

How to Write a Dissertation

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Accepted: 21/11/2020

Received: 15/12/2020

Abstract

This study will discuss the task of writing a dissertation. It aims to help students to write a well-structured dissertation, easy to follow, logical, and coherent, in order the examiners will enjoy reading it and will be able to listen to students' arguments without the distraction of trying to make all the links themselves. Also, this study will show students how to write their dissertations in a successful way. This work is addressed to the students of TM University of Bechar because nowadays they face many problems in their viva examinations with their examiners about methodology, and they always claim that they do not know how to start writing their dissertations especially those of the department of English.

KeyWords: dissertation, EFL, elements of a dissertation, structure of a dissertation, students at the University of Bechar.

Introduction:

Thesis writing can be challenging for students and supervisors, but one of the many rewards for both parties is to receive positive examiners' reports. From the start, good students tend to be independent, confident, and are in the habit of thinking like a researcher. Some students have such skills at the beginning, but most have to learn them, and do so by working with their supervisors and other students.

Completion of a thesis, especially a PhD thesis, involves mastery of a range of technical accomplishments, from learning an appropriate writing style to managing references, and from developing techniques for writing quickly to being effective at self-criticism and at criticizing the work of others. There is also the basic issue of learning what a finished thesis should look like. This book is structured as a discussion of the components of a thesis, and of the sequence of tasks you need to complete to get the thesis finished. The emphasis is on what you need to learn in order to do these tasks well, rather than on technicalities; other resources, including excellent books and websites, can provide help with different aspects of producing a thesis.

1. What is a Dissertation?

A dissertation is defined as an extended argument or an extended written treatment of between ten and twenty thousand words on a topic set by a department or one chosen by the student him or herself. It is usually divided into chapters and may contain headings and subheadings of a subject that can be successful research if it demonstrates logical and structured reasons, presents credible and verifiable evidence, and makes an original contribution to knowledge after passing through examination by experts in the field. The word dissertation in a Latin word 'dissertate' means 'to debate, it answers a particular research question and can either report on an empirical study or on a literature-based study. Dissertation is original research that shows mastery of both subject and methodology by the candidate as explained by David Evan: “

- *The thesis demonstrates authority in the candidate's field and shows evidence of command of knowledge in relevant fields.*
- *It shows that the candidate has a thorough grasp of the appropriate methodological techniques and an awareness of their limitations.*
- *It makes a distinct contribution to knowledge.*
- *Its contribution to knowledge rests on originality of approach and interpretation of the findings.*
- *It demonstrates an ability to communicate research findings effectively in the professional arena and international context.*
- *It is a careful rigorous and sustained piece of work demonstrating that a research "apprenticeship" is complete and the holder is admitted to the community of scholars in the discipline." (David Evans, 2014) .*

Indeed, "The dissertation is a source of pride for doctoral students," Dinah Manns (Manns, 2019), faculty chair at Capella University, says "The dissertation is often a compilation of academic and practical knowledge, and in many cases, it can be the student's first publication". However, there are no standard constructions to the dissertation.

2. The Elements of the Dissertation:

1. Preliminary Pages:

Before starting the first chapter, there are the first few pages which are called preliminary pages. These pages set the context of the thesis, and will include generally in the order given below:

- 1.1. Title Page :** It contains title (including subtitle), author, place, institution, department, date of delivery(month and year), research mentor(s) and advisor, their institutions and email addresses, the degree for which the thesis is submitted, and any university-specific requirements. Moreover; the title must be succinct, specific, descriptive, and representative of the research that will be done since it is the important element to tell the

potential reader what your research is about. Indeed, there is a required format for the title page in any discipline, so the student needs to check what that is and if he is still using officially the title that he nominated to the university at the start of his project.

