

# Dissertation and Thesis Abstracts

Abstracts occur in a variety of forms when you're job searching. Review the recommendations and the descriptions to ensure you have various kinds of abstracts prepared when you begin the academic job hunt.

## Some recommendations for abstract writing

- **Audience:** Begin with the understanding that your audience – be it grant funders, legislators, educators, or the general public – is not used to reading scholarly writing from your particular discipline. They may be interested in your work, but unequipped to navigate the complexities of your area of study.
- **Language:** Avoid long or complex words. Eliminate jargon – specialized language that you might use with your professional peers – which a more general audience might not understand. Explain acronyms, abbreviations, or terms specific to your discipline that a general audience might not understand.
- **Sentence Structure:** Write in active voice, and keep sentence structure simple. If you don't need a particular word to convey your message, delete it.
- **Organization:** Organize your thoughts clearly, in a way that is clear and easy to follow. Read with an eye toward eliminating details or extraneous thoughts that don't contribute to the reader's understanding of your work.
- **Readability:** If you are unsure about the level at which your public abstract is written, use a readability formula to see whether the writing is suitable for a general audience. Ask a friend from outside your discipline to read your public abstract, and highlight words, phrases, or ideas that are unclear to them.

This information is taken from "How to Write a Dissertation Abstract,"  
<https://www.grad.uiowa.edu/academics/thesis-and-dissertation/preparing-formatting/public-abstract>

| Type                   | Length  | Description   | Purpose   |
|------------------------|---|---|---|
| <b>Public Abstract</b> | up to 250 words   | a summary of the research/work targeted to a general audience and written in lay terms  | translational and functions as an "elevator pitch" for your research; a professional development opportunity to gain experience in articulating the value and/or purpose to broader audiences, including legislators, the media, and members of the public. |
|                        | <b>Recommended resource</b><br>Iowa Graduate College. "Abstracts." <a href="https://www.grad.uiowa.edu/academics/thesis-and-dissertation/preparing-formatting/public-abstract">https://www.grad.uiowa.edu/academics/thesis-and-dissertation/preparing-formatting/public-abstract</a>                                  |   |   |
| <b>CV Abstract</b>     | brief paragraph (3-4 sentences)   | included on the CV in the Education section, immediately under the entry for your PhD; similar to the dissertation paragraph used in your cover letter, but contextualized so it can stand on its own; avoids theoretical jargon, although key terms may be employed if defined   | equivalent of a short elevator pitch on your CV to summarize research   |
|                        | <b>Recommended resource</b><br>Cheryl Ball. "How to Write Research Statements." <a href="https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2014/10/06/essay-how-write-research-statements-applying-academic-jobs">https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2014/10/06/essay-how-write-research-statements-applying-academic-jobs</a> |   |   |
| <b>Long Abstract</b>   | two single-spaced pages   | structure often mirrors the structure of your dissertation, with a chapter-by-chapter breakdown in succeeding paragraphs; details may be pulled from your dissertation proposal; spend more time (a full paragraph or two) setting up the theoretical and methodological frameworks for your dissertation; fully flesh out analysis/results, outcomes, or other conclusions | stand-alone document sent either with initial job materials or when requested as supplemental materials; may also be used in your actual dissertation   |
|                        | <b>Recommended resource</b><br>Cheryl Ball. "How to Write Research Statements." <a href="https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2014/10/06/essay-how-write-research-statements-applying-academic-jobs">https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2014/10/06/essay-how-write-research-statements-applying-academic-jobs</a> |   |   |

| Type   | Length           | Description   | Purpose   |
|--|------------------|---|---|
| <b>Short Abstract</b>  | 250 to 350 words | includes the following components <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief description of the thing you're studying (e.g., what are you studying?)</li> <li>• Theoretical framework (e.g., what disciplinary lenses are you using to study X idea/concept/texts)</li> <li>• Methodological framework (e.g., how are you studying that thing)</li> <li>• Main research questions (why you are studying that thing)</li> <li>• Discovered or potential results of your study (e.g., what's the outcome of studying that thing).</li> <li>• Significance of your study (e.g., why are those outcomes important to your discipline, to humanity, etc.)</li> </ul> | provides a stand-alone description of your thesis or dissertation |
| <p><b>Recommended resources</b></p> <p>Cheryl Ball. "How to Write Research Statements." <a href="https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2014/10/06/essay-how-write-research-statements-applying-academic-jobs">https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2014/10/06/essay-how-write-research-statements-applying-academic-jobs</a></p> <p>University of Kentucky, College of Arts and Science. "Sample Dissertation Abstracts." <a href="https://english.as.uky.edu/dissertation-abstracts">https://english.as.uky.edu/dissertation-abstracts</a></p> |                  |   |   |