

KICKING OFF YOUR DISSERTATION: WHAT YOU NEED TO DO DURING TERM ONE

BY LIBRARY STUDENT PARTNER, ANGEL SUN



*Doing a dissertation sounds daunting, but most of us do not feel stressed until the deadline is coming in term three. Yet, we can always start the preparation a bit earlier to ease the pressure in future. **Library Student Partner, Angel, shares her dissertation journey and outlines how you can prepare for your dissertation from your penultimate year.** Here is everything you should and should not do before and during term one of your final year.*

Pick a dissertation topic and write a proposal

It sounds scary that you need to start preparing for your dissertation in your penultimate year, but it is definitely necessary. Most courses require students to submit a proposal before beginning the research, and each of them has a different deadline.

For example, English students need to submit the proposal in term three of the penultimate year, while the deadline for History students is week four in term one of the final year.



Therefore, make sure that you are familiar with the deadline and dissertation procedure of your departments in the penultimate year. You

should be able to find all the necessary information on the department website.

...contact your supervisor for a meeting...

If you need to complete the dissertation proposal in term three of the penultimate year, you should start thinking about your research topic by term two. Although you are not required to show that you know everything about the topic, you need to show that you have a clear idea of your research.

Thus, think about the topic earlier, and reserve some time for primary research. You may change the subject of research after reading some scholarly articles and go back and forth.

If your dissertation proposal is due in the first

term of your final year, you may want to start figuring out the topic during the summer vacation. It may be difficult to decide because there are so many interesting topics throughout your university study. Just make sure that you are passionate enough about the topic and that you have sufficient background knowledge about it. You can also check if there is any relevant expertise in your department to supervise your research.



Look for advice

When you struggle to pick a topic or fill in the proposal, don't hesitate to contact a professor or teaching fellow in your department. They may be an expert in your research topic, your personal tutor,

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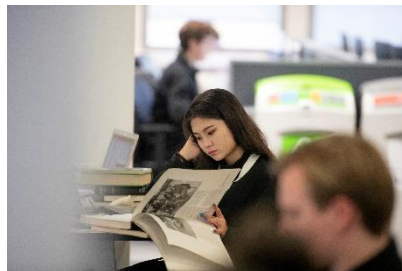
or any senior students you have met. I was very lost about my dissertation topic in October, and I asked a professor who taught me last year for help. Although she was not assigned to be my supervisor, she gave me a lot of useful tips about how to assess historical sources and narrow down my topic. Again, do it as soon as possible because their advice may completely change your approach to the topic.

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After submitting the proposal

After you submit the proposal, you can sit back and relax for a bit. Your department should inform you of who your supervisor is via email or by updating your Tabula profile. Once you know who is going to supervise your research, contact them and schedule a meeting with them. It allows you to move on to the next step of your dissertation as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, you may not be able to have your project supervised by someone you want the most. Some departments allow students to change their supervisor, while others do not. In this case, make sure that your department permits you to ask those who are not your supervisor for help. Then, contact your supervisor for a meeting like anyone else, and let other professors know that you may need their help in the future.



After that, start your project according to your supervisor's advice!

There are many supports available across the university in addition to your academic department. For example, you can contact a [Research and Academic Support Librarian](#) if you struggle to find the sources you need.

Students of the Faculty of Art can also join the weekly Study Café for some general research advice.

When you feel too stressed and overwhelmed, the [Wellbeing and Student Support](#) team and welfare officer of your course's society may help. To make it short, don't be afraid to ask for help.