

SKILLS FOR LEARNING

GUIDE TO WRITING YOUR DISSERTATION

WRITING THE DISSERTATION

Before you begin writing your dissertation, it's important to be clear about your overall argument and the evidence you will use to support your argument. Further, make sure that you talk to your supervisor about how your assignment is to be structured. You may also be able to obtain written guidance concerning dissertation structure from your faculty.

Try not to leave the writing process until the end of your research. Instead, see it as part of the research process. This is particularly applicable if you're required to produce certain chapters for assessment part of the way through your research.

The basic structure of a dissertation is often as follows:

- Abstract
- Introduction
- Literature review
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Bibliography
- Appendices

Each of these sections may form different chapters within your dissertation and you may want to break certain chapters down into further subheadings to ensure clarity for the reader.

THE PROPOSAL

You may be required to produce a proposal before you start writing the dissertation. The proposal should be quite short- usually about two sides of paper- and should briefly outline what your dissertation will be about and how you intend to carry out the work involved until submission.

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is an overview of published academic work on a particular topic. By undertaking a literature review, you will be able to identify and critically evaluate the key debates, theories or concepts within your topic.

As you conduct your review, think about the key theories, concepts and ideas that you can draw on in order to provide your work with some background and context. As you write your review always consider how the literature relates to your research question. The literature you gather for your review will provide you with material for the discussion chapter of your dissertation.

When conducting your review, make your search as comprehensive as possible. Also remember to cite all your sources so that a reader could follow them up and ensure you record the publication details of all the sources you intend to use within your review.

Using bibliographic management software such as RefWorks is an easy way to keep a track of all the sources you're using. Our **Guide to RefWorks** takes you through the process of setting up a RefWorks account. For further support, you can book onto the **Referencing with RefWorks** workshop.

HELP AND ADVICE

For help and advice on any aspect of dissertation research, including details of 'Planning your Dissertation' workshops, please see the Skills for Learning website at <http://www.wlv.ac.uk/skills>.



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