



How to start your dissertation

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THIS SESSION

- Identifying your contribution
- Refining your topic
- Setting SMART objectives
- Structure of the dissertation
- Do's and don'ts of dissertation writing

HOW TO FIND A TOPIC

- Which aspects of business/management do you find interesting?
- Can you narrow this area by time, country, region, industry sector etc?
- How much literature does already exist?
- Is your proposed research likely to make a contribution to knowledge?
 - Has this been done already?
 - There has to be an original element, but this could be the context (sector/country) of your study rather than the study itself

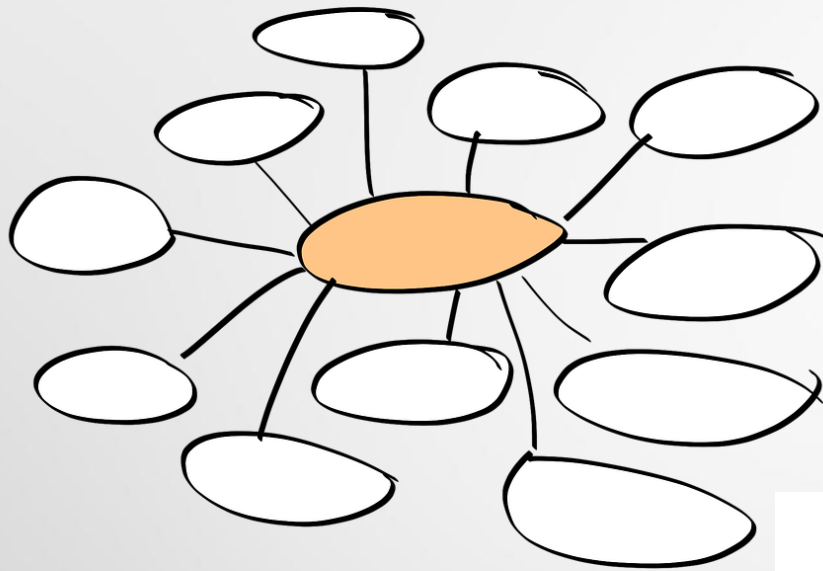
IS IT RESEARCHABLE?

- A topic may be interesting and make a contribution to knowledge, but is impossible or impractical to research
- Is there a suitable methodology?
- “Young children today will be more critical of advertising when they become adults”
- “What will be the effects of BREXIT?”

BE REALISTIC ...

- Very few postgraduate dissertations change the world
- Be happy with a small contribution to knowledge
- Not having a “headline news” story may still be a good dissertation

USE A MIND MAP TO ORGANISE YOUR THOUGHTS



From: Pixabay

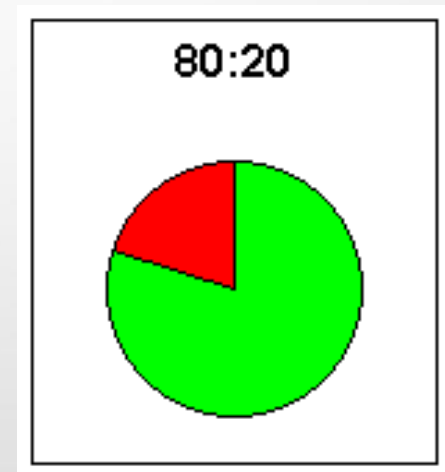


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CONSIDER POSSIBLE METHODOLOGIES

- Do you prefer quantitative or qualitative methodologies?
- How researchable is your proposal using both approaches?
- Mixed methods = 80% Quantitative, 20% Qualitative? Or 50:50? Or 20:80?

??





RESOURCES REQUIRED?

- How long will it take?
- How large will your sample need to be?
- Where will you get your data from?
- Why should anybody give you data?
- **Problems of collecting data often under-estimated**
- Be creative in developing alliances for data collection

CHECK LIST FOR A GOOD TOPIC

- Be original: What do we know that we didn't know before?
 - and how do we know that we know it?
- But: There is a lot of published material on management topics
- Still lots of opportunities as new topics emerge, e.g. social network media
- Will it interest you for several months?
- Is it a "hot topic"?

Caution: If you are in a job/sponsored by an employer – think about the potential impact of your work on your career

ETHICS AND RISK

- All research touches on ethics and risk
- Ask yourself:
 - Is the information I need confidential? If yes, how can I ensure confidentiality?
 - Are my respondents vulnerable in any way? If yes, how do I deal with this?
 - Could I, as the researcher, find myself in a risky situation?
 - Are there any physical or political risks involved for either the researcher or respondents? What could be done to mitigate these risks?
 - Could anyone else perceive my research as unethical? If yes, how can I deal with objections?
- You need to complete and discuss your Ethics form with your supervisor before you can collect any data!

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Research aims, objectives and questions are like a puzzle – they need to fit together!



This structure underpins your entire dissertation.

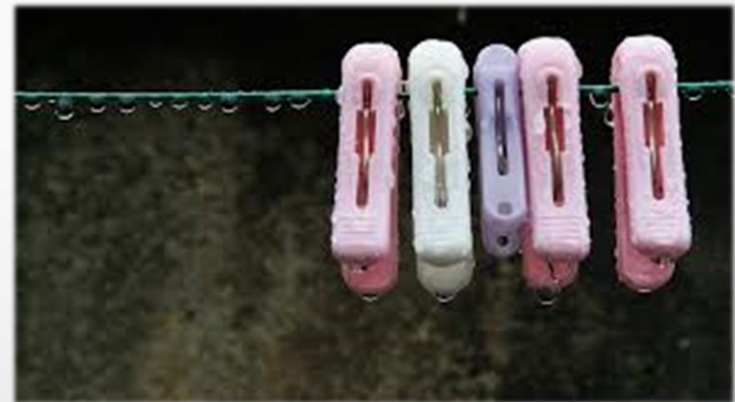
- **Aim.** General statement
- **Objectives.** Specific statements that are evaluated. Should be **SMART**
 - Specific: measurable and convincing
 - Measurable
 - Achievable
 - Realistic
 - Timescale
- **Research Questions:** The translation of your objectives into questions and/or hypotheses

