

DISSERTATION MODULE HANDBOOK

Writing your Dissertation is the most important step in the pursuit of your Doctoral degree. Hence, this Handbook will guide you through this long and laborious process and will help you identify your future priorities. It is important that you read this document very carefully and understand the different aspects of your future work, in order to give yourself the means to achieve it, once you commence your Dissertation Module.

At the present stage, you should use this Handbook to identify your weaknesses and work during your first year at Swiss Management Center to enhance your skills in these fields. With the help of this paper you will be better able to:

- ✿ Understand the general regulations involved in your work
- ✿ Understand the different stages involved in your work
- ✿ Understand the role of your advisor
- ✿ Select your dissertation topic
- ✿ Understand the goals of our research,
- ✿ Define the aims and objectives of your work
- ✿ Determine the research methodology to be used
- ✿ Write up your dissertation based on defined structure
- ✿ Understand the importance of submission deadlines and hand – in regulations
- ✿ Present the dissertation to the Committee

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PART I : GETTING STARTED

Introduction

The dissertation is a completely new experience that is much larger and more independent than your previous academic work. Unlike your graduate studies which consisted primarily of reading assignments, labs, papers, and tests, the dissertation is a new kind of academic project, unlike anything else you've done. It is the academic project that marks your transition from student to scholar.

The nature of writing a dissertation is difficult above all due to the self-directed process. The independent character of this project will require a very strict discipline on your behalf, as there are no deadlines assigned to you on a regular basis, no discussions with classmates and therefore little external pressure on you. On the other hand, it is the longest work you would have written in your life and therefore requires a strict structure and environment for executing it.

The dissertation is the beginning of your post-graduate career. It will help you define your professional identity. You may feel like your research interests, your theoretical influences, and your skill as a writer may all be evaluated by this first piece of serious scholarship. Whether any of these points are true or not, you may find yourself questioning your commitment to your chosen profession or topic and unable to begin the dissertation. Questioning your commitment at this stage will therefore be very important in order to sustain a high quality performance throughout your studies and beyond.

Learning Outcomes

Enhanced writing skills

The dissertation is not a one-shot deal. Unlike the elaborate study strategies you developed in order to pass your comprehensive exams, writing the dissertation will enable you to start developing a set of valuable research and writing skills. Thinking analytically, synthesizing complicated information, writing well, and organizing your time will all serve you well regardless of the career you begin. If you choose a career in academia, the systems of support, research strategies, work schedules, and writing techniques that help you do the dissertation will help you write books, articles and lectures for many years to come.

A career enhancer

If you take some care in developing your dissertation, the document can be transformed, after graduation, into a book or series of articles that can help launch your academic or other career. Unlike earlier course papers that just received a grade and were then shuffled off to a filing cabinet or trash bin, your dissertation can be used and revised for years to come. On the other hand, it can be an end as well as a beginning—you don't have to develop the dissertation beyond the completion of the degree if you don't want to. If you're sick of the topic, you can focus on just finishing it for the degree, and then move on to other projects.

Suggestions & Routine Problems Solutions

In writing your dissertation you may experience none of the below described problems, yet most people will identify with time the importance of the below section. Here are some tips of how to deal with the different concerns that you will experience and minimize their impact on your psyche and productivity.

Managing your topic.

- ✚ It is important for you to consider your topic as an ever evolving item. In the process of your work, you will most probably bring alterations by adding new parts to the project and canceling others. While you want to keep your advisor and committee informed about major changes in your focus, in most disciplines you do not have to follow strictly the research and writing plan that you suggested in your dissertation proposal. Do not worry as this occurs to you, it is a normal process, as you begin obtaining a certain expertise in the field to see that parts of your work do not satisfy you.
- ✚ Talk to your advisor about any changes you might make. He or she may be quite sympathetic to your desire to shorten an unwieldy project and may offer suggestions. On the other hand, do not forget to verify the impact that these changes will have on the value of your study and its depth and breadth.
- ✚ Compare and examine other topics in your field. You will find that length is not critical and the research quality is such is the key. Chose your topic in accordance to these criteria and make sure that you can manage it.

Building relationship with your advisor

- ✚ The doctoral studies bring you a certain level of independence and a large knowledge enhancement. Your relationship with the faculty will also significantly evolve. You will have to understand that in the process of writing you will acquire more knowledge on your particular topic that the committee itself and your knowledge will become a contributor to them. Hence, your relationship will become that of colleagues and not student/professor.
- ✚ You need to establish with your advisor a process that works for both sides. It is important to discuss the frequency of your meetings and their objectives in each case, what type of material you should submit (whole drafts of chapters, relatively polished drafts, smaller chunks of less-well-formed writing), the timeframe for your work to be assessed and the sequence of writing and evaluation. You need to be very clear in communicating what kind of feedback would be most helpful to you. Do not worry to express your opinion, as the usefulness of the responses is critical for the quality of your work.
- ✚ Information is critical to the advisor. He or she can help you only if they know on a regular basis what you are working on and what problems you incur. A progress report or meeting on a regular basis can most of the times be very helpful.
- ✚ In the case that you have recurring problems communicating with your advisor, you can also request to change. It can be expressed in two measures, the first one being changing advisor completely or choosing a "secondary advisor", which can provide you with the feedback that you may lack in your relationship with the first one.

Building relationship with your committee.

- ✚ You should discuss with the academic director and/or your advisor how the committees usually work with doctoral candidates in your department.

- ✚ Provide to your committee members, feedback on your progress, your plans of completion, and your directions of thought.
- ✚ Share with the committee members your setbacks, obstacles that you experience and the mistakes that you are trying to avoid. Committee members are very knowledgeable in this field and can be of great help to you.
- ✚ Ask the members of your committee whether they would prefer to see drafts of your chapters individually, or wait to see the final complete draft.
- ✚ It's important not to get too hung up on how your committee does (or doesn't) relate to you. Ultimately, you have to go forward no matter what they do.

Avoid exhaustion.

Many times graduate students combine a part or a full time job, family responsibilities, traveling, professional stress and other factors that can lead to a mental and/or physical exhaustion. DO not overload yourself from the very beginning, as in time you will find yourself in a more and more difficult situation that will lead to failures not only in your dissertation progress but in the other fields that we have mentioned. Adopt a discipline of life that will permit you to allocate the time in a way that will suit each of your goals. Sometimes, finding time to exercise, meditate, or participate in relaxation programs (yoga, stretching, massage therapy, and so on) can help you cope with tiredness better, even if those things do little to alleviate the work load. Good nutrition can also go a long way toward improving your sense of well-being.

Plan finances from the beginning and seek external help.

Your doctoral studies are a long process which will demand in the dissertation stage quite some time. You should plan your finances in a practical manner that will permit you to have a reduced workload during parts of the dissertation stage, in order for you to give yourself the time to produce a quality paper. You can also in some cases seek for a fellowship, grant or scholarship can provide enough financial cushion for you to complete the work. It is important to note however, that these require great discipline, as most people organize their day better if they have a part time job, which provides them with a structure of the day and makes them function with time frames and deadlines. Without that structure, and with a full year ahead, many people tend to feel that they can put off the dissertation for a day, a week, or more, or have a very low working speed.

Time management.

- ✚ You need to learn to plan each day. Block out 30 minutes, hour, 3 hours, or whatever time you want to allocate to your dissertation writing.
- ✚ Choose a way of building your schedule that works for you. The daily workload can be expressed in terms of hours worked, problems or topics dealt with, pages written, etc.
- ✚ Create some calendar or scheduling device that can break down your work in manageable goals expressed in weeks and month. Do not overdo with planning, but create a schedule that you can manage and which you make sure you can stick to.
- ✚ Combine your other work with the dissertation writing. Do not eliminate everything else for the sake of writing. It is good for your motivation, productivity and general state to do other things, as they will provide you with a dynamic environment and some change from your routine, and make you more dedicated and productive.
- ✚ Plan your long-range goals working backwards from commencement. When do you need to turn in the dissertation? To do that, when would you need to defend? To do that, when would you need to get it to the committee? Get specific—don't use "this semester" as a deadline, use a specific date.

- ⤵ Do not let daily concerns take over the time you want to devote to the dissertation. As you have no immediate deadline, it is difficult to make out of it a priority on a daily basis. Plan your activities so that they do not distort each other.
- ⤵ Learn to say "No." Do not take up obligations just because people perceive you as being "free". You will find that a lot of people can consider your work to be of second priority as it has no emergency or daily fixed time frame. Do not fall into that trap, as your days will fly and your work will still not be done.
- ⤵ If you are having trouble learning to say no or learning to budget time for your dissertation, try dividing your workload into "urgent tasks" (things that have impending deadlines) and "important tasks" (things that are important to you, but don't have immediate deadlines). Make sure that your important task (writing the dissertation) isn't overwhelmed by things that are unimportant, but urgent.
- ⤵ If all the above fails for you, or you are not happy with the results, try to spend five minutes a day dedicated to your dissertation. Everybody has five minutes a day. Every day! You will discover that your daily involvement is very good for your work, as it will create you habits for daily commitment and with time the 5 minutes will be converted easily into 1 hour, as you subconsciously change your timing in your priorities.
- ⤵ Think about this process as an opportunity to build self-trust. When you make a promise to yourself that you will work for five minutes or an hour, keep it. Become someone you can count on.

