The Wednesday Workshop – Dissertation Skills for MA and MSc Students: Writing Up Your Research

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This workshop will:

- Examine writing activities, such as the processes of planning, structuring, drafting and editing when handling extended pieces of academic writing
- Explore best practice in using contents, chapters, sections and appendices as structural devices
- Look at different ideas for presenting basic data
- Offer tips and hints on structure, academic style, citation and referencing.

Teaching points:

- Brief overview of parts of successful dissertation
- Benefits of planning an extended piece of writing
- Structure of a dissertation
  - Macro:
    - Models
    - Chapter content
    - Plan or map of content
    - Organising your notes
  - Micro:
    - Heading and sub-headings of chapters and sections
- Critical Analysis
- How to synthesise in your writing
- Presenting data
- Editing
- Drafting
What makes a ‘good’ dissertation? A firm intellectual grasp of your topic coupled with coherence are the defining features. We will look at coherence in depth as this relates to organisation and structure. So, in detail, your dissertation should...

- Display coherence of structure (e.g., the conclusions follow clearly from the data)
- Skilfully organise a number of different angles (required by the extended length of the work)
- Be cogently organised and expressed
- Possess a definite agenda and an explicit structure
- Present a sense of your learning as a journey, as a structured, incremental progress through a process of both argument and discovery

**Planning** is a process: it is the process by which you transform...

- The demands of the topic
- The ideas of other writers
- Your own thoughts

……..into your own original argument.

**Activity** Suggestions at the end
In a pair, note down below the negatives of not planning and the benefits of planning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negatives</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Activity**
With a neighbour or in a group, fill in what you think the gaps of the process of planning and writing are. At what point in the process are you WRITING?
Structure

You want your marker to walk with you through your research process journey, picking up the golden nuggets you have carefully placed along the way to the conclusive pot of gold. A strong and simple logical structure showing your line of reasoning will do this. There are two aspects to structure – macro-structure relating to the dissertation as a whole and the organisation of your notes, and micro-structure which concerns itself with the internal structure of chapters, sections, paragraphs and even further.

Macro-structure

It is important to be clear about the structure of your dissertation, to ensure that your ideas are clearly and logically presented to your reader, so that your research process with its supporting evidence, can be followed. A dissertation more or less follows the order you considered or carried out elements of your research. However, due to the requirements of various disciplines and courses, there are a number of different dissertation structures.

There are three common structures to extended pieces of writing:

- The ‘focus down’ model
- The ‘opening out’ model
- The ‘compromise’ model

The ‘focus down’ model is very popular within the social sciences and humanities disciplines which adopt both primary and secondary analysis research projects.
It starts with a very broad literature review that progressively gets winnowed down as it goes on to eventually finish with texts that are ‘closest’ to the researcher’s topic. A study of methodology and methods comes next followed by the results’ section. Finally, the data is analysed.

The ‘opening up’ model is used widely in other sciences which tend to adopt primary analysis research projects.

This model starts with a short section which is very focused on the immediate issues to be tackled. The largest element comes next which provides the key research findings and results, followed by the second biggest section on applied analyses which tracks back and forth between across what has been found out, and connects it with previous research and literature. Finally, the thesis ‘opens’ out into a discussion of the wider themes and theoretical implications arising from the research.
The ‘compromise’ model combines the two methods as is successful in humanities and social sciences which adopt both primary and secondary analysis research projects.

Your literature review should be framed around your central research question focusing on materials readers ‘need to know’ to appreciate your research contribution and no more.

Your methodology and choice of methods comes next taking up about the same space as the literature review. Keep it focused though, including only relevant information to your research. This ensures your reader does not have to wade through over half of your dissertation before getting to the key element of your research, but does have the appropriate coverage of your theoretical stance and themes.

