

Dissertation

General information

Lecturer

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Requirements

- You have a research question
- You know how to look for, and get access to research papers

Organisation of the module

Module

- 14 hours
- 5 sessions

Evaluation

- Continuous assessment (40% of the final mark): projects by groups of students
 - Tasks given during each session
- Final evaluation (60% of the final mark): Individual mark
 - A short report to be submitted, and presented before the last session (July 3rd)

Module outline

1. Introduction to dissertation writing
2. Using sources
3. Writing the literature review
4. Communicating results: graphs and tables

Module objectives

In this module, you will learn:

- **How to organize your dissertation**
- **How to write the different sections of your dissertation**
- **How to read research papers**
- **How to use your sources**
- **How to communicate your results**

Introduction to dissertation writing

Outline

1. What is a dissertation ?
2. Writing attitude
3. Difference between poor and good writers
4. Genre of abstracts, introductions and conclusions

What is a dissertation ?

Definitions

Dissertation (Longman Dictionary)

A long piece of writing on a particular subject, especially one written for a university degree → thesis

Dissertation (EM Normmandie Business School)

- The final-year dissertation of the EM Normandie is an initiation to research.
- It aims to shed new and objective light on a current topic within the management sciences.
- A dissertation thus makes it possible to answer a problem of management and this, thanks to a rigorous scientific approach, to bring knowledge to the greatest number.

Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation should contain the following six main elements:

1. **Introduction**
2. Identification of the key theoretical concepts linked to the research proposal, with a **critical review of the literature**
3. Choice of methodological approach, identification of data sources and research methods used
4. **Methods** of data analysis, as well as the presentation and evaluation of the **results/findings** within the context of the research question and the theory used, both academic and professional
5. **Conclusions et recommendations** addressing the research question
6. Final conclusions on the topic including the **limits** of your project and ideas for further study.

Structure of the dissertation

When we write a dissertation, we need:

- 1. Writing attitude (mindset)**
- 2. Knowledge of the expectations of the audience**
 1. Genre of the dissertation (Introduction, Literature review,...)
 2. Technicality
- 3. Information**

Writing attitude

Writing attitude

- **Do not let new material intimidate you: it's okay to be a beginner.**

...tell yourself, “I am a beginner at [whatever it might be].” Grant yourself a learner’s permit.

- **Do not let writing intimidate you; you already know how to do it.**

... Whenever you get stuck while writing, stop struggling. Close your eyes, visualize a specific, living, breathing reader, and say to yourself, “What am I really trying to say?” Whatever the answer, write it down.

Writing attitude

- **Stay in learning mode. I apologize for the cliché, but it's true:**

You must be willing to learn, as a matter of attitude. Without hard work, great gifts of the mind, eye, and spirit will come to nothing. Conversely, if you have even a small gift for words and ideas, you can eventually do very well simply by keeping at it.

- **Make no effort to be original.**

As adolescents, most people try to pose as someone they are not.

Posturing never worked as well as being ourselves.

Trying to “be original” in your writing is much the same. It's almost universal among the young, and it's a waste of effort, because you already are original.

Writing attitude

- **Rough drafts are by definition rough.**

You can think, “Well, of course there are problems—I’m not finished yet! It’s only a draft!”

- **Practice knowing whether you know or whether you sort of know.**

To write about something, you need to know it. You’ll be several steps ahead if you can routinely know which kind of knowledge you have on any given subject, writable or sort-of.

Writing attitude

- **Do you know enough? Really? Are you sure you have finished your research?**

You are ready to stop researching and interviewing (1) when you understand one layer deeper than you plan to write (that will protect you from writing something deeply stupid), and (2) when you start turning up the same thing again, and again, and again. Perhaps the new bits are useful confirmation, but more detail than you can use. They make the same point as material you already had.

Writing attitude

Are you acutely lost, in a state of total confusion and sinking fast?

Every once in a while, novice writers really do tackle something that is beyond their abilities—at least, the abilities they had when they started. Perhaps that is what has happened to you now. You are growing, and a painful experience it is.

...

Puzzled writers are often missing one or two key concepts, ideas so big that nothing makes sense without them, but not many in number. Once you locate the gap in your knowledge, you are almost home.

Abstracts, Introductions and Conclusions

Why are they important ?

...you can always work with readers who say, I don't agree. What you can't survive are those who shrug and say, I don't care.

Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., Williams, J. M., Bizup, J., Fitzgerald, W. T. (2016). The craft of research. University of Chicago press.

Introductions pattern

The common structure consists of three elements:

- Contextualizing background
- Statement of the problem
- Response to the problem

Context + Problem + Response

Conclusions pattern

You can write your conclusion using the same elements in your introduction, in reverse order

- Start with Your Main Point
- Add a New Significance or Application
- Call for More Research

Abstracts

In many fields, reports begin with an abstract, a paragraph that tells readers what they will find in the report.

It should be shorter than an introduction but do three things that an introduction does:

- State the research problem
- Announce key themes
- State the main point or a launching point that anticipates the main point

Abstracts

What does an Abstract do?

- Carves a research space—shows a concern, debate, or gap in knowledge
- Explains the purpose of the research
- Describes the specific approach
- Highlights the results/findings
- Argues for the significance of the results and might make recommendations

Abstract patterns

- *Context + Problem + Main Point*

This kind of abstract is an abbreviated introduction.

- *Context + Problem + Launching Point*

This pattern is the same as the previous one, except that the abstract states not the specific results, only their general nature

References

- Hancock, E. (2003). Ideas into words: Mastering the craft of science writing. JHU Press.
- Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., Williams, J. M., Bizup, J., Fitzgerald, W. T. (2016). The craft of research. University of Chicago press.