Acknowledgement, Personal Contribution and Conflict of Interest statements in a thesis manuscript

As well as being an examination document, a thesis manuscript is an official scientific publication. As such, it is essential that it contains an appropriate acknowledgement, personal contribution and conflict of interest statement. This is consistent with the KU Leuven guidelines on fair and honest scientific conduct (https://www.kuleuven.be/english/research/integrity/Checklist).

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A thesis manuscript requires a scientific acknowledgement section, which is separate from the personal acknowledgement (gratitude). The purpose of the scientific acknowledgement section is to give credit to all contributors. If your thesis manuscript is a compilation of research articles, it is often sufficient to use the scientific acknowledgement(s) from the paper(s).

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Because a thesis manuscript is published by one PhD researcher, the ‘personal contribution’ section needs to specifically identify the contribution of that one author to this work. This section already has to be included in the thesis manuscript at the time of its submission to the jury members.

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A full and complete conflict of interest (COI) statement is critical for maintaining the integrity of the scientific literature. For your thesis manuscript, you need to include a complete and detailed disclosure. The presence of a COI does not invalidate the results, it is there to allow the reader to fully understand the context of the results.

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