Let’s look at what goes into each section of your dissertation

**Activity**

Fill in the column titled ‘content of sections’ with what you would expect to include in a dissertation. Answers at the end

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Chronology</th>
<th>Content of sections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction (Chapter 1)</td>
<td>Represents your initial thoughts and ideas of topic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review (Chapter 2)</td>
<td>Reading to inform your methodological stance and choice of research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology (Chapter 3)</td>
<td>Why and how you carried out your research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results/Findings (Chapter 4)</td>
<td>What you came up with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis/Discussion (Chapter 4 or Chapter 5)</td>
<td>Your interpretation of results</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion (Chapter 5 or Chapter 6)</td>
<td>Your opinion on the significance of results</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations (Chapter 6 or Chapter 7)</td>
<td>What you think could be done next</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This structure can vary, for instance Analysis and Discussion maybe split into two or not appear at all. When the research is based on quantitative data, it may be more appropriate to present the numerical results in the ‘Findings’ chapter, followed by a ‘Discussion’ chapter. In qualitative research, it is more to common to present findings and discussion in one chapter.

You may well have a different structural requirement for your dissertation. Please outline your structure below, highlighting any differences between it and the one above.

Don’t forget to check with your school, tutor or programme handbook about a preferred structure.

Due to the different disciplines and courses at the University, dissertation lengths vary from 6,000 words all the way up to 15,000. It can help to allocate an approximate word count to each chapter and/or section of your dissertation.

Based on the structure provided, which chapters would be the longest and therefore have highest word count?

Use the example below as a guide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Word count – Total 100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Negligible amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>Negligible amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>As instructed by tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction (Chapter 1)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review (Chapter 2)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology (Chapter 3)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results/Findings (Chapter 4)</td>
<td>5-15% depending on whether qualitative/quantitative Includes all graphs, charts, tables, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis/Discussion (Chapter 4 or Chapter 5)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion (Chapter 5 or Chapter 6)</td>
<td>5-10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Chapter 6 or Chapter 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References/Bibliography</th>
<th>Is not included in your word count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>Check with your tutor but not normally included in your word count</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Make sure that you also have in front of you a copy of the specific marking criteria for your dissertation. **If you cannot find these criteria, ask your tutors!**

Just as you don’t read journal articles front to back so readers may not read your dissertation in this way. A contents page provides readers with an overview of your research and argument, and a map by which to pinpoint the different parts of your dissertation.

Make it easy to read with plenty of ‘white space’ so readers clearly see the items listed clearly

A rough draft contents page is also useful for your planning and orientation to see how you have organised your material down to the sub-section level. You can amend it as you see fit as this will not be included in your final draft.

There is no need to clutter your dissertation with, for example, tables containing mounds of data results, questionnaires, your observation notes, or other irrelevant information to the main thrust of your research process. Place materials that...

- are essential for enabling the reader to follow your methods or make sense of your analyses
- have been mentioned in your dissertation

...in the appendix. Include instructions or materials given to participants, datasets, tables and graphs, and number them exactly as you have in your work.

Good structuring is also about engaging with your notes not just writing them out. It’s about how you physically organise your notes: will you use a mind or concept map, diagrams, flow charts, a computer or pieces of paper on a board?

An excellent tool which is available on all University computers is MindGenius 3. It is useful both for planning and structuring, and creates connections between sections or elements of processes and assignments. There are a number of different organisational formats for you to choose from.
The pathway is:

Click on Start icon; All Programmes; Productivity Software; MindGenius 3

Activity

Read the example assignment question below and, with a neighbour, create a plan or map of the main elements you may wish to discuss in the main body of the essay. Look for key words and think around those words. Suggestions are at the end.

Examine the sociological evidence of stereotypes of social groups in the mass media. What are the causes of stereotyping in the mass media and to what extent do they influence social attitudes?

Micro-structure

Good structuring isn't just about placing the right sections in the right order – it's also about structuring the individual chapters and sections to ensure your reader can follow your reasoning easily. Don’t forget, you want them to find the nuggets and the gold!

Headings and subheadings act as signposts to the reader about the theme or topic that is coming up. Consistency is the key so readers are aware whether a major section or sub-section is coming up.

