

What is a Dissertation?

Dr. Frances Clynes

Dissertation Seminar

Thursday 15th December 2022

A Master's Dissertation

‘A Master’s qualification ... signifies that the holder has gone beyond the acquisition of general knowledge and has advanced specialized knowledge of a subject.’

Biggan, *Succeeding with your Master's Dissertation: A step-by-step handbook*, p. 2



A Master's Dissertation

‘It is an independent piece of work ... to be completed in such a way as to satisfy the examiner(s) that you are a competent researcher with advanced knowledge on a specific topic, normally chosen by you, which relates to your Master's programme.’

*Biggan, Succeeding with your Master's
Dissertation: A step-by-step handbook, p. 3*





MA Cultural Astronomy and Astrology
Dissertation Handbook
2022-2023

The dissertation gives you the opportunity to follow up your own interests and to use your initiative in terms of what you wish to research, how you wish to tackle it, and how it is to be presented. You will carry out an independent research study in your chosen discipline, though your supervisor will help to ensure that your research idea is viable, that it meets the requirements for your discipline, that it is likely to be completed within the time limit and that it is likely to yield the results that you anticipate. The dissertation will result in a document of 15,000 words, though you may supplement this with photographs, maps or other images that you and your supervisor consider appropriate to your chosen topic.



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

MA Cultural Astronomy and Astrology

Dissertation Handbook

2022-2023

15,000 words

Independent Research

- Working with a supervisor
- You choose the topic
- Related to the MA on which you are enrolled
 - Astronomy, astrology, cosmology
 - Ecology, spirituality
- Original research
- Completed within the time limit
- Completed within the word count



Word Count

15,000 words (+/-5%)

Be ruthless

(Very) rough guide

- Introduction 1500 words.
- Literature review 2000 words.
- Methodology 1500 words.
- Research 8000 words.
- Conclusion 2000 words.

Qualitative Research

‘A dissertation which encompasses both a Literature Review and the collection and analysis of your own primary research data, providing you with the opportunity to compare theory (from your Literature Review) with practice (from your collected primary data, e.g., from interviews or questionnaires).’

Biggan, Succeeding with your Master's Dissertation: A step-by-step handbook, pp. 3-4



Dissertation

Text Research

Biggan, *Succeeding with your Master's Dissertation: A step-by-step handbook*, pp. 3-4



Dissertation

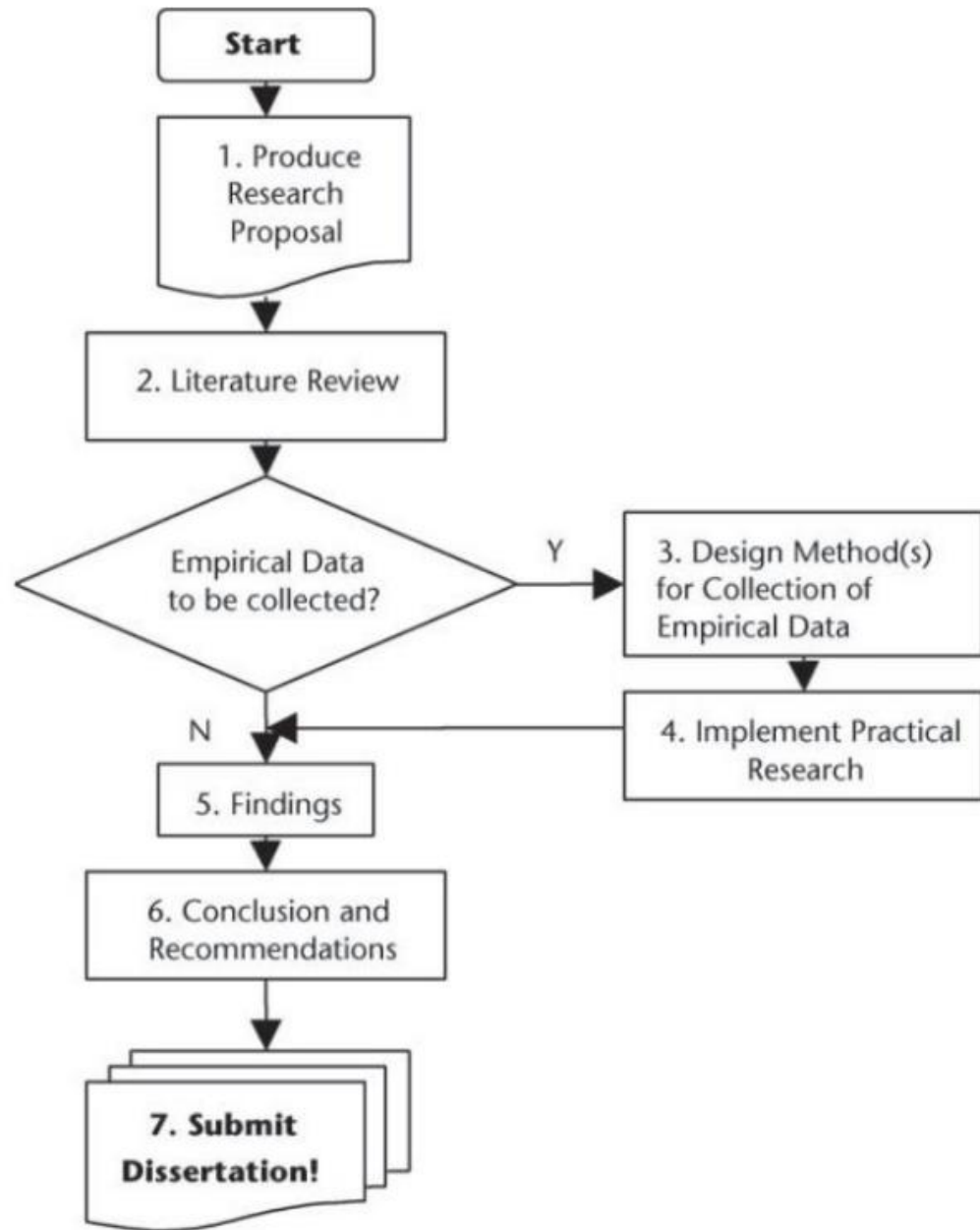


Figure 1.1 Dissertation Life Cycle (DLC)

