



## **WRITING GUIDELINES**

Sub-heading

First Name, Last Name

Student number

Course name

Epidemiology and Biomedical Data

Science

Faculty of Medicine

University of Oulu

Month Year

University of Oulu  
Faculty of Medicine  
Research Unit of Population Health  
Epidemiology and Biomedical Data Science

## **ABSTRACT**

Last name First name:

Title of the Thesis:

Master's thesis: XX pages, x appendixes

Month Year

The abstract is an independent presentation without in-text references that introduces the purpose of the work, methods used, results obtained as well as conclusions. The recommended length for the abstract is 250 words and it should fit on one page. The line spacing for the abstract is 1.

Please add keywords to your abstract, below the text. The recommended number of keywords is 3-6. The keywords describe the most important aspects of the work. You can utilize [The Medical Subject Headings \(MeSH\) thesaurus](#) for selecting your keywords.

Please note that only the master's thesis includes an abstract. The other writing assignments only include an abstract if specifically stated.

Keywords:

## **FOREWORD**

A Master's thesis can begin with a foreword if the writer wishes. The foreword expresses gratitude to the supervisors, other co-authors, colleagues, potential host organization, or others who participated in the work. Possible research funding support can be expressed.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

This page presents the abbreviations used in the work, quantities, and units as well as other explanations in a single list. Abbreviations should follow internationally accepted units of measurement in the SI system. The most common SI system of units does not need to be explained (e.g., kg and cm). Abbreviations are presented/listed in alphabetical order.

For example:

BMI

Body Mass Index

WHO

World Health Organization

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Annexes

# 1 INTRODUCTION

These instructions are used in the Epidemiology and Biomedical Data Science Master's Degree Programme. Instructions can be used for written assignments such as essays and for a Master's thesis. Please note that there can be different instructions given by the teachers of specific courses, especially for shorter assignments. Always follow the guidelines given by the teacher of the course. You can utilize the formatting of these instructions in your own work, such as the title page and abstract page for your Master's thesis.

**Introduction chapter** introduces the reader to the topic, motivating the reader to continue reading. The introduction explains the purpose of your work and informs the reader about the importance of the subject. Introduction should answer the following questions: What is of interest in this matter? What have earlier studies had to say about it? What is the knowledge gap?

## **2 THE LAYOUT FOR A WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**

### **2.1 Title page**

The title of the work is written in the middle of the title page with **BOLDED CAPITAL LETTERS** in font size 14. Main title should be short and precise, telling the reader what the assignment or the thesis work is about. If needed, a subtitle is written under the main title, in font size 12. The following information should be included on the right lower corner: name of the student, student number, course name, faculty, university, degree programme, month, and year.

### **2.2 Abstract**

The abstract comes after the title page. It is an independent presentation without in-text references introducing the purpose of the work, methods used, results obtained, as well as conclusions. In general, abstract is only needed for the master's thesis. Please always follow the instructions given for each specific writing assignment. The recommended length for the abstract is 250 words and it should fit on one page. The line spacing for the abstract is 1.

### **2.3 Table of contents and page numbers**

Table of contents is formulated using main headings and possible subchapters. If using subchapters, the recommendation is to have more than one under one main heading. Table of contents is added using a table of contents tool in Word or manually.

Page numbers should be used and placed at the bottom of the pages. Begin each new main chapter on a new page. Page numbering should start from the Introduction chapter. Numbering is not used on the title page, table of contents, or in annexes. Page numbers should end on the last page of references.

### **2.4 Text formatting**

Left- and right-side margins should be 2.0 cm and top and bottom margins 2.5 cm. The font size of the body size is 12 with a line spacing of 1.5. The text should be distributed evenly, and both edges

trimmed. There should be one empty row between the chapters and one empty row after the main and subheadings.

**Table 1.** Text formatting

Layout	Format
Title (on the title page)	<b>TIMES NEW ROMAN 14</b>
Title page, excluding the title	Times New Roman 12
Body text font size	12
Tables font size	10
Page number	Bottom of the page, in the middle
1st level heading	<b>TIMES NEW ROMAN 14</b>
2nd level heading	<b>Times New Roman 12</b>
3rd level heading	<u>Times New Roman 12</u>
Annex	Times New Roman 12

## 2.5 Tables and figures

Figures provide a graphical way of presenting information and can sometimes be a clearer and more illustrative way of presenting results or other information. For example, graphs can be more useful than tables when presenting certain comparisons or time trends. Tables should be used when you are presenting a large amount of data and/or the numbers you are presenting need to be exact, for example, study descriptives.

