Dissertations: getting started

Student & Library Services - Learning and Research Support
Learning Outcomes

By the end of this workshop you should be able to:

• Understand the key aspects of preparing for a dissertation or project

• Identify issues to consider in your planning, organisation of work and time management.

Remember! This workshop is intended to help you get started and plan your dissertation.
How is your dissertation different?

SCALE
How is your dissertation different?

Independent
How is your dissertation different?

Academic
Begin with the basics

Choose a topic
• Specific and realistic
• Personal ability and interest
• Think of it as a question

Check the requirements for:
• Format
• Word count
• Supervision
• Primary research / Literature review
• Ethics
• Deadline and submission
Planning your dissertation
Where to start?

You should get some guidance from your dissertation supervisor on this. No set path, however there is one golden rule – Don’t start at the beginning!

The introduction is probably the last thing you will write – you can not introduce something that you haven’t written yet?!

Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature review</th>
<th>Primary research</th>
<th>Findings/Data analysis</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(3000 words)</td>
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<td>(3000 words)</td>
<td>(2000 words)</td>
<td>(1000 word)</td>
<td>(1000 words)</td>
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Plan to succeed

• Create an individual plan
• Helps you to focus and stay on track
• Remember to include some flexibility

• Think about how you manage your time:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=go5XyuI7DkA
How to plan your dissertation

When is your hand in date? – work backwards from that
  Don’t forget to leave enough time to proof read it at the end

Don’t think of it as 10000 words - Break it down into smaller essays
  i.e. literature review, methodology, findings/ discussion

Be realistic – how long does it usually take you write an essay/report?
  It is important to remember that you will have other assignments to do as well

Life doesn’t stop! – make allowances for all elements of your life
  Work, birthdays, celebrations, holidays
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16th - Group presentation</td>
<td>25th - Christmas</td>
<td>1st – New year’s Day</td>
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<td>31st - New Year’s Eve</td>
<td>15th - Essay deadline</td>
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<td>28th – Report deadline</td>
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<td>30th – Practical exam</td>
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<td>March</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>June</td>
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<td>18th – Birthday</td>
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<td>21st - Hand in date for dissertation!!</td>
<td>1st- 16th - Exams</td>
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<td>19th- 21st – Weekend away</td>
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<td>Exam revision</td>
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<td>Assignment deadline</td>
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<td>Month</td>
<td>Tasks</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Literature searching&lt;br&gt;16th - Group presentation</td>
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<td>December</td>
<td>Write literature review&lt;br&gt;25th - Christmas&lt;br&gt;31st - New Year’s Eve</td>
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<td>January</td>
<td>Do primary research&lt;br&gt;1st – New year’s Day&lt;br&gt;15th - Essay deadline&lt;br&gt;28th – Report deadline&lt;br&gt;30th – Practical exam</td>
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<td>March</td>
<td>Write methodology chapter&lt;br&gt;18th – Birthday&lt;br&gt;19th- 21st – Weekend away</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>Write Introduction/Conclusion</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>Proofread final draft&lt;br&gt;21st - Hand in date for dissertation!!&lt;br&gt;Exam revision&lt;br&gt;Assignment deadline</td>
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Organising your research
Group your topic areas –
• develop themes
• similarities and common issues
• differences or contradictions
• reorganise if necessary
Literature Review

• Background for your research
• Key issues, key writers, current context, theories and terminology
• Ideas on how your work extends, challenges, fills a gap
• How has it been researched before – what methods have been used and were they effective?

• Succeed@Tees workshop on Writing a Literature Review
Search strategy

• Saves you time
• Helps you to keep track of your searches
• Allows you to search the same way in many sources – consistency
• Allows you to piece together more relevant results
Reading and Note taking

• Look at different examples for writing style

• Summarise key findings as you go
  See www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk

• Remember to note full references
• Succeed@Tees workshop on Note Making
Working smart

• Set up accounts and alerts
  • http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/up_to_date
• RefWorks
  • http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/refworks
• Resources from other libraries
  • http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/ILL
Keep calm and carry on

• Eat, sleep and breathe!
• Take regular breaks and plan time off to relax
• Celebrate when you tick something off your list
• Do something rather than nothing
• Ask for help if you’re struggling
Other Resources


• **Succeed@Tees** LibGuides
  [http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/literature_search](http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/literature_search)
  [http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/literature_review](http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/literature_review)
  [http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/critical_writing](http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/critical_writing)
More Help

Remember lots of help is available:

• Your supervisor
• Academic Library team
• Learning Hub
• LibGuides
• Succeed@Tees Workshops
Questions?

This workshop is part of the Succeed @ Tees programme