



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

How to structure the dissertation

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



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Outline

- Set up a timetable according to your workload
 - update the plan you submitted with your first assignment
- Discuss it with your supervisor

Structure

- There are different ways to structure a dissertation
 - It depends on the discipline, the research methodology, and the research design
 - e.g., if a dissertation is based on data collection from interviews or surveys, you need to add a methodology chapter
 - But if you are discussing literature only, you usually would not need a methodology chapter

Tipps

- Make sure your chapters are linked
 - they should flow nicely from one to the next.
- For instance, one way is to end your background chapter by identifying what we DON'T know about your topic. This leads neatly into the next chapter: your research question and methods.

POTENTIAL STRUCTURE (usually for empirical dissertations)

- **TITLE PAGE**
- **ABSTRACT**
- **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**
- **CONTENTS PAGE (ILLUSTRATIONS, ABBREVIATIONS)**
- **INTRODUCTION**
- **LITERATURE REVIEW**
- **SOURCES AND METHODS**
- **FINDINGS / DISCUSSION**
- **CONCLUSION**
- **REFERENCES**
- **APPENDICES**

Alternative Structure

Abstract	i
List of Figures	ii
List of Tables	iii
List of Plates	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: A review of the evidence	3
Chapter 3: Cwmann: its place on the Silk Cut Route	
12	
Chapter 4: Analysis of the ceramics	22
Chapter 5: Comparisons with the evidence from China	35
Chapter 6: Conclusions:	50
Bibliography	54

TITLE

- TELL THE READER WHAT IT'S ABOUT!
- CATCH THE READER'S ATTENTION
- SNAPPY, SPECIFIC, CLEAR AND ***TRUE TO THE RESEARCH*** YOU HAVE DONE

ABSTRACT

- A STAND-ALONE SUMMARY OF THE WHOLE DISSERTATION
- CAN BE DONE AT THE END, OR AT THE BEGINNING AS AN INITIAL “PLAN”
- IT IS NOT AN INTRODUCTION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- YOUR OSCAR WINNING THANK YOU SPEECH
- By the way, this section is not necessary but you can add it

CONTENTS

- INCLUDE ALL SECTIONS WITH PAGE NUMBERS
- INCLUDE A SEPARATE LIST FOR PHOTOS, TABLES, ILLUSTRATIONS
- INCLUDE A SEPARATE LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/SPECIALIST VOCABULARY

INTRODUCTION

- TO INTRODUCE WHAT'S COMING NEXT!
 - Introduce research topic
 - Explain research questions
 - Outline of dissertation
- AN EXPANSION OF THE ABSTRACT

LITERATURE REVIEW

- PUTTING YOUR RESEARCH INTO CONTEXT
- WHAT IS THE CURRENT RESEARCH IN YOUR AREA?
- WHAT IS/ARE THE CURRENT THEORETICAL APPROACH/ES IN YOUR AREA?
- IS THERE A CONTROVERSY OR GAP?
- HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR RESEARCH WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE EXISTING BODY OF KNOWLEDGE?
- YOU CAN REFER BACK TO THIS SECTION DURING YOUR DISCUSSION
- **Tipp: the chapter is not always called literature review but linked to the topic of the research. Important is that you will need to explain somewhere in the dissertation what scholars have written about your topic.**

METHODOLOGY

- WHAT IS THE SETTING AND WHY DID YOU CHOOSE IT?
 - HOW DID YOU CARRY YOUR RESEARCH OUT (EG. HOW DID YOU CHOOSE PARTICIPANTS)?
 - WHAT STRATEGY DID YOU USE AND WHY?
 - WHAT DESIGN AND TECHNIQUES DID YOU USE TO GATHER DATA?
 - WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THOSE METHODS AND NOT ANOTHER?
 - WHAT ANALYSIS DID YOU USE AND HOW/WHY DID YOU STRUCTURE IT (EG. THEMES, HEADINGS)?
 - LIMITATIONS AND ETHICS
 - SELF-REFLECTION
-
- **Remember – this is not needed in all dissertations**

DATA and DISCUSSION

- REVIEW YOUR DATA WITH THE IDENTIFIED THEMES
- EXPLORE YOUR RESEARCH IN THE WIDER CONTEXT (REFER BACK TO YOUR LITERATURE REVIEW)
- DEVELOP **YOUR** ARGUMENT/CRITICAL ANALYSIS/VIEWPOINT
- YOUR RESEARCH DATA SHOULD RUN THROUGH YOUR DISCUSSION (USE EXAMPLES)
- **BUT: keep in mind that other structures are possible**

CONCLUSION

- NOT JUST A SUMMARY BUT CONCLUDE YOUR ANALYSIS AND THE MAIN POINTS OF YOUR DISCUSSION
- REFER BACK TO YOUR ORIGINAL DISSERTATION QUESTION
- ARE THERE AREAS THAT DESERVE FURTHER RESEARCH?
- ARE THERE GAPS IN YOUR RESEARCH?
- ARE THERE TANGENTS THAT COULD BE EXPLORED FURTHER?
- **Tipp: it is usually good to go back to the introduction after having written the conclusion and check that both fit together.**

How we assess your dissertation

(i) Quality of presentation

- Integration of references, in some cases also maps, diagrams, tables, images
 - Including the quality of reproduction of maps diagrams, photographs
- Proof-reading: check pagination for cross-references, grammar & spelling

How we assess your dissertation

(ii) Originality of the work

- Credit will be given for originality of thought & ideas
- You will need to synthesise earlier work in order to present the background to your project, *but you must take it much further*. Earlier research is just a starting point, a building block for your own research and ideas.

How we assess your dissertation

(iii) Background reading

- You must demonstrate full awareness of appropriate literature. Reference every piece of evidence and every idea that is not your own.
- You should contextualise your dissertation within the framework of earlier studies. Tie it in with what is already known, and **REFERENCE** this work.

How we assess your dissertation

(iv) Research design & methodology

- Appropriate & clearly explained research design and methodology/theoretical stance
- Comment on any problems or limitations you have encountered & how they have affected your work; critique any problematic areas

How we assess your dissertation

(v) Analysis, interpretation & conclusions

- Incisiveness of your analysis & interpretations
- Conclusions: highlight the principal findings & assess these in the context of previous studies
- How might you further develop this study?

Higher marks are awarded for

- Not relying on the obvious
- Being successfully questioning
- Showing evidence of independent inquiry
- All sources accurately referenced
- Good construction