Work Smart

- ⤵ Work on your dissertation during times that you are most productive. You should analyze your working habits very well. Some people work well in the morning, others in the evening. You should establish a regular frequency of breaks to avoid exhaustion. Analyze whether you can read and research and write on the same day, or whether you need to split these tasks and give yourself the time to assimilate the information. Once you determine the hours that are most productive for you (you may need to experiment at first), try to schedule those hours for dissertation work.
- ⤵ Chose the place where you are most productive. Analyze well the places where your productivity is highest. Your office will probably not be the best place, as you will constantly be disturbed. Some people find libraries ideal, other too quiet. Working at home can prove difficult for some, as they have a problem imposing discipline, not watching TV and not being disturbed by other members of the household.
- ⤵ If your work space is at home, make every sure that it is not in the bedroom. Most people do not sleep well if their work space and their sleep space are in the same room—their anxieties about their work can prevent them from getting to sleep quickly and having a restful night.
- ⤵ Make sure your working environment provides good lighting, comfortable chair, a sturdy desk, to keep your posture and health in good order.
- ⤵ Working in the same environment can prove tiring. Try changing of scene. Take your materials and sit in a café, park or another place with some social movement.
- ⤵ Analyze the ways you work best and implement them. Some people work well when they develop rituals such as getting a special pen, preparing a particular drink, etc. These can function as signals to your brain that work will begin and can help you getting down to it.
- ⤵ Analyze your working methods. Some of your habits such as listening to music may be things you like, but also things that do not help your productivity.
- ⤵ Decorate your work space for productivity. A pleasant and cozy environment in accordance to your taste will help you spend time there that is less tiring. Avoid working in an atmosphere in which you do not feel comfortable. Some people find that having pictures of family and friends on their desk helps, others feel that this makes them homesick or dredges up fears of inadequacy. Some people work well with neutral colors around them, and others prefer bright colors that perk up the space.
- ⤵ At this stage you should figure out what works and DO THAT. If something seems to keep you from working, GET RID OF IT.

- ✚ Don't let the fact that you know when, where and how you work best prevent you from working in other times, places, and ways. Try to be flexible, and don't use your rituals as excuses.

Tips against a blank page

Here are some tips on how you can stimulate yourselves when you do not feel like writing:

- ✚ Make a list of all the little things you need to do for a given section of the dissertation, no matter how small. When you are out of inspiration, tackle the small things, varying your work. The important part is to do SOMETHING. In this way you will have the habit of continuing to work.
- ✚ When you do not feel like working on intellectual parts, do the mechanical ones, such as formatting, chapter definitions, bibliography, etc. which in themselves can be very boring if left for the end.
- ✚ When not feeling like working, do the acknowledgment parts of your paper. This will help you divert your attention and make you feel rewarded thinking of the people who are also involved in your work.
- ✚ Write a part of your dissertation as a letter (or e-mail) to someone interested in your work. This will clarify your ideas and will put them in perspective. The comments of the person will also help you identify problems that you do not perceive.
- ✚ Express in writing why you feel frustrated and stuck and tired of your advisor or committee. Writing these down will help you continue with the rest your work, once the process begins.

Building consistency in the writing process

- ✚ Out of sight out of mind. Keeping this in mind, leave the work that needs to be done in a place where you consistently see it. This constant reminder will sooner or later work and help you get it over and done with. It is more difficult to postpone something that is in front of you.
- ✚ If you're really feeling disorganized, clean your workspace. A clear desk and an organized set of notes can go a long way toward clearing your head and getting you back on track.
- ✚ Create your own order of work. Some people start writing chapter 1 then 2 , etc. other may start from chapter 4 as it inspires them most. Follow your own style, making sure that putting it together is possible and will create a work that is smooth.
- ✚ Write down parts of your dissertation even if they are junk. Liberating your thoughts will be very liberating and stimulating. Get something on paper and then worry about making it perfect.
- ✚ The quality of your work is very important. However, you should realize that this is your first try and therefore the work will be in any case far from perfect. You should not worry, as we have all gone through this.
- ✚ You should be reasonable in your efforts. The daily time allocation for your dissertation depends on your general productivity. Do not stretch your limits too far, as quality will suffer and later, when you read your work, you will feel like re-writing it. Time or work per day can vary from 4-5 to 10 hours approximately.
- ✚ Talk to people around you who have been involved in laborious projects of this type and ask them for advice.
- ✚ Be consistent in your efforts. If you need a boost, put double-spacing for a while, number the pages, review the work you have already accomplished. All these will be serious boosters to your confidence and can be very rewarding.

- ⤴ Print out the parts of the work that you have already completed. As time goes by and the file becomes thicker, your motivation will be maintained.
- ⤴ Know when to stop. Give yourself a day of rest and switch off. If you had any great ideas, write them down but do not start working on them.

Motivational Factors

- ⤴ In keeping your motivation, turn to your relatives, friends and colleagues asking them for feedback and opinion. Make sure you ask those whose opinion you value.
- ⤴ When presenting your work in an unfinished form, state it before you request someone's opinion. People should give you feedback on what you need and not comment on what you already know and what is evident to you.
- ⤴ Give yourself rewards. Put definable benchmarks of completion of certain parts and deadlines. When you achieve them, mark the event somehow. This gives the right perception that you have progressed.
- ⤴ Punishments can also work. Some people find it useful to say, "If I don't get this done by that date, then I can't do _____."

The mental attitude

It is important for you with time to alter your mental condition from a student to a scholar. You are not a student any more and you should stop feeling like one. You are becoming a professional and this work is a step of becoming one. The persons around you in academia are there to help you, and not persecute you.

Build a pro-active attitude towards your work. Try to attend conferences and read broadly in your field, deliver papers on your research to interested parties, begin conversations with scholars in other universities in the same field. Simply realize what you are in the process of doing.

Building a strong Will

As simple as it sounds, completing the dissertation project is a matter of having a strong will. The dissertation is a marathon, not a sprint, and it will take endurance, determination, and perseverance. Developing and sustaining the will to complete a complicated, long-term project is a habit that will serve you well in other areas of life.

The process of Writing Your Dissertation

The following steps can be identified in the process of preparing your dissertation. These do not have an obligatory character and can be modified over time:

- Step 1 - Preparation Stage**
- Step 2 - Choosing your subject**
- Step 3 - The advisor**
- Step 4 - The work**
- Step 5 - Getting started**
- Step 6 - Writing up**
- Step 7 - Presentation & scholarly standards**

Step 1 – Organization & Preparation Stage

The first and one of the most important steps is the organization and preparation. Considered preparation and organization can make the difference between a good dissertation and an average one. So, consider the following things you must know before you start on the bulk of your work:

- ⤵ Have you allowed enough time? A well-planned, well-researched and well-written dissertation takes time.
- ⤵ How can you organize your life in order to combine this large task? Take the necessary measure.
- ⤵ When is your dissertation due in? fix a time line that is realistic taking into account the various aspects of your life.
- ⤵ What are the means and methods of presentation required? Do you need to enhance your presentation skills?
- ⤵ Who is your advisor? Establish good rapport with him/her or change if your methods of work are too different.
- ⤵ What kind of research are you required to do? If you are required to do primary qualitative or quantitative research (surveys, interviews, questionnaires, etc.) you will need time to plan and carry it out. If anything is unclear ask your advisor.

Step 2 - Choosing your subject

This task is difficult and very important and you should begin research as early as possible, giving yourself the time to examine the depth of the work that you will have to undertake and the information required.

- ⤵ choose something manageable - nothing too large-scale or excessively time consuming.
- ⤵ choose something in which you are interested. This will help to motivate you and give you an incentive to study.
- ⤵ choose something which doesn't overlap too much with other assessments you have submitted. For example, if you have already handed in an extended essay on a topic, do not choose it for your dissertation topic; you could be accused of self-plagiarism.
- ⤵ discuss your choice, and your reasons behind it with your advisor who should be able to give you an indication of the feasibility of the study.

Step 3 – The Advisor

When you undertake a dissertation module, you will be allocated an advisor. The role of him/her is to check that things are going OK, give you advice, and point you in the direction of relevant source materials. Your advisor is not there to tell you what to do, chase you up if you fall behind, or read and correct your dissertation before you submit it. A dissertation is a piece of self-directed study, so your dissertation advisor cannot interfere with your work too much, and is likely to be one of the people who marks it. However, your advisor can be of great use in giving you guidance, support, and advice, and you should make the most of this important resource. Ultimately students must take responsibility for their own studies.

