GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A BACHELOR'S, MASTER'S OR REQUALIFICATION THESIS

**English Department,
Faculty of Science, Humanities and Education,
Technical University of Liberec**

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The Guidelines of the English Department are in line with those of the Faculty of Science, Humanities and Education. They provide students with brief information on the content, format, language and style of the thesis.

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The Aim of the Thesis

The thesis should demonstrate the student's ability to investigate and develop an issue independently within the field of English Studies. The student should show the capacity to collect, analyze and present data in an appropriate form. The findings should be then evaluated and explained against a theoretical background showing that the student is able to contextualize the particular research.

The following sections describe how a student should proceed.

The Topic of the Thesis

1. The writing of a thesis starts with the choice of a good topic.
   First, choose one of the broad subject areas offered by the department:
      a. Literatures and Cultures of the English Speaking Countries
      b. Linguistics
      c. Teaching and Learning of English as a Foreign Language

   For a list of potential supervisors in each field, see the relevant part of the list of faculty members on the website of the English Department (i.e. the Literature and Cultural Studies Section, the Linguistics Section, the ELT Methodology Section or the Practical Language Section): https://kaj.fp.tul.cz/department/members

   For more specific areas of research, click on the faculty members' profiles, and then visit the "B&M Theses" section of their profiles. Here, you can always find a list of all theses these people have supervised, with links to the theses on STAG. You can use the titles and abstracts for inspiration. In addition, most faculty members also list general areas of research in which they are happy to supervise student research.

2. Try to narrow down your chosen topic to a specific issue with the help of independent readings in the field, and then make an appointment with a supervisor who will help you further define the scope of your thesis. A good topic should be:
      a. interesting and therefore worth investigating;
      b. appropriate to the requirements of the assignment;
      c. one which can be supported by evidence.

3. After you have chosen a topic, you will want to review the latest information available. Locate and read accounts of your subject in books, journals, in academic databases (e.g. ProQuest, JSTOR, EBSCO), on the Internet, or from other sources. As you extend your knowledge of the subject and define the purpose of your thesis, start to plan the specific content as well as the organization of your paper.

4. Once you have selected a general topic for your paper and analyzed the literature, you need to formulate a thesis statement. This statement is the main and focal point of your paper and it is the position you will take on your particular topic. Formulating a strong thesis is one of the most important things you need to do. Evaluate the quality of your thesis statement, and the research question(s) leading to it, by asking yourself these questions:

a. Is my question concrete and specific so that I know what I am looking for?

    The following thesis statement, for example, is too broad: "The sea has multiple meanings in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*."

    A narrower and better focus of research would be: "The sea functions as an antagonist in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*."

b. Can sufficient data be gathered to support my hypothesis?

c. Does my research contribute constructively to a general understanding of the issues my thesis focuses on?

You need to have a thesis statement that is narrow and precise enough so that you can prove it in the length available for your thesis (see below for the specific requirements).

Content & Required Sections

1. **Title page**, "Zadání", Declaration of Authenticity, Abstract:
   See: https://www.fp.tul.cz/student/zaverecne-prace

2. **Table of Contents**

3. **Introduction**:
   In the introduction, state the subject of the paper, its research question(s) and thesis, its methods, and mention the area/s you will focus on.
   The introduction should be concise and brief and should keep the reader's attention.

4. **Body of the Thesis**:
   - Literature Review: In this section, you will have to present and summarize what the academic and professional community's position is regarding the topic you are investigating. If there is a controversy, or if there are alternative views, this should be mentioned. If special terminology is required for the particular research, the definition of key terms must be given in this section.

   - Research Methods: Think about various methods of collecting data that are applicable to your field of research (linguistics, methodology, and literature/culture). Once yu have chosen those applicable, explain why they are the ones to be used for your research and how exactly they apply to the problem investigated in your thesis.

   - Analysis and Results: Analyze the findings and then present plausible reasons why the results have turned out the way they did.

   You might hear students of other programs talk about a "theoretical part" and a "practical part," and references to these might also appear in the faculty guidelines. These two parts, however, are not written in stone, and you should not consider them as a must. In certain areas, such as literary and cultural research, they make no sense whatsoever (what part of a literary or cultural analysis is practical, and in what sense?), while in others, they can easily lead to an overly formal text, where the theories used are merely regurgitated, rather than discussed, and it remains unclear why and how they were chosen. We thus strongly recommend using the structure discussed above (i.e. Literature Review, Research Methods, Analysis and Results) over a division into a "theoretical part" and a "practical part."

5. **Conclusion**
   The conclusion of a thesis summarizes the main findings of the paper in the context of the thesis and it places them in the broader context of the theoretical background.

6. **References**
   This section must include all the direct sources that you referred to in the body of the paper.

7. **Appendices**
   A paper may also include these. Appendices are texts, lists, worksheets, lesson plans, maps, charts, graphs and other materials which are either too long to be inserted into the body of the thesis, or which are interesting, but not centrally important to the discussion in the main text.