STRUCTURE –THE BEGINNING

- Title / Name & date / Declaration
- Abstract :
 - your research problem
 - why that problem is important and worth studying
 - your data and methods
 - main findings
 - **Should not be longer than three paragraphs or two thirds of a page.**
- List of:
 - Contents
 - Figures
 - Title above diagram and referred to within the text preferably after reference
 - Title below diagram

INTRODUCTION

- Why this topic
- Your research approach
- Aims and objectives / hypotheses
- Link into the next chapter (All chapters should link conclusion of previous with intro. of next)
- This chapter needs to be written at the end of your dissertation period – allow time for it!
- Suggested word length: around 1500 words long



LITERATURE REVIEW

- Check your time frame – you should use older, seminal literature but you must use newer, up-to-date material as well.
- Data bases: Business Source Complete, Science Direct, ABI Inform, JStor
- Marketline
- Check for theoretical and empirical sources
- Reference lists of contemporary articles
- Don't use Wikipedia!



A good literature review should be characterised by: (Wood, 1994)

- Purposes of a review being accomplished
- Evidence of a critique (analysis and synthesis)
- Primary sources
- Number of references used
- Paraphrase rather than quote
- Logical structure and reasoning
- Structure from general → specific
- Is usually 5000-6000 words long



METHODOLOGY

- Your research philosophy and research approach with a justification.
- The methods used
- Why these methods?
- Your sample with justification
- Research design and implementation
- Your form of analysis and why
- Why these methods and not others? Review
- Suggested word length for this chapter around 2500 words

DATA ANALYSIS/FINDINGS

- Introduction to chapter
 - Set the scene and link to objectives
- Findings
 - Use a range of analysis tools, especially at Masters level.
 - Be specific but avoid unnecessary detail. Supplement this chapter with appendices
 - Analyse rather than describe.
- Conclusion
 - Did you answer your hypotheses / research questions/ objectives?
- No suggested word length, depends on the type of your research.



DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

- This chapter is critical – **what does it all mean?**
- Critically discuss your findings. This chapter provides the link between your literature review and your findings. Compare and contrast with your literature review.
- Suggested word length – together with the data analysis chapter 4000-4500 words.



RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Briefly summarise your key findings
- Relate to your objectives
- Develop realistic recommendations based on your findings (don't just invent them!)
- How would you change the study if you did it again? Limitations
- Any implications for policy and practice
- Future research directions and methods
- Most important chapter – does not need to be long but must be good!



WHAT MAKES A GOOD DISSERTATION...

- Always be critical and avoid description (of the literature, background, findings)
- Link chapters and paragraphs
- Use critical language
- Allow enough time for editing and proof reading
- Reference, reference, reference!

USE CRITICAL LANGUAGE

Good practice (samples)	Not as strong/descriptive
In comparison to Jones (2008), Smith (2009) ...	Jones (2008) says ... and Smith (2009) tells us ...
Jones (2008) agrees with Smith (2009) on...	Jones (2008) states ...
In contrast to Jones (2008), Smith (2009) maintains...	Jones (2008) maintains that ... and Smith (2009) states..
Smith (2009) supports Jones (2008) earlier work by also finding...	Jones (2008) says ... and Smith (2009) tells us ...
The literature remains ambiguous in this area, Smith (2009) and Jones (2008) come to different conclusions	Jones (2008) maintains that ... and Smith (2009) states..
Jones (2008) comes to the conclusion that ... which has been expanded by Smith (2009) to include...	Jones (2008) claims that ... and Smith (2009) states..

LINKAGE EXAMPLES

- Before proceeding to examine X, it will be necessary to ...
- Before employing these theories to examine X, it is necessary to ...
- So far this paper/chapter has focussed on X. The following section will discuss ...
- This chapter follows on from the previous chapter, which (examined/laid out/outlined) X.
- This chapter has demonstrated that ... It is now necessary to explain the course of ...
- Having discussed how to construct X, the final section of this paper addresses ways of ...
- This section has analysed the causes of X and has argued that ... The next part of this paper ... In addition, it is important to ask ...
- However, this system also has a number of serious drawbacks.
- Despite this, little progress has been made in the ...

REFERENCING

- Reference, reference and reference!
- Use Harvard referencing
- UWTSD referencing guides

<https://www.uwtSD.ac.uk/library/info/skills/referencing-handbooks/>



THE ROLE OF THE SUPERVISOR

- The supervisor is essentially a facilitator – the effort has to come from you
- Establish early on how you will work together
- It is not the supervisor's role to write chapters for you or to be your language editor.
- Your dissertation is your own piece of work – your supervisor can advise but ultimately it is your choice if you follow this advice.
- The supervisor will prompt you but you need to manage your time independently.



HOW TO BRING IT TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION

- Miss agreed meetings with your supervisor without explanation
- 'Disappear' - and expect your supervisor to do all supervision right at the end.
- Change topic without your supervisor's agreement
- Copy other people's work without acknowledgement – very likely to be found out (Unfair practice)
- Have someone else do your work for you – also very likely to be found (Unfair practice)
- **Make sure your conclusions/ recommendations are substantial, and link to your findings and literature review.**
- Allow sufficient time for editing and proof reading. Running the spell checker is not enough!
- Your introduction and conclusion chapters are the two chapters likely to be read first – make sure they are as good as you can possibly get them. First impressions count!



ANY QUESTIONS, QUERIES,
COMMENTS?