Dissertation Life Cycle (DLC)

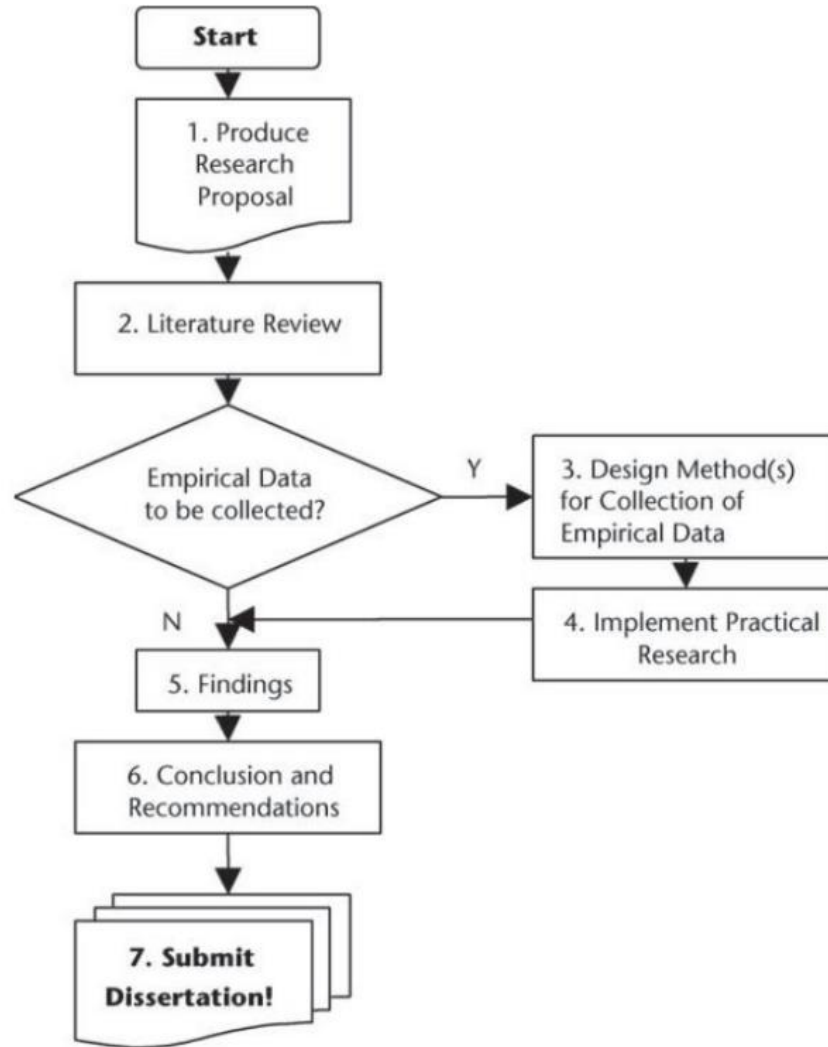


Figure 1.1 Dissertation Life Cycle (DLC)

An Iterative Process

Stage 1

- Put forward a credible research proposal

Stage 2

- Evaluate literature from a variety of sources, pertinent to your research objectives
- Cite sources

Stage 3

- Identify and justify how you will collect and analyse your own research data

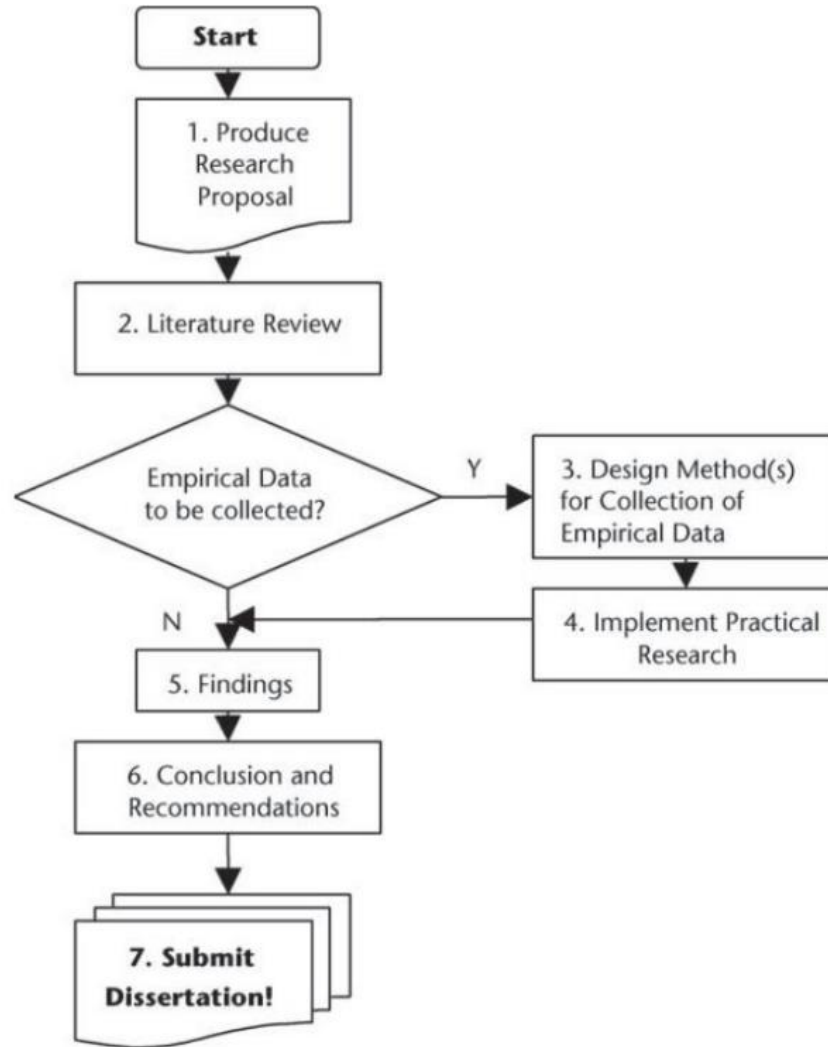


Figure 1.1 Dissertation Life Cycle (DLC)