- Whatever structural scheme of headings, apply it to every chapter so your reader doesn't have to learn a new layout each time.
- Make sure the sections are similarly sized which reflects the (same) importance you give to each section generating an expectation in the reader of the length of each future section.

Each main section will have a ‘first order’ heading, because they are the top organizers, the ones including most text within each chapter. You can show their importance by:

- Numbering them (for instance, 3.1, 3.2, etc.)
- Using a large font size to make them stand out
- Locating them prominently (for instance, having no other text on a line and centring the heading)

You also need to signal sub-sections using ‘second order’ headings, and again there are methods of revealing their secondary importance to a main section:
Using a font smaller than a ‘first order’ heading but larger than the main text
- Locating them less conspicuously (for instance, on an otherwise blank line, but placed at the left-hand margin)

Example

Chapter title:

3. Theoretical perspectives of students engaging with support services at Universities

Main section using first order heading:

3.1 Bourdieu’s theory of class distinction

Sub-section using second order heading:

Key terms: habitus, field and capital

As you are at the writing stage, you will have completed your critical analysis of the question (whether it is your research question or not), of the sources, and will continue to analyse your own work using the same methods (see the activity later). However, you may find transferring that critical analytical work onto paper difficult, in which case use...

http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/critical.htm

This is a fantastic website that provides phrases you can use in your written work to:

- Introduce questions, problems and limitations (theory and method/practice)
- Identify a study's weakness
- Offer constructive suggestions
- Use evaluative adjectives to comment on research
- Highlight inadequacies of previous studies
- Introduce general criticism
- Introduce the critical stance of particular writers

What is synthesis? It is the process of combining elements of several sources to help you make a point. It is not just simple reporting, it’s more about interpretation.

For example:
You have been out to see a film with four friends but one couldn’t go with you. You see this friend the following day and tell them all about your evening. You are engaging in synthesis; creating harmony amongst the chaos of all the things that happened on your night out so your absent friend understands what went on.

You do the same with your sources when synthesising them in your assignment.
So as you can see, it’s not just about writing a series of summaries because you would end up repeating yourself. It’s about digesting and re-arranging the information you have gleaned from your sources. It is about your thesis/point with the sources supporting it.

Tip - Make a list of complete sentences making a supporting point to you main point. Use each of these as your introductory topic sentence to a separate paragraph. In this way you will create a logical flow to your dissertation.

Key Features of Synthesis

- Accurately reports information from the sources using a full arsenal of varying phrases and sentences.
- Organized in such a way that readers (audience) can immediately see where the information from the sources overlap.
- Makes sense of the sources and helps the reader (audience) understand them in greater depth.

Activity Answer at the end

Read the following paragraph and suggest why it is a ‘good’ paragraph using synthesis.

In the past, opponents of immigration raised economic, racial, religious, and nationalistic objections or questions about large-scale immigration to the United States (Jones 247-305). Today, however, experts tell us that opposition to immigration is expressed almost exclusively in economic terms. For example, Dan Lacy, a workplace consultant, business journalist, and editor, found that "research of immigration attitudes" shows that the fear that some Americans have of losing their jobs to immigrants is the main reason for opposition to immigration today (41). In the same economic vein, Thomas Muller, an economist with the Urban Institute, points out the widespread concern among Americans that the new immigrants use welfare and other public-aid programs to such an extent that they are a "financial burden" on government and, therefore, a financial burden on taxpayers (125-127). With these two reasons expressly conveyed, it is easy to see that most objections to immigration now fall under the economic realm.

Reasons it is a ‘good’ paragraph:

Presenting basic data

The essential principle for selecting and presenting all forms of detailed evidence effectively is the 'need to know' criterion: 'what will my readers need to see or need to know in order to accept the conclusions of my analysis?'

- Use charts or graphs to represent numerical data making information more accessible, but add textual representation of this information also.
Using visual representations of complex causations or interactions make things clearer and more accessible.

Tables, charts, graphs, etc. need to be independently intelligible to help readers make quick evaluations.

