

HDR Thesis Preparation Guidelines

Table of Contents

1 Intent and scope	2
2 The purpose of writing a thesis	2
3 Style	2
4 Presentation and layout	3
5 Length of the thesis	3
6 Avoidance of plagiarism	3
7 Thesis contents	4
7.1 Title page	4
7.2 Acknowledgements	4
7.3 Statement of the contribution of others	5
7.4 Abstract	6
7.5 Table of contents, list of tables, list of figures and list of plates	6
7.6 Body of the Thesis	6
7.7 References	7
7.8 Appendices	7
8 Editorial Standard	7
9 Editorial Intervention	7
10 Research Data Storage and Release	8
11 Copyright	8
12 Credit for Work Completed Prior to Candidature	8
13 Incorporating Published Material in the Thesis	8
13 Visual Presentation	9
13.1 Text	9
13.2 Tables	10
13.3 Illustrations	11

1 Intent and scope

The intent of this document is to provide guidelines to be followed in the preparation of a thesis for examination for a Higher Degree by thesis or by portfolio at Alphacrucis.¹

A thesis means either:

- A substantive description of research undertaken for the purpose of obtaining a degree; or
- A critical interpretation of creative work, together with any associated material that is also subject to examination.

The thesis must comply with the specific format prescribed by the College for the Doctorate or Masters course, as well as the discipline in which the candidate is enrolled. There is a wide range of disciplines in which theses are written so the generic information provided here may not cover all the specific requirements of every discipline or thesis course.

Higher Degree by Research candidates should consult with their Primary Supervisor regarding matters such as style and requirements peculiar to their particular field of research before beginning to write. (It is easier to begin using the correct style rather than to have to edit many pages of work later.) Various style manuals are used within the College. Many are held by the library or are otherwise available online.

Reviewing other theses in the discipline from this and other tertiary institutions is also good practice. Many examples are available online.

2 The purpose of writing a thesis

The thesis should be written with the aim of convincing examiners that the candidate has met the requirements for the degree. The requirements of research degrees offered by Alphacrucis follow the specifications of the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#) and are as follows:

Research Doctorate degree: A doctoral degree qualifies individuals who apply a substantial body of knowledge to research, investigate and develop new knowledge, in one or more fields of investigation, scholarship or professional practice.

Research Masters degree: A Research Masters degree qualifies individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for research and scholarship and as a pathway for further learning.

All HDR theses are expected to show evidence of:

- Originality of the research data and/or analysis of the data;
- Coherence of argument and presentation;
- Technical and conceptual competence in analysis and presentation; and
- Critical knowledge of the relevant literature.

3 Style

Irrespective of whether sections of the thesis are written for journal publications, the thesis should exhibit the same form of disciplined writing as would be accepted in a journal publication of the relevant

¹ The body is largely based on James Cook University's guidelines. See <https://www.jcu.edu.au/graduate-research-school/forms-and-policies/hdr-thesis-format-guidelines>.

discipline. Candidates should write clearly and concisely, without undue repetition, eliminating redundant tables or graphs and excessive methodological detail.

4 Presentation and layout

Candidates should use a high-quality word processing or desktop publishing computer package to ensure that thesis presentation is both clear and attractive to the reader. The typescript must be clear and easily read, such as Times, Times New Roman or Arial, in a font size such as 11, although other fonts of similar size and appearance are acceptable.

Theses are submitted electronically both for examination and to the library. The layout should have:

- The equivalent of paper sizing A4 (297 mm x 210 mm)
- Line spacing of 1.5
- Footnotes, if used, should be placed at the foot of the page to which they refer and not be carried over to another page if possible
- Margins of no less than 25 mm
- Diagrams, maps, photographs, etc., are to be interleaved in the text, included in the page sequence and numbered accordingly.

Information stored on media such as DVD, CD and USB drives can be included in the thesis. Candidates should consult with the HDR Librarian to ensure that such information is provided in a format that will be easily accessible to an examiner and reader and suitable for long-term electronic storage in the College's institutional repository, which forms the College's archive of research outputs of staff and HDR candidates.

5 Length of the thesis

The thesis should be within 10% of the maximum number of words specified below:

- Research Masters – 30 000 words
- Professional Doctorate – 50 000 words
- Doctor of Philosophy – 80 000 words

The limits set above are exclusive of appendices, bibliographies, etc. Footnotes are included in the word count. Candidates are asked to sign that they have met the relevant restriction in the forms that accompany thesis submission.