An Iterative Process

Stage 4

- Carry out your own research

Stage 5

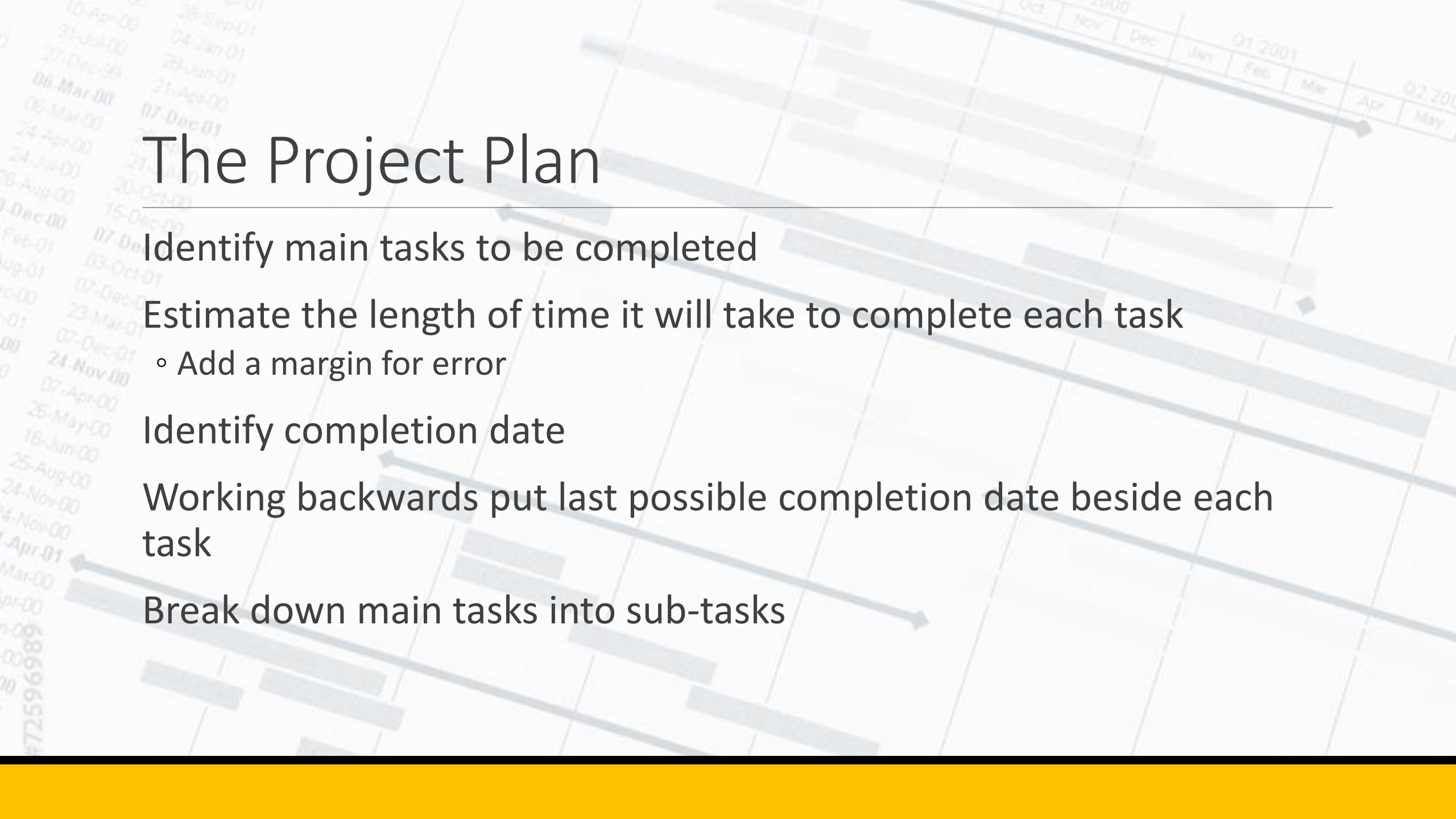
- Discuss and analyse your findings

Stage 6

- Summarise the main points of your research
- Present your conclusions

Stage 7

- Submit your dissertation



The Project Plan

Identify main tasks to be completed

Estimate the length of time it will take to complete each task

- Add a margin for error

Identify completion date

Working backwards put last possible completion date beside each task

Break down main tasks into sub-tasks

Example Dissertation:

How do astrologers view their relationship with the night sky?