Ensure each visual is clearly labelled with appropriate keys and brief source details.

There are many different ways of representing data; a small number of the basic methods are shown below...

**Tables:** communicate precise numerical information.

**Activity**

Which of the following is the better table and why?

Table 7.1 How health boards compare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Boards</th>
<th>Treatment rates per 100,000 people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Border</td>
<td>723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayrshire and Arran</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argyll and Clyde</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumfries and Galloway</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forth Valley</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grampian</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fife</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean Treatment Rate</strong></td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median</strong></td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The range is 494
Source: National Audit Office, 1999

Reasons for whichever one is better than the other:
Charts and graphs

If you can display data in chart form rather than in tables, it is desirable to do so. They are easier for you to analyse correctly and for readers to interpret. Charts are especially important to:

- show the relative importance of different components or phenomena
- give trends over time and rates of growth
- illustrate more complex patterns in data than just linear relationships

Types of charts and graphs and when to use them:

a) Vertical bar chart

Use a vertical bar chart when you have simple over-time data that are not really continuous, but cover discrete time periods; or when you have other appropriate comparative data where the labels for each bar are short enough to fit underneath it.

Do not use a vertical bar chart if the bars in the chart have long data labels.

Put numbers inside columns, not on top of them, if data not chronological or in categories with a fixed order, aim to achieve a numerical progression.

b) Horizontal bar chart

Use a horizontal bar chart whenever you have comparative data where the labels for each bar are too long to fit underneath columns easily.

Do not use a horizontal bar chart if readers will expect to see columns.
Put numbers inside columns, not outside their right-end, and aim to achieve a numerical progression in almost all cases (unless data is in categories with a fixed order or is chronological).

![Favorite Graphs]

**c) Pie chart**

Use a pie chart whenever you want to show the shares of something or percentages.

Don't use a pie chart if data is over-time or more complex.

Put the pie slices into a descending numerical progression (unless data is in categories with a fixed order or is chronological), start with the largest slice at the top and arrange slices in declining order going clockwise, and label each slice and show the percentage share as a number inside or outside it.

![Countries by Area]

**d) Line graph**

Use a line graph whenever you have continuous over-time data.

Don't use line graphs if the data are over-time but are not really continuous, and you have very few observations (use a vertical bar chart).

If you have more than one line, make sure that they are both visible.

![Figure 5. Cell phone use in Anytowne, 1996 to 2002]

**Drafting, redrafting, revising, editing and proofreading** take a long time – do allow for this, as writing your dissertation all in one go is unnecessary and difficult.
Closely related activities — aim is to identify problems and allow you to improve overall quality.

- Drafting = writing a first version to be edited later.
- Editing = revising and adapting an earlier version against quality markers & the brief/the question.
- Redrafting = it’s unlikely that your best work will ‘flow out’ onto the page the first time - once the original has been edited it is written up again.
- Proofing = once content and composition are as good as they can be, it is about making sure that the work is ‘technically’ accurate.

Activity

Reduce the following....

Example 1: by half

The dollar has been declining in value against the euro over the last six years, hurting travellers to Europe and American consumers purchasing European goods. The strengthening euro has not had the expected beneficial impact in Europe, as trade with North America has shown a downward trajectory as a result.

Example 2: by over two thirds

The public’s knowledge of health is poor and more government funding for health education is needed. Increase sums of money should be spent on courses to make people aware of personal health issues. People don’t always know what then can do to take care of their health, so further investment is needed in training on health issues. Throughout the research process to help with your final writing, and generally save time and effort, it’s a good idea to....

✓ Keep notes of sources, methods, results and data
✓ Talk and think through drafts of chapters
Write up chapters/sections of your dissertation once you feel you have dealt with it, e.g. your literature review or methodology.

Altering your work in light of comments from your supervisors/s.

....to make it easier for yourself, write sections up as you go along.