Candidates should obtain permission from the HDR Director if they expect to vary from the limit by more than 10%. Such requests are only granted in exceptional circumstances.

6 Avoidance of plagiarism

All quotations, conclusions, findings, important ideas or concepts reached by others (or published previously by the candidate) that are used or referred to in the thesis must be fully acknowledged. The candidate is strongly encouraged to use plagiarism checking software to check their thesis chapters as they write them for references to others' work.

The candidate must declare that they have stated clearly and fully in the thesis the extent of any collaboration with others and that to the best of their knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published (including grey literature and online blogs, etc.) by any other person

except where due acknowledgment has been made by Including a Statement of Contribution of Others. (See 6 Thesis contents.)

7 Thesis contents

The contents of a thesis must normally include the following in the order specified. Disciplinary norms and customs may also be taken into account when determining the contents and order of a

thesis:

7.1 Title page

7.2 Acknowledgements

7.3 Statement of the contribution of others

7.4 Abstract

7.5 Table of contents, list of tables, list of figures and list of plates

7.6 Body of the Thesis

7.7 References

7.8 Appendices

The page numbering for items 6.2 Acknowledgements–6.5 Table of contents, list of tables, list of above is typically in the form of Roman numerals (i.e. i, ii, iii, iv, etc.), with Arabic numerals (i.e. 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.) commencing at the start of the body of the thesis. It is usual not to include page numbering on the title page of the thesis. The thesis document should be formatted using the odd and even pages layout option, such that page numbers sit at the outer margin on all pages when the thesis is printed double-sided and bound.

Completed theses from the same discipline or that used the same overall structure may be helpful in providing examples of the order and formatting of a thesis.

7.1 Title page

The title page should include:

- Surname and full given name(s) and degrees and/or professional qualifications already held by the candidate;
- Full title of the thesis;
- Degree for which the thesis is submitted;
- College(s) or equivalent in which the candidate submitted the work;
- Name of the College; and
- Date of submission of the thesis – month and year.

7.2 Acknowledgements

The acknowledgements are typically no longer than one page and are usually left to the candidate's discretion as to whom to include, although it is wise to have the text checked by another person. Acknowledgements will often include thanks for the formal and informal contribution of others in the conduct of the research and production of the thesis, such as advisors, research assistants, peers and mentors. (Details on the nature of such support must be included in 6.3 Statement of the contribution of

others.) Acknowledgement of personal support provided by family and friends is often also included. Support from a funding body as well as any other support the candidate has received, e.g. a professional association or charity, may also be mentioned. Any scholarships received during candidature must be acknowledged.

7.3 Statement of the contribution of others

Contemporary research, including the work of HDR candidates, is increasingly collaborative or team based. Thus, contributions to the research project by others are inevitable in almost every case. Research may be jointly published, may be carried out in collaborative teams, and may be done and/or written with the technical, theoretical, statistical, editorial, or physical assistance of others.

In all cases, it is imperative that the candidate acknowledges the work of others appropriately. A statement precisely outlining the contributions of others to the intellectual, physical, and written work must be set out at the beginning of the thesis. When the thesis contains work that is also part of jointly published papers, the contribution of the candidate and of others must be clearly stated at the beginning of the chapter and the publication details clearly cited as described below.

The statement of the contribution of others at the beginning of the thesis should include (as appropriate):

- Tuition fee support including acknowledgement of fee sponsorships, waivers, and fee offset scholarship from the Australian Government.
- Stipend support
- Supervision
- Other collaborations
- Statistical support
- Editorial assistance
- Research assistance
- Any other assistance
- Project costs
- Use of infrastructure external to Alphacrucis
- Use of infrastructure external to an organisational unit within Alphacrucis

An example Statement of Contributions of Others is available below. Candidates are strongly advised to document the contribution of others in qualitative, rather than quantitative, terms as the latter may be misinterpreted.

Nature of assistance	Contribution <i>(specify only those contributions that are applicable to your thesis; the list below is not exhaustive)</i>	Names, titles (if relevant) and affiliations of co-contributors
Intellectual support	Proposal writing Data Analysis Statistical support Cartography and GIS Editorial assistance	
Financial support	Fee offset/waiver Research costs Stipend Write-up Grant	

Data collection	Research assistance Interview design and transcription Boat drivers
------------------------	---

Table 1 Example Statement of Contribution of Others

7.4 Abstract

The thesis should be prefaced by an abstract of 300–500 words, which:

- States the principal objectives and scope of the study;
- Describes the methodology employed;
- Summarises the results; and
- States the principal conclusions.