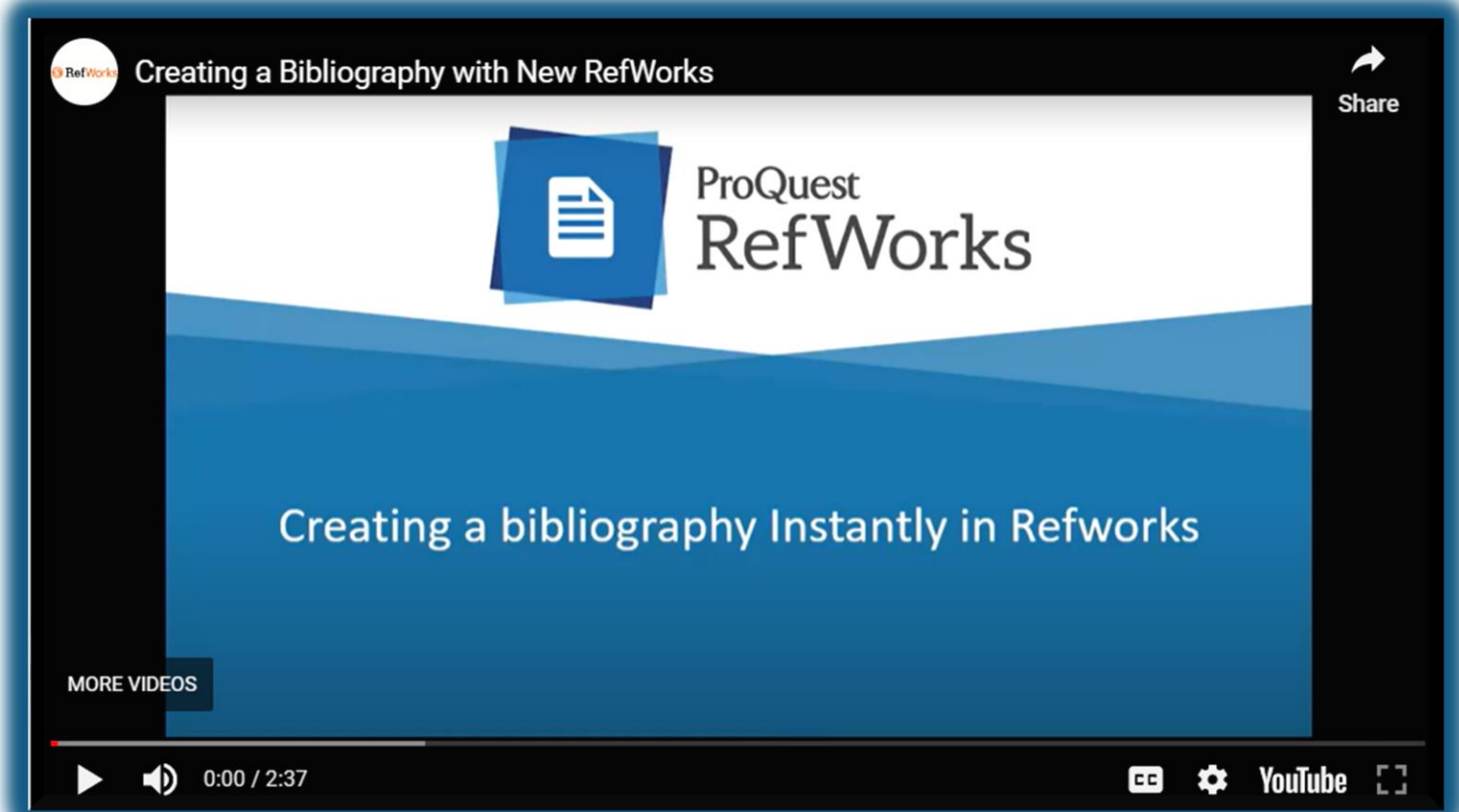
Task	Estimated time	To be completed by
Get proposal agreed		
Literature Review		
Methodology		
Interview astrologers		
Analyse findings		
Discuss results		
Conclusions		
Abstract		
Acknowledgements/TOC/Cover Sheet		
Check references/Bibliography		
Proof read		

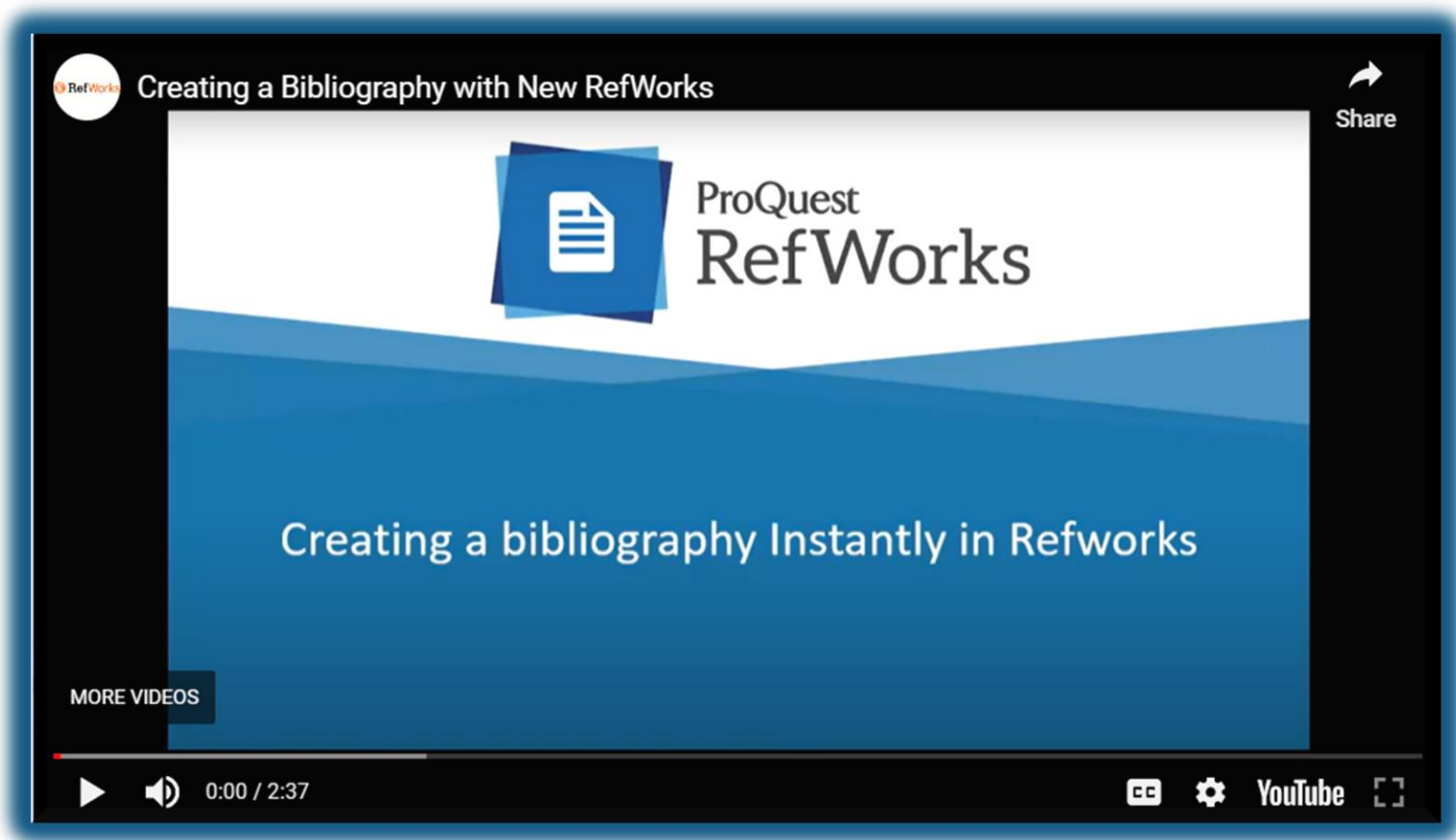
Referencing Software

Refworks:

<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/student-essentials/refworks/>

Tutorials





Referencing

Reference as you go

Never take a risk

Check and double-check
the MA Referencing
Guide

- Footnotes
- Bibliography

Quotes page

Choose your Topic

Topic of interest

How much do you know of the area?