When you have written something relating to your dissertation, always put it aside for a few of days. In other words 'sleep on it'. Then reread with a critical eye. Try to put yourself in the position of someone who is interested in your topic but knows nothing about it. Would it make sense to him or her? Have you used the best words to express the points you are seeking to make? Where does what you have written fit into the dissertation as a whole? Will the joins show? In considering these and similar questions you will often be surprised at the changes you decide to make in the interests of enhanced clarity and greater variety and elegance in the language used. The Three Rs of competent writing are revise, revise, revise. This is especially important with a substantial piece of work like a dissertation.

There are two suggested checklist formats for editing and proofing which are:

**Process-driven:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim/purpose</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Structure/organisation</th>
<th>Language-style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Am I still clear that my purposes were in this assignment?</td>
<td>Is it clear what main points I am expressing in each paragraph? Have all sources of material been cited and referenced? Have I used examples when appropriate? Are my facts correct and up to date?</td>
<td>Will the structure of my essay be clear to the reader? Have you defined any key terms in the introduction? Have you made explicit connections between your introduction and conclusion? Do I make links between one paragraph or section and the next?</td>
<td>Have I checked for obvious mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar? Does the language express your arguments with appropriate force and conviction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is my topic clearly stated?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is the document written in an appropriate style, e.g. in the third-person; objective language?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a clear central argument or point of view in the assignment?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is the length and number of sentences in each paragraph suitably varied?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I feel I have achieved the assignment aim or purpose?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Have you expressed your argument in language which is as clear and concise as possible?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could I sum up my central position or point of view in the assignment in a sentence or two?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Does the essay read smoothly and easily? (If in doubt, try reading it aloud.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have I really answered the question/engaged with the set task?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hierarchically driven**
There is always a tension in writing in an academic style: you need to make your work is accessible whilst still being appropriately academic, and ensure it is 'contentful' without being too dense. Have a look at the table below which summarises these tensions and can improve or worsen the accessibility of your text:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors generally increasing the accessibility of your text</th>
<th>Factors which initially improve your text, but may impede accessibility if taken too far</th>
<th>Factors generally worsening the accessibility of your text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Structural considerations (sufficient organizers, well-developed framework)</td>
<td>- Push for parsimonious phrasing ('less is more' becoming too dense and formal with no 'flavouring')</td>
<td>- Professional authenticity (using unnecessary jargon, over-complex vocabulary and grammar construction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Logical and developmental pressures (chaining text for ease of understanding using paragraphs and sentences)</td>
<td>- ‘Say it once and say it right’ (develops into a lack of ‘warm-up’ links needed to grasp wider pattern of argument)</td>
<td>- Reproducing the feel of an original text (as above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Readability (understandable language and simple grammatical forms)</td>
<td>- Maximizing originality (can lead to using concepts or terminology which are not needed, or writing over-dense text; and writing in ‘equations’, ie x with y leads to z)</td>
<td>- Cramming in substantive content (too much detail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Managing readers’ expectations (‘need to know’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paragraphs are the stepping stones for your reader to move along your argument’s line of reasoning. Paragraphs have a set structure with each paragraph making a separate point. Each paragraph has its own structure; the one below has everything you need to make your point clear.
You will have noticed that **a line of reasoning** is mentioned. This means that your paragraphs can't just go in any order, but must be laid out in a logical order to build and reveal your given argument. Stay focused and don't ramble.

To make it easy for the reader, your introduction will include an overview of the original argument and your argument.

**Tips for citing and referencing**

**Citations:**

1 A citation is a **signal** to a reader that you are either quoting or paraphrasing original work from another writer/s. Readers will see the citation 'signal' and be able to look in your reference list for the additional information required to trace the source of the original material in your written work.

2 You **must** use a citation when...
   - Using quotations, statistics (or other data), photographs or graphics that are the result of work by another person that you use in assignments should always be referenced.
   - Using information from a websites. [If no named writer, author or editor is shown, you should cite and reference the name of the website, e.g. (ED Bites 2007)].
   - Providing a paraphrase which may be exclusively your own words or include short length quotation/s
3 You do not have to use a citation if....