Tables and figures should be always cited in the text and numbered consecutively in the order of their first citation in the text and supplied with a brief title. Each table or figure should be separated from the body text with one row before and after the table/figure. Permission should be obtained for a table or a figure taken from another published or unpublished source and the original authors should be fully acknowledged.

For tables: internal horizontal or vertical lines are not used. Each column should have a short or abbreviated heading. You should place explanatory matters in the footnotes, not in the heading. All non-standard abbreviations should be explained in the footnotes.

1. The numbering of the tables (in bold) and headings (with no formatting) are presented on top of the table. Tables are numbered in order of appearance.



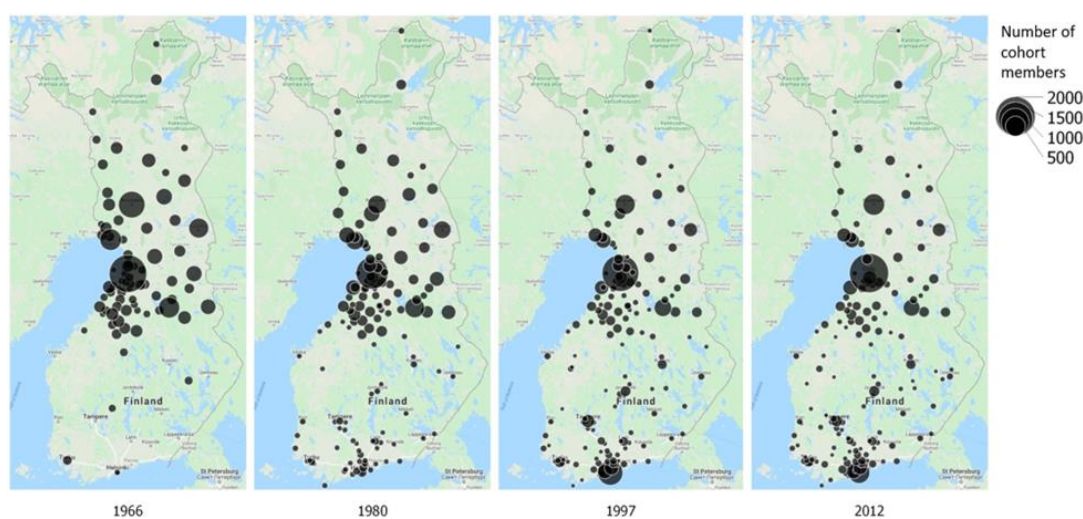
2. Figures numbering (in bold) and a caption (without formatting) are presented below the figure and numbered in order of appearance.
3. All tables and figures must be called in the text.
4. The tables and figures must be self-explanatory and have stand-alone quality, without the need for simultaneously reading the actual text. The statistical measures of variations should be identified.

**Example 1:**

**Table 2:** Baseline characteristics of the participants (n=280)

Characteristics	n	%
Sex		
Male	189	67
Female	91	33
Age		
35–54	79	28
55–64	114	41
65–74	87	31
Smoking		
Never	196	71
Quitted	50	18
Current	34	12

## Example 2:



**Figure 1:** The proportional symbol map of the place of residence of Northern Finland Birth Cohort 1966 members in Finland at the time of birth and 14-, 31-, and 46-year follow-ups (Nordström et al. 2021).

## 2.7 Language and abbreviations

In addition to the content of the study assignment or master's thesis, the language and layout will be assessed. Please use a logical and consistent verb tense throughout the text (usually passive past tense and present perfect). The text will be written in a factual style, aiming for clear and unambiguous sentence structures. Attention should be paid to spelling and punctuation. Unnecessary underlining, bolding and italics should be avoided.

Established or frequently used terms in research may be abbreviated, but the full term for which the abbreviation stands should precede its first use in the text, e.g., World Health Organization (WHO). The list of used abbreviations should be presented before the table of content page.

### 3 CITATIONS AND REFERENCES

In a written assignment, citations and a list of references are essential criteria for scientific excellence. The reader must be able to verify the claims made in your text. References give credit to other researchers whose previous data, explanations, conclusions, and ideas are used. All statements not cited with a reference are considered to be the author's own text.

The following list gives six reasons why citations are important and should be used in academic writing (adapted and expanded from *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* by Swales & Feak, 1994).

- Citations are used to recognize and acknowledge the work done by other scholars. They recognize that these scholars have intellectual property rights over the work they have published.
- Citations are used to pay respect to work done by previous scholars, and display familiarity with the history of the field.
- Citations are used to create a research space. By describing what has already been done in the field, they can reveal what remains to be done, and in this way prepare a space for new research. Citations are tools of persuasion: writers use citations to support their own ideas and opinions. They can add greater authority to an argument.
- Citations can be used to disagree with an author. This is especially important when disagreeing with a work that is regarded as being seminal or extremely influential in the field.
- Citations can be used to display that the author wishes to be regarded as a member of a chosen scholarly community or they can be used to demonstrate distance from a particular community.
- Citations always include a reference to the source. They may include a paraphrase of points made by the author, or direct quotation, or a mixture of paraphrase and quotation. Paraphrase is the default (neutral) option, since your essay, thesis, or other written work is something you are writing in your own words. Direct quotation is permissible and sometimes valuable; but there should be a particular reason for quoting.