Gap in existing scholarship

Is there existing scholarship?

Have you touched on this in earlier modules?

What is the question?



Proposal

Background information on the area

Existing scholarship

Academic rationale

Aim of the research

- Objectives

Your approach

Proposed methodology





Introduction

The research question

Preliminary background

Introduce and define

Aim of the dissertation

Objectives

Academic rationale and
justification

Previous scholarship

Methodology



Introduction

What you are going to do

- Threads through every section of the dissertation
- Check again at the end
- Conclusions should show how you did what you said you would do in the Introduction

Literature Review

Primary and secondary
sources

Make it relevant

Easy to get lost on a
tangent

Refer back to this in your
findings and in your
conclusions



LITERATURE REVIEW

How do astrologers
view their
relationship with
the night sky?

Primary Sources

- Astrologers
 - What are astrologers saying about the night sky?
- Text books, articles in astrology journals, blogs, social media



LITERATURE REVIEW

How do
astrologers view
their relationship
with the night
sky?

Secondary Sources

- Wide range of sources
- Who are the recognised authors in the field?
- What are the current debates?
- Have there been recent developments?



LITERATURE REVIEW

How do astrologers
view their
relationship with
the night sky?

Secondary Sources

- JSTOR
- Online Databases
- Academic Texts
- Online Journals
 - *Culture and Cosmos*
- PhDs
- Perhaps none?



LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review

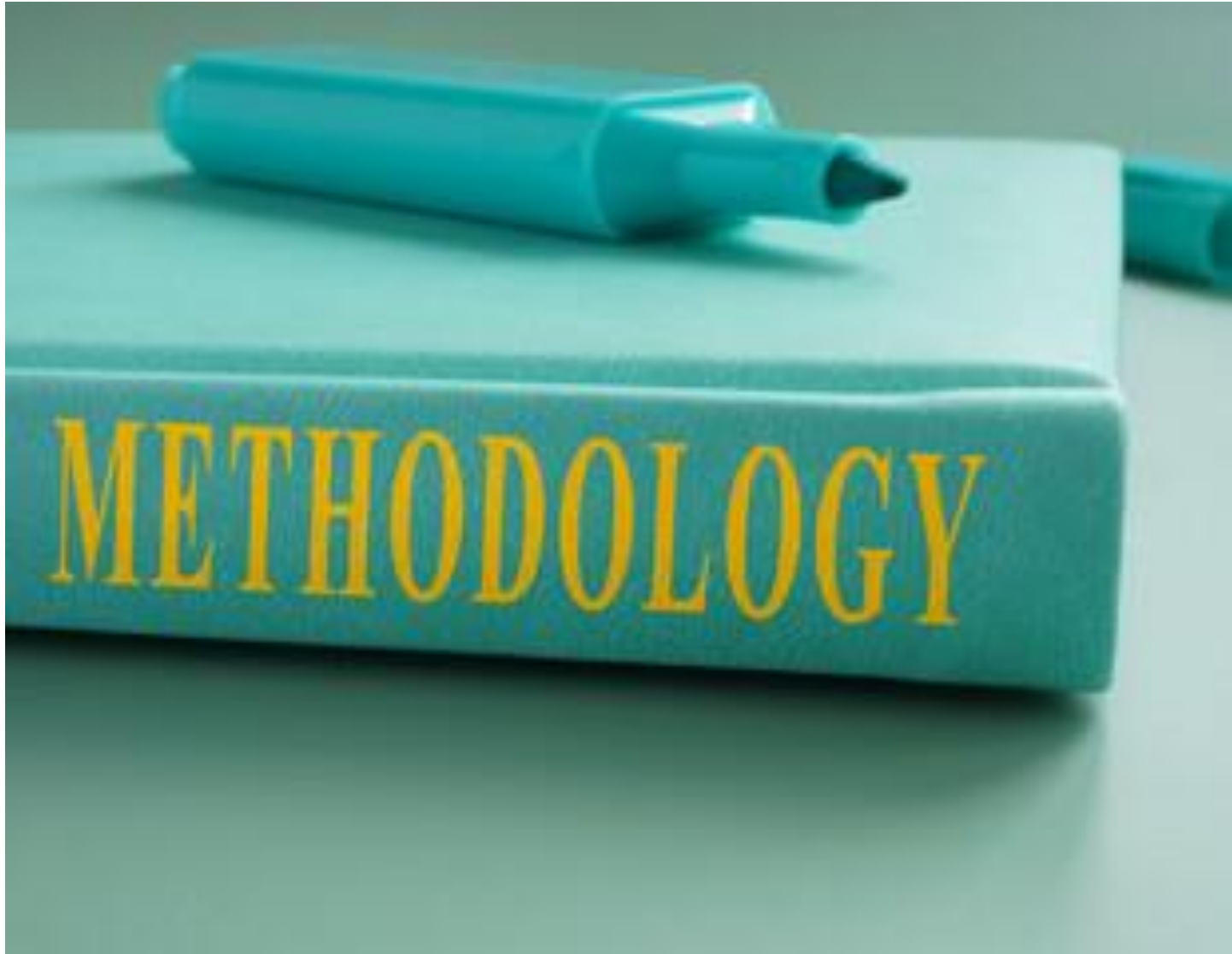
Analytical Approach

- Are they taking a position in a current debate?
- What is the author's motivation?
- What has influenced their opinions?
- Have they overlooked something?
- Are they factually correct?

