

Description

The academic world is filled with many different types of writing assignments, each with its own unique set of requirements and expectations. One common source of confusion for students is the distinction between a thesis and a dissertation. Both are long-form academic works, but there are several key differences between the two that are important to understand.

In Shakespeare's day, a candidate for a master's degree would write a thesis, an original paper in which he maintained a certain proposition. Whereas, completion of a doctoral program required submission and defense of a dissertation. He would read his thesis to his committee, after which he sat in silence while two faculty members gave point-by-point refutations of everything the candidate said.

The focus here was on the student's ideas and his ability to arrange and express them clearly. If a student wished to advance further in academia he could pursue a dissertation. This was more of a literature review. He would read widely in a particular area and write up his findings, discussing the various authorities and their opinions. The point was to demonstrate that he was well-versed in the literature of the field. While the confusion between the two terms is understandable, we shall tackle the dissertation vs. thesis topic in this article and provide unambiguous insights on it.

What Is a Thesis?

A thesis is a critically written scholarly piece of research work. Typically, it is submitted by students graduating from a master's program. The purpose of a thesis is to allow students to showcase their knowledge and expertise within the subject matter they have been studying as part of the program.

What Is a Dissertation?

A dissertation is a comparatively lengthier piece of scholarly writing that accounts for your research work throughout the doctoral program. A researcher earns the Ph.D. after submitting and defending his/her dissertation. It includes all information about the original research or expanded research on a new or existing topic conducted by the Ph.D. candidate.

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Dissertation vs. Thesis: Differences

1. The primary difference between a thesis and a dissertation is the time when they are completed. As mentioned earlier, a thesis is presented at the culmination of a master's program, whereas, a dissertation is presented to earn a Ph.D.
2. A thesis is a compilation of research ensuring that the researcher is well-informed and has knowledge about the research topic learned in the study program. On the other hand, a dissertation provides an opportunity for the researcher to contribute new theories and information to the existing literature in the research field.
3. A thesis is a presentation of learned and existing information, while the purpose of a dissertation is to develop a unique concept and defend it based on theoretical and practical results.
4. A master's thesis is approximately 100 pages in length. However, a Ph.D. dissertation should be much longer than a thesis and must include background and research information. A dissertation must include your research proposal, grant proposal, literature review, ideation of research topic, and every other minute detail about your research. Ideally, a dissertation inclusive of all details mentioned above should be three times the length of a master's thesis.

