Audience and thesis and dissertation writing

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Audience and academic writing

- Primary and secondary readerships

- Academic essays

- Thesis writing

The context of thesis and dissertation writing

- The setting of the text

- The focus and perspective of the text

- The purpose/s of the text

- The intended audience for the text, their role and purpose in reading the text

- The relationship between writers and readers of the text

- Expectations, conventions and requirements for the text

- The background knowledge, values, and understandings it is assumed the student shares with their readers, including what is important to their reader and what is not

- The relationship the text has with other texts

Setting of the text	The kind of university and level of study, the kind of degree (e.g. honours, master's or doctoral, research or professional) Study carried out in a 'hard' or 'soft', pure or applied, convergent or divergent area of study
Focus and perspective of the text	Quantitative, qualitative or mixed method research Claims that can be made, claims that cannot be made Faculty views on what is 'good' research
Purpose of the text	To answer a question, to solve a problem, to prove something, to contribute to knowledge, to display knowledge and understanding, to demonstrate particular skills, to convince a reader, to gain admission to a particular area of study
Audience, role and purpose in reading the text	To judge the quality of the research Primary readership of one or more examiners, secondary readership of the supervisor and anyone else the student shows their work to How readers will react to what they read, the criteria they will use for assessing the text, who counts the most in judging the quality of the text
Relationship between writers and readers of the text	Students writing for experts, for admission to an area of study (the primary readership), students writing for peers, for advice (the secondary readership). Writer authority, identity and positioning.
Expectations, conventions and requirements for the text	An understanding and critical appraisal of relevant literature A clearly defined and comprehensive investigation of the research topic Appropriate use of research methods and techniques for the research question Ability to interpret results, develop conclusions and link them to previous research Level of critical analysis, originality and contribution to knowledge expected Literary quality and standard of presentation expected Level of grammatical accuracy required How the text is typically organized, how the text might vary for a particular research topic, area of study, kind of study and research perspective What is typically be contained in each chapter The amount of variation allowed in what should be addressed and how it should be addressed The university's formal submission requirements in terms of format, procedures and timing
Background knowledge, values, and understandings	The background knowledge, values, and understandings it is assumed students will share with their readers, what is important to their readers, what is not important to their readers How much knowledge students are expected to display, the extent to which students should show what they know, what issues students should address, what boundaries students can cross
Relationship the text has with other texts	How to show the relationship between the present research and other people's research on the topic, what counts as valid previous research, acceptable and unacceptable textual borrowings, differences between reporting and plagiarizing

(Paltridge, 2006)

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Discussion task

Consider the following in relation to theses written in your area of study. How do these influence what students write and how they can write it?

the institutional setting of the thesis

the focus and perspective of the thesis

the purpose/s of the thesis

the intended audience for the thesis

the relationship between writers and readers of the thesis

expectations, conventions and requirements for the thesis

the background knowledge, values, and understandings it is assumed students will share with their readers, including what is important to their readers and what is not

the relationship the thesis has with other texts