

Dissertation structure

There is no single dissertation structure – the structure of your Honours dissertation will depend on a range of factors, such as your discipline, your topic, the type of research, the formal requirements of your faculty, and your own style and preferences.

This resource is designed to help you start thinking about which structures might best suit your disciplinary and research framework.

1. Typical dissertation features

Even though dissertation structure varies, all dissertations 'tell a story'. To do that, your dissertation should:

- Set out a research problem
- Explain why this problem is worthy of research
- Use literature and theory to provide context and rationale
- Explain your research design
- Present and analyse the data you have gathered
- Discuss your findings and their implications
- Draw conclusions and make recommendations

2 Dissertation sections

Most Lincoln University dissertations conform to this overall structure:

Preliminary components	Title page Declaration Abstract & keywords Acknowledgements Table of Contents List of Tables, Figures or Illustrations Abbreviations / Glossary (if needed)
Main body components <i>(The main body may be organised in a variety of ways. See over page for more detail.)</i>	Introduction section (e.g. background, rationale, literature) Approach or method section Results section Discussion/interpretation section Conclusion section
Supplementary components	References or bibliography Appendices (e.g. surveys, data sets)

3. Typical dissertation body structure

There are several types of dissertation structure used at Lincoln University, but most **dissertations** are **single study** style. This style is similar to a scientific paper: it reports a single study and has a combination of introduction – literature review – methods – results – discussion – conclusions sections.

For example, the dissertation might have one of the following structures:

◆ Introduction (including review of the literature)	◆ Introduction	◆ Introduction
◆ Methods	◆ Literature review	◆ Literature review
◆ Results	◆ Methods	◆ Methods
◆ Discussion	◆ Results	◆ Results & Discussion
	◆ Discussion	◆ Conclusions
	◆ Conclusions	

4. Deciding on the body structure of your dissertation

Every dissertation is different and you need to choose the structure that best suits **your** project. To help decide,

- Talk to your supervisors about what they expect
- Read the Lincoln University House Rules and your Faculty guidelines.
- Read some recommended dissertations in your discipline. Your supervisor, or the LTL Learning Advisors, can suggest examples. (However, don't try to simply mimic an example.)

More resources:

For more advice on thesis writing (and to find out about the workshops and individual appointments we offer), visit our website at <http://ltl.lincoln.ac.nz/>

You could start with ...

[Manag your thesis/dissertation journey](#) (House Rules; resources)

[Writing a thesis/dissertation](#) (proposals, literature reviews, formatting templates & more)

[Resources for thesis writers](#) (print & online resources in the LTL collection)