

THE SKILLS YOU NEED
GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

BOOK 3

WRITING YOUR DISSERTATION OR THESIS



The Skills You Need Guide for Students

BOOK 3

WRITING YOUR DISSERTATION OR THESIS

Skills You Need

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INTRODUCTION

Most postgraduate courses and many undergraduate courses around the world require the submission of a written thesis or dissertation.

Dissertation is usually the word used for the most substantial piece of independent work in the undergraduate programme, while a thesis is associated with master's or doctoral degrees. These terms are often used interchangeably, however, and may vary between countries and universities. In this guide, the terms are used interchangeably.

A thesis usually explains and discusses a piece of original research carried out by the student. Writing it can be a daunting prospect, as it is probably the single biggest piece of work you will ever have done, and will carry the largest mark. Many people also struggle to know what to include in each section, even within a given structure, or what is meant by some of the terminology.

This Skills You Need guide, one of a series aimed at students, is designed to reduce some of the confusion and concerns.

Dissertations generally have a clearly defined and shared format, with some minor tweaks at different universities and study institutions. This eBook explains what should be included in each of the usual sections, and provides some background to help you decide what goes where, and how to write up your research.

If your study institution requires a slightly different format, it will usually contain either the same or very similar elements, but perhaps in a different order, or with a different emphasis. For example, some universities place a higher emphasis on data analysis, and require a separate chapter on this area.

We hope that this guide will be useful in deciding what to include, and in how to write up your work.

The Skills You Need Team

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AN INTRODUCTION TO DISSERTATION WRITING

The aim of the dissertation or thesis is to produce an original piece of research work on a clearly defined topic.

A dissertation or thesis is likely to be the longest and most difficult piece of work a student has ever completed. It can, however, also be a very rewarding piece of work since, unlike essays and other assignments, the student is able to pick a topic of special interest and work on their own initiative.

- Writing a dissertation requires a range of planning and research skills that will be of great value in your future career and within organisations.

The dissertation topic and question should be sufficiently focused that you can collect all the necessary data within a relatively short time-frame, usually about six weeks for undergraduate programmes.

You should also choose a topic that you already know something about so that you already have a frame of reference for your literature search and some understanding and interest in the theory behind your topic.

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