

Writing Up your Research



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Preparation

Before you start....

Buy yourself a
coffee or tea
at your
favourite café
and go
through the
writing
guidelines....
again

MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology Homepage

Study skills and resources

Below you will find a list of links and resources that support your studies. We hope you will find the area useful, and please do help us develop it.

Moodle information

-  Using Moodle
-  Using the discussion forums
-  Netiquette guidelines

General programme resources

-  Information about Study Skills Support from the University for Distance-Learning Students

Referencing and Writing Guidelines

-  START HERE - Introducing the Referencing Style
-  Additional Referencing Notes January 2014
-  Nick's MA CAA Writing Guidelines OCTOBER 2016
-  Nick's Guidelines to Writing a Critical Review and Comparing Texts October 2016
-  MA CAA REFERENCING GUIDELINES FEBRUARY 2016
-  Plagiarism - An easy guide

General useful Internet links

-  The Writing Centre

Return to your earlier modules

- If you have done RCC then return to your RCC text book:
 - Chapter 11 Hennink, Monique M., Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey, *Qualitative research methods* (Los Angeles ; London: SAGE, 2011).
 - Also return to your research based papers and reread them and pay attention to feedback.
 - If you have done Heavenly Discourses then relook at your comments on that paper.

Pay particular attention to comments about your:

- Structure
- Comments about your use of primary sources
- Comments about how you are citing your secondary sources
- Look at any feedback on your literature review, and conclusion.

WHY write up?

- Investigation without publication and dissemination is not research.
- Investigation which only reports is not research.

To count as research, a project has to seek to make a contribution to knowledge (and perhaps practice and/or policy) in the field. To make this contribution it has to be published – written up.



In order to understand your work any person will need the answer to four key questions .

Key questions are :

What have you done?

Why have you done it?

How have you done it?

What did you find and why does it matter?



Until these questions are answered the reader will struggle to make sense of your research.

Thus these questions need to begin to be addressed at the beginning of your paper

WHAT

Introduction – the Aim of the paper

State your research question

WHY

Academic Rationale

The brief evidence for your academic rationale

– **the Literature Review** (take this from your RP form)

HOW - brief

Methodology

Including particular site or location.

What you found

A brief pointer to what your research revealed.

GETTING STARTED

Laying Down the Structure

The structure of your final research paper needs to have these headings

- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Findings/Discussion
- Conclusion

There can be variations but you will confirm these with your tutor.

Be Smart: Open a Word document and insert these headings. Thus you have started your writing up!

Be Very Smart: Make sure you know how to use the Word features of:

- Outline view and headings
- Inserting page numbers
- Producing footnotes
- Inserting an image
- Working with captions.

If you do not know how to do these things in Word then Google 'Tutorials in Word' you will find many YouTube videos on the topic. Spending an hour learning Word can save you days and much frustration later on!

The Literature Review

Your literature review is where you cite and discuss the previous work in your subject field or in a similar field. You do not list the opinions you COMPARE and CONTRAST the THEMES.

In order for your work to be able to add to the body of academic understanding it must be linked to other papers.

Otherwise it has no context and does not contribute to the overall 'picture' of the subject.

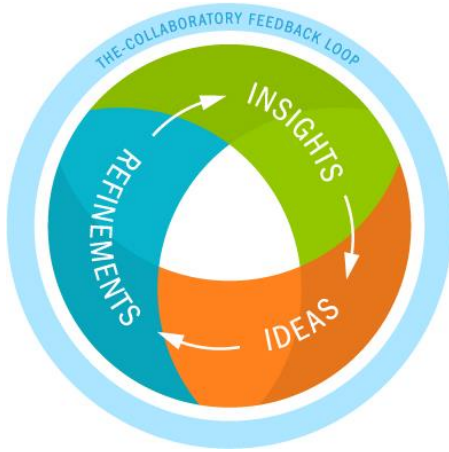


Your findings must link to theory – the theory is covered in your literature review.

It is deeply frustrating when a student does good work but CAN NOT get a distinction because they have failed to link their work to the THEMES developed in their literature.

A bad literature review just list topics, has no themes and leads to a bad write up which leads to a lower mark.

The Research Loop



Research work can uncover points that you had not considered in your literature review, thus you will then need to return to your literature review and provide some THEORY for what you have discovered so you can DISCUSS it in your write up.

Your writing up becomes a feedback loop.

Your findings will feedback into your **literature review**, which can feedback into your **methodology**, which can feedback into your **discussion and themes** which in turn feeds into your **conclusion** and eventually feeds back to your **introduction**.

Researcher vs Reporter

The researcher will do the job of a reporter – collect data – but then goes beyond reporting.

The researcher places their findings into the context of the given opinions in the field.

The research therefore adds to the conversation. The research finds new knowledge.

A reporter just presents the field findings.

Their job is to provide information so that others can analysis the meaning of the field findings.

Reporters can look like researchers as they can go out into the field, or ask people to come to them (in the studio) for interviews.

However they do not analyse, just collect data.

You need to be a Researcher not a Reporter.



Conclusion

Your conclusion is the other bookend to your introduction. It needs to take the reader full circle and make them understand why your research is important.

Thus a conclusion **must**:

- Return to your research question.
- Summarises your procedure and findings.
- Add your unique finding.

However, it is also your chance to give your own thoughts. The conclusion is the place where you can add the final comments on the points you have found in your research. You thus want to summarize your paper but additionally emphasis, in some way, the importance of your findings. **Give your reader a new insight into the subject.**



A person should be able to read your introduction and your conclusion and:

- Understand the aim of your research.
- Have an overview of your methodology.
- Gain an idea of the themes that you developed.
- Understand what you found.

If they wish they can read your entire paper and see the detail of the evidence for your findings.

Some causes for loss of marks

- Unclear introduction so the reader does not understand the focus of your work.
- Methodology not justified via citations
- Literature review simply reporting the different opinions rather than developing a discussion.

Your Results

- No discussion – simply listing findings – this can actually lead to failure.
- Too many facts – orientations - with little or no discussion – reporting!
- Insufficient use of your primary sources – your field work.
- Discussion with little or no reference back to your literature review – this can lead to failure.
- New material introduced in your discussion, separate to your literature review.
- Conclusion not returning to the original aim and summarising the main themes.
- Conclusion not grounded in the evidence presented in the paper. Generalisations or speculations.

Check List

Tick these boxes to get the best marks for your paper but more importantly to write up a wonderful paper.

- ☐ Have I address the **What**, **Why** and **How** issues in my introduction?
- ☐ Have I justified my methodology by citing scholars who argue that my chosen methodology is valid for my intended research?
- ☐ Have I consider the work of other scholars in the area of my research? In exploring this have I avoid just reporting this literature but instead shown the different opinions on the key themes that I am going to explore in my literature and are important to my findings?
- ☐ Have I written up my findings as a researcher and avoided just reporting facts?
- ☐ Have I clearly labelled all my tables and graphs, making sure they can be understood and have the figure numbers in the right order?
- ☐ Have I written a conclusion which summarises my work but also synthesis it together and shows why my work is important?



Start writing early...

When you complete the first draft look at it as a complete piece – Does it make sense?

Does it fit together?

What needs to change or needs work?

VIP: Can someone else understand it?