- ⤵ Your subject area will give you guidelines about how much of your advisor time you are entitled to.
- ⤵ Make good use of your advisor - prepare for your meetings, and turn up when you have arranged to do so. Submit an agenda so that the advisor can prepare for the meeting and which will also remind you of what you wanted to discuss.
- ⤵ Be sure to maintain contact with your advisor - don't hide from him/her because you haven't done as much work as you had anticipated.
- ⤵ You may want your advisor to comment on a piece of work which you have completed. It would be helpful to let them have this in advance.
- ⤵ Get problems sorted out at an early stage – talk to your advisor if you get stuck, or encounter any major problems with your work. To delay could be disastrous.

Step 4 - The Work

Planning

Planning is a key element in undertaking a dissertation. You not only need to plan the content and structure of your piece of work, but also the time in which you have to complete it. Planning the content of a dissertation is not always easy at first; you are often unsure of what your research will reveal. However, if you have done some basic research into your subject area before deciding on a topic, you should have a fairly good idea of what your dissertation will need to cover. Often, subject areas will give you specific advice on what they expect to be included within the dissertation, and this is an excellent guide to planning your work.

A good way of starting is to try and do a rough, long term plan. This could include time planning for the following issues:

- ⤵ By when do you want to have each chapter completed?
- ⤵ How much time will you need to complete any primary research?
- ⤵ When do you want to have all your research work completed?
- ⤵ How long will you need for typing up the project and checking for errors?
- ⤵ Will you need to get your dissertation bound in any special way? Is this going to take time?
- ⤵ By making a rough plan of the above long term goals, you can often make your dissertation a much more manageable task. Remember to be realistic about time scales; allow yourself plenty of time in which to complete tasks. If your timetable doesn't go to plan, simply reorganize it. Flexibility is very important in dissertation preparation and writing; your work will not always go smoothly, so you need to regularly review your goals and adjust them accordingly.
- ⤵ If you intend to use questionnaires, interviews, or conduct experiments for your dissertation, please give yourself plenty of time in which to get these done. Writing to request an interview with someone two weeks before your dissertation is due will rarely be of any use; the person may not even agree to be interviewed, which would leave you stuck, with no time to approach someone else.

Focus and structure

You should review these questions and answer them before you begin writing your dissertation

- ⤴ Have I clearly formulated the problem or question? Have I put it into context – ie. the relevant literature? historic or socio-economic contexts? Is there a clear analytical framework?
- ⤴ Have I established aims and objectives? Are they clear and concise? Do they relate to my central research question or problem?
- ⤴ Have I provided a discussion of my research design/methods?

Step 5 - Getting Started

Now you have a rough plan of what you are going to do, its time to get started. How you go about this will depend very much on your dissertation topic. A good way to begin, however, is to do some good background research into your subject area. This will give you ideas and resources for future work, and get you immersed in the subject. Some rules that can be of help can be defined as follows:

Information:

- ⤴ Always keep your eyes open for material.
- ⤴ Whenever you read something or take notes on a source, always take down full bibliographic details. This will save you time later when compiling your references and bibliography. Using an index card system is useful for this.
- ⤴ Try and start writing up as soon as possible. There is no rule which says you must first do all your research, then spend three weeks writing it up. Writing as you research gives a sense of achievement, and can help avoid any last minute panics.

Reading

- ⤴ Focus your reading once you have a general background picture of the subject - make sure everything you read is for a purpose, not just for the sake of 'doing something'.
- ⤴ Don't avoid reading just because your project will contain a lot of fieldwork - you will still need to refer to other research in your field, and may even end up having to rely on written materials more heavily than you had first thought. It is a good idea to contextualize your research in relation to the work of others.
- ⤴ Answer yourself the question: Have I surveyed and selected the relevant works from the general literature?

Step 6 - Writing Up

Even if you have been doing some writing up as you have been researching, you will get to a stage where you simply cannot research any more, and you must put your mind to getting your dissertation completed. As was the case in step one, It is extremely important again at this stage to make sure you follow the guidelines given to you by your advisor about the format required for your dissertation. Try and follow the points raised below to ensure your dissertation is well written:

- ⤴ Is there a clear and logical structure?
- ⤴ Have I analyzed and interpreted my data (of various sorts) or just described them?
- ⤴ Have I critically assessed and not merely reported the relevant issues and debates contained in the literature?
- ⤴ Have I related the literature to my research problem/questions?

- ⤵ Data collection and analysis. Analyze whether you have shown a clear and systematic approach to the analysis of data and how this fits into your research design
- ⤵ Layout - do you have to include an abstract? Are any of your chapter headings prescribed? Are you allowed appendixes?
- ⤵ Prefer the short word to the long.
- ⤵ Prefer the single word to the roundabout expression.
- ⤵ Prefer short sentences and paragraphs to long.
- ⤵ Never use a foreign, slang, or jargon word unless there is no equivalent in everyday English.
- ⤵ Punctuate sparingly, and remember there is more to punctuation than the full stop and the comma.
- ⤵ Never use an exclamation mark except for the purposes of quotation.
- ⤵ Write in an objective way - be impersonal. This said however, some disciplines do encourage a more personal engagement. If in doubt, consult your supervisor.
- ⤵ Are my conclusions based on the evidence I have presented in earlier chapters?
- ⤵ Have I left myself enough time for redrafting and revisions?
- ⤵ Provide a detailed and accurate Bibliography
- ⤵ Checked spelling and grammar
- ⤵ Make sure that you have used consistent referencing throughout. Ensure that other people's work is explicitly cited
- ⤵ Examine the margin sizes, font, general layout of the dissertation.

Step 7 - Presentation and scholarly standards

- ⤵ Build a presentation that is dynamic, graphically enhanced and that brings forward your knowledge on the topic
- ⤵ Avoid long and numerically or theoretically difficult parts, as people will lose interest very quickly, as they will not be able to understand you
- ⤵ Create an atmosphere that is relaxed, friendly, yet official and which will permit you to reduce your level of stress

Hints for Success

The following ideas may be useful to you while trying to put your dissertation together, but still remember to refer to your subject area's instructions regarding format and what is expected.

Ideas for the Introduction

- ⚡ a clear statement of your subject
- ⚡ an explanation of why the research is worthwhile
- ⚡ an outline of methods used
- ⚡ an indication of the limitations of the study
- ⚡ a summary of the chapters to follow
- ⚡ thanks to any person or agency who gave you special help

Ideas for the Chapters

- ⚡ each one should answer a major question
- ⚡ each chapter should contain lots of answers to smaller questions
- ⚡ use sub-headings to guide your reader
- ⚡ develop points carefully, step by step
- ⚡ each chapter should make sense if it were to be read on its own
- ⚡ give chapters introductions and conclusions as well

Appendices

- ⚡ are designed to let you include material which could not be fitted easily into any chapter
- ⚡ a large document would look awkward in the middle of a chapter, so it should be included as an appendix
- ⚡ important material referred to in more than one chapter should go in as an appendix
- ⚡ check with your supervisor that appendixes are acceptable, and discuss the material you wish to include in them. Also check on whether material included in your appendixes counts towards the wordage for the dissertation.

Bibliography

- ⚡ set out all sources used - printed or otherwise
- ⚡ everything referred to in the text must be cited in the bibliography
- ⚡ use the appropriate referencing system as advised by your supervisor or module leader

And finally.....

When tackling your dissertation, try to remember that it is not the only obligation that you will have for that academic year. Don't get so immersed in your dissertation that you neglect your other fields of life. If you need advice about any aspects of dissertation writing, contact your advisor or the Academic Director.

Good Luck!

PART II : THE DISSERTATION

Structure

Early on in the conception of the Project/Dissertation and in consultation with your advisor, you should discuss your ideas and formulate a more precise description of your Dissertation. This should include:

- ✿ **Title**
Clear indication of the content of the Project/Dissertation.
- ✿ **Aims**
An overall statement of the nature of the original research and what you intend to do.
- ✿ **Objectives**
The specific questions you will expect to answer in your Project/Dissertation. You will probably find it impossible to identify sensible questions as objectives until you have done a literature survey.
- ✿ **Methodology**
Identification of the ways you will achieve your objectives. This section should contain some critical evaluation of why you selected a particular method of data collection, analysis, target group, etc.
- ✿ **Timescale**
List the tasks involved in the Project/Dissertation and estimate the timescale involved for each so that you can set milestones by which you and your supervisor can assess your progress. Make sure you allow enough time to write up your Dissertation and also to get it word-processed and bound by the submission date.