Is it relevant?

- Does it help answer the question?

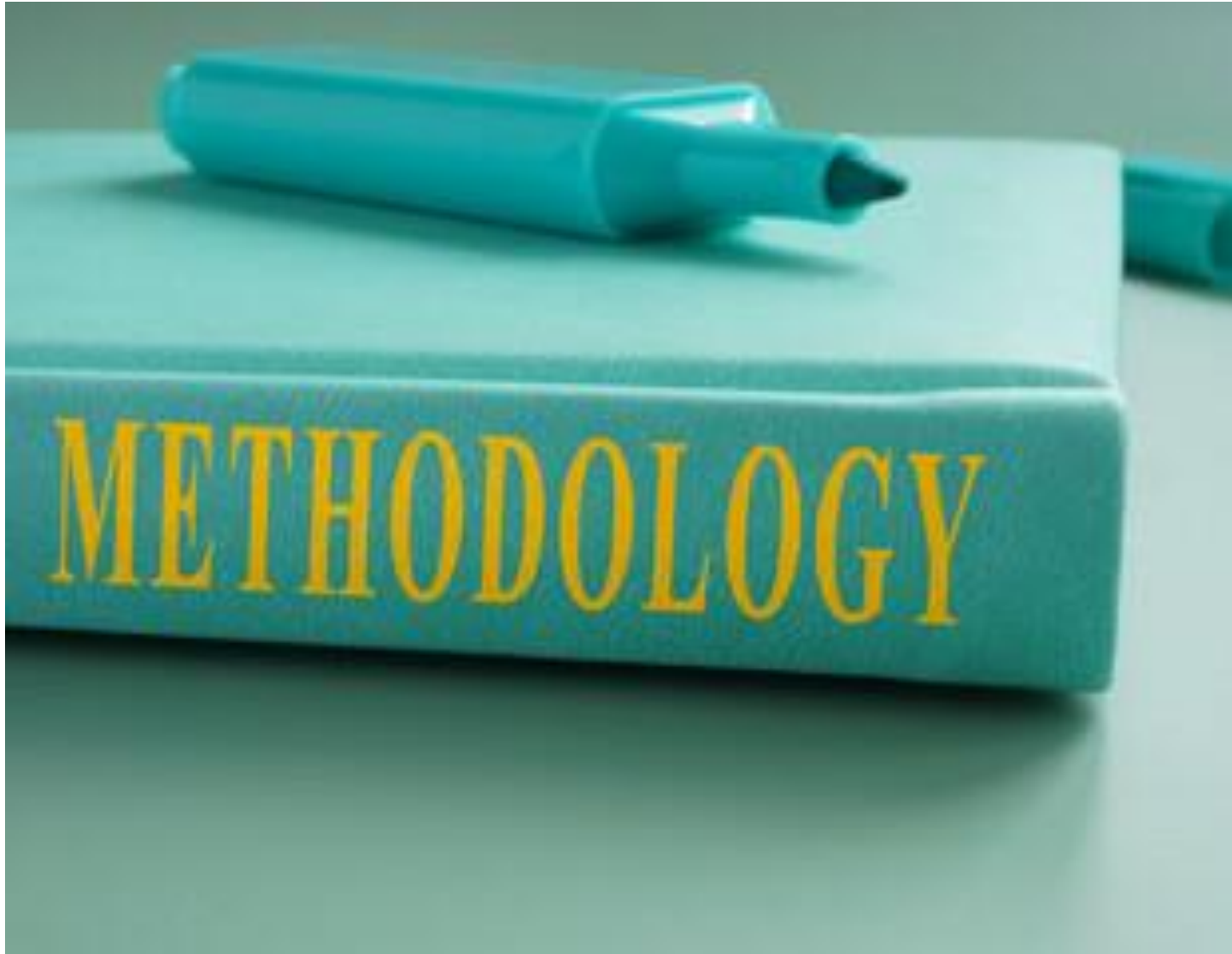




Methodology

Text Based Research

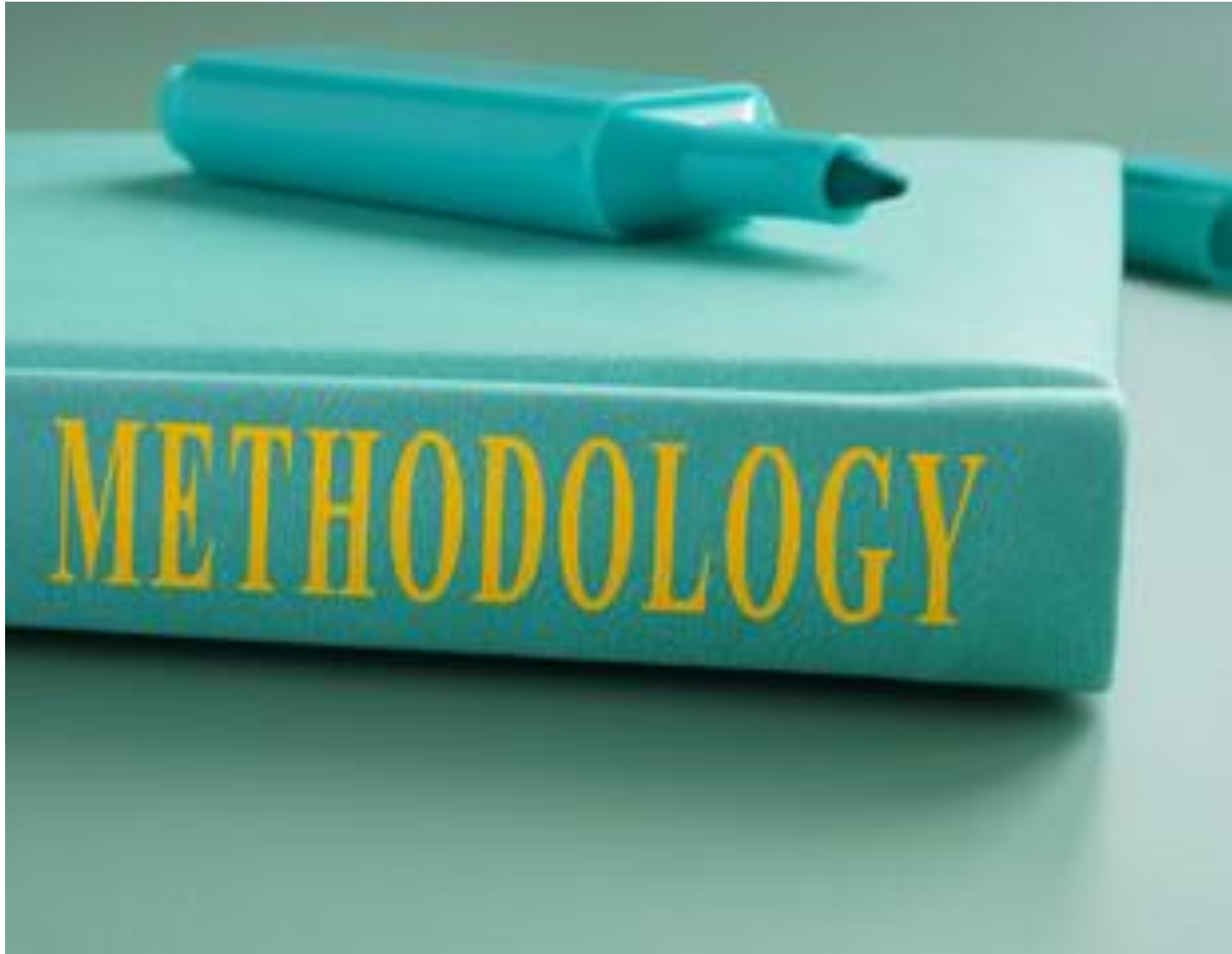
- Where will you find the information?
- What are your primary sources?
- Why are they valid for your question?
- How will you access them?
- What are your secondary sources?