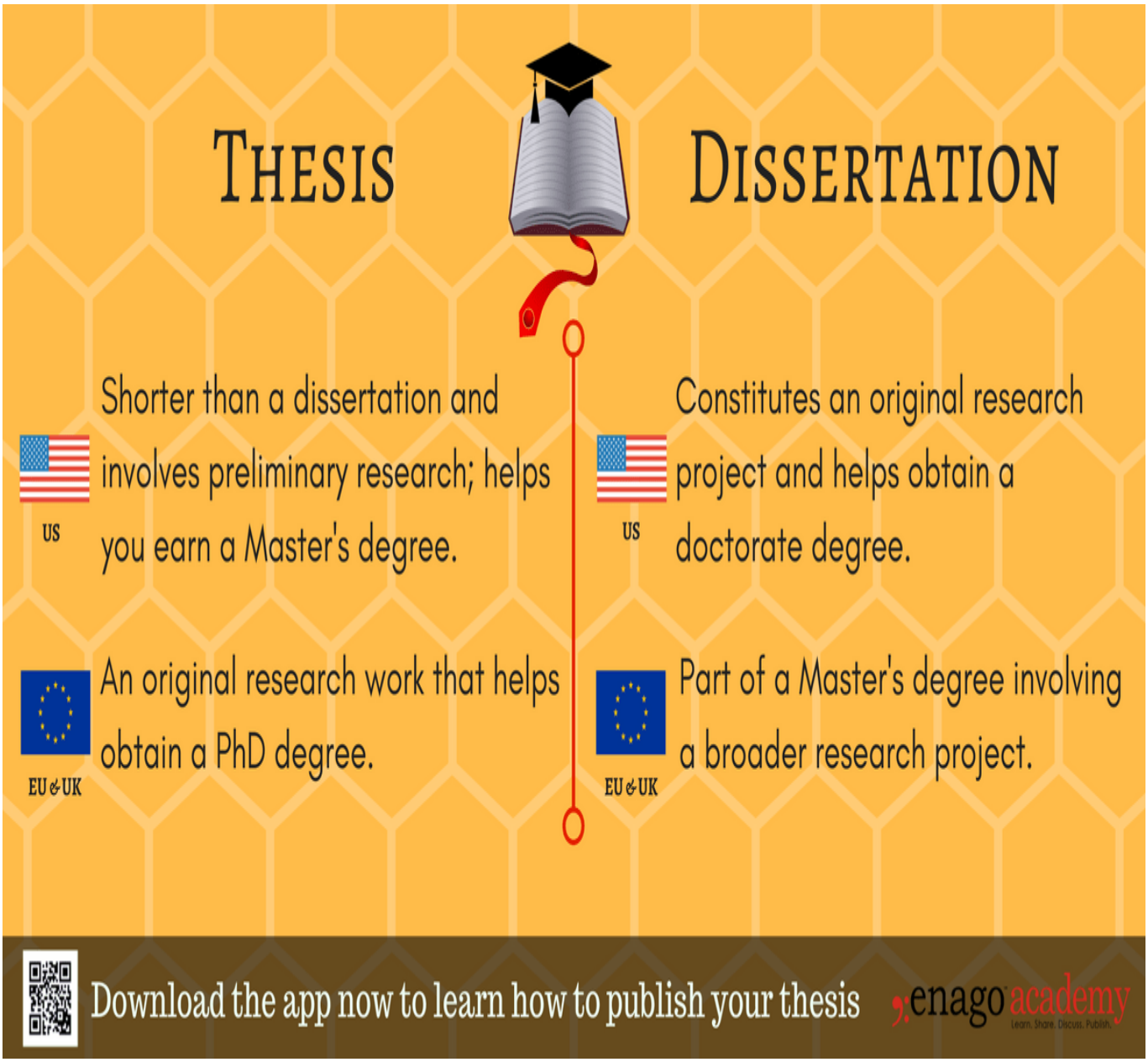
Dissertation vs. Thesis: Similarities

1. Both a thesis and a dissertation are considered final projects and are required to graduate from respective programs.
2. The thesis and dissertation both require a deep and accurate understanding of the research problem.
3. Both forms of scholarly written pieces must address specific research questions.
4. Academic writing skills are imperative for a thesis as well as a dissertation.
5. Ethical practices must be followed while collating and documenting research data.
6. Plagiarism is not accepted in either.
7. Both require analytical skills to support the findings.
8. It is essential that both undergo intense dissertation/thesis editing and critical proofreading before final submission.

Dissertation vs. Thesis: Europe

In Europe, the original distinction between a thesis and a dissertation has been largely retained. A doctoral thesis is a focused piece of original research that is performed to obtain a Ph.D. A dissertation is part of a broader post-graduate research project.

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However, the thesis has evolved since original research nowadays requires plenty of background research. So, a thesis will contain extensive citations and references to earlier work, although the focus remains on the original work that comes out of it.

Dissertation vs. Thesis: USA

In the United States, the definition of a thesis is almost the opposite of that in Europe. Because a thesis is shorter than a dissertation it gradually came to mean a preliminary degree on the way to a doctorate. A thesis is now performed to earn a Master's degree. In scientific fields, a master's candidate takes advanced coursework and gains hands-on experience in a research project but does not direct the project to the same extent that he would in a doctoral program. In a master's project, the student's ideas are welcomed and expected but the focus is on obtaining technical expertise, not doing original research. Engineering students commonly obtain Master's degrees and seldom go on to get

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PhDs. In other fields such as Chemistry, the opposite is true, with a Master's degree no longer being required as the first step for a doctorate. Almost everyone I know who received a Master's degree in Chemistry got one because they dropped out of graduate school and wrote their truncated research as a Master's project.

In a Nutshell

Needless to say, the dissertation vs. thesis facts are real. Therefore, using one term instead of another is not acceptable as an academic. One must remember the purpose of each and use them accordingly. However, one is not undermined by the other. Whether you are writing a thesis or a dissertation, both must be done with the same seriousness. Both require critical technical and soft skills. Improving your time management and academic writing skills plays a major role in acing both forms of scholarly writing.

How do you decipher dissertation vs. thesis? Should the interchanged usage of these terms be acceptable? How is your approach to writing a thesis different from that of a dissertation? What are the other differences associated with the thesis and dissertation? Let us know in the comments section below!

Category

1. Manuscripts & Grants
2. Reporting Research

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