You may find computer based project management programs (PERTmaster or Microsoft Project) useful, especially for identifying any tasks you can carry out in parallel.

Writing Up the Dissertation

Choosing your Title.

Before you begin your investigation you should check systematically through the literature relating to your subject area to see what has already been published. Most authors include an indication of opportunities for future work, as you will at the end of your Project/Dissertation and hopefully in a paper (if that emerges later). Having done your initial literature survey you should be ready to finalise the precise nature of your investigation and list the specific aims and objectives knowing the background of your chosen area of study. Chose a title that reflects well the central research questions and that is analytical and not descriptive.

Chapter 1 : Introduction

(approx. 10% of total words)

Introduction

In the introduction, do not overestimate the reader's familiarity with your topic. You are writing for researchers in the general area, but not all of them need be specialists in your particular topic. It may help to imagine such a person---think of some researcher whom you might have met at a conference for your subject, but who was working in a different area. S/he is intelligent, has the same general background, but knows little of the literature or tricks that apply to your particular topic.

The introduction should be interesting. If you bore the reader here, then you are unlikely to revive his/her interest in the materials and methods section. For the first paragraph or two, tradition permits prose that is less dry than the scientific norm

This section might go through several drafts to make it read well and logically, while keeping it short. For this section, it is a good idea to ask someone who is not a specialist to read it and to comment. Is it an adequate introduction? Is it easy to follow? There is an argument for writing this section-or least making a major revision of it-towards the end of the thesis writing. Your introduction should tell where the Dissertation is going, and this may become clearer during the writing.

The central research questions

The single most important element in your dissertation project is to ensure that your paper is coherent – the central research question should be evident throughout your work and the different chapters and sections should relate to one another and follow a single line of thought. Consequently, you should focus throughout your paper on the central question, identify the subquestions and therefore work from there on to build your dissertation. These should then be translated into the specific research questions that your will put forward and the purpose of your research as such.

The 'what's your point?' question is really useful to ask yourself throughout the process of research and writing. This can also be asked as ' So?' or 'So what?' Such a question helps to determine the relevance of the research, the relevance of the information being gathered, and the relevance of writings. You will find abundant good quality information, however its relevance is the key to your success.

Define the problem.

What is the central hypothesis or question under consideration? So, you should provide a statement of the problem – this may include a hypothesis (that A causes B) to be tested, and a central question to be addressed. The statement should be framed in such a way as to allow you to be analytical. Don't just ask 'how does something work?', as this type of questions leads to descriptions and not problem and hypothesis.

- What is purpose/aim of the research? Is it to examine a policy, evaluate or develop a theory, analyse the significance or consequences of a development/event/policy, or what? In short, what's the point of your dissertation?

Why have you chosen this problem for consideration? What has prompted the research? (A change in legislation? A gap in literature you have identified?). What is it that makes this an interesting area of study, and an important question to be examined? Try to be precise. It's not enough to say you were curious about a topic. There is no research problem in wondering how something happens or develops. Your statement of the problem must be precise and one which will be examined in the course of your research.

What are the sub-questions – the research questions – this has generated? A hypothesis or statement of the problem will have generated a series of research questions to test your hypothesis or examine the problem. Write down the 2 or 3 that are guiding the research that you will be embarking on.

Setting your Aims and Objectives

A good way to end the introduction is to state the dissertation objectives. Draw up a statement of the overall nature of any original work together with a clear list of objectives for your work. As your work progresses, these will be useful to you as indicators of whether you are achieving what you set out to achieve in your Dissertation. If you find the identification of aims and objectives difficult, it is probably an indication that you have not clearly sorted out what you are doing. The objectives should not change much as you go through the Dissertation. If you don't achieve a particular objective there may well be a good reason. **Don't change it, critically evaluate it!** There is no right answer to the Dissertation but those that do not show critical evaluation will be scored much lower than those that do.

In preparing the Introduction the following questions should be answered:

- Why do this study? Is there a problem?
- What is it?
- Why does it need to be solved?
- Why now?
- Why here?
- Why me?
- What is your hypothesis?
- Who will benefit from your investigation?
- In what sense will they benefit?
- In what sense will my contribution add to what is already known?
- How in general terms are you going to solve the problem, e.g., collect data, analyse data?
- How do your research questions relate to one another?
- How do they relate to the central hypothesis or problem under study?
- How you will go about examining these questions in your research?
- How does the examination of these questions relate to the statement of the problem?
- What are the constraints or limitations of the study?

Chapter 2 : Review of Literature

(approx. 15% of words)

Introduction

Where did the problem come from? What is already known about this problem? What other methods have been tried to solve it? Ideally, you will already have much of the hard work done, if you have been keeping up with the literature from the beginning of your studies and if you have made notes about important papers over the years. If you have summarised those papers, then you have some good starting points for the review.

This Chapter is a review of what is already known and of the main themes or issues. It covers past research and studies and articles from relevant journals, books, newspapers, etc. It is a summary of what other people have written and published around the theme of your research. It is very important that you acknowledge the authorship of other people's work.

The literature chapter can, and should be drafted very early. As you find the literature, read it, and write about it. Think of the literature review as a patchwork quilt - made up of paragraphs you have written about individual texts. Highlight the findings that are relevant to your theses. Be critical of the literature - don't just report it.

Check the major abstract journals in your field. Abstracts provide an index (usually on an annual basis) for all major journals in their subject area. Many abstracts contain not only the full details of where the article can be found but also a summary of the article. The summary is particularly useful for articles in other languages. It is best to start with the most recent issue and work your way backwards. There are several new CD-ROM and WWW-based abstracting systems available, some of which can give you full-page text on-line. You will use keywords to find references and would be well advised to prepare a list of search terms and synonyms in advance.

You can find a list of all the articles quoting a particular article in the Citations Indexes. They show clearly that some papers are regarded as more important than others because everyone quotes them. Books, particularly those recently published, can be very valuable. Technical reports and patent specifications are also valuable resources.

Literature Searching

In order to perform a successful literature review, you should first of all clearly identify your topic, and break it down into its key components. A good and focused dissertation outline will ensure you are aware of the nature of the problem to be examined, the main research questions stemming from this, the major concepts you want to examine, the theoretical issues raised by your topic, and the empirical questions you need to address in the process of your research.

- ✎ The first stage in the research is to conduct a thorough review of the relevant literature, within the boundaries of the research problem as set out in your outline. A review of the literature will be the foundation of all dissertations. Most of you will begin with a chapter on the existing literature, research and arguments that are relevant to your topic (though this will be more central to some dissertations than to others). Whether your

dissertation is theoretical or empirical – you still need to have – and demonstrate you have - knowledge of existing literature. Literature review is an ongoing process – you will go back to it when trying to address research questions and understand the data or findings, or elucidate your thoughts. But it is usually expected that you spend a fair amount of time at the beginning familiarising yourself with the literature relevant to your field.

The literature review serves a number of inter-related functions:

- ✚ It helps you refine the problem set out in the outline, and to build upon it
- ✚ It allows you to develop an in-depth understanding of the subject area in which you are working, and to learn from existing research in this field. This in turn should give you food for thought that informs your own thinking and your own research.
- ✚ It provides guidance in addressing some of the research questions set out in your outline – it won't always be necessary to conduct empirical research from scratch if previous research has answered some of these questions for you. Remember there is a limit to what you can do by way of empirical research anyway (time, resources, expertise).
- ✚ It helps you gain an understanding about the theoretical and analytical debates that are prominent within current work on your topic. You are expected to engage in these debates.
- ✚ It will help you make sense of your data and findings when you gather them.
- ✚ As well as summarising the views and conclusions expressed by established academics, you are expected to be analytical, to weigh up different arguments and points of view, and to critique existing work, where you take issue with it. Do not be afraid !
- ✚ It adds scholarly weight to your dissertation. We want not only to see that you've read books, articles and reports, but that you've thought about them, given consideration to them, addressed the merit of existing work, maybe even challenged them as a result of your own research.
- ✚ Always retain focus – this is why it is important to have a good research outline that you have discussed with your advisor. There is no point in aimlessly reading and reading around the general area and hoping this will bring focus to your research.
- ✚ Don't waste time on irrelevant material – Don't feel you have to get to the end of a book if it isn't really relevant. Likewise, resist the temptation to use a book just because you read it.
- ✚ Use academic sources and specialist texts. Textbooks may be useful to direct you to the specialist texts, and familiarise you with the key debates, but in themselves, they are not very useful sources – they are too general for this level. The Internet is useful, especially if examining an ongoing issue where the academic textbooks may be behind events, but the internet is never going to be good enough by itself. You must embed your research and your written work in the context of the existing academic literature.
- ✚ Don't try to read everything! Part of the challenge of the literature review is selecting the relevant material. You are not expected to have read every book or journal article that relates to your topic. You are expected to have read the key ones.