7.5 Table of contents, list of tables, list of figures and list of plates

The Table of Contents (ToC) and Lists of Tables, Figures and Plates should reflect the page numbers of section titles, tables, figures and plates, respectively. The depth of the ToC should not be more than two levels. That is, the chapters and main sections therein only should be listed. For example, in this document the third-level headings in 6.6 Body of the Thesis are not listed in the ToC.

7.6 Body of the Thesis

7.6.1 Introduction

The first chapter of the thesis should be a concise description of the purpose of the thesis, the scholarly context of the research and an explanation of the structure of the thesis, i.e. the rationale for and scope of the research.

7.6.2 Chapters

The body of the thesis will normally be presented as a series of chapters that represent natural divisions or logical progressions of the research. In many circumstances it may be appropriate, in fact highly desirable, to prepare these chapters in a format that will facilitate publication as a series of journal articles or as a book. If the data chapters of the thesis are presented as a series of papers (published or unpublished), the thesis is likely to be more readable if the papers are presented in a coherent format rather than reprints bound together. The intellectual thread that connects the chapters should be signposted in the introduction and summarised by way of synthesis in the general discussion.

7.6.3 Methods Section(s)

In some disciplines, the thesis should include a methods section, which fully supports the discussion of the individual chapters. The detailed format of this section will vary, according to whether it is intended to be published, or has been published, as will its organisation, for example, as a single consolidated chapter or as separate sections associated with individual chapters.

7.6.4 General Discussion/Conclusions

The thesis should conclude with a general discussion which:

- Provides an integrated statement on the outcomes of the research described in the thesis, how these match the objectives of the research outlined in the introduction and discussion and how these advance or change thinking in the discipline; and
- Where appropriate, signals directions for future research.

7.7 References

The references should conform to a recognised referencing system appropriate to the discipline.

7.8 Appendices

Supporting material that is not central to the thesis should be presented as appendices. These might include a summary of primary data, code for computer programs developed as part of the research, etc.

8 Editorial Standard

Before producing the final version of the thesis for submission for examination, the candidate should ensure that:

- All textual errors, including typographical and formatting errors, have been corrected;
- Spelling, grammar, punctuation and choice of language are of an appropriate standard; and
- The referencing is complete and exact.

Attention to textual detail is essential as mistakes are extremely irritating to examiners and divert them from the substance of the thesis. If a professional proof-reader or editor is used in preparing the final thesis, the candidate must declare that they have read and complied with the Guidelines for the Editing of Research Theses by Professional Editors.²

9 Editorial Intervention

This purpose of this section is intended to clarify the extent to which external paid assistance may be involved in the preparation of the final version of a thesis/dissertation prior to submission.

The advisors of research higher degree students are expected to provide editorial advice to their students. Candidates are permitted to use additional editors in preparing their thesis for submission, but should discuss this with their Primary Supervisor and provide the editor with a copy of these guidelines before they commence work.

Editorial intervention should be restricted to:

- Proofreading: that is, detecting and correcting the presentation of the text to conform with standard usage and conventions (e.g. spelling, quotations, italics, lists, word usage, punctuation, graphs, charts, citations, references, heading hierarchies, symbols and equations, headers and footers, style of numbers, etc), as noted in Standard E, of the [Handbook on Australian Standard for Editing Practice](#).
- The identification and provision of advice, with corrections as exemplars only, in matters of structure (the need to restructure and reword, deletions, additions); the conventions of grammar and syntax; use of clear language; logical connections between phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and sections; voice and tone; and how to avoid ambiguity, repetition and verbosity, as noted in Standard D of the [Handbook on Australian Standard for Editing Practice](#).

Where editors do deal with matters outside of Standards D and E then this should be noted in the acknowledgements of the thesis.

When a thesis has had the benefit of professional editorial advice, of any form, then:

² http://iped-editors.org/About_editing/Editing_theses.aspx.

- The name of the editor and a brief description of the service rendered, in terms of the Standards cited in the Australian Standards for Editing Practice, should be printed as part of the list of acknowledgements or other prefatory matter near the front of the work when it is to be presented for examination.
- If the professional editor's current or former area of academic specialisation is similar to that of the candidate, this too should be stated in the prefatory matter.

