

Process of writing a dissertation

A dissertation is a self-directed process, it gives you a chance to pursue an area of study in which you are particularly interested. It will result in a sustained personal investigation, analysing aspects of your chosen subject. Writing a dissertation allows you to test your ideas, develop specialised knowledge.

1. **Selecting a topic**

Make sure the topic has a specific focus, rather than encompassing everything that you know about a broad issue. **N.B.:** The topic must be agreed with your supervisor. What interests you? What would you like to know more about? Topics can emerge from something that you have seen or read, or an issue that has been in the back of your mind. Ask:

- Is the question or problem clear? Are the aims and objectives achievable?
- What methods could be used to research it?
- Is there relevant literature available?

2. **Planning**

Sketch the outline of your dissertation. Give working titles to every chapter with some note for each of them. Put a rough word count to each. This will give your work a structure, giving you a clear overview of the argument and its direction. [Plan your time](#) with reference to the overall deadlines for the whole project.

3. **Research**

A dissertation is only as good as the research you carry out. This applies regardless of the type of dissertation you are doing. It is important to plan your research. You might find it helpful to divide the research into smaller sections. Begin by focussing on the literature. You need to identify the key theories and literature. What are the experts saying? If you are carrying out primary research, allow time in your planning for carrying this out. It is worth including additional time for any delays that might occur, such as questionnaires not being returned. Plan your methodology and approach, do your reading around methods, before outlining and writing up.

4. **Writing**

It is important to make sure you write up as you go along. When writing remember to use a formal style. Be consistent, precise and clear in your writing. Make sure you are sticking to the topic. How does each section help you to answer your question?

5. **Developing an argument**

Throughout your dissertation you are expected to be critical in your writing style. While there is a place for description, make sure you have kept this to the minimum. Use the literature to make your argument. Have you identified other points of view, compared them, contrasted and evaluated the evidence available? Ensure you do this in all sections of the dissertation.

6. **Editing and drafting**

Even the best writers continually make changes, you will need to redraft and edit. As the dissertation grows, it is important to go back over past chapters. You will need to review and critique each chapter more than once, ideally leaving some-time between completing and revising. It is also essential to proof-read your dissertation carefully. Give your final version to a friend to read. Look [here](#) for more tips.