Useful techniques in literature search

- ✚ Shelfmarks: if you find one book that you already know is relevant, this will lead you to the relevant shelfmark where you will find books on a related topic.
- ✚ Bibliographies: Books and articles will make reference to other books that relate to the topic. Use the references in endnotes or bibliographies to lead you to relevant works.
- ✚ Identify relevant journals: You are expected to use journal articles as well as books in your literature review. Identify the relevant journals in the library that relate to your topic.
- ✚ Explore Library catalogues and different University libraries
- ✚ Internet – many organisations now have their own websites, and publish documentation on their web pages that is freely accessible and can be downloaded.

You can also use the search engines to find useful sites relating to your research. Please note: there is no quality control on the web.

- Other sources. There are a number of other sources, readily available in the library or on the internet, including newspapers, Think Tank publications, etc.

Making notes/ interactive reading

Focused and accurate note taking is an important part of the dissertations process.

- Skim read for relevance: in what ways is the book/article useful? (For example, arguments/events/concepts/evidence/definitions/questions/ways of thinking). How does it relate to your research questions? Note its structure/ topic/ general reasoning/ data and bibliographical references.
- Survey the different parts of the book. Use the Contents and the Introduction to identify key chapters. Skim read the introduction and conclusions to chapters to work out the gist. Skim read the introduction to book and conclusions in order to identify the main arguments/ logic for book/ approach. How does it relate to your research questions?
- Read key chapters carefully and make detailed notes. It is important that you put things in your own words. Making notes which answer these questions will help you put things in your own words:
 - What are the essential points of the account / discussion/ argument?
 - How does this relate to your own interest/ ideas/questions?
 - How does it relate to other discussions you have read: does it reinforce or challenge previous explanations or analyses? What are your reactions to the arguments and evidence presented?
 - Remember to critique (critically assess) relevant studies- don't just report them
- What is your summary and analysis of the work going to be useful for? For example, will it help in constructing a narrative account (Who? What? Why? When? Where? And the ever useful SO WHAT?) or as part of mapping debates in the area? Or as part of your framework for analysis?
- Do the work of assessing the meaning, relevance and significance of each work as you go along. You won't get the meaning through osmosis, or through writing out chunks and putting it under your pillow... The process of active reading involves:
 - Absorbing information
 - Reflecting upon it
 - Relating various bits of the argument/ information/ analysis to other parts
 - Assimilation - relating to previous knowledge
 - Retention and recall - storing in a meaningful and accessible way
 - Communication - for use in producing an account
- When making notes, remember clarity is the key: mark clearly what is in own words and what is direct quotes. It is advisable to avoid directly copying whole chunks. Before copying a section, ask yourself what work particular quotes might do for your argument. Perhaps mark these in a different coloured pen to avoid any confusion later.
- Make a full note of the details of the book or article at the time - rather than try to retrieve them later when you are trying to compile your bibliography.
- Record author, title of book or article, publication details (for a book, place of publication, publisher, date; for a journal, journal title, volume and/or part number, date, page numbers for start and finish of article), and page number(s) of quote or argument summarised. (see Citations guidance below)
- Consider setting up a record system using cards or a small diary with reference information and key words (annotated bibliography)

Chapter 3 : Methodology

(15-20% of words)

It is a description and evaluation of the methods, techniques and procedures used in the investigation. It describes the scope and aims of the dissertation in some detail. It is also very important that you **justify** the methods used.

Deciding your Methodology

You decide the methodology which will best answer the questions set in your objectives. There may be only one way that you can achieve some objectives (e.g. by observation, by a structured interview or by a questionnaire) and therefore you would describe this method. For other objectives there may be several ways in which you could achieve them. You should describe the decision making process which aided your choice of any particular method. You may use several different research methods to achieve your different objectives.

Having selected your research method(s) you should describe how you are going to implement the method(s) and identify the sampling frame: for example, for a questionnaire you may initially use a structured interview to identify issues and to draw up a pilot questionnaire which can be refined before being used in the actual survey. Justify your selected tool.

Data Collection

Collecting the data is a time-consuming process. The quality of the data you collect will determine the quality of your resultant argument. If you use a postal questionnaire you are likely to need to chase people up to complete their questionnaires or get a low response. If you do use a questionnaire then make sure each question on it provides data, that is why it is there. Think about what you will do with the data afterwards. Collect the data in the way you want to use it. Make sure that the questions are appropriate to your target audience. Do not use jargon or TLAs (three letter abbreviations!!!) your audience may not understand them and therefore bin the questionnaire.

Chapter 4 : Systematic Presentation of the Data

(approx. 15-20% of the words)

What was observed and what was discovered/found out?

This is a presentation of the data - **not** a discussion in this section. It may involve the creation of tables, charts, histograms, etc., each of which should have an appropriate title or heading.

Types of presentational structure

1. Chronological Structure - identify the origin of the methodological problem, the development of problem, the results of the research. However you must avoid the danger of merely telling the story.
2. Thematic structure - often more appropriate if you are looking at particular topics, and present the research results by segment. Identify key themes or aspects of the problem you have raised (poss. based on research questions).
3. Methods structure – present the results of the research by types of research used.
4. A combination of the above.

Chapter 5 : Discussion, Analysis & Interpretation of Data.

(approx. 20 - 25% of words)

Introduction

The chapter should cover the following points:

- ✚ Interpretation of findings. What patterns have emerged?
- ✚ The difference between your findings and those of other people. The difference between the views of various other authors.
- ✚ How do the main points you are making change the way you think about the topic?

Data Analysis

You need to identify at a very early stage the statistical techniques you will use for the analysis of the data. This will help you to identify the amount of data you will need to collect (nominal, ordinal, interval, ratio). You can get lots of clues about how data is analysed from your literature survey. You may already be familiar with MINITAB, a general purpose statistical package for the quantitative analysis of small data sets, or SPSS or some other appropriate computerised analytical tool. If so, use them. You may prefer to analyse your data manually or with the aid of a calculator or spreadsheet package. Check that you understand how you will carry out the analysis before you embark on data collection.

Tips in data analysis

Set aside sufficient time for the data analysis process and for drafting and redrafting chapters. Keep questioning yourself and your material to identify how it addresses your research questions, and how the material inter-relates.

- ✚ Be prepared to make a critical and balanced judgment of the material.
- ✚ Treat data critically and remain focused. Avoid going off at tangents that detract from the purpose of your study.
- ✚ Avoid making exaggerated claims to 'proof' or drawing conclusions, which your material does not support.
- ✚ Top tip: use a system of coding to categorise your material into chapters and sub-themes within chapters, to facilitate the analytic process. In doing this, ensure that your analytical categories are consistent with the aims and objectives of the dissertation.

"However exciting may be their experiences while gathering data, there comes a time when the data must be analysed. Often researchers are perplexed by this necessary task... they are often troubled by (some of) the following questions. How can I make sense out of all this material? How can I have a theoretical interpretation while still grounding it in the empirical reality reflected by my materials? How can I make sure that my data and interpretations are valid and reliable? How do I break through the inevitable biases, prejudices and stereotypical perspectives that I bring with me to the analytic situation? How do I pull all of my analysis together to create a concise theoretical formulation of the area under study?"

Strauss A and J Corbin, 1990,

Basics of Qualitative Research (London: Sage), p 7.

Chapter 6 : Summary & Conclusions

(approx. 10 - 15% of words)

All dissertations must have a conclusion. This should be used to sum up the main points of the argument and pull the threads together. It returns to statement of problem and purpose of the dissertation and draws conclusions in light of evidence presented. Your Conclusion must be consistent with the rest of your argument. It should not come as a surprise to the reader. Generally, the Chapter should include the following:

Your abstract should include your conclusions in very brief form, because it must also include some other material. A summary of conclusions is usually longer than the final section of the abstract, and you have the space to be more explicit and more careful with qualifications. You might find it helpful to put your conclusions in point form.

It is often the case with scientific investigations that more questions than answers are produced. Does your work suggest any interesting further avenues? Are there ways in which your work could be improved by future workers? What are the practical implications of your work? Questions that you should overall tackle are:

1. Summary of main findings as a series of statements.
2. Conclusions and directions for further research.
3. Recommendations.

PART III : DISSERTATION REGULATIONS

The dissertation should be written in the 3rd person, past tense, e.g., "**The author (or It was) found** that all subjects in the study " **not** "I find that all subjects in the study ". The dissertation is a formal document and should be written in that style.

1. List of Documents

Regardless of general format, the dissertation includes particular parts in an established order as listed below. Model pages are provided for most pretext pages. In all cases, margin requirements apply (see above) and the same font style/size must be used in the body of the text and elsewhere. All titles of pretext pages should be formatted identically with respect to font size and style.