Methodology

Field Work

- How you will get your information
- Identify
 - Which specific methodology will you use?
 - What does the literature say about it?
- Justify
 - Re-visit the aims of the research
 - Why does this methodology suit your topic?



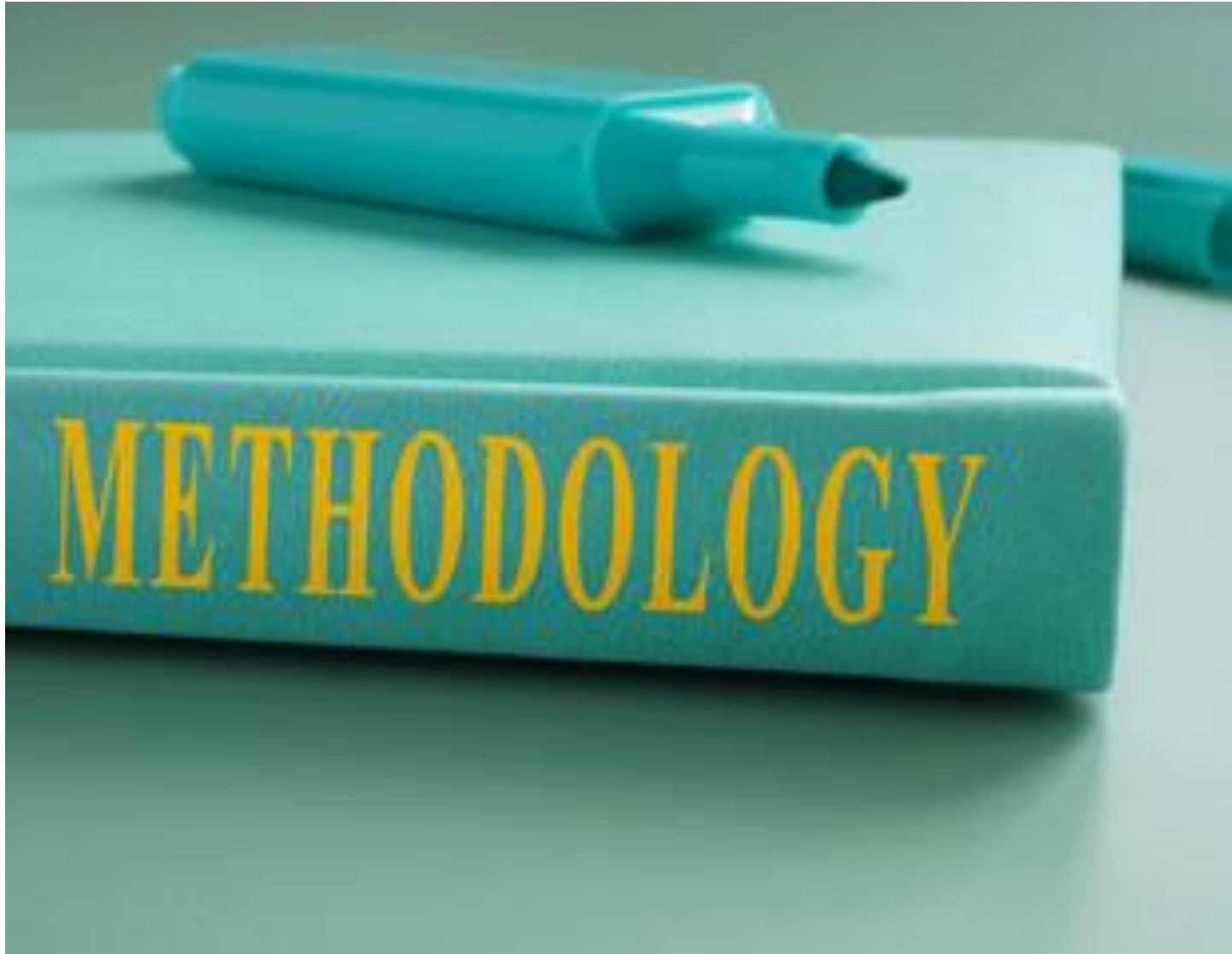
Ethical Issues

Where will the interviews take place?

Can you ensure confidentiality?

Where will you store the data/recordings?

How will you refer to the interviewees in your analysis/findings?



How do astrologers view their relationship with the night sky?

