

UG dissertation: Structuring

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Session aims

- To establish how the dissertation differs structurally from a standard essay.
- To outline a working structure for the project using the abstract model
- To peer review each other's structural approach to get feedback
- To create an action plan to move the project forwards

Dissertation vs essay

How does the dissertation differ structurally from a standard essay?

Are there any additional elements/issues to consider?

What are the challenges associated with writing an 8,000 word assignment?

Understanding scope and sequencing

Imagine the ideal book on your dissertation topic – what would the contents page of this book include?

Think about the different chapter topics but also the order in which these would need to go to create a consistent narrative.

Abstracts and structure

Use the following model for an academic abstract to create a 300 word outline of your project.

1. **Specify** the field of study
2. **Describe** the topic you're focusing on
3. **Identify** your objectives
4. **State** your research approach
5. **Summarise** the expected finding(s)
6. **State** the most important conclusion(s)

Peer reviewing abstracts

- Swap abstracts with a partner and read with a critical eye:
 - Are the aims of the project clear?
 - Is there a logical structure?
 - Does the order of information make sense?
- Each person gets five minutes feedback on their abstract – make notes as you will need to incorporate this later.
- Remember :
 - Be constructive in your feedback
 - Questions can be just as useful as comments

Literature reviews

- Summarise and critique the scholarship upon which you are basing your research
- Position your own work within a scholarly debate
- Identify a gap
- Two possible structures
 - Chronological / historical
 - Thematic



Literature reviews

A good literature review should ask and answer the following three questions:

- Why is this topic significant?
- What is already known about this topic?
- What other approaches have been taken to it?



Action plan

Spend five minutes writing down ideas about the next stage of your dissertation writing.

This might include:

- Structural issues that need resolving
- New resources to chase up
- Ideas about how to organise the narrative

Think about:

- When you will next work on your dissertation
- What you might want to discuss with your supervisor
- Where you are in your overall schedule for the project

Session 3: Peer review workshop

- The next session is in Term 3 and will be a peer review workshop (date and venue tbc).
- Please bring along 700 words of your own work for peer review.
- We will be looking at critical engagement, academic style and clarity of purpose.

Resources and support

- [RLF fellow](#) Mahendra Solanki is based in H521 in the Humanities building and offers bookable appointments on Tuesdays and Thursdays during term time (starting from Week 3 of Term 1).
- [English UG academic writing podcasts](#)
- [MLA referencing guide \(Purdue OWL\)](#)
- [The Library's tutorial on using Endnote](#)
- Students who have English as an additional language can receive language support from the [Centre for Applied Linguistics \(CAL\)](#).

ANY QUESTIONS?