



DEVELOPING YOUR DISSERTATION

Dr Antje Cockrill, UWTSD, 2017



THIS SESSION

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



WHEN YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A TOPIC

- Is your proposed research likely to make a contribution to knowledge?
 - There has to be an original element, but this could be the context (sector/country) of your study rather than the study itself
- What will you know that was not known before?
- Could your research be used as a basis of a higher degree or for publication or would it be useful for an organisation?



WHEN YOU HAVE DECIDED ON THE GENERAL AREA OF STUDY

- Don't wander too far away in your reading
- Keep asking - "is this relevant?"
- Keep looking for the connecting points in the literature
- Write down questions as they arise during your reading
- Eventually you will need to be ready to focus in on a narrow area of literature

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

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”
- “When will the recession end?”

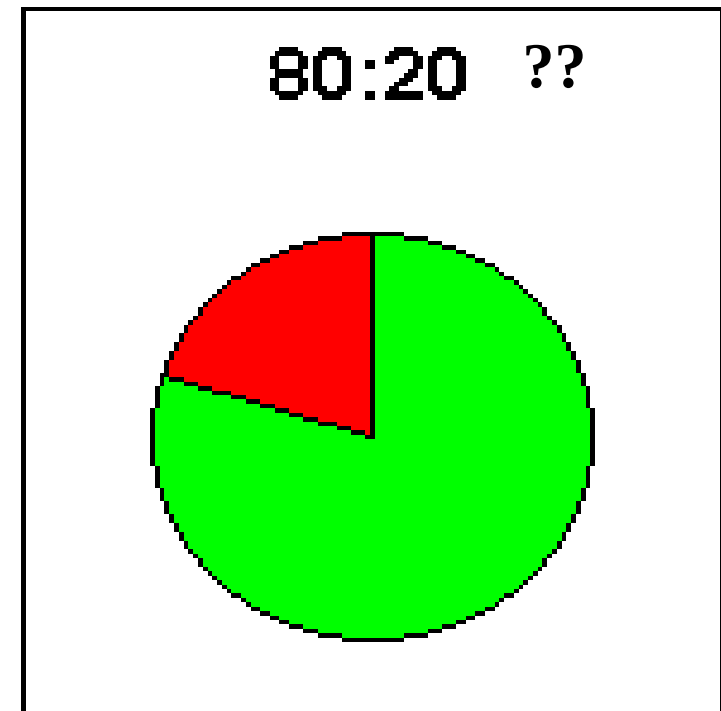
USE A MIND MAP TO ORGANISE YOUR THOUGHTS



<https://uk.pinterest.com/pin/16888567322794439/>

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 underestimated**
- Be creative in developing alliances for data collection

CHECK LIST FOR A GOOD TOPIC

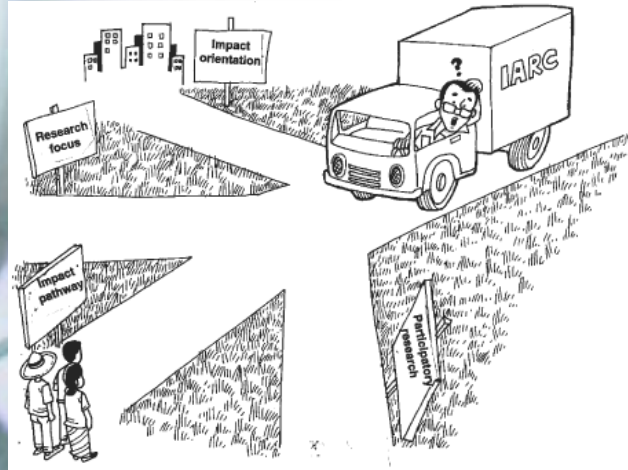
- Be original: What do we know that we didn't know before?
 - and how do we know that we know it?
- But: There is a lot of published material on management topics
- Still lots of opportunities as new topics emerge, e.g. social network media
- Will it interest you for several months?
- Is it a “hot topic”?

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!**

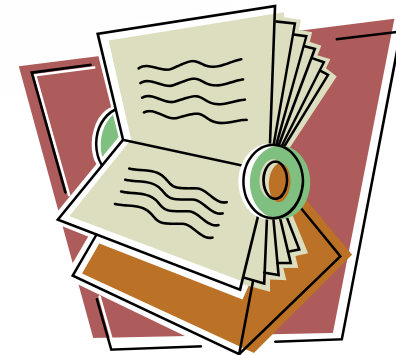
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES



- **Aim.** General statement
- **Objectives.** Specific statements that are evaluated. Should be **SMART**
 - Specific: measurable and convincing
 - Measurable
 - Achievable
 - Realistic
 - Timescale

