

Introduction to research options at L6

Dissertations and Independent Projects

The Independent Project

- 20 credit module, 5,000 words
- Specific structure which you must adhere too.
- Some tutor support but this is very much an independent piece of work.

The Dissertation

- 40 credit module
- Approx 10,000 words – but quantity does not always equal quality!!
- Required structure & format following a prescribed assessment schedule

Your Choices

- It will be all your own work
- Your own original idea – won't be completely original but you need to have your own slant on a topic area
- You will be the designer
- You will be the organiser
- You will be the author
- Your very own creation!

Like most things...

- The dissertation/project is what you make of it.
- Chance to develop your interests
- Chance to study something in depth and develop an independent view
- Rewarding experience

Employability

- A successfully completed project provides evidence of:
- critical analysis
- written communication
- project management
- ability to work on your own initiative.

Key points

- Keep it simple – don't be too ambitious. It must be achievable in the time available.
- If you decide to do a Literature Review for your project you MUST spend time ensuring there is enough literature available on the subject in order to write 5,000 words.
- Possible to undertake a literature review based independent project

Key Points

- Your research question/title needs to be: clear, concise and focussed approx 15 words of personal interest manageable in the time available
- Sub research questions – remember SMART

Dissertations and Research Based projects

- You might have an HYPOTHESIS within your title
- A hypothesis is a prediction based on theory
- Your research will then test your hypothesis. It does not matter if you don't actually find what you predict as long as it is reasonable in light of research and you can account for why.
- If you have an hypothesis you will need to be aware of VARIABLES

Hypothesis - examples

- Girls enjoy reading more than boys. $\Rightarrow$ Children learn better in the mornings when they are 'fresh'. $\Rightarrow$ The development in co-operation with peers progresses from a relatively primitive form in 1 year olds to a more genuine co-operation in 2 year olds.

Variables - examples

- Teachers in a reception class note that children who come from playgroup A have better language skills than children from playgroup B. Observations and records of children's language skills over a period of several years seems to support this view. The teachers conclude that the difference is attributable to the higher quality of language interaction between the staff and children in playgroup A. Is this conclusion appropriate? What other factors might be involved? (adapted from Mukherji & Albon 2010)

You may not have a hypothesis

- Attachment: How does it affect the development of social relationships between children in playgroup?
- An investigation into the impact of P4C on questioning skills in a KS2 classroom
- An evaluation of teaching strategies used to engage boys with reading at KS2 in an urban primary school
- An investigation into the perceived success of the Foundation Phase and the effectiveness of a play based curriculum.

You may not have a hypothesis

- An evaluation of 'Listening to the Voice of the Child' and its impact on the well being of the pre schoolchild.
- Challenging behaviour in Autistic adults: a case study into the alternatives to sensory issues through a case study of a young autistic man.
- Your title does need to be specific –
- An investigation into autism
- An investigation into the effect poverty has on academic performance and achievement of primary school pupils. BOTH TOO BROAD

Independent Project

- First semester
- 1 hour timetabled each week
- Mixture of taught sessions and direct tasks, peer support Second semester
- Combination of group meetings and individual Q&A sessions
- Attendance and supervision records kept.

Dissertation

- Combination of individual and group meetings timetabled across the academic year.
- Approximately 1 formal taught session per month.

Some advice...

- Read widely, journals are your friend!
- Consider using a reference manager e.g. Mendeley, Zotero, Endnote

Reading for Independent Project

- Sharp J, (2012). *Success with your Education Research Project* (2nd ed.). London: Sage
- Ridley D (2012) *The Literature Review*. 2nd ed London: Sage
- Walliman N (2014) *Your Undergraduate Dissertation* (2nd ed) London: Sage

Reading for Dissertation

- **ESSENTIAL READING** Walliman N (2014) *Your Undergraduate Dissertation*. (2nd edn) London: Sage
- Bell J. (2010) *Doing Your Research project* (5th ed.) Milton Keynes: Open University Press
- Coles A & McGrath J (2010) *Your Education Research Project Guide*. Harlow: Pearson
- Mukherji P & Albon D (2010) *Research Methods in Early Childhood*. London: Sage
- Walliman N (2011) *Research Methods: the basics*. London: Routledge
