

4. THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR DISSERTATION

Your dissertation should consist of the following elements and sections in this order:

1. TITLE PAGE containing the title of your dissertation, your name, the name of your supervisor and other basic institutional information. You can download the template ("Modelo portada Trabajo Fin de Grado") from <https://biblioteca.unizar.es/servicios/deposito-tfgtfm>.

2. TABLE OF CONTENTS

You may head this section Table of Contents or, simply, Contents. You may also wish to learn how to produce an automatic table of contents, which saves time and avoids errors. Guidance is available [here](#) and there are also video tutorials: [short video](#) (1) and [short video](#) (2).

One important note for students working in English: although in Spanish we say "Índice", the word "Index" in English refers to something different—the alphabetical index of names and terms found at the back of a book. Do not use "Index" as the heading for your table of contents.

3. INTRODUCTION (approx. 15% of the dissertation, roughly twice as long as the Conclusion)

This section presents the topic to the reader, explaining your main focus and research aims. Briefly introduce your arguments and methodological approach, the theoretical basis and the concepts relevant to your analysis, moving from broad contextual perspectives towards a precise formulation of your thesis. It is the section that sets out *what* you are arguing, *why* it matters, and *how* you intend to demonstrate it. Keep these three questions in mind.

A word on writing order. The process of writing your TFG should begin with a draft of the Introduction, but you need to revise this thoroughly once the dissertation is complete. Since the Introduction advances what the dissertation will argue and how it will be structured, make sure it perfectly matches what was actually written in the subsequent chapters.

Things to do

- **Follow the "reverse pyramid" structure.** Start with the broad contexts and considerations and gradually narrow down to your specific research problem.
- **Define clear objectives.** State explicitly what your dissertation sets out to demonstrate, examine, or argue.

- **Justify the scope.** If you are deliberately excluding material that might seem relevant, explain why. For instance:

While Carol Ann Duffy's *The World's Wife* (1999) comprises poems inspired by literary, mythical, biblical, and historical females, this dissertation is specifically focused on the poems reimagining figures from classical Greco-Roman mythology. By narrowing the scope to dramatic monologues like those in "Medusa," "Circe," and "Eurydice," the research will provide a deeper and more coherent analysis of how Duffy challenges patriarchal conceptions of female identity.

- **Mention the methodology.** Briefly state the theoretical approach or research methods without going into full detail at this stage. For instance:

To examine the ethical and narrative complexities of Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow*, this research adopts a methodology grounded in Trauma Studies, with a specific focus on the field of "perpetrator trauma." Given the novel's controversial fictionalisation of a Nazi doctor's life, the analysis will use the theoretical frameworks established by scholars such as Berel Lang (2000), regarding the limits of Holocaust representation; Sue Vice (2000), on the traits of Holocaust fiction; and Sue Vice and Jenni Adams (2015), on perpetrator literature.

- **Provide a structural roadmap.** Conclude the Introduction by explicitly outlining the organisation of the TFG. Briefly describe the purpose and central argument of each subsequent chapter to demonstrate a logical progression of thought and to prepare the reader for the transition from the Introduction to the body of the work.

Things to avoid

- **Do not give everything away.** Avoid including detailed results or conclusions here. Save those for the body and the Conclusion.
- **Do not over-reference.** While you need some citations to set the scene, the Introduction should not look like a literature review.
- **Do not use the first-person plural (we) and limit the use of the first-person singular (I).** Avoid using "we" unless you are referring to readers/author/researchers collectively as a group. When you refer to your own research, use "I" or, better still, the impersonal: "This study aims to . . ." or "The research focuses on . . ." or "These poems were selected based on . . ."

4. BODY (approx. 70% of the dissertation)

The body of the dissertation is where you develop and substantiate your argument. This is often the most demanding part because it requires balancing close analysis of the primary text(s) with engagement with secondary sources. Divide it into two or three chapters or sections; each of these may be further subdivided, although in a relatively short piece of work like a TFG excessive subdivision tends to fragment the argument rather than clarify it.

The chapters of the body should not simply sit side by side as independent essays on related themes. They should build cumulatively, each one advancing the overall argument, so that the dissertation as a whole has a sense of intellectual progression.

A note on tense: when discussing literary texts, English Literature follows the convention of the literary present tense. Write “Hamlet hesitates,” not “Hamlet hesitated”; “Duffy subverts,” not “Duffy subverted.” This applies to your analysis of primary texts throughout the dissertation.

Things to do

- **Ground your analysis in close reading.** In English Literature, evidence is not simply a matter of plot or theme: it lies in detailed attention to language, imagery, syntax, form, and structure. When you make a claim about a text, support it by analysing how the text works, not just what it says.
- **Ensure fluid transitions between sections:** A smooth transition acts as a bridge, closing one idea while introducing the next. Use the end of a section and/or the beginning of the next to create this bridge. For example:

Having established the psychological framework of perpetrator trauma in this section, the following section examines how these theories can be applied to the analysis of the reverse-chronological structure of Martin Amis’s *Time’s Arrow*.