- Summarising in your own words within a conclusion *provided* you included appropriate references in the main body of your written work

And....

- ‘Common knowledge’ does not need to be referenced. General public awareness of undisputed facts can also be treated as common knowledge. However, the sources for any contested or contentious discussion of the same events would need to referenced.

4 The citations should appear at an **appropriate point** (often following) the use of the source in your writing, so that the writer can easily see where and how the source has been utilised.

**Referencing**

There are two main methods of academic referencing, and you will no doubt have encountered both during your reading.

**The Numeric system**

In the numeric system, each source to which you refer is *followed* by a number (starting at 1) enclosed in brackets. So, if the first author you mention is Baker, and the second Jones, Baker would be (1) and Jones (2). For example:

'Baker (1) has suggested that government intervention in the economy limits productivity. However, an alternative view has been advanced by Jones (2).'

If you need to make your references more specific, you can add page number(s), as in the following:

'Baker’s argument (1: 25) that intervention hinders economic growth is addressed in detail by Jones (2: 45-65).'</n

Although you may refer to the same source repeatedly throughout an assignment, you only use a single number when referring to it.

Each number refers to a full bibliographic reference of the source in the list of references at the end of the document (references may also appear at the foot of each page). These references are listed in the numerical order in which they appear in the text, **not** alphabetically.

References should take the following form:

- Author’s or editor’s last or family name
- Author’s or editor’s initials
- Title (in *italics*)
- Volume or edition number (if applicable)
- Place of publication
- Publisher
• Year of publication

For example:


**Note:** if you are unsure of place of publication, just put the publisher.

The Harvard System

This system of referencing is the one in most common usage. It too involves reference both in the text and at the end of the document.

The Harvard system involves inserting the last or family name of a source’s author and its year of publication into the text. This insertion is known as a citation, and can be done in either of two ways, as in the following:

‘In a recent study (Smith 1996) the solution was shown to be...’

OR

‘In a recent study Smith (1996) argued that...’

Again, if you need to make your references more specific, you can add page number(s):

‘A recent study (Smith 1996, p.51) found that 10% of people had experienced...’

OR

‘A recent study by Smith (1996, p.51) found that 45% of people disliked...’

**Note:** If there are two authors, both of their names must be cited; for example, ‘Davison and Grimes (1976)’ or ‘(Davison & Grimes 1976)’. However, if there are more than two authors, only the first need be cited, followed by ‘et al.’, which means ‘and others’. Remember, though, that all the authors need to be included in the bibliographic reference.

References

Each citation refers to a full bibliographic reference of the source in the list of References at the end of the document. These references are listed alphabetically in order of authors’ first or family names.

**Note:** your list of References should contain only those sources to which you have specifically referred during the course of your work, whereas your Bibliography should list all the books and other sources with which you have engaged during your research, whether you have mentioned them specifically or not. A list of references should be included at the end of any piece of academic work, whilst an additional bibliography is only required in lengthy pieces, such as substantial reports and theses.

References (in both reference lists and bibliographies) should take the following form:
For example:


**Note:** again, if you are uncertain of the place of publication, just put the publisher.

****It may be that your academic department, school or faculty requires that you use a particular system of referencing, but it is worth remembering that otherwise it is not really important which system you choose, but rather that you use one system consistently.

**Plagiarism Activity**

Look at the scenarios below and decide whether or not the situation described amounts to plagiarism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is this plagiarism?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. You see a quotation in a book and copy it word for word into your assignment without citing the source.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. You see a quotation in a book and copy some of it into your assignment, adding other words of your own. Again, you don’t cite the source.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. You see an interesting summary of different approaches to a subject on an internet website. No author’s name is shown. You don’t copy and paste, but paraphrase in your own words the summary into your assignment. You don’t mention the website source in your assignment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. You are part of a study group of four or five and you all discuss an assignment. You all agree on the approach and arguments you will use in the assignment. One of the students, with a little help from another, writes it. All the members of the group submit the assignment individually.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. You want to give a historical overview of something that has happened over a long period, for example, an employment trend. You read three or four general textbooks on the subject. They all say much the same thing, so you summarise in your own words and don’t cite the sources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. You and your friend are on the same degree course. You both have to write a dissertation and submit it as individual work. You both discuss your dissertations’ topics, which are different although your research methods are the same, and you help your friend gain a better understanding of their subject. Your</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.bradford.ac.uk/academic-skills
friend is grateful and writes their dissertation. You copy the methodology section, although you add additional comments and change the wording here and there.

