

Guidelines on writing dissertation/thesis

1. Theme/idea

Start constructing your paper from an idea, a theme, a problem, a question, an argument or a controversy. Build up a number of sub-themes and arrange so that they allow you to address the main theme in a logical way.

2. Abstract/summary

Every paper should have an abstract or summary of one paragraph which tells the reader what the paper says (i.e. what the theme/aim is and what is the conclusion).

3. Introduction

- should state and explain the aim of the paper and why it is important;
- explain how you will address it; refer briefly to any constraints on data

4. Analytical framework

All papers require an analytical framework: for example, if you are evaluating the effectiveness of a regime of comparing two or more regimes then you must state and justify the criteria you are using. This is best placed early in the paper, after the introduction.

5. Core of paper

- a number of sections addressing key issues in logical order.
- constantly refer to the main theme or question.
- evaluate all material to decide if it is relevant; if not relevant, omit it.
- use the analytical framework to decide how to structure the rest of your paper, and what information to include or exclude
- make it clear why each piece of material is relevant to the argument
- link sections by providing a brief summary/conclusion at the end of each section and by starting each section with a brief introduction stating significance of chapter.

6. Evidence/material

- read widely secondary materials; do not just restrict yourself to six or seven papers from the reading for the relevant class. Analyse primary materials if central to argument

7. Conclusions

- can be brief; but must be sufficiently comprehensive and clear that if a reader read only the abstract, the introduction and the conclusions, they would have grasped your main points.

8. Standard

What standards should you be aiming for? Remember, that a course paper which achieves a distinction is close to being publishable. So, you should be comparing your papers with published papers in journals.

9. References/footnotes

- papers/books referred to must be mentioned in both footnotes and bibliography
- bibliography must only contain material referred to in text
- bibliography: to be listed in alphabetical order of first author's surname.

10. Quotations

- all quotations must be in quotation marks and be fully referenced.
- keep quotations to a minimum