

3. Getting started

Where to start?

Follow this link to the Centre for Sociology, Anthropology and Politics *Companion for Undergraduate* how to go about starting the dissertation.

<http://www.socscidiss.bham.ac.uk/vidpages/s5vid.html>

Working on your research question

The University of Colorado offers *An Introduction to the Research Process* which includes a section on defining your research question. It offers handy tips and guidance on brainstorming, sizing and honing your questions.

http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/trad_research/intro/pop2d.cfm

Managing your time

In *Skills for Success*¹, Stella Cottrell advises that time management in projects benefits from the use of more than one time-management tool. She highlights the use of action plans where you outline targets and deadlines for different parts of your project. Schedules can then be used to give order to the targets that you have set. And diaries can also be useful for organising the tasks over a week.

Action plans

The following template will help you to identify what needs to be done and by when in the dissertation process.

Task	By when?	Comments
Prepare a work schedule for the dissertation		
Identify a topic area		
Read all course documentation about dissertations or final projects		
Schedule session(s) with supervisor		
Prepare ideas for first meeting with supervisor		
Undertake background reading		
Define Title		
Plan approach or methodology		
Prepare for literature searches, including listing possible search terms		

¹ Cottrell, S. (2003) *Skills for Success*, Basingstoke, PalgraveMacmillan), pp102-104

Set up a recording system for searches and other activities related to the dissertation		
Undertake literature searches		
<i>Make enquiries regarding ethics procedures, including deadlines for submissions of applications</i>		
<i>Devise research plans</i>		
Discuss research plans or methodology with supervisor		
<i>Devise interview schedules and/or related documentation to support field research</i>		
<i>Prepare and submit applications for ethics procedures</i>		
<i>Negotiate access to research participants if required</i>		
<i>Undertake data collection</i>		
<i>Thank you letters to participants etc.</i>		
Collate data		
Develop plan for structure of dissertation		
Schedule meeting with supervisor		
Devise detailed writing timetable		
Undertake writing in stages		
Complete Chapter 1		
Complete Chapter 2		
Discuss drafts with supervisor		
Complete Chapter 3		
Complete Chapter 4		
Complete Conclusions		
Check timings and costs of services for printing and binding		
Complete all writing including references, appendices, introduction, abstract, front page		
Give draft to a critical reader to proof read and/or comment on the work		
Rest the final draft before doing a last read and edit		

of the dissertation or project, incorporating critical reader's comments		
Print and check the document		
Take to printers		
<i>Complete any dissemination promises to research participants</i>		
Pick up from printers		
Submit		
Celebrate (any way you want!)		