Avoid plagiarism by referencing your sources. You should reference all evidence including:

- The source of all statistics from external sources used in your report
- The source of all quotations used
- The source of specialist knowledge you have paraphrased or summarised
- The source of any definitions quoted or paraphrased
- The source of any previous external research summarised
- The source of any theory, model, idea, or working practice that you refer to in your text.

And finally….a blank checklist is on a handout for you to use to ensure you have covered all elements to completing a successful dissertation.

References

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Charts and drafts via Google Images

With thanks to the LDU and Jennifer Rowland of the Library.

**Answers**

**Benefits to planning**

Stages to planning and writing process
1. Analysis: work out what the question or task is asking you as this will help you to decide your stance. It will also help with your research and outline plan for the assignment. Is it descriptive or analytical? What are the key words?
2. Your notes: remind yourself of the subject using your lecture notes and any other class handouts or information. Do you have any gaps in your knowledge or understanding?
3. Research: will fill the gaps, and provide ideas and evidence to support your argument.
5. Key points: what is your bank of notes telling you are the important and significant points to cover?
6. Map/plan: put together a tentative outline of the main sections and order of your assignment. You can always amend it later.
7. Write you first draft: more ideas may come from writing so....
8. Revise and edit: to ensure your subject matter is relevant to the question/task and the order makes sense. Do a ‘reverse outline’ by making short notes by the side of each paragraph or section and check you are answering the question and it flows well from one subject to the next.
9. Proofread: check your format, spelling, grammar, and punctuation as it is easy to lose marks here.

**Dissertation/s content**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Chronology</th>
<th>Content of sections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Page/s listing dissertation section page numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Summary of dissertation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Represents your initial thoughts and ideas of topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chapter 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sets the scene: introduces the question/problem, and explains purpose and focus of dissertation provides background information, e.g. on previous work in the area, and on research gaps. provides definitions of key term(s). outlines in summary form how topic dealt with, and the various stagestaken before reaching Conclusion. may state why the topic is relevant to you, e.g. in relation to your professional context.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Literature Review (Chapter 2)

**Reading to inform your methodological stance and choice of research**

Examination of existing academic literature to:
- place the proposed or current work within the stream of academic development and history, and/or discover the strengths and weakness in the literature
- uncovering gaps which may justify significance of the current work

### Methodology (Chapter 3)

**Why and how you carried out your research**

Theoretical underpinnings for choice of research approach, and methods (tools or procedures) used.

Plus...
- ethical considerations
- recruitment of participants: why chosen and how get them to participate
- data collection procedures: how questionnaire to be administered; conduct your interviews or observations
- data analysis: how analyse your data (statistical procedures, content analysis, discourse analysis, etc).

### Results/Findings (Chapter 4)

**What you came up with**

Answer research question/s by presenting and discussing your results.

### Analysis/Discussion (Chapter 4 or Chapter 5)

**Your interpretation of results**

Should link to Literature Review and Methodology, as relating own findings to results of previous research, and to way it was conducted.