### 3.1 Paraphrasing

Views, arguments, or descriptions presented by an author or critic should normally be paraphrased and integrated into the argument of your own presentation, with an appropriate acknowledgment of the source. A more extensive paraphrase also integrates the reference to the source into the text. This practice is preferable, especially when the point at issue is important in the larger discussion. When paraphrasing, the author in a way interprets the thoughts of some other author to the present author's readers. This presupposes that those original thoughts have been comprehended.

The best way to ensure that paraphrasing does not degenerate into plagiarism is to write without consulting any notes. It should be noticed that introductory phrases such as "Albert Schweitzer argues that..." by themselves do not suffice to ensure one is not plagiarising; unless what follows is a quotation, and marked as such, it must be in one's own words, paraphrasing and not simply copying the original. It is not sufficient merely to replace a word or two of the original with a word or two of one's own, leaving the rest intact.

### 3.2 Quoting

Direct quotations must be used very sparsely, and they should be as short as possible. Direct quotations should be used only when the original text expresses an idea so concisely and convincingly that it would lose its accuracy or is deformed when put in other words. A short direct quotation should be written inside quotation marks, and it must be in exactly the same form as in the original text. Direct quotation of sentences, parts of sentences, or phrases is usually motivated by one of the following:

- The wording of the original is particularly neat and effective.
- There is support for your line of argument in the words of an accepted authority.
- You need to handle the source with care: you wish to avoid misrepresenting the source, and place terms in inverted commas that may be unusual or unfamiliar and therefore open to interpretation.
- You wish to distance yourself from the source, highlight oddities, and perhaps pick up ideas to argue against.

All quotations should be exactly as printed in the source. Place all short quotations (i.e. less than four lines) in double quotation marks and place them in the body of your text. Longer quotations should be indented 2.5 cm, and typed with single spacing between lines. Leave out the quotation marks in these block quotations.

When you miss something out of a quoted text (ellipsis), indicate this by three spaced full stops/periods [. . . (.\_.\_.)]. If the ellipsis coincides with the end of your sentence, use four spaced full stops/periods, with no space before the first one [one. . . (one.\_.\_.)]. If you wish to add something of your own in the middle of a quotation, perhaps to ensure that your whole sentence is grammatical, or to make the referent of a pronoun explicit, enclose your interpolation in square brackets. A fairly common interpolation is sic, which indicates that the quotation is exact, even though the reader may have cause to doubt it.

### **3.3 References**

In the Epidemiology and Biomedical Data Science degree programme, the reference style is American Psychological Association (APA) 7<sup>th</sup> reference style. University library for example has good resources for APA guidance, [available here](#).

The citations are placed in brackets within the text containing the reference. Citation should indicate the author surname(s) or if not available the publishing body, such as the World Health Organization and the year of publication. Page numbers are used when reference is made to specific pages of the source such as to a textbook. When referring to an article page numbers are not needed, except in the case of direct quotations.

If the reference is only to the preceding sentence, a full stop is placed after the parentheses. If the reference refers to several preceding sentences, the full stop is placed before the references and before the last bracket. The position of the full stop is important, as it enables the reader to distinguish the writer's own input from the source information.

**Table 3:** APA style in-text citations

Type of citation	APA 7 <sup>th</sup> edition
One author	(Smith, 2020)
Two authors	(Smith & Johnson, 2020)
Three or more authors	(Smith et al., 2020)
Authors as a group, with abbreviation	(World Health Organization [WHO], 2020) for the first time, (WHO, 2020) after that.
Authors as a group, no abbreviation	(University of Oulu, 2020)

### 3.4 List of references

A list of references must be included at the end of all written assignments if not stated otherwise. A reference must be found from both the in-text citation and from the list of references. The list of references should follow the APA style 7<sup>th</sup> edition., it is recommended to use a reference management tool such as Mendeley especially for the master's thesis. More information about using Mendeley can be found at University of Oulu [Libguide page](#).

### 3.5 Annexes

Any additional material closely related to the thesis will be placed as annexes at the end of the thesis. These include extensive tables, document samples, and questionnaires. Appendices are numbered consecutively in the top right-hand corner of the appendix page, e.g. Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 in the order in which they are referred to in the text. Each annex must be referred to in the text.