You may also want to look at the e-learning help which the faculty has prepared for students. The guidelines can be found at the following address:
https://elearning.tul.cz/course/view.php?id=10852

Basic Format Requirements

BA Thesis:
- <u>Length</u>: 9,000 – 11,000 words (without appendices).
- <u>Layout</u>: Standard A/4 sheet, 12 point Times New Roman, with double spacing and 2.5 cm margins.
- <u>Paragraph Structure</u>: indented paragraphs (1 cm) with no lines between paragraphs.
- <u>Sources</u>: A minimum of six (6) sources in alphabetical order is required, including one (1) article from peer-reviewed academic journals.
- More detailed information about the format:
  https://elearning.tul.cz/course/view.php?id=10852

MA Thesis:
- <u>Length</u>: 16,000 – 19,000 words (without appendices).
- <u>Layout</u>: Standard A/4 sheet, 12 point Times New Roman, with double spacing and 2.5 cm margins.
- <u>Paragraph Structure</u>: indented paragraphs (1 cm) with no lines between paragraphs.
- <u>Sources</u>: A minimum of fifteen (15) sources in alphabetical order is required, including five (5) articles from peer-reviewed academic journals. If you write about literature or culture, the secondary literature cited should go back at least ten years in time.
- More detailed information about the format:
  https://elearning.tul.cz/course/view.php?id=10852

Requalification Thesis:
- <u>Length</u>: 7,000 – 9,000 words (without appendices).
- <u>Layout</u>: Standard A/4 sheet, 12 point Times New Roman, with double spacing and 2.5 cm margins.
- <u>Paragraph Structure</u>: indented paragraphs (1 cm) with no lines between paragraphs.
- <u>Sources</u>: A minimum of five (5) sources in alphabetical order is required, including one (1) article from peer-reviewed academic journals.
- More detailed information about the format:
  https://elearning.tul.cz/course/view.php?id=10852

Careful: exceeding the standard length required is also a problem, not only submitting a thesis that is too short. You can and will be penalized for both by your assessors.

Citation

- The citation and referencing system to be followed by the students is specified by the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th edition. (Careful, this is not the latest version!) Although the Chicago Style permits the use of any of the two sub-styles (footnote-referencing and parenthetical referencing), **you are strictly bound to follow the author-date parenthetical referencing format**.

  A quick guide for referencing in this style is available at the following address: https://resrhetorica.com/files/rr_author_guidelines.pdf

- Use in-text documentation to cite a source whenever you:
  - summarize **original ideas** from one of your sources;
  - use **factual information** that is not common knowledge (if you are not certain if it is common knowledge, cite to be safe);
  - **quote directly** or **paraphrase** a source.

  Example of a direct quotation:
  Carter (1996) considers the plays written by Thomas Otwas as the best examples of heroic tragedy, "where death and disaster could destroy the whole of society" (74). OR: Plays written by Thomas Otwas are the best examples of heroic tragedy, "where death and disaster could destroy the whole of society" (Carter 1996, 74).
  Example of a paraphrase:
  Carter (1996) thinks that the plays in which tragic events could have a devastating effect even on society are those written by Thomas Otwas (74).

- Block quotations are indented by 2 cm from the left margin throughout the cited text.

- Facts that are widely known, or information or judgments considered "common knowledge" do not have to be documented (e.g. Shakespeare was born in England.) At the same time, it is always safer to overcite than to undercite.

- You must always acknowledge the original sources that you have used. If you do not use the above-mentioned means of documenting sources properly, you will commit plagiarism. (For further information see: http://www.plagiarism.org/)

Language

- Make every effort to ensure that your paper is without grammatical, lexical or punctuation errors.

- The thesis must have *coherence*, which means that successive sentences and successive sections of the paper should relate to each other. It should also have *unity*. This is achieved by linking every detail to a topic sentence and every topic sentence to the thesis statement.

- Avoid contractions (*do not* is used rather than *don't*), phrasal verbs (e.g. *elaborate* is better than *work out*), everyday words (such as *really*, *a bit, a lot,*), and formulations like *I am going to explain…*, *I would like to add…*, *Let's focus on…* that are considered "fillers" and are not suitable for an academic register.
  Instead of writing "I am going to explain how appointing a 'group facilitator' can accelerate group development", simply state: "It is common practice in accelerating group development to appoint a 'group facilitator.'"

- Wherever possible, use gender neutral language, avoiding the use of male-specific words such as 'man' or 'he'. At the same time, instead of the excessive use of constructions such as "he or she," "his/her," try to use the gender neutral "they" so as not to overcomplicate your sentences.

- Use clear and precise language. One sentence should contain one main idea.

The Use of Generative AI

In general, the use of generative AI is allowed at the Technical University of Liberec. (See the relevant regulation here: https://doc.tul.cz/12546 .) **If it is used, however, this fact must be mentioned explicitly in the thesis**, including:
- exact details about which specific software(s) and which version(s) were used;
- what exactly they were used for;
- and which specific parts they were used for.

Failing to provide this information will be penalized.

Please also bear in mind that the thesis bears your name, not the name of the software you are using, thus:
- *all plagiarism is* considered *your plagiarism*, even if it was committed by the AI software;
- *citing non-existing sources leads to a failed thesis*, whether the source was "invented" by you or the software;
- *attributing claims to a source that it does not make* (or the opposite of what it makes) *is unethical*, whether you do it or the software that you used;
- *Grammarly is also generative AI,* and so are other similar language enhancement software, so their use should also be explicitly stated in the thesis;
- *DeepL, Google Translate, Yandex Translate, Bing Translator* and all other machine translating software may only be used for translating sources in languages other than Czech or English. If this is done, it should be explicitly mentioned at every single

occurrence. **It is forbidden to use machine translation for creating the main text of the thesis.**

Further Remarks

- Students must take responsibility for ensuring that their final papers are prepared according to the guidelines for writing a thesis.
- Failure on the part of the student to submit the thesis in the correct academic form will result in marks automatically being deducted.
- Supervisors cannot be expected to proof-read a student's thesis for mistakes in form or language. This work must be done by the students themselves.
- While theses *can be submitted* without the supervisor's approval, if this is done, the supervisor is entitled to suggest a fail, in case they deem it necessary or appropriate.