### Conclusion (Chapter 5 or Chapter 6)

**Your opinion on the significance of results**

In addition to a summary of your research:, the limitations of your research
- implications of findings – your contribution to knowledge

### Recommendations (Chapter 6 or Chapter 7)

**What you think could be done next**

Recommendations of possible action to be taken and suggestions for future research

### References/Bibliography

n/a

Complete list of all sources both cited and read but not cited

### Appendices

n/a

Examples from your data, e.g questionnaire used or extracts from interview transcripts.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Meeting Contemporary Audience Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One (Intro and 2 sections)</td>
<td>Disarming Conservative Criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two (Intro and 1 section)</td>
<td>Big Brother as a Result of Ever-changing Social Values, and Facilitating Contemporary Living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three (Intro and 1 section)</td>
<td>Interactivity and the Utilisation of Advances in Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four (Intro and 2 sections)</td>
<td>A Democratic Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five (Intro and 3 sections)</td>
<td>The Private Becoming Public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### References/Bibliography

n/a

Complete list of all sources both cited and read but not cited

### Appendices

n/a

Examples from your data, e.g questionnaire used or extracts from interview transcripts.
The Reflection of an Audience Fixated With Voyeurism, and Self-disclosure

Structure of assignment plan – what to include in your plan
Definition of a stereotype?
What are the different kinds of stereotypes?
- Race
- Culture
- Nation
- Class
- Sexual orientation
- Gender
Do they intersect?
Define what is meant by mass media?
- Press
- TV
- Radio
- Online
How are these stereotypes represented in mass media?
- Situation comedies
Evidence of influencing social attitudes?

Synthesis paragraph

- Notice the "experts tell us" phrase that tells us that the author is combining the ideas of experts about "opposition to immigration" and then giving us examples.

- Notice how the italicized portions trace the coherence in the sources expressed by the repeated key words that relate to economic objections or questions.

- This is important when there are two different sources; they are made to work together to form a coherent discussion of the idea expressed in the topic sentence through the efforts of a third independent writer. And yes, it is your job to be that third "synthesizing" writer

Better table

Titles and labelling:
7.1
- Overtly short heading which says only what kinds of organisations are being compared but no country location, time period or what is being measured.
- Title is in present tense which will go out of date
- The first column has no labelling and the second column label uses pointless abbreviation and omits any denominator for the population.
- Readers would have to look in the main text to be sure what the table showed.
- None of the headings and labels use a distinctive font from the rest of the table. Some of the row labels are printed on two lines, despite lots of space, so row numbers are uneven
7.2
- Full and complete labels, in clear fonts, which give all missing information, and avoid unnecessary abbreviations. The row labels are tidied up, including lack of ampersand
- Decimal points, index number and details in the data numbers, and printing each label within a single row

Decimal points, index numbers and details in the data numbers:
7.1
- Does not tell readers exactly what measurement units are being used: they are numbers of eye cataract operations per 1000 population, giving us large numbers.
- Made more difficult to read as no commas to separate the thousands, and also by citing the numbers correct to two decimal points. There is no need to know to this level of detail.
7.2
- Eliminates all decimal points and rebases the index number to cataract operations per 100,000 people, making the figures easier to comprehend.

Numerical progression
7.1
- Rows are sequenced alphabetically so second column data is jumbled with no predictability in succession. This will make it hard to follow.
7.2
- Reorders the rows to give a clear downward numerical progression, so performances are visible at a glance

Statistics for central level and spread
7.1
- Provides no help for readers at all.
7.2
- Gives two 'averages' – the arithmetic mean and the median.
- The table’s notes give the range (variation between highest and lowest scores)

Layout
7.1
Hard to read by being overly spaced out across the page
There is no boxing or shading making it very difficult to see what numbers match which locations
No source is given
7.2
Minimum-width columns with no over spacing so numbers and labels are closer.
Rows and columns boxed which usually helps readers.
Median is highlighted
Source is provided

Text reduction exercise
Just use the first sentence.
### Plagiarism exercise

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<td>✓</td>
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However, be cautious when doing this and always try to establish the name of the original author. If an author’s name is shown, this must be cited. If the idea is an original one, though (as opposed to ‘interesting’), it would be wise to cite the website if no author’s name is shown.
It is **not** plagiarism to summarise **in your own words** historical or general overviews of situations where there is unlikely to be any significant argument or dispute with what you say. However, if you copy extracts from books the author(s) must be cited and referenced.