- **Ensure your own voice is not drowned out by critics.** Secondary sources (critical studies) should support, expand, or provide a counterpoint to your own analysis, rather than replacing it. Avoid “stringing” quotes together without providing your own interpretive commentary. Your argument should guide the chapter; the critics should serve it.
- **Integrate theory consistently.** Do not introduce a theoretical framework in one section and then abandon it. Use the theory throughout the entire analysis.
- **Keep structural proportionality.** The sections within the body of your work should be of relatively comparable lengths. Avoid significant disparities in section size.

- **Every time you introduce a quotation or paraphrase, provide its source.** Every quotation or paraphrase—whether primary or secondary—should provide a formal citation, explicitly attributing the idea to their original authors. This is a basic requirement of academic integrity.

✗ Things to avoid

- **Do not summarise the plot beyond what is strictly necessary.** This is one of the most common weaknesses in English Literature dissertations. If you find yourself describing *what* happened rather than *why* it matters, reconsider including it.
- **Do not state the obvious.** Avoid sentences that do not advance your argument (e.g., “Holocaust literature is very important for society”).
- **Do not be afraid to disagree with a critic’s interpretation.** If your close reading of the primary text contradicts a published scholar’s view, explain *why*. Providing a reasoned critique of a secondary source is a sign of academic independence.
- **Do not ignore conflicting interpretations.** Acknowledge scholars who hold opposing views and use these disagreements to justify your own stance. By explaining why you align with one critic over another—or why you disagree with both—you establish your own critical voice.
- **Do not argue in circles.** Avoid repetitive argumentation. Your dissertation should progress in a linear fashion, with each chapter building upon the last, rather than moving in a circle. If you need to return to a point already made, do not restate the whole argument. Use a brief cross-reference instead: “Building upon the analysis of Heathcliff’s isolation at the end of the previous section, the following paragraphs intend to further demonstrate . . .”

5. CONCLUSION (approx. 7% to 5% of the dissertation, about half as long as the Introduction).

The Conclusion is where you synthesise your findings and draw out the broader implications of your argument. It should follow the inverse movement of the Introduction: beginning with the specific findings developed in the body chapters, it progressively broadens in scope to address what your study contributes to the wider critical conversation. It is not a summary, and it is not a repetition of the Introduction. Introduction and Conclusion should be put in dialogue, and so, some issues posed in the Introduction should be taken up and reconsidered in the Conclusion. Questions meet answers.

✓ Things to do

- **Synthesise the findings.** Rather than listing what you did in each chapter, explain how the chapters work together to support your main claim.
- **Address the research questions.** Explicitly state the answers to the questions you posed in the Introduction.
- **Acknowledge limitations.** Briefly mention, if you wish, what your study *could not* cover. This shows academic awareness (e.g. “While this study focuses primarily on the protagonist’s evolution, a further exploration of the minor characters might offer additional insights into . . .”).
- **Read your Introduction and Conclusion back-to-back** before submitting. They should read like the two halves of the same conversation: one opening questions that the other resolves.

✗ Things to avoid

- **Do not introduce new material.** Never introduce a new critical approach, or a new sub-topic in the Conclusion. If it is important enough, it belongs in the body of the dissertation.
- **Avoid emotional or evaluative language.** Keep the tone objective and analytical (i.e. avoid things like “I loved reading this book. Oscar Wilde’s writing style is amazing and very clever.”) Emotional language may make your conclusions seem to be based on your personal “taste” rather than evidence.
- **Do not end with a “cliché” or “universal” statement.** Avoid ending with sweeping, grand claims about humanity, life, the “beauty of literature,” or “the greatness” of the work you have analysed. Such endings feel amateur. Your final sentence should leave the reader thinking about your specific findings—not about literature in the abstract.

6. WORKS CITED. The Works Cited list includes only those sources from which you have quoted or paraphrased directly in the dissertation. Sources you have read but do not cite should not be included. Full guidance on formatting your Works Cited list is provided in Section 5 of this Guide.

7. APPENDICES (if applicable). Appendices are not compulsory but they may be appropriate in certain cases. For instance, if you have worked on a number of poems, you might wish to include the full texts in an appendix for the reader’s convenience. Other materials (historical documents, images, tables) may also be included as an Appendix, where relevant to your specific project.

APPROXIMATE LENGTH GUIDELINES

The following breakdown is intended as a practical orientation for a standard TFG of 22 pages (Times New Roman 12, double-spaced, excluding cover and table of contents):

Section	Approximate length
Introduction	4 pages (approx. 15%)
Body (divided into sections)	15 pages (approx. 70%)
Conclusion	2 pages (approx. 7-5 %)
Works Cited	1 page
Total	22 pages