Thesis Formatting Checklist Before Submission: 48 Items

Print this list and work through it in three passes with your university's formatting regulations open beside you: a pass for the page, headings and numbering (sections 2 to 4), a pass for tables, figures and references (sections 5 and 6), and a final pass for the front matter, the appendices and the file (sections 1 and 7). Tick an item only after checking it in the document itself, not from memory. Where this list and your handbook differ, the handbook wins.

1. Title page and front matter

1	☐	Title page follows the university template word for word: full title, degree statement, department, author name as registered, and the year (month only if required).
2	☐	Thesis title identical on the title page, the abstract page, the declaration and the submission form.
3	☐	Abstract within the word or page limit and placed where the regulations require, usually immediately after the title page.
4	☐	Declaration, copyright statement, AI-use statement and ethics statement included with the exact wording the university prescribes.
5	☐	Acknowledgements and dedication within the allowed length and placed after the compulsory pages.
6	☐	Table of contents generated automatically, updated after the last edit, and showing every heading level the handbook requires.
7	☐	List of tables and list of figures generated from captions, complete and in sequence.
8	☐	List of abbreviations or glossary present if the thesis uses many abbreviations, and every abbreviation defined at first use.

2. Page setup, fonts and spacing

9	☐	Page size as required (A4 or Letter) in every section of the document.
10	☐	Margins as required, with the larger margin on the binding edge; mirror margins if the thesis is printed double-sided.
11	☐	One body font and size throughout, from the approved list or as named in the handbook.
12	☐	Line spacing as required (1.5 or double), with single spacing only where permitted: quotations, footnotes, captions, reference list.
13	☐	Paragraph spacing or first-line indents applied through styles, with no empty paragraphs used for spacing.
14	☐	Text alignment consistent (left-aligned or justified as the handbook prefers), and no hyphenation at line ends if it is prohibited.
15	☐	Footnotes in the prescribed smaller size and numbered as required (per page or continuously).
16	☐	No heading left alone at the foot of a page, and no single line stranded at the top of a page.

3. Page numbering

17	☐	Every page counted in the sequence the handbook prescribes: one Arabic sequence from the title page, or Roman numerals for the front matter.
18	☐	Title page unnumbered but counted; the first printed number matches the handbook.
19	☐	Page number position and font consistent on every page, including landscape pages.
20	☐	Section breaks, not manual gaps, separate the title page, the front matter and the main text; Link to Previous switched off where the numbering changes.
21	☐	Word count printed where required (for example at the foot of the contents page) and within the limit after the permitted exclusions.

4. Headings, numbering and navigation

22	☐	Every heading carries a heading style and appears in the Navigation Pane; no body text carries a heading style.
23	☐	Heading levels within the maximum allowed, identical in appearance at each level, and used without skipping a level.
24	☐	Heading numbering, if used, generated by a multilevel list and consistent across chapters.
25	☐	Each chapter begins on a new page through the style setting, not through repeated Enter presses.
26	☐	Headings in the text match the entries in the table of contents exactly.
27	☐	Running headers, if used, consistent throughout and free of the candidate's name where the policy forbids it.

5. Tables, figures and captions

- [ ] 28 Every table and figure has a caption inserted with the caption tool, numbered in sequence (or by chapter) with no gaps or duplicates.
- [ ] 29 Caption position consistent with the handbook or style guide (tables above; figures below, or above under APA 7).
- [ ] 30 Every table and figure is referred to by number in the text before it appears; no reference reads 'the table below'.
- [ ] 31 Tables fit within the margins, repeat their header row when they continue on a new page, and avoid rows split across pages.
- [ ] 32 Table formatting follows the required style (for APA 7: horizontal lines only, no vertical lines or shading, notes below the table).
- [ ] 33 Figures legible at print size, with labelled axes and units, and readable in greyscale if the thesis is printed in black and white.
- [ ] 34 Statistics in tables follow the number rules: $p < .001$ rather than 0.000, consistent decimals, no leading zero for p and r.
- [ ] 35 Sources and copyright permissions stated for reproduced tables, figures and images.

6. Citations, quotations and reference list

- [ ] 36 One referencing style throughout, in the version named by the handbook.
- [ ] 37 Every in-text citation has an entry in the reference list, and every entry is cited at least once.
- [ ] 38 Author names, years and spellings identical in the text and in the list.
- [ ] 39 Direct quotations carry page numbers; quotations longer than the style's limit are set as indented blocks.
- [ ] 40 Reference entries complete: authors, year, title, source, edition, volume and issue, pages, DOI or URL, and access date where required.
- [ ] 41 Reference list formatted as required (alphabetical order, hanging indent, spacing, italics) and consistent in capitalisation and punctuation.
- [ ] 42 Secondary citations marked as such, and only the source actually read appears in the list.

7. Appendices, file and submission

- [ ] 43 Appendices lettered or numbered, titled, listed in the contents, and each referred to in the main text.
- [ ] 44 Appendices contain the required items (instrument, consent forms, ethics approval, additional output) with page numbers in the sequence.
- [ ] 45 All fields updated (Ctrl+A, then F9) and no 'Error! Reference source not found' or 'Error! Bookmark not defined' text anywhere.
- [ ] 46 Spelling and grammar check completed in the correct language variant, with technical terms spelled consistently.
- [ ] 47 PDF exported from the final file with embedded fonts, bookmarks from headings and, where required, PDF/A compliance; page count matches the Word file.
- [ ] 48 File name, size and format match the submission system's rules; document properties (title, author) correct; a backup of the Word file and the PDF stored.

> **Items that depend on your handbook.** Items 1, 3, 4, 9, 10, 12, 17, 21, 29 and 36 take their values from your university's regulations or your department's style guide, so read those first and write the required values next to each item. Items 6, 7, 28 and 45 are the ones most often found wrong on the day of submission, because they depend on updating fields after the last edit: do them last.

Prepared by the Mastermind PhD team · October 2026 · This checklist is general educational guidance and does not replace your university regulations or your supervisor's instructions · Companion article: Thesis Formatting Checklist Before Submission on mastermindphd.com · Thesis & Research Formatting service: https://mastermindphd.com/thesis-formatting/