1.2. Abstract

To write the Abstract last can be best because the researcher is sure what exactly he is summarizing. Alternatively, it can be written earlier on in order to identify the crucial main thread of his research, its purpose, and its findings, which could then guide the structure of the dissertation. A good abstract must be explicit, concise, readable, and quantitative, it should be 1-2 paragraphs, approx. 400 words. Abstracts generally do not have citations but it can use numbers where appropriate. The abstract contains summaries of the three main components of the project, and an individual paragraph to each: (a) why you did the work and what you were trying to achieve; (b) what methods you used and what results you obtained; and (c) what you concluded from it. Finally, answers to these questions should be found in the abstract:

- ☐ What did you do?
- ☐ Why did you do it? What question were you trying to answer?
- ☐ How did you do it? State methods.
- ☐ What did you learn? State major results.
- ☐ Why does it matter? Point out at least one significant implication.

1.3. Table of Contents

It's a good idea to look over several completed theses to see how other students have done this. The contents pages will show up the structure of the dissertation. Any imbalance in space devoted to different sections of content will become apparent. This is a useful check on whether amalgamation of

sections or creation of further sections or sub-sections is needed. The student must list all headings and subheadings with page numbers, Indent subheadings. Many authors also list sub-section headings. I suggest that you don't; they clutter up the table of contents and rob it of the power to demonstrate the structure of your thesis. All endmatter like References, Appendices must be included also in the content.

1.4. Acknowledgment

Acknowledgements recognize help received in the execution of the research and in the preparation of the report or thesis. If the student has received financial assistance, this is the opportunity to mention individuals who have been particularly helpful and to acknowledge the organization that granted the student a scholarship or other funding. It is a good idea that the student reads the acknowledgements in other dissertations in his field to have an idea of the ways in which different kinds of help have been appreciated and mentioned:

- a. Advisor(s) and anyone who helped you:
- b. Technically (including materials, supplies)
- c. Intellectually (assistance, advice)
- d. Financially (for example, departmental support, travel grants) .

1.5. Figure and Table Lists

The student must always check all figures and tables and its caption which should consist of several parts like a title (which will appear in the lists in the preliminary pages); explanatory material to explain certain features of the figure or table, and a citation giving the source of the material. The student lumps all the figures, including graphs, diagrams, plates, photographs, and maps together in one list and the tables in another. Ultimately, all the titles of the figures and tables must be in alphabetical order.

1.6. Introduction

It is one of the preliminary pages and the first piece of writing the examiner comes to. The student can't write a good introduction until he knows what the body of the paper says because he is not absolutely sure what he is introducing.

2. Chapters

In these chapters, the student must present clearly and precisely a straightforward description of how his research is conducted by describing equipment, processes, and materials he used. The student must detail his research accurately in order another researcher can replicate his study.

3. Results and Findings

Student must check the suitable style of reporting is preferred in his field, for example:

- a. Whether the student begins with an initial overview of the results, followed by the detail, or whether you move immediately into the detail of the results;
- b. In which order the student will be presenting the detailed results; and what balance, in terms of word space, he wants to achieve across the spread of results that he has. (Kim Kastens, 2020).

4. Discussion

In this part, the student can refer back to the literature review, and discuss what his own research has added in this context.

5. Conclusion

It is not a mere summary of a student's research but must be 'conclusions'. This chapter is much shorter than the Discussion. it contains the main points of the student's research.

6. References

The student must highly structure this section which includes all references of the research with the required referencing styles APA or MLA. As the student edits and rewrites his dissertation he may lose references, therefore, he must check that all the references are in his reference list.

7. Appendices

The student must check whether the appendices count within the page limit for his dissertation or not. Items that can usefully go in the appendices are those that a reader would want to see like questionnaires and interviews which can take up too much space within the main text.

Conclusion

To conclude this article, it is extremely important to mention the unified template of how to classify the elements of a dissertation in the English language as it is explained below:

1. Dedications
2. Acknowledgements
3. Table of Content
4. List of abbreviations
5. List of figures
6. List of tables
7. Abstract
8. General Introduction
9. Chapter One: Literature Review (all the chapters should contain a short introduction and a short conclusion)
10. Chapter Two: Methodology of the research
11. Chapter Three: Data Analysis and Interpretation
12. General Conclusion
13. References
14. Appendices

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