

8 Questions

That Thesis Readers Ask

The main point of this document is to help a thesis writer understand some of the standard answers/information a Thesis Reader is expecting.

1. What is the **PROBLEM or QUESTION** the author is attempting to solve or answer?
2. Is the main Problem or Question **IMPORTANT** enough to warrant study?
3. What is the author's **CONTRIBUTION** to work on the Problem or Question?
4. Is the contribution **ORIGINAL**?
5. How do readers **KNOW** that it is original? (Reference work of others.)
6. How can readers **TRUST** the contribution?
 - a. Does the author *motivate* and *document* an **APPROPRIATE METHOD** for arriving at results? (This is **what the author did**, **why** the author chose the particular method(s), and **what happened**.)
 - b. Does the author do an **APPROPRIATE ANALYSIS** of those results? (This is the author's *reasoning* about **what the results mean**.)
7. Is the contribution **DISCIPLINE-APPROPRIATE**? (Example: "history of technology adoption" is not appropriate for a physics degree.)
8. Is the contribution **IMPORTANT** enough to warrant a PhD?
 - a. Is the contribution **GENERALLY RELEVANT** to more than just a few people? (**WHO** is interested in the contribution?)
 - b. Is the contribution an important **ADVANCE** over what was known before? (**HOW MUCH** do they care about it?)

Obs! There are, of course, different opinions about some of these questions. For example, not all people believe that "originality" is an important aspect of a thesis – and there are even disciplines that question whether originality is even possible.

However, a thesis writer needs to a) be aware that at least **some** readers care about the answers, and b) address the issues one way or another. It is **not** usually acceptable for thesis authors to just "ignore" (or avoid) any of the major questions just because they "don't believe the questions are relevant/significant." Authors must address them, either by **explicitly answering** them or by **explaining why they do not answer them**.