoided.
Notes	Abbreviations, scoring, missing values, or adapted measures are explained where needed.
Appendices	Only relevant supporting material is included, such as approved instruments or supplementary analysis.
Privacy	Names, contact details, and confidential participant information are removed or protected.

Cross-check every number in the text against the corresponding table or figure. If a value changes, update all references to it throughout the manuscript.

6. Final Academic Writing and Reference Audit

Language and style

- Use clear, concise academic language and one main idea per paragraph.
- Define abbreviations at first use and keep terminology consistent.
- Correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, tense, and sentence structure.
- Avoid unsupported generalizations and causal language that the design cannot justify.
- Paraphrase accurately and cite the original source; quote only when necessary.

Reference audit

- Verify each reference against the original publication or a reliable bibliographic record.
- Check author names, publication year, title, journal/book details, pages, DOI, or stable URL as applicable.
- Ensure each in-text citation matches a reference-list entry and vice versa, according to the required style.
- Apply one style consistently, such as APA if specified by your department.
- Remove unverified references and drafting placeholders.

Do not rely on an automatically generated reference list without checking each entry. A well-formatted false reference is still incorrect.

7. Formatting and Technical Checks

Use the official university template if one is provided. The values below are checks, not universal formatting rules.

Feature	What to verify
Page setup	Paper size, margins, orientation, and section breaks follow institutional rules.
Typography	Font family, font size, line spacing, and paragraph spacing are consistent.
Headings	Heading levels and numbering are consistent and match the contents page.
Page numbers	Preliminary pages and main text use the required numbering convention.
Tables and figures	Captions, placement, numbering, and cross-references are correct.
Navigation	Table of contents and lists of tables/figures are updated after editing.
File integrity	The final PDF opens correctly, pages are in order, and no text is clipped or missing.
File name	Use the naming convention required by the department; avoid ambiguous labels such as final_final2.

If your university specifies a template, use that rather than changing margins or styles based on a general guide.

8. Submission Readiness Checklist

Mark each item only after checking it in the final exported document.

- ■ All required supervisor revisions are addressed or explicitly queried.
- ■ The title, objectives, questions, methodology, findings, and conclusions align.
- ■ The literature review uses relevant and verified sources.
- ■ All methods and ethics statements accurately describe what occurred.
- ■ Every finding is supported by actual data or documented analysis.
- ■ All tables, figures, statistics, and quotations have been checked.
- ■ The discussion and conclusion avoid unsupported claims.
- ■ Limitations are acknowledged and recommendations follow from evidence.
- ■ Every in-text citation and reference-list entry has been cross-checked.
- ■ The abstract matches the final thesis and contains no placeholders.
- ■ Contents, page numbers, headings, tables, figures, and appendices are updated.
- ■ The document follows institutional formatting and submission rules.
- ■ The PDF has been opened and checked page by page.
- ■ The final file is saved securely and a backup copy exists.

Final reminder

A final thesis should be complete, accurate, ethical, and consistent. Do not hide missing work behind polished formatting. If a critical issue remains unresolved—such as missing data, unclear ethics approval, or a major mismatch between questions and results—consult your supervisor before submission.

9. Final Supervisor Sign-Off and Viva Preparation

Use this page to record remaining decisions and prepare for the final review or viva.

Section / issue	Final comment or action	Status
_____	_____	Open / Done
_____	_____	Open / Done
_____	_____	Open / Done
_____	_____	Open / Done

Questions to prepare for

- What is the central problem and contribution of the thesis?
- How does the literature review establish the research gap?
- Why was the chosen research design and sampling strategy appropriate?
- How were the instruments and analysis checked for quality?
- What are the main findings, and what evidence supports them?
- What are the most important limitations and how do they affect interpretation?
- What practical or scholarly implications are justified by the results?
- What would you change if you conducted the study again?

Prepared as a practical finalization guide based on the structure and integrity principles of the uploaded “First Draft of a Thesis” guide. Institutional requirements and actual research evidence take precedence.