

DNB Thesis Protocol

Writing guide with word limits for every section

How to use this guide

- Each section shows the recommended length, followed by short instructions on what to write. Read them first, then write your own text on the lines or in your own document.
- Lengths are given in pages in the DNB guidance. Word counts here are approximate (about 250–300 words per page at double spacing) so that you can plan; always confirm against the current DNB guidance for your session.
- Write the protocol in the future tense ("will be recruited"), because the study has not yet been done.
- Keep every section consistent: the objectives, methods, outcomes and statistical analysis must all answer the same research question.
- Cite references in Vancouver style, numbered in order of first appearance in the text. Abbreviate journal names as in Index Medicus.

Structure and recommended length

Section	Pages	Approx. words
Cover details	1	–
1.1 Introduction	1–2	250–500
1.2 Review of Literature	1–5	250–1,250
1.3 Aims and Objectives	about 1	150–250
1.4 Materials and Methods	1–3	300–800
1.5 References	about 1	about 15–30 references
1.6 Study Proforma	1–5	as required
1.7 Ethics Committee approval	attach	–
1.8 Scientific Committee approval	attach	–

Signatures required

Candidate, guide, head of department and head of institution.

Cover details

Word limit: 1 page

- Give the full title in title case: specific, informative and ideally under 25 words. State the study design or population in the title if possible.
- Mention the date of joining the DNB course. The protocol must be submitted within 3 months of joining.
- List the guide and co-guide with their designations.
- The candidate, guide, head of department and head of institution must sign.

Study title:

Subject / specialty: _____

Candidate name: _____

DNB registration number: _____

Date of joining: _____

Guide name and designation: _____

Co-guide name and designation: _____

Date of protocol: _____

Signatures

Candidate: _____

Guide: _____

Head of department: _____

Head of institution: _____

1.1 Introduction

Word limit: 1–2 pages (about 250–500 words)

- *Move from the general to the specific: the broad problem, its burden (with numbers), what is already known, then the gap.*
- *State clearly why this study is needed and who will benefit from the answer.*
- *End with the research question or hypothesis in one or two sentences.*
- *Avoid long textbook definitions; every paragraph should lead towards your question.*

1.2 Review of Literature

Word limit: 1–5 pages (about 250–1,250 words)

- *Review recent and relevant studies only; prefer the last 5–10 years, plus landmark older studies.*
- *Group studies by theme (for example prevalence, diagnosis, outcomes) rather than listing them one by one.*
- *Compare findings, point out contradictions, and show where the evidence is weak or missing.*
- *End with a short paragraph linking the gap to your objectives. Cite every statement in Vancouver style.*

1.3 Aims and Objectives

Word limit: about 1 page (about 150–250 words)

- *Aim: one broad statement of what the study hopes to achieve.*
- *Primary objective: one specific, measurable statement that matches your research question and sample size.*
- *Secondary objectives: a few additional, measurable aims. Start each with an action verb (to estimate, to compare, to assess).*
- *Objectives must be stated in advance and be answerable by your methods; avoid vague words such as "study" or "evaluate" alone.*

1.4 Materials and Methods

Word limit: 1–3 pages (about 300–800 words)

- *Write it so that another researcher could repeat your study. Use these sub-headings in order:*
- *Study design, setting and duration: type of study (observational or interventional, prospective or retrospective), place and time frame.*
- *Study population: source of participants, inclusion criteria and exclusion criteria (each as a clear, checkable list).*
- *Sample size: formula or software used, the values assumed (prevalence, effect size, alpha, power, dropout) and the reference they come from.*
- *Sampling and recruitment: how participants will be selected, and randomisation and blinding if applicable.*
- *Procedures: materials with their source, step-by-step methods, who will measure what, and with which tool or scale.*
- *Outcomes: define primary and secondary outcome measures and how and when each will be measured.*
- *Data management and statistical analysis: software, tests for each objective, level of significance and handling of missing data.*

1.5 References

Word limit: about 1 page (typically 15–30 references)

- Use Vancouver style, numbered in order of first citation. Each number in the text must match one entry.
- Abbreviate journal names as in *Index Medicus* and give year, volume and page range.
- Cite only works you have actually read. Prefer recent, peer-reviewed sources.
- Check that every reference listed is cited in the text, and the reverse.

1.6 Study Proforma

Word limit: 1–5 pages

- Attach the data collection form exactly as you will use it: participant identification code, demographics, clinical details, investigations and outcome fields.
- Include any questionnaire or scale you will use, with its reference.
- Keep it short and tick-box based where possible, so it can be filled quickly and analysed easily.
- Do not collect names or other identifiers on the proforma unless essential.

1.7 Ethics Committee approval

Word limit: attach the approval

- Attach the Ethics Committee approval letter and state the composition of the committee.
- Attach the participant information sheet and informed consent form (and translations) that the committee approved.
- For participants who are minors, include assent and parental permission as applicable.

1.8 Scientific Committee approval

Word limit: attach the approval

- Attach the Scientific Committee approval letter and state the composition of the committee.
- Make sure the protocol you submit is the same version that the committee approved.