A [searchable list of professional editors](#) is available on The Institute of Professional Editors web site.

10 Research Data Storage and Release

Original data should be retained in the College in which they were generated. Data should be held for as long as readers of the thesis or publications might reasonably expect to be able to raise questions that require reference to it. Data should be stored for at least 5 years. Where it is impossible or impracticable to hold data, a written indication of the location of the data, or key information regarding its location (e.g. the way in which it was called up from a limited access database) must be kept in the College.

11 Copyright

See the relevant section in the *Guide for Theses Containing Publications*.

12 Credit for Work Completed Prior to Candidature

Alphacrucis recognises that some candidates may have already completed work towards their research project before commencing their candidature. For example, they may have transferred to Alphacrucis part-way through their HDR candidature. Candidates may include studies undertaken towards another research degree, provided that the work:

- was completed after the candidate was qualified for entry to their current program at Alphacrucis;
- has not been counted towards a completed award at Alphacrucis or elsewhere;
- was conducted with adequate advisory oversight at an acceptable institution; and
- is of a nature and quality appropriate to the current program at Alphacrucis.

13 Incorporating Published Material in the Thesis

See the *Guide for Theses Containing Publications*.

14 Visual Presentation³

One of the final steps in writing a thesis is crafting. There are a number of elements which need crafting, the argument (including flow and ensuring all assertions are supported); language; word count (usually writing down to it) and visual presentation.

This note will cover the last of these, the visual presentation. The key principle is consistency. The goal is invisibility. Good design is not seen, it simply adds to effective communication. If some elements of the presentation stand out, it frequently means that the presentation needs attention.

Good visual presentation covers a range of issues. Below we will address text and layout, tables and then infographics, which includes graphs and other images.

14.1 Text

14.1.1 Typefaces

Your text should be presented using a legible font. You may choose to use those from the thesis template. If you choose not to, please choose a typeface used for body text which is designed for reading. These include typefaces such as Bookman, Palatino and Times. If you are using special characters for biblical studies, classical studies, or similar, ensure that the typeface has the glyphs you need. A very good classics typeface is Cardo. It is freely downloadable from the web. The Society for Biblical Literature also have a collection of high-quality typefaces (see <https://www.sbl-site.org/educational/biblicalfonts.aspx>). It is important, however, to ensure that all the typefaces used in your thesis match.

Compare the two Greek sections below. The first one uses the same body typeface whereas the second does not. In the second example, the Greek stands out, rather than blending in.

1. We can benefit from comparing the Hebrew world view inherent in the phrase בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים from Gen. 1:1, with the Greek thought inherent in Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος from John 1:1.

with
2. We can benefit from comparing the Hebrew world view inherent in the phrase בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים from Gen. 1:1, with the Greek thought inherent in Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος from John 1:1.

You should use few typefaces, at most two. One should be a serif font for the body, as serif fonts are most readable. You can choose to use a contrasting font for headings, as is done in this paper. Make sure that they work together and do not clash.

It is important that the fonts communicate clearly. That is, that they are readable, rather than decorative. For example, you may think that a handwritten font adds the personal touch. It doesn't, it annoys the reader. While most won't be tempted to use decorative fonts for body text, unfortunate choices can be made for headings. If in doubt, ask someone with print publishing expertise or stick with the standards (Times and Helvetica/Arial).

³ This section on visual presentation of theses was prepared by Dr Nigel D. Pegram, Alphacrucis College Doctor of Ministry Program Director.

14.1.2 Sizes

Not only does one need to choose a few readable typefaces, it is also important that size is chosen wisely. The body type should not be so small that lines are difficult to read, nor should they be so large that lines are too short. Headings should show a hierarchy of size and style. As well as numbering, heading size also provides a visual clue as to the importance of the section or label.

You will need to juggle the size of margins and type. Wider margins will accommodate a smaller type size, while narrower margins require a larger font. You will note above that we recommend 11-point type with 1.5 line spacing. While not the optimum for readability, these settings are chosen to allow room for comments from examiners.

The golden rule of consistency applies to heading style as well as to captions and other labels. They should sit well with the body and heading fonts and sizes. See above for the visual clues provided by headings [1.1](#) and [1.1.1](#).

14.1.3 Single lines

It is considered unsightly (and does not aid comprehension) when a line appears by itself. There are a few items to note here.