I. Pretext Pages

1. **Flyleaf** – a blank page
2. **Abstract** (see Dissertation Templates). An abstract is a summary of the document's purpose, methods, major findings, and conclusions. All library copy abstracts must include the major professor's original signature. Your name (designated "Student Name") must appear exactly the same throughout the document. Underline where indicated. Of all your dissertation, this part will be the most widely published and most read. It is best written towards the end, but not at the very last minute because you will probably need several drafts. It should be a distillation of the research: a concise description of the problem(s) addressed, your method of solving it/them, your results and conclusions. An abstract must be self-contained. Usually they do not contain references. When a reference is necessary, its details should be included in the text of the abstract.
3. **Copyright Page** including **Copyright waiver** (see Dissertation Templates) – This standard page gives you the copyrights on your work and grants the university the right to publish the work, possibly by microfilm or some other medium. Print your name exactly as you did in the Abstract.
4. **Title Page** (see Dissertation Templates)
5. **Acknowledgments** – optional but recommended. The exact content of this page is up to you. Text spacing should be the same as your document text body.
6. **Contribution of Authors** – manuscript document format only
7. **Table of Contents** – Ensure that the page numbers accurately reflect where the headings appear in the text. Listing the chapter headings in the Table of Contents is required; listing the subheadings is optional, and you may list some levels but not others. Levels are denoted by indentation in the Table of Contents. Wording, spelling, and capitalization of headings in the Table of Contents must match the heading in the body of the text exactly. If headings are numbered in the Table of Contents, they must be numbered correspondingly in the text. List appendix or appendices (if applicable) in the Table of Contents or in a separate List of Appendices. In either case, list the Appendices Heading Page in the Table of Contents. When listing an individual appendix, include its title. If the Table of Contents is more than one page, subsequent pages should be headed "TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)." Return twice between the TABLE OF CONTENTS heading and the first item in the table. Do not underline, bold, or italicize in the Table of Contents (unless the heading is a scientific species name)
8. **List of Figures**. Lists are required if two or more figures appear within the text.
9. **List of Tables**. Lists are required if two or more tables appear within the text. Use an identical format for the list of figures and tables. If a list is longer than one page, subsequent pages should be headed "LIST OF FIGURES (Continued)" or "LIST OF TABLES (Continued)." The first sentence of the figure or table caption must be listed,

and the wording must match the text exactly. List only one page number per figure or table. When there is a legend page in front of a figure (see information on FIGURES below), list the legend page only. Figures in the appendices are listed on a separate List of Appendix Figures list. Return twice between the LIST OF FIGURES/TABLES heading and the first listing. Single-space listings with a single return if double spacing is used in the text, or 2 returns if 1.5 spacing is used.

10. **List of Appendices** (optional). If list of appendices is short, it may be attached to the Table of Contents. For more than 5 appendices, or list different heading levels are listed in the appendices, a separate List of Appendices is required. If two or more figures appear in the appendices, a List of Appendix Figures and/or a List of Appendix Tables is required.
11. **List of Appendix Figures**. For two or more figures in the appendices.
12. **List of Appendix Tables**. For two or more tables in the appendices.
13. **Other Lists**. If you are including other lists, such as lists of abbreviations, nomenclature, symbols, and so forth, each list must have its own page. The elements of these lists do not need numbering or page numbers.
14. **Dedication** (optional) If desired, you may dedicate your document to the honor of someone. Dedications are usually short. Margin requirements apply. Use the same font/font size as text body. Arrangement of page is at your discretion.
15. **Preface** (optional)

II. Body of Text (follow standard *or* manuscript document format)

III. Bibliography. The bibliography should include the full name of the author, the full name of the book, the pages to which you have referred, the edition number, year of edition and the name of the editor.

IV. Appendix/Appendices (optional). If there is material that should be in the Dissertation but which would break up the flow or bore the reader unbearably, include it as an appendix. Some things which are typically included in appendices are: important and original computer programs, data files that are too large to be represented simply in the results chapters, pictures or diagrams of results which are not important enough to keep in the main text.

IV. Flyleaf (a blank page not numbered)

2. General Format

Standard Document Format

Refers to one Dissertation document that addresses a single theme. The Pretext Pages, Introduction, Conclusion, and Bibliography are **mandatory**. Your committee determines the additional chapters; you choose the chapter titles.

Manuscript Document Format

A single Dissertation document made up of several scholarly manuscripts or journal articles addressing a common theme. *All manuscripts/articles must be related or address a single, common theme.* You must be the primary author of each manuscript. Co-authors other than your advisor must be mentioned in a Contribution of Authors page in the pretext section of the document. The following parts comprise the Manuscript Document Format:

Pretext Pages

Chapter 1 – General Introduction (common introduction linking all manuscripts thematically)

Chapter 2 – First Manuscript

Chapter 3 – Second Manuscript

Chapter 4 – General Conclusion (common conclusion linking all manuscripts thematically)

Bibliography

Appendices (optional)

Note: Within the larger Manuscript Format thesis document, Chapter Heading Pages (see Figure 6) precede individual manuscripts that have already been published. Manuscripts must uniformly conform to these dissertation guidelines.

3. Page Layout and Text Requirements

Margin Requirements:

The left margin must be at least 1.5 inches (recommend 1.7). All other margins must be at least 1 inch. Nothing may invade a margin. Every page must meet margin requirements.

Page Numbering:

Pretext pages: If numbered, pretext pages following the Approval Page are numbered consecutively with small Roman numerals (e.g. i, ii, etc.) in the same location as other page numbers in the text.

Body: The body of the text, including Appendix/Appendices and Bibliography, are numbered consecutively with Arabic Numbers (e.g. 2, 3, etc.). Page one, although counted, is not numbered. Most software comes with the ability to suppress page one numbering. If your software does not have this ability, remove the page number from page one manually.

Page numbers must appear at the top right corner of pages, at least 1 inch from the top edge of the page and at least 1 inch from the right edge of the page. Page numbers must not invade any margins. There should be blank space between the page number and the first line of text on each page.

Title:

Your document begins with its title centered at the top of page one. Titles longer than one line should be single-spaced. The document's title does not count as a heading level.

Text Spacing:

Use *either* double *or* 1.5 line spacing for the body of text. Do not mix the spacing. Use single spacing in the following situations:

- ↯ For headings longer than one line
- ↯ For figure titles/legends
- ↯ For bibliographical and reference citations
- ↯ For direct quoted material
- ↯ For items listed within the body of the text (optional)
- ↯ Where indicated in the pretext section (text, such as abstract or acknowledgements, should have the same spacing as the text body of the document.)

4. Text Format Requirements

Font: Use regular, unadorned font, 10- to 12-point size for text (headings may be 14-point only if *all* headings are 14-point). Use the same font style and font size throughout.

Headings: Chapter names are Level 1 headings. Subheadings of a chapter are Level 2 headings. Subheadings of chapter subheadings are Level 3 headings, and so forth. Each level must look different from the other levels. Headings of the same level must look the same throughout the document. All headings, regardless of level, must be the same font size. Either number all headings *or* number none. Single space headings that are more than one line, and use adequate and consistent spacing between headings and the text. A minimum of two subheadings may be used within a given level. Each level 1 heading begins a new page.

Appendix Heading Page: A numbered, counted page should be inserted in front of your document's appendix/appendices. The word APPENDIX (or APPENDICES) should be centered about 1/3 down this page. This heading page and its page number should appear in the Table of Contents.

Blocked Quotes: Use Blocked Quotes for quoted material longer than three lines. Use the same font size as within the text. Single-space the quotation, and indent it evenly on both sides. (There is no need to justify quotations.) Use consistent citation for each quote.

References: Use the same font size as within the text. Choose a reference style with the guidance of your major professor and your committee and be *consistent*. Single-space each citation, and use adequate and consistent spacing between citations.

Endnotes: Footnotes collected at the end of a chapter are called endnotes. Use the same font size as within the text. Single-space each endnote, and use adequate and consistent spacing between endnotes.

Orphan Lines/Headers/Footnotes: No orphan lines may appear at the top or bottom of a page. No headers or footers may be used. Footnotes are acceptable.

5. Figures

Figures must be integrated throughout the text, not bunched at the end of a chapter. They should be placed as close as reasonably possible to their first mention in the text.

Figure Labels and Captions: A figure's labels denote the type of figure (Map, Illustration, etc.) and its number, and a figure's caption is its title and description. Every figure must have a label and caption unless there is only one figure of its type in the document. Use consecutive label numbers by order of appearance within the text. Each figure must have a unique number. Illustrations that take up more than one page should have the label followed by "(Continued)" on the second page. Label and caption font size is the same as body text size. Use adequate (at least one return) and consistent spacing between and figure and its label and caption and between the figure and text. A figure's label and caption should be placed outside its boundaries, commonly above a table and below an illustration. If both a figure and its label and caption do not fit on one page, place only the label on the page with the figure, and place the label and caption on a separate page that precedes the figure (called a legend page). Single-space the label and caption and center it 1/3 of the way down the page. Include no other text on this page. List the page number of the legend page in the pre-text list.

