Research Methodology

Unit-1

1.1 Research project

In this guide, we have used the term 'research project' to refer to that component of a degree programme which requires you, the student, to successfully design, conduct and write up a piece of research as a condition of being awarded the degree. In the vast majority of cases that research will form either a dissertation or a thesis.

1.2 What is the difference between a dissertation and a thesis?

Students are often unclear about the difference between a dissertation and a thesis. For a purpose of this writing guide, there are no significant differences between the two in as much as both apply the same general principles of academic writing style and share similar principles of structure, organization and formatting. Where they differ is in their respective levels of details because a dissertation is normally one of a number of written requirements of a Bachelors of Master degree (BA, BSc, MA, MSc, MEd or MPhil) it will typically be shorter in length and less detailed and far-reaching. In contrast, a thesis the sole written requirement for the PhD degree and constitutes the final product of lengthy period of research (normally 3 year or more); as such, it is expected to be considerably longer, more detailed and more far-reaching than a dissertation.

Furthermore, a defining characteristic of a thesis is its originality and the fact that it adds significantly to the existing body of knowledge in the field with which it is concerned. While a dissertation will also involve original work, there is less emphasis on this aspect and research that replicates a previous study, for example-perhaps in a slightly different context or by employing a slightly different methodology-may will be acceptable.

Finally, a word about the MPhil degree:

The Master of Philosophy degree can be a taught degree or a research-based degree. If it is a taught degree, the research project will form one of a

number of written assignments that will need to be submitted and assessed before the degree is awarded. As such it will constitute a dissertation. In the case of a research-based MPhil degree, there will be little or no coursework and the research project will become the main focus of your attention and the main subject of assessment. In this case, it will constitute a thesis, reflecting as it does a PhD, if in a more truncated form.

Before looking in detail at the process of actually writing a research report, let's look briefly at a number of general principals and procedures that can help you to the task ahead. An understanding of these will help smooth your journey over the