

PGR Thesis Content Notification Guidance

What is a thesis content notification?

A content notification is a written statement included in the preliminary pages of a thesis that is designed to warn readers that some of the language or imagery contained within could potentially be offensive and/or triggering.

Subjects for which you may choose to include such a notification include (but are not limited to)

- Animal cruelty or animal death
- Child abuse/paedophilia/incest
- Domestic violence
- Eating disorders, body hatred, and fat phobia
- Hateful language direct at religious groups (e.g., Islamophobia, anti-Semitism)
- Homophobia.
- Images of deceased people
- Kidnapping and abduction
- Mental illness and ableism
- Miscarriages/abortion
- Pornographic content
- Racism and racial slurs
- Self-harm and suicide
- Sexism and misogyny
- Sexual assault
- Transphobia and trans misogyny

Types of content notification

For the purpose of the guidance, we encourage PGRs and supervisors to consider two types of notification. A **content warning** and/or a **trigger warning**. Either one or both might be appropriate to the thesis. The terms are often used interchangeably because both are intended to give readers agency to prepare for their interaction with the content and to decide how and if to engage with it.

Content Warnings:

A content warning is a written statement disclosing that some of the content contained in the thesis may be sensitive in nature. A content warning anticipates that the reader may feel uncomfortable or potentially offended by some of the content e.g. images of nudity.

Trigger Warnings:

Trigger warnings are a specific variety of content notification. Trigger warnings are a written statement warning readers of potentially distressing content to prevent exposing a reader with past trauma to any content that could cause intense physiological and psychological symptoms e.g. descriptions of sexual violence or self-harm.

How to write a content notification

The content notification should generally be no longer than a paragraph, and should identify the specific category or categories identified as potentially offensive or triggering, without reproducing the actual content.

The notification may also identify where in the thesis the material occurs, if it is only in a specific section, or state that it is present throughout.

For example:

Content warning: this thesis includes coarse language throughout which may cause offence to some readers.

Trigger warning: chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis contain descriptions of sexual violence that some readers may find distressing.