Landscaping: Because of their shape, some figures may need to be placed crosswise on a page. If so, the top of the figure should be at the left margin as viewed normally (i.e. portrait orientation), and the caption should be parallel to the right margin. The page number keeps the same location and orientation as all other page numbers in the text. Margin requirements apply.

Mounting: Figures should be photocopied directly onto the cotton bond paper whenever possible. If it is necessary to use original figures, they must be mounted onto the cotton bond paper with a spray adhesive. Rubber cement should not be used, because it yellows and deteriorates over time. To test if your figure is correctly mounted, put your fingernail under an edge and try to lift it away from the cotton bond paper – if it lifts even slightly at any edge, you must fasten it again.

Color: Color used to differentiate lines, bars, or segments will reproduce as shades of gray on microfilm and in photocopies. Choose high-contrast colors that will remain distinct in the black-and-white process, or use symbols with or without the color. Photocopy the image directly onto cotton bond paper or use a laser printer. Do not print with water-based ink.

Oversized Figures: There are 3 ways of managing the inclusion of oversized figures:

Reduction: Photographically reduce the size of figures to meet margin requirements. Page numbers and figure captions must remain the same font size as the text.

Accordion Fold: The final, folded page must be 11 inches in height and no more than 8 inches wide. Fold the page from right to left, making the final folded width 8 inches. Fold the page a second time from left to right so the page number appears in the same position as all other pages in the text.

Pocket Addition: Your Library may attach a pocket to the back binding and fold the figure to fit it. Doctoral students must submit an extra (third) copy of the figure.

6. Printing, Binding and Submission

Cotton Bond Paper: Cotton bond paper contains a minimum of 25% cotton bond fiber and has a weight of at least 16 lbs. (Standard cotton bond is usually 20 lbs.) Each sheet has a watermark with the cotton content noted. Cotton bond paper should be white for all documents and should not have texture or design lines. Purchase enough to use the same paper throughout the document and for any pages that are corrected after submission. Flyleaf pages are also the same paper.

Printing Specifications: The document's text must appear on *only one side* of the cotton bond paper. It is preferable to photocopy the final document onto cotton bond paper; however, it is permissible to use a laser printer. Do not use inkjet or water soluble ink. Pages that have bleeding ink will be returned. Pages with broken text, ink blemishes, and crooked text must be recopied. Remember to examine the pagination of your document *before* you put it on cotton bond paper. Pages from page 2 onward should have consecutive page numbers that are the same font size and located in the same position. After the copying process is complete, count the pages again to be sure none were skipped.

Envelope Preparation: Submit five library copies of your thesis in separate manila envelopes that have clasps. Choose an envelope that is appropriate to the size of your document. Pages put in envelopes that are too large or too small may be damaged before they reach the library. Fasten a copy of the document's Title Page (See figure 6) to the outside of each envelope. Additional pages, copyright permission letters, enclosures such as maps and disks, and so forth should be placed inside the envelope. Oversized attachments may be packaged in separate envelopes or tubes that are properly labeled with your name and the title of your document. Documents that are not properly packaged will not be accepted at the time of submission.

Submission Deadlines: Submission dates for both draft and final copies will be clearly stated and meeting these hand-in deadlines is **EXTREMELY** important. Do not treat the dissertation like coursework assignments, which can be completed in a short time period. In the final analysis the onus for completing this work lies with you, it is not the advisor's task to chase you.

7. Copyright Permissions

You should assume that any material from other sources that you use in your thesis, including text, pictures, musical compositions, graphs, charts, cartoons, and so forth, is copyrighted. You must obtain *written permission* from the copyright owner to use it. To obtain written permission, send the copyright owner a concise letter specifying your intended use and allow ample time for a response. If you get no response or if you are denied permission, *you must remove the copyrighted material from your document*. A doctoral student should send out copyright permission requests **at least four** months before his or her defense date. Be sure to state that copies of the document may be distributed by request.

8. Ethics

Ethical research practice requires you to avoid: **Plagiarism:** failure to acknowledge the work of others by using proper citations and obtaining written permission to use copyrighted material. **Fabrication:** the creation of fictitious research results. **Falsification:** alteration of research results by misrepresentation or selective reporting of findings.

PART IV : THE PRESENTATION

As part of Dissertation, you will be asked to give a presentation. The purpose is to test in depth your subject knowledge, and defend your hypothesis. Hence, you will expect the Committee to challenge your opinions and make you defend them. Typically you will be asked to separate your presentation into two distinct parts : Presentation & Defense. You will be given 30 – 40 minutes to present and approximately 1 hour to defend.

1. Preparation

Preparation for a Dissertation will be a long and well-thought process. You should plan a minimum of 10 days of work for the entire process. Your success depends on how closely you match the presentation to the expectations of your audience/listeners. Do not forget that an importance part of your competence in life is judged in accordance with how you deliver your knowledge.

Do some research:

Profile the audience

- ⤴ How many will there be? (this is important to know for selecting visual aids)
- ⤴ How expert on your subject will they be?
- ⤴ Will they have strong opinions on your topic?
- ⤴ Will they argue amongst themselves?
- ⤴ Will they be difficult to control?
- ⤴ How long exactly do they expect your presentation to be?

Learn about the location

- ⤴ How will I get there, will there be any problems?
- ⤴ How is the room arranged?
- ⤴ Will there be any visual aids that you are not acquainted with?

AVOID SURPRISES!

2. Define your aim and objective for the presentation

You should not forget that your aim for this presentation is to show your research findings, convince the audience of your conclusions and provide solid evidence that your level of knowledge justifies the receiving of a Doctoral Degree.

3. Prepare your Material

Gathering material should start as early as possible before your presentation – the more time you have to familiarise yourself with your material, the more competent you will appear.

Sources of material

Always state your sources at the beginning or end of the presentation or when telling an anecdote

- ⤴ Your research findings
- ⤴ Books
- ⤴ Reports, journals, studies, newspapers, research papers

- ⤴ Electronic databases
- ⤴ Other

How much material?

This becomes obvious as you structure. Don't prepare too much material – this is often the problem with inexperienced speakers, so divide information into:

- ⤴ Core material (absolutely necessary to cover) this should be a minimum which you know by heart
- ⤴ Disposable material which can be omitted if the time is running out quickly
- ⤴ Supplementary Material – this can be used if there is time to spare, or in answering questions. Don't be tempted to use old material or someone else's material

4. Create Presentation Aids

You cannot rely on holding the audience's attention with just your voice – you need to use some other sorts of aids

Advantages of presentation aids:

- ⤴ They attract attention
- ⤴ Pictures, graphs, diagrams are more easy to remember than words
- ⤴ Demonstrations are easier than explaining techniques.
- ⤴ They help understanding
- ⤴ They aid clarity
- ⤴ They give you something to focus on

Dangers of Presentation aids

Aids can wreck your presentation faster than anything. Beware of

- ⤴ Overuse of visual aids
- ⤴ Aids in the wrong format for the audience to view
- ⤴ Slides in the wrong order/upside down
- ⤴ Trying to convey too much information

Make sure that your presentation aids:

- ⤴ Reinforce your message
- ⤴ Match the style of the presentation
- ⤴ Match the equipment
- ⤴ Not too many
- ⤴ Not too complex

Presentation Aids you can use are :

- ⤴ Flipchart
 - Not suitable for audiences of more than about 30
 - Not suitable in very formal situations
 - Can be torn off and displayed around the room

- ⤴ Whiteboard

- ❑ Make sure you have a cloth and dry marker

⤵ OHP

- ❑ Foils can be pre-prepared or written during the presentation
- ❑ Suitable for large or small audiences
- ❑ You can place foils over one another, thereby adding to a point
- ❑ Don't rely too heavily on these
- ❑ Watch out for bulbs going wrong, noisy fans etc.

⤵ Computer Beamer

- ❑ Is the best and most effective visual presentation of all
- ❑ Requires your computer on the day of the presentation
- ❑ Watch out for last minute computer problems and viruses
- ❑ Have a slide copy of the presentation in case something goes wrong

⤵ Handouts

- ❑ A very good way of getting your audience involved.
- ❑ Handouts should not be text rich, so that the audience does not read rather than listen to you.