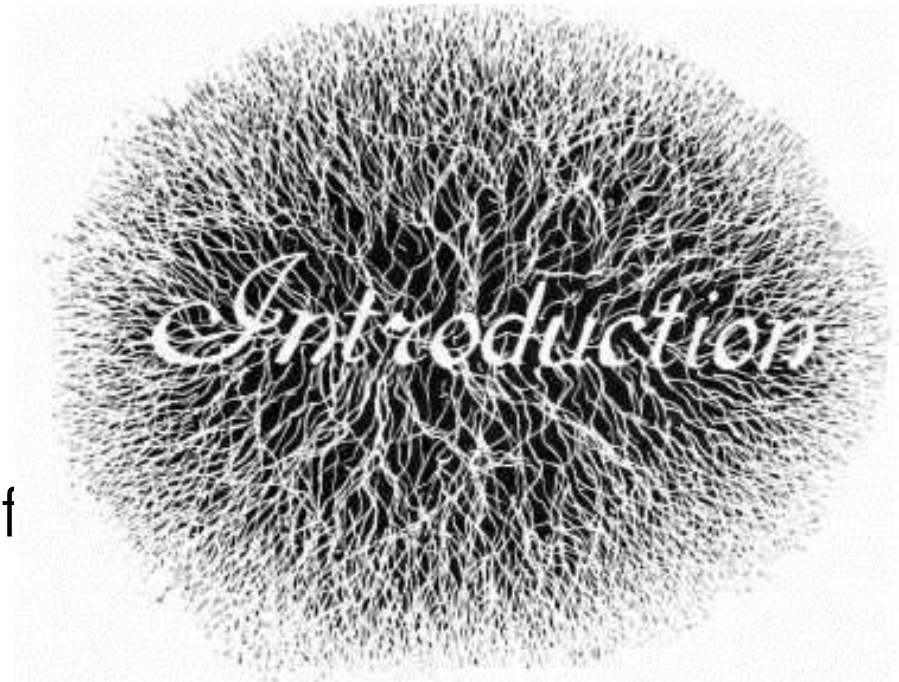
STRUCTURE - INTRODUCTION

- 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



- 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)
- Suggested word length: around 1500 words long

INTRODUCTION



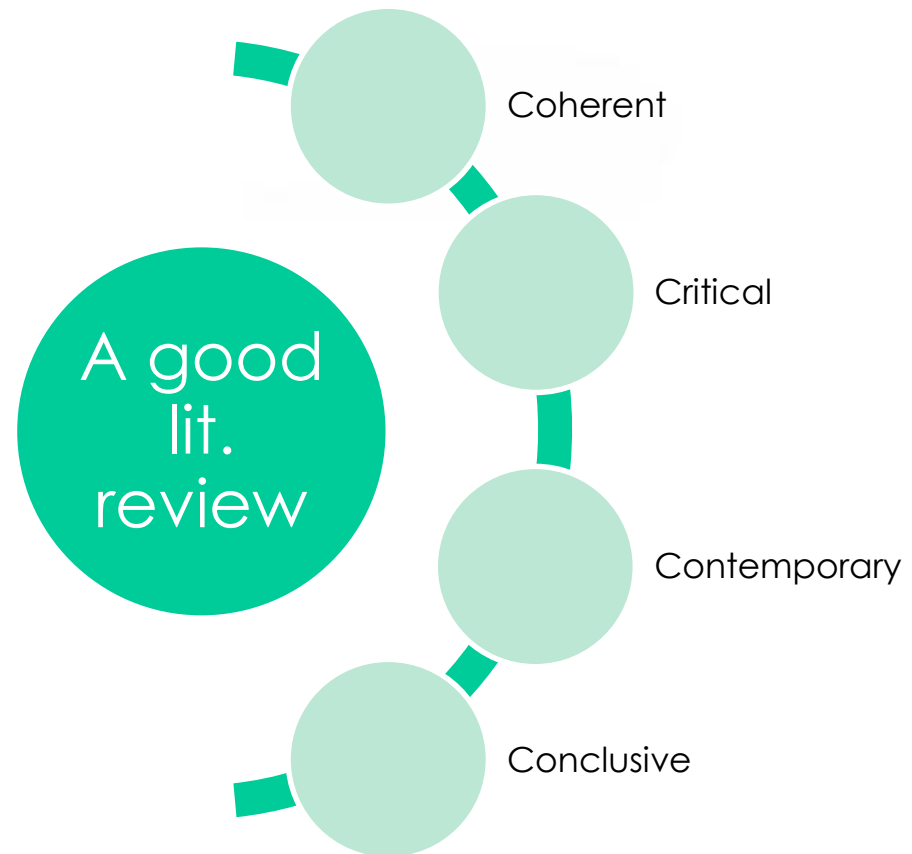
LITERATURE REVIEW

- 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
- 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

- Introduction to chapter
 - Set the scene and link to objectives
- Findings Presents your 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 / 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 hypotheses / 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!**



LINKING CHAPTERS

- Start each chapter with a statement of what the chapter is about e.g..
 - *This chapter surveys the relevant literature. It is divided into four sections. . .*
- In the final paragraph of a chapter: Summarise the main points of the chapter and link them to the following chapter e.g..
 - *This chapter has brought together the main findings . . . And discussed various ways of . . . The evidence suggests . . . The following chapter will address these issues in . . .*

REFERENCING

- Reference, reference and reference!
- Use Harvard referencing

A very user-friendly guide to Harvard referencing can be found here:

[University of South Wales
Harvard Referencing Guide](#)



THE ROLE OF THE SUPERVISOR

- 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.



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?**