



UNIVERSITÀ DI PAVIA
Dipartimento di
Sanità Pubblica, Medicina
Sperimentale e Forense

Dottorato di Ricerca *Public Health and Lifestyle*

Website: phd-public-health.unipv.it

Scientific Secretariat: phd-public-health@unipv.it

Administrative Management: uoc.formazionericerca@unipv.it

Guidelines for formatting a PhD thesis for the PhD course in Public Health and Lifestyle

1. General format and layout

In formatting their own thesis, PhD students must follow the following guidelines for page composition presented below:

Page format

Use the standard A4 format and set 2.5 cm margins all around (top/bottom, right/left).

Text size and line spacing

The text should be in 12-point character and 1.5 spaced lines. Footnotes should be in 10-point character and single-spaced lines. Text and footnotes should be justified. All headings must be in bold. Chapter headings must be centered, in all capital letters and in 18-point character; main paragraph headings must be justified and in 14-point character, and not in all capital letters; sub-paragraph headings must be justified and in 12-point character, as the body of the text, and not in all capital letters.

Font

Choose Times New Roman or Arial, which provide a full character set.

Chapter and paragraph numbering

Chapter headings must be preceded by their number (e.g. 1. CHAPTER TITLE), and paragraphs and sub-paragraphs headings should be numbered accordingly (e.g., 1.1., 1.2., 1.1.1., etc.).

Page numbers

Page numbers are placed at the bottom of the page, centered between the margins. and must be in continuous Arabic numbers (beginning with 1), in 10-point character and in the same font as the body of the thesis.

Tables and figures

Tables and figures must be placed as close as possible to their first mention in the text. The text must be placed above and below the figure/table; no text should wrap around the figure/



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table. Captions of figures and tables must be placed below them and written in the same font and size as the text. Captions must be single-spaced.

2. Required sections

The PhD thesis must contain the following sections:

Title page

Please use the title page template available at this link:
<https://spmsf.dip.unipv.it/en/education/post-graduate-programs/phd-programs/public-health-and-lifestyle/final-exam>

Dedication

This is an optional page.

Table of contents

As a page heading, use TABLE OF CONTENTS in all capital letters, centered on the page and in 18-point character. Highlight or indent the titles of chapters and paragraphs to differentiate chapters from main and sub-paragraphs. Page numbering must be always in the same size.

Abstract

The abstract should be no longer than 300 words. As a page heading, use ABSTRACT in all capital letters, centered on the page and in 18-point character.

List of abbreviations

This is an optional page. As a page heading, use LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS in all capital letters, centered on the page and in 18-point character.

Chapter 1 – General introduction

Chapter 2 – Aims

Chapter 3 – Materials and methods (or Methods)

Chapter 4 – Results



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Chapter 5 – Discussion

References (or Works cited)

For references, use the Vancouver style (see section 4). As a page heading, use REFERENCES or WORKS CITED in all capital letters, centered on the page and in 18-point character.

Acknowledgements

As a page heading, use ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS in all capital letters, centered on the page and in 18-point character.

3. Additional suggestions

Style sheets

It is recommended to define the overall formatting and style of the thesis in a sample chapter and then apply the same structure to all the chapter files. This ensures consistency and simplifies the writing process, avoiding the need to format each chapter individually.

Technical issues

Do not use contractions in scholarly prose: don't, it's.

Place footnote numbers after punctuation (e.g. .¹, ;²).

Express numbers under 10 in words, except if they are part of a measurement (e.g., 4 kilometers).

Connectors such as *however, moreover, nevertheless, furthermore, in contrast*, etc. should be preceded (when in the middle of a sentence) and followed (when at the very beginning of a sentence) by a comma.

Avoid 'e.g.', and 'i.e.'. Do write 'for example', 'that is'.

Articles and organizations: use the article 'the' when we pronounce the individual letters: the EU, the UN, the IMF, the OECD. Do not use the article when we pronounce it as a word: NATO, UNESCO, OPEC. However, if the organisation is used as adjective, it requires the article: an EU directive, the EU Commission.



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Abbreviations: All acronyms must be spelled out on first use. For example: European Union (EU).