Are you an insider or an outsider?

What are the pros and cons of your emit/etic position?

How will it affect your research?

What is your relationship with the night sky?

How do astrologers view their relationship with the night sky?

Have you access to astrologers?

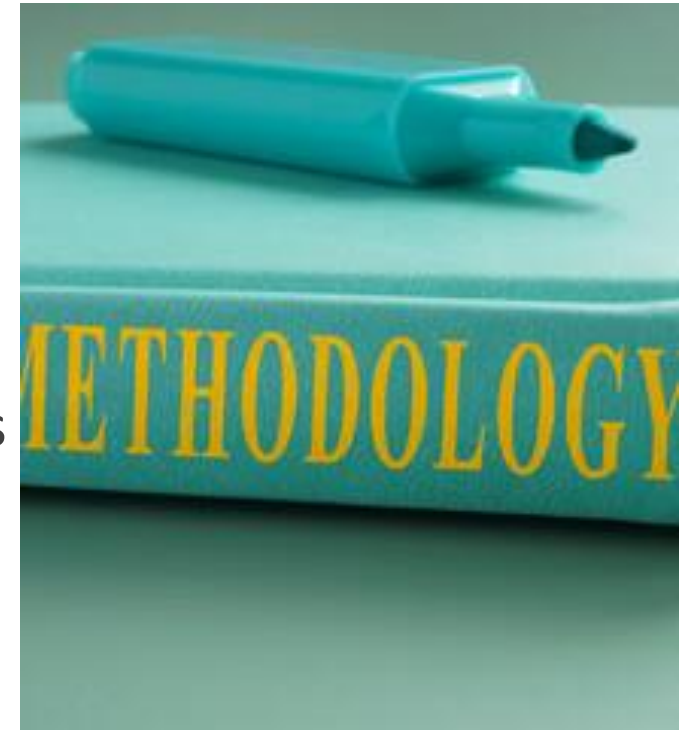
- How many?
- Interviews or questionnaires or both?
- What type of interviews?
- Where will you get your questions?

Will you differentiate between professional astrologers and non-professional astrologers?

Will you take the type of astrology they practice into account?

Will you ask about age/gender/religion?

- If justified by the literature





Analysis/Findings

Report your results

How you intend to analyse them

Refer back to the Literature Review

- Where do your findings agree with the literature?
- Where do they differ?
- Did you find something not in the literature?
 - Go back – you will need to address this in the literature review



Analysis/Findings

Did you find something that you did not expect to find?

Are the results not what you wanted them to be?

You cannot dismiss what does not fit with the dissertation you wanted to write



How do astrologers
view their relationship
with the night sky?

Review of methodology

- Insider/outsider status?



CONCLUSION

Conclusions

No new material

Re-state the question and the aims

Re-state the methodology you used

Summary of your findings in relation to the Literature Review

- Do they agree or not?

What issues arose?



CONCLUSION

Conclusions

What conclusions can you draw from your findings?

- Your conclusions must be based on the evidence of your findings

Future research

Finally – have you clearly answered the initial question?



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Structure of the Document

Components of the Document

Cover Sheet

Title Page

Abstract

Table of Contents

Introduction

Literature Review

Methodology

Findings

Conclusion

Bibliography

Appendices





Postgraduate Dissertation Coversheet & Feedback Form:



For completion by student:

Student Name:

Student University Email:

Module code:

Student ID number:

*Educational
support needs:
Yes/No*

Dissertation title:

Supervisor:

Word count:

I confirm that this is my original work and that I have adhered to the University policy on plagiarism.

Signed

Email submission: if you are submitting this form via email, please tick this box ☐
(as a substitute for your signature) to confirm that you agree to the above declaration.

Cover Sheet

Cover Sheet with Statement of Originality

Declaration that the dissertation is an independent work in which sources of material have been acknowledged.

How do astrologers view their relationship with the night sky?

Nick Champion

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment
of a Master of Arts in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology
University of Wales Trinity Saint David
2022

Title Page

Title of dissertation

Your name

Award

University's name

Date of submission



Abstract

Brief Summary of
Dissertation

Max 1 page

- The aims and objectives
- Academic rationale
- Methodology
- Summary of findings
- Conclusions



THANK YOU!

Acknowledgements

A formal thank you to people who have helped you with the dissertation

- Supervisor
- Interviewees/questionnaire respondents
- Family and friends



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents

List of chapters and/or sections

Sub-sections

Illustrations - numbered

Tables - numbered

Appendices numbered

All of the above with page numbers



Main Text

Introduction

Literature Review

Methodology

Results/Findings

Conclusions



Bibliography

Alphabetical list of sources

All authors referred to or cited in your work must be correctly and fully attributed

A bibliography should contain all the sources mentioned in your text



Appendices

Supplementary material

Appendices should be kept to the minimum

Questionnaires

Interview Questions

Appendices do not form a part of your marked work

HPCA7022 MACAA Dissertation Module Seminars 2022/2023

All seminars are at 4:00 pm UK time, which will shift between GMT to BST. The seminars will be held on a Thursday afternoon in Semester 1 and on Friday afternoon in Semester 2. In each seminar there will be time for discussion and general questions.

	Date	Topic
Seminar 1	Thursday 20 October 2022	Student presentations of their MA thinking Plus skills lecture
Seminar2	Thursday 17 November 2022	Student presentations of their MA thinking Plus skills lecture
Seminar 3	Thursday 15 December 2022	Student presentations of their MA thinking Plus skills lecture
Seminar 4	Friday 17 February 2023	Student presentations of their MA thinking Plus skills lecture
Seminar 5	Friday 31 March 2023	Student presentations of their MA thinking Plus skills lecture
Seminar 6	Friday 12 May 2023	Student presentations of their MA thinking Plus skills lecture
Seminar 7	Friday 9 June 2023	Student presentations of their MA thinking Plus skills lecture

Next Seminar

FRIDAY 17TH
FEBRUARY 2023

4PM GMT

Bibliography

John Biggan, *Succeeding with your Master's Dissertation: A step-by-step handbook*, 2nd Edition
(Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill, Open University Press, 2011)