Golden Rules of Presentation Aids

- ⤵ Don't use too many
- ⤵ Use plenty of graphics and pictures
- ⤵ Don't use too many words – 25 words on each foil is plenty
- ⤵ Don't crowd information on – maximum of 6-8 points on each
- ⤵ Beware of overuse of technology – this can come between the speaker and audience, and doesn't help a poor presentation become good

5. Create Speakers Notes

Verbatim Script

It is better not to use a verbatim script unless you are using the services of a professional script writer – a natural sounding script is very difficult to write

Disadvantages

- ⤵ Difficult to write
- ⤵ Difficult to follow whilst reading out loud
- ⤵ Inflexible if you start to run into timing problems
- ⤵ Difficult to maintain audience contact while reading

Advantages

- ⤵ Necessary when you are "on the record" and likely to be quoted

Use of Visual Aids

If you use this approach, make sure that you have all your material on your slides/presentation aids.

Disadvantages

- ⤴ It may not be appropriate to put all your material on your slides
- ⤴ You cannot omit or add points during the presentation

Advantages

- ⤴ Cuts down the number of notes you need to carry

Prompt Cards or Sheets

This is the preferred approach, as you can create your own notes, with reminders for when to display visual aids. Paper or cards can be used – the advantage of cards is that it forces you to be succinct, and the cards don't rustle.

Disadvantages

- ⤴ Can be a little confusing if you have visual aids.

Advantages

- ⤴ Force you to put few points on a sheet/card
- ⤴ You can change them without changing your visual aids

Layout of a prompt card or sheet.:

1. Number to show sequence

LARGE CLEAR MAIN HEADING

- ⤴ Five or six subheadings
- ⤴ Brief hints and reminders
- ⤴ Reminder of when to show visual aids
- ⤴ Guides to timekeeping (if it helps)

6. Rehearsal

Rehearsal is not always necessary, but it is quite recommended to rehearse for your dissertation presentation.

Advantages

- ⤴ Reduces nerves
- ⤴ Improves performance
- ⤴ Helps judge timing
- ⤴ May help to refine the content

How to rehearse

- ⚡ Take it seriously
- ⚡ Take a note of the timings – but the rehearsal is nearly always shorter than the actual presentation
- ⚡ Try to use the actual location if possible
- ⚡ Don't over-rehearse and lose interest

7. On the day of the presentation

Before the presentation

- ⚡ Ensure all the presentation aids that you require are present and working, and that you are familiar with them
- ⚡ Calm your nerves
 - Deep breathing
 - Don't worry about drying up, or not finding the right word – you won't
- ⚡ Rearrange things after the previous speaker
- ⚡ Ensure your notes are in the right order and put them where you want them
- ⚡ Ensure that markers etc are in the right place.

Structure of the presentation

There are 3 presentation structure types in common use:

Logical argument

- ⚡ Follows an argument through all the steps, countering any arguments as you go.
- ⚡ Suitable in courts, tribunals and dissertation defense, as you need to persuade the audience of the "truth" of your argument.
- ⚡ Not best suited to "general business" type presentations

Narrative

- ⚡ Most likely to grab and hold the attention of the audience – this is the best suited for after dinner speeches Not best suited for a business presentations

Formal

- ⚡ This is best suited to a business setting.
 - ⚡ The structure will be:
 1. Tell them what you are going to tell them
 2. Tell them
 3. Tell them what you have told them
- OR
1. Introduction
 2. Main section
 3. Conclusion

The Sections of the Presentation

You need to introduce yourself.

- ⤵ This is good for calming your nerves and getting you started (you should know your material by heart!)
- ⤵ Needs to be attention grabbing and fire the audience's interest.
- ⤵ Do not give your whole presentation away in the introduction – give the audience something to look forward to

Attention grabbing

- ⤵ Tell a joke – be careful of this unless you are an expert – best left to the professional comedians generally.
- ⤵ Tell a story – this should be preferably true and have happened to us – use your personal experience to illustrate. You can sometimes leave the conclusion or "punchline" to the end of the presentation, thus maintaining the audience's interest all the way through.

Make a controversial statement

- ⤵ Pick out something that you will explain later on in the presentation – a different perspective, arresting statistic or main conclusion from our message.

Display a key visual aid

- ⤵ You can display a key foil or OHP which focuses on a key aspect of the message. It should be:
 - Pictorial
 - Bright
 - Clear
 - Simple
 - Intriguing
- ⤵ You may also provide objects (machinery, clothing, equipment) which will focus attention in the same way.

The Opening Summary

- ⤵ Having gained the audience's attention, you should summarise "what you are going to tell them". You don't need to explain it away immediately – it will stimulate audience interest to wait until the end

Main Section

More structure is too complicated and less is a bit thin. You may use a couple of subheadings if necessary, but don't over-complicate the structure, as the audience will lose interest.

The conclusion.

Use a clear summary of your points.

- ⤵ Summarise and finish any stories you have started.
- ⤵ Say Thankyou and goodbye, to indicate you have finished.
- ⤵ Other closures you may use:
 - A Challenge or call to action

- A (rhetorical) question for the audience to consider
- A relevant witticism or good joke.

During the presentation

- ⚡ Don't apologise – don't start with an apology or no-one will want to listen to you
- ⚡ Don't be brash or over-confident
- ⚡ Remember to introduce yourself if no-one else has
- ⚡ Be enthusiastic, but don't gush
- ⚡ Keep the pace going – keep the presentation moving forward
- ⚡ Be responsive to your audience
- ⚡ If they are fidgeting and looking bored – move on more quickly
- ⚡ If they are looking lost – recap or summarise your point
- ⚡ Don't be arrogant and assume stupidity in your audience
- ⚡ Keep your voice up and vary the tone
- ⚡ KEEP TO THE TIME YOU HAVE BEEN ALLOTTED – nothing is more off-putting to an audience than someone who is unaware of timing.
- ⚡ Don't be interrupted if you intend to ask questions at the end – if a question is asked, put them off until you are ready to deal with them.

Eye Contact

- ⚡ You should aim to have eye contact with your audience for at least 50% of the time.
- ⚡ Avoid just concentrating on those in your audience who are most responsive.
- ⚡ Don't look at the clock or look out of the window as if you are bored.

Non-verbal

Some mannerisms can be distracting. Avoid these:

- ⚡ Swaying
- ⚡ Fiddling with markers or pointers
- ⚡ Putting your hands in your pockets
- ⚡ Repetitive gestures
- ⚡ Pacing nervously
- ⚡ Use of hands -too much/too little?
- ⚡ Smiling?
- ⚡ Eye contact with audience none/some of audience/everyone?
- ⚡ Standing still/ moving around/ standing up straight or slouching?
- ⚡ Position in relation to audience?

Voice

- ⚡ Quiet/Loud/Clear/Muffled?
- ⚡ Slow or fast speech?
- ⚡ Monotonous or varying voice?
- ⚡ Use of humour?

Content

- ⚡ Well structured and following a logical sequence?
- ⚡ Did it have an introduction and conclusion?
- ⚡ Did they finish within time limit?
- ⚡ Was the talk too simple or too complex and jargon-filled?
- ⚡ Was it interesting?
- ⚡ Was the speaker enthusiastic, serious, confident?
- ⚡ Were notes used? Were they read out, or just used for key points?

- ☞ Were questions asked or invited? If so were they handled well?
- ☞ Did the audience seem involved?

Visual Aids

- ☞ Was an OHP, blackboard, Powerpoint or other props used?
- ☞ Were they used well? Did they add to the talk?

Do

- ☞ Check that any foils are straight and the right way around
- ☞ Remove foils when you are finished with them
- ☞ Switch off an OHP for long periods between slides

Don't

- ☞ Stand in front of the flipchart or OHP
- ☞ Speak to the screen or board
- ☞ Talk while something is being passed around
- ☞ Give handouts until the end – give them out as you are covering the topic
- ☞ Show one thing and talk about something else.

After the Presentation

Questions

- ☞ Answer any questions you can – do not be tempted to try and make up an answer.
- ☞ If you cannot answer a question, tell the questioner that you will get back to them, and write the question down.
- ☞ Do not try to answer a question which you don't understand – ask the questioner to rephrase.
- ☞ Throw a question out to the audience in general if you think someone else may be answer better than you.

Checklist for the final draft

Adapted from Silbergh, D, 2001, Doing Dissertations in Politics (London: Routledge), p178.

- ⤵ Does my writing demonstrate that I have understood the key concepts and complexities pertaining to the topic?
- ⤵ Does it demonstrate awareness of the relevant literature?
- ⤵ Have I critically assessed and not merely reported the relevant issues and opinions arising from the literature?
- ⤵ Does my dissertation demonstrate that I have chosen and used appropriate research methods, and have these methods been adequately explained and discussed?
- ⤵ Does my dissertation demonstrate that I have collected, analysed and assessed data, which are relevant to the topic under investigation?
- ⤵ Does my writing demonstrate that I have brought a critical and balanced point of view to bear upon the evidence gathered and presented?
- ⤵ Does my writing demonstrate that I have drawn conclusions based upon a balanced discussion of the evidence?
- ⤵ Are the conclusions consistent with the aims and objectives set out in the introduction?
- ⤵ Presentation check list

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