First, one sentence is not a paragraph. A paragraph explains an idea. Therefore it should contain multiple sentences over a number of lines in order to introduce and explain the concept under consideration.

Second, the placing of automatic page breaks by word processors can lead to a line appearing by itself at the top or bottom of a page. These are known as widows and orphans, respectively. These can be managed by turning on “Widow/Orphan control” in the paragraph settings. We recommend that you include this as part of the style settings for your body paragraphs.

One can encounter a similar situation where captions are separated from the table or figure which they label. This can be avoided by the appropriate use of “Keep with next” as part of the paragraph settings for the image/table and the caption.

Another similar situation can occur when a heading appears by itself at the bottom of a page. This too can be solved using “Keep with next” in the paragraph style. We recommend that this setting is applied to all heading styles.

14.1.4 Styles

Finally, we recommend that time is taken at the beginning to set up styles in your document so that you do not have to manually set up paragraphs and tables as you write. This time invested at the start can result in much time saved later. An additional benefit of using styles is that when a change is needed, one can change a style and have all paragraphs which use that style will be automatically updated to match. All modern word processors use styles. See the program help or search online.

14.2 Tables

The above guidelines can now be carried forward into tables and graphics. First, we will deal with tables. Using the default settings of your word processing program may not be the wisest option. Compare the two tables below. The first is taken from a word processor with nothing altered. The one on the right has been crafted to fit in with the style of this document, using the same typefaces.

If you look closer at the second table, you will see that the typeface is the same as the body of the document. The numbers have also been right-aligned so they read more naturally. If the figures have decimals, then you would align on the decimal points. Some other changes were made, such as to

borders and adding row highlights to make it easier for readers to scan across lines. However what makes a good table is a question of aesthetic style, as well as consistency. I leave it to you to search for information about what makes a good table.

Denomination	Attendance
ACC	125
Baptist	103
Churches of Christ	98

Table 1: Attendance by Denomination

Denomination	Attendance
ACC	125
Baptist	103
Churches of Christ	98

Table 2 Attendance by Denomination

Tables should be numbered in a consistent fashion sequentially throughout the document. Tables (indeed any illustrations) should occur after they have been discussed in the body of the document. Do not leave it to your readers to figure out tables, explain them and highlight important elements.

14.3 Illustrations

By now you should be expecting the admonition that consistency is a key feature of illustrations. The above advice regarding the numbering and placement of tables also applies to figures and illustrations.

Illustrations should present information. They should not shout and demand attention. This will mean that any illustrations should be crafted using the same typefaces as the surrounding document. They should have consistent type sizes, line weights and colour palettes between them. Type, lines and colours should also show consistency with the rest of your thesis. This means that some illustrations which are being used from other sources need to be acknowledged, but then refashioned to fit into your own document. An image from a textbook is reproduced in [Figure 1](#). Since it is a picture, it uses the lines and fonts from the original. Notice that the font in particular is inconsistent with that in the body of this paper. Whereas in [Figure 2](#), the typefaces match the surrounding document, including the tables.

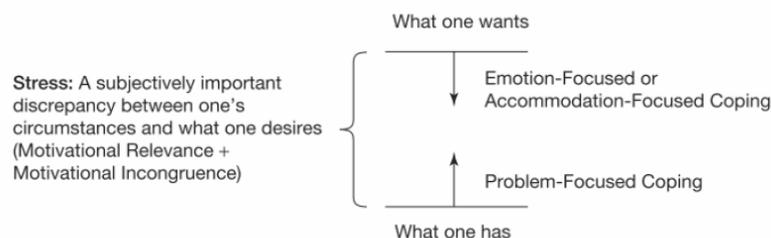


Figure 1 Smith and Kirby figure 15.1 pasted graphic

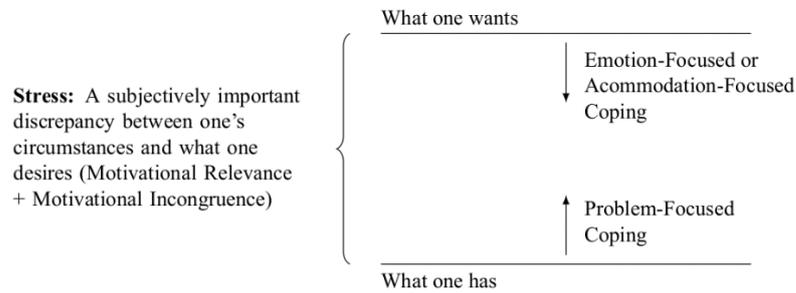


Figure 2 Smith and Kirby figure 15.1 reproduced

The graphs below show both the difference between styles and colour (see [Figure 3](#) and [Figure 4](#)). This paper is designed to be printed in one colour, so not only does the updated graphic match the line and text of other illustrations, but it is converted to greyscale and provides the figures to make it more informative. One may argue that the 3D looks and colour of the original is more attractive. However, the updated graph is more informative and less jarring to the reader. It is important when using external software to generate graphs that they all use the same colour palette, from the order of colour in bar and pie charts, to the colour of backgrounds.

Even if a graphic has the right colour scheme, scans and reproductions from e-books are not always of high quality. Below are two illustrations. One is an original taken from a work found on the internet. It was the highest quality available. It has been reproduced large enough so that the reader can see the pixellation. Its typeface does not match the document, either. To make it presentable, it also needed touching up as parts of the circle's line was clipped (missing). See [Figure 5](#). Compare this with the recreated image, which is clear, sharp, and consistent with the rest of the document. See [Figure 6](#).

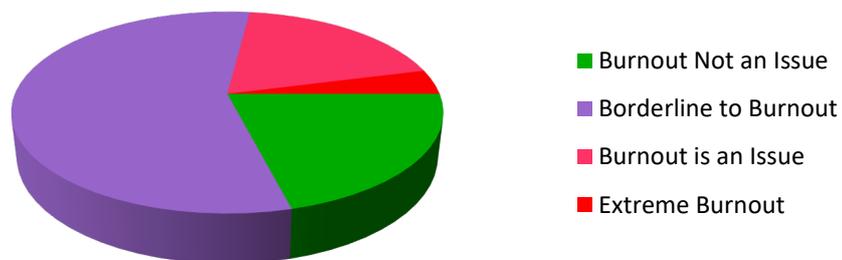


Figure 3 Original graph

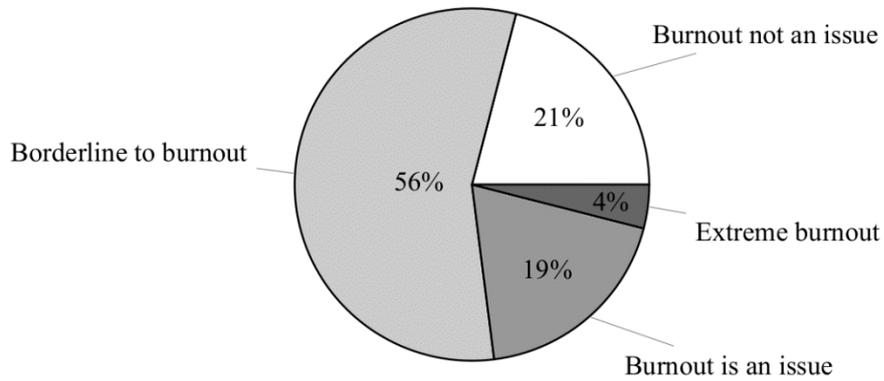


Figure 4 Updated graph

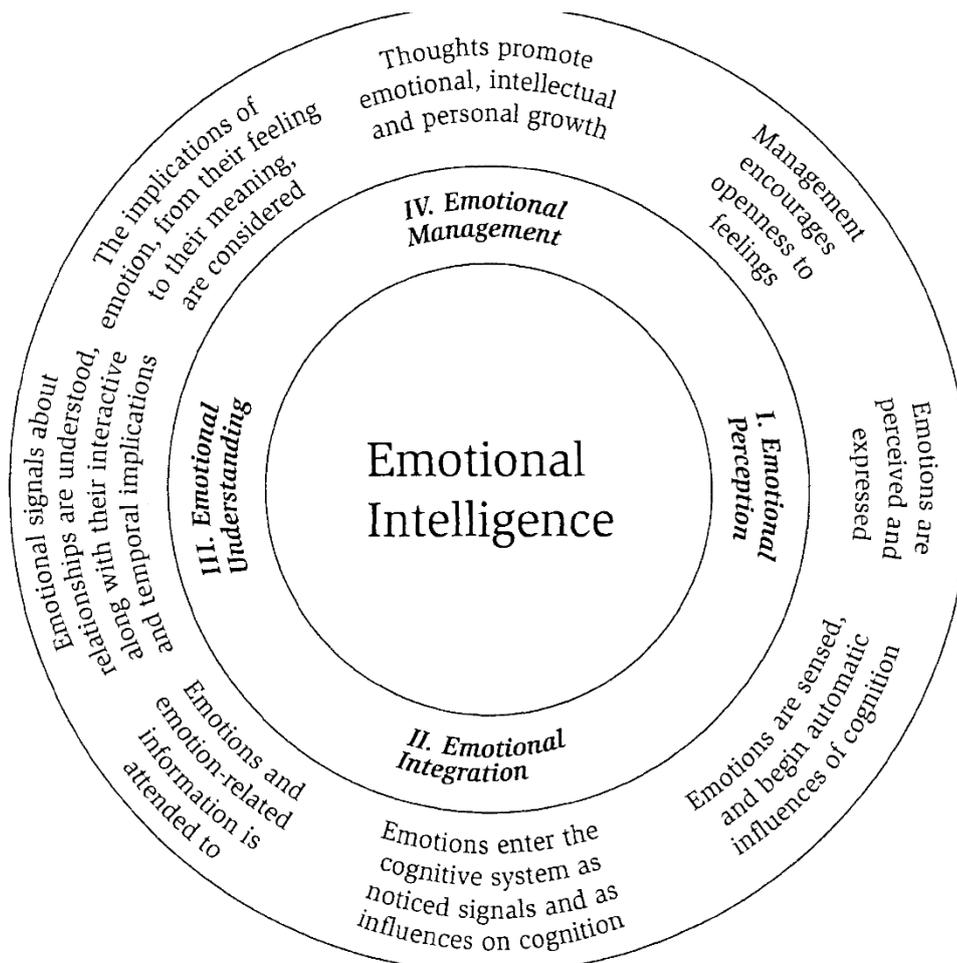


Figure 5 Original EI as a Circle

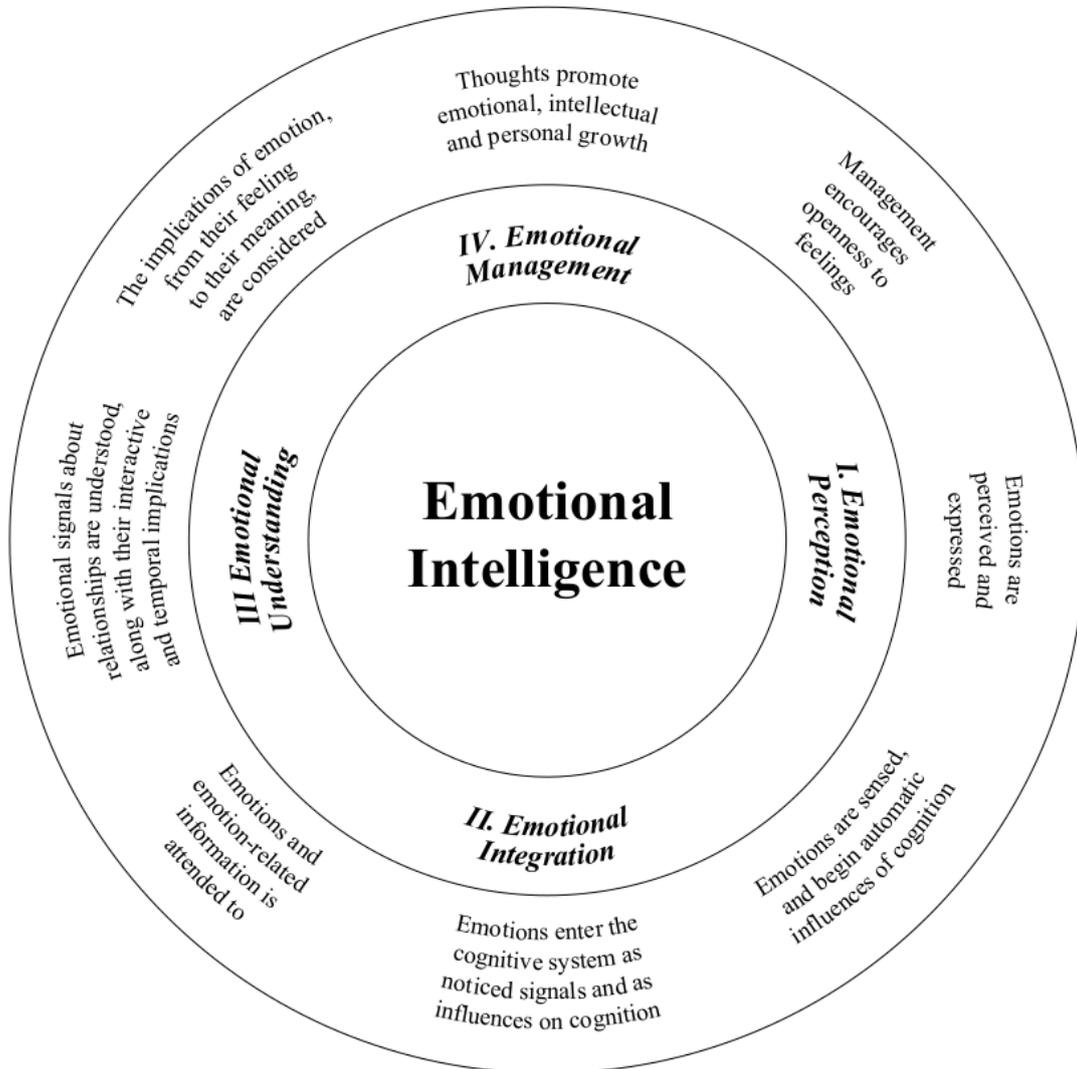


Figure 6 Recreated EI as a Circle

To create the strongest possible impact, a range of images and tables have been collected onto the one page. When all the mixed format examples are seen together, one can see how they do not sit easily with each other nor the body text as seen in the captions.

Denomination	Attendance
ACC	125
Baptist	103
Churches of Christ	98

Table 1: Attendance by Denomination

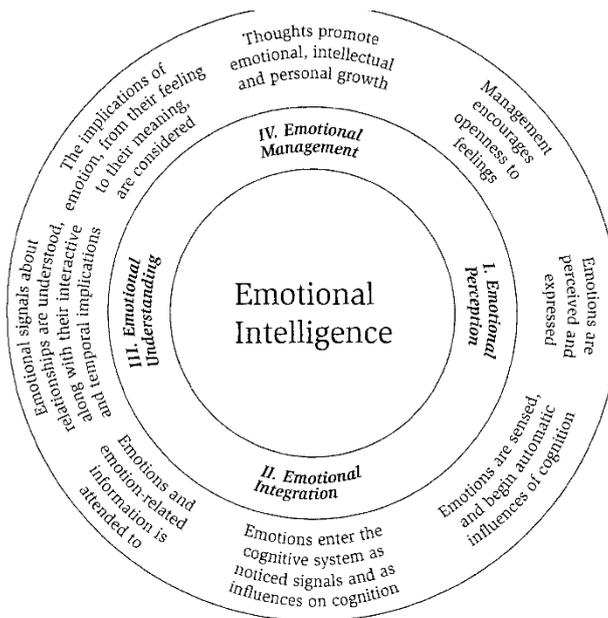
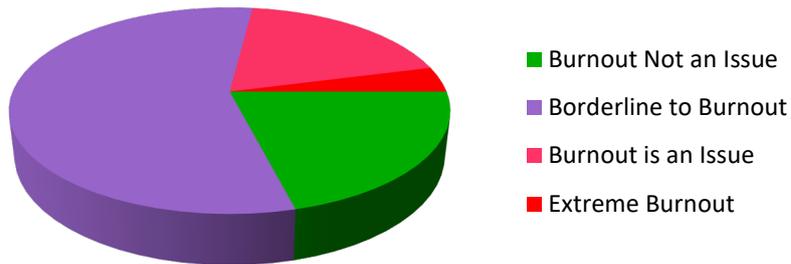
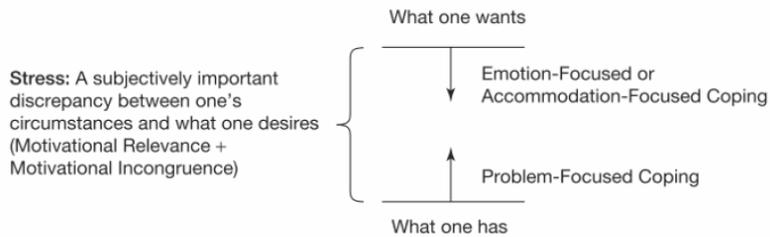


Figure 7 Collected originals