English language issues

a. Use of the relative pronouns ‘that’ and ‘which’

There is a difference between American and British conventions. In American English ‘that’ is typically used for restrictive (defining) clauses, while ‘which’ introduces non-restrictive (non-defining) clauses. In the latter case, ‘which’ is preceded by a comma: “The novel, which I read last summer, quickly became my favorite” (non-restrictive). By contrast, “The novel that I read last summer was set in Italy” (restrictive). In British English ‘which’ is often used in both cases: “The novel which I read last summer was set in Italy.” The key point is to be consistent: choose one convention and apply it throughout your writing.

b. Please be sure to use the UK or US spelling consistently

Spelling: American style guides usually favor -z- spellings in words such as ‘organize’ and ‘recognize’, whereas British conventions prefer ‘organise’ and ‘recognise’. Both forms are correct, depending on your intended audience or publisher; the important thing is to use one system consistently. In addition, British spelling retains the -u- in words like ‘colour’, ‘labour’, and ‘favour’, while American English uses ‘color’, ‘labor’, and ‘favor’. Another difference regards the doubling of consonants: British English typically doubles the -l- in forms like ‘cancelling’ or ‘modelling’, whereas American English uses ‘canceling’ and ‘modeling’. Finally, there are -re / -er and ae/e variations, such as ‘metre’ and ‘paediatric’ in British English, compared with ‘meter’ and ‘pediatric’ in American English.

Dates: In British English dates are written as ‘10 April 2026’ or ‘10th April 2026’. In the US, it is ‘April 10, 2026’. Avoid writing ‘the 10th of April’ and ‘April 10th 2026’.

Punctuation: Generally, in American English a comma after each item in a list is required, while in British English the comma before the last item is often omitted:

- US: He likes the colors red, blue, and white
- UK: He likes the colours red, blue and white.



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Titles and headings: in American English all nouns and verbs of titles and headings are capitalized, whereas in British English, after capitalizing the first word of book titles and headings, the lowercase is used:

- UK: Health-related quality of life and rehabilitation cost following intensive care unit stay in multiple trauma patients
- US: Health-Related Quality of Life and Rehabilitation Cost Following Intensive Care Unit Stay in Multiple Trauma Patients

4. Short guide to the Vancouver citation style

The Vancouver style is a numeric citation system widely used in medicine, public health, and the health sciences. Sources are cited in the text using numbers, which correspond to a numbered reference list at the end of the document.

a. In-text citations

Citations are indicated with Arabic numerals in the order in which sources first appear in the text. Examples:

Recent studies have confirmed this association.¹

Smith and colleagues reported similar findings.²

Several authors discussed the issue previously.³⁻⁵

You may use superscript numbers¹, numbers in parentheses (1) or numbers in square brackets [1]. The important thing is to be consistent throughout the document.

b. Reference list

The reference list is ordered numerically according to the order of citation in the text.

General rules:



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Authors' surnames are followed by initials of the name without full stop, except for the last author's name. Use commas between authors. Journal titles are abbreviated according to PubMed standards. No italics or quotation marks are used.

c. Common reference formats

Journal article

Author(s). Title of article. Journal Abbreviation. Year; Volume (Issue): Pages.

Example

Wang X, Smith J, Brown P. Road traffic injuries among older adults. *Inj Prev.* 2023; 29(4):215-221.

Journal article with more than six authors

List the first six authors followed by et al.

Example

Rossi M, Bianchi L, Turner P, White A, Singh R, Lopez D, et al. Long-term recovery after motor vehicle crashes. *BMC Public Health.* 2022; 22:14-56.

Book

Author(s). Title of book. Edition number (if it is not the first edition). Place of publication: Publisher; Year.

Example

Greenhalgh T. *How to Read a Paper.* 6th ed. Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell; 2019.

Chapter in an edited book

Author(s) of chapter. Title of chapter. In: Editor(s), (eds). Title of book. Place: Publisher; Year. p. xx-xx.

Example

Miller A. Epidemiological methods in injury prevention. In: Brown T, Wilson R (eds). *Public Health Research Methods.* London: Routledge; 2021. p. 85-102.



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Website

Author/Organization. Title [online]. Name of website; publication year [cited Year Month Day]. Available from: URL

Example

World Health Organization. Road traffic injuries [online]. Geneva: WHO; 2023 [cited 13 May 2026]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/road-traffic-injuries>

Thesis or dissertation

Author. Title [type of thesis]. Place: Institution; Year.

Example

Johnson E. Mental health outcomes after road traffic crashes [PhD thesis]. Melbourne: University of Melbourne; 2020.

d. Useful stylistic conventions

Multiple citations together:

Several studies reached similar conclusions.^{2,4,6}

Previous research supports this hypothesis.¹⁻³

Repeated citations:

If the same source is cited again, use the same number assigned the first time.

Example:

First citation: Smith et al.¹

Later citation of the same source: again¹



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e. Frequent mistakes to avoid

- ✗ Alphabetical reference list
- ✓ Vancouver uses citation order
- ✗ Reassigning a new number to an already cited source
- ✓ Keep the original number
- ✗ Writing authors' full first names
- ✓ Use initials only
- ✗ Inconsistent journal abbreviations
- ✓ Use PubMed abbreviations