



Research Methodology

Step 8: Begin writing your first draft

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Outlines:

- What is a postgraduate dissertation?
- A Generic Dissertation Skeleton
- Writing the Chapters
- Think about Readers

What is a postgraduate dissertation



Dissertation

- Useful contribution to knowledge !
- Readers will ask
 - what is the question here ?
 - is it a good question ?
 - is it adequately answered ?
 - is there a contribution to previous knowledge?

A Generic Dissertation Skeleton



The Generic Dissertation Skeleton

- Abstract
- Introduction
- Literature review
- Methodology
- Design, Presentation & analysis of data
- Conclusions
- References
- Appendices



The Generic Dissertation Skeleton (Cont.)

- Abstract
 - general introduction
 - summary of the question
 - justification for question
 - Birds eye view of the result



The Generic Dissertation Skeleton (Cont.)

- Introduction

- *particularly* if you span two or more traditional areas (dissertations/theses often do)



The Generic Dissertation Skeleton (Cont.)

- Literature review
 - state of the art
 - organised by ideas, not time/author/geography
- The research question (core/foundation)
 - concise statement of question
 - justification, refer closely to review (analysis)
 - explain why question is worthwhile (applicability)
 - Use a short and small analysis and comparison if possible to proof of your question



The Generic Dissertation Skeleton (Cont.)

- Describe the methods/methodology
 - Possibly many sections to some chapters -*balance*
 - Aim to show that question has been *fully* answered
 - *Show relevance of work to solution*
 - *Avoid detailing blind alleys* unless they contribute to showing that question is answered



The Generic Dissertation Skeleton (Cont.)

- Design, Presentation and Analysis
 - Possibly many sections to some chapters - *balance*
 - Aim to show that question has been *fully* answered
 - *Show relevance of work to solution*
 - *Avoid detailing blind alleys* unless they contribute to showing that question is answered



The Generic Dissertation Skeleton (Cont.)

■ Design, Presentation and Analysis (Cont.)

Code, Tabulated Analysis:

- Some dissertations deal with proving ideas by means of program(s) implementation, some on data analyses, others on comparison
- *Sufficient* information supplied to support key findings/check claims.
- Remember the appendices.



The Generic Dissertation Skeleton (Cont.)

- Conclusions, generally in three sections
 - conclusions
 - short concise statements of inferences made as a result of the work done
 - conclusions must be directly related to the research question/problem raised previously
 - summary of contribution
 - examiners will scrutinise this section
 - future research
 - useful to people following in your tracks



The Generic Dissertation Skeleton (Cont.)

■ References

- closely tied to the review done early in the dissertation
- examiners usually check out this section early on and will form preliminary assessment notions early, so pay attention
- references *must appear* in the main body
- use the guidelines published by DCU



The Generic Dissertation Skeleton (Cont.)

- Appendices
 - material which casts light on the work done but which would impede the clear delivery of ideas
 - mathematical proofs unless prime focus
 - program listings
 - huge tables of data



Think about Readers



Think for Readers

- Make *no unreasonable assumptions* about your audience
- ***Examiners hate to be made to work hard on trivia***
 - to understand poorly named sections, organise ideas themselves from your work and wade through bad grammar

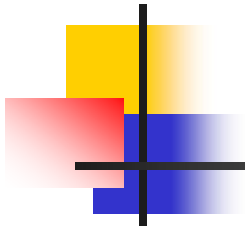
Methodology:

Using the generic dissertation skeleton and following the academic writing techniques



Next Session :

Step 9: Prepare your final draft



*"There is no way to get
experience except
through experience."*