Some Tips on Writing Up

Try to get into the habit of writing from the start of your research. For example, make a commitment to produce some written material at every meeting with your supervisor.

Looking at a blank page and imagining your completed thesis is one of the biggest challenges that you will face. These pages will help you. Hopefully, you have been writing as you go and have some materials written already which will be a starting point as you are unlikely to write in order from beginning to end.

A good way to get a clearer idea about what to write is to review other theses in your research area. Your supervisors may suggest theses of previous students, but you will also find theses in your institution's library and many theses from UK institutions are also stored online at EThOS. When reading these theses use the analysing a thesis checklist to gain an overview of the style, format and structure used in your discipline. Then review what you have already written.

Typically, research generates a lot of writing. You may have:

- annual reports
- early drafts of chapters
- posters and conference presentations
- notes on articles that you have read
- summaries of data collection
- analysis
- thoughts and notes to yourself.

Once you have reviewed what you have got, draft a structure that breaks the overall task down into manageable sections, inserting text from your previous writing to give a draft outline of the content. Then check your plan with your main supervisor. They will have seen a lot more theses than you have and will be your best source of support.

Your institution will have requirements and limitations.

Now you are in a position to write a paragraph, not a thesis. You don't need to write it in order. Start with work that has been published or with a set of results that are straightforward and can be easily explained for example a lot of scientists start with their 'Materials and Methods'. Get as much down as possible without worrying too much about the detail and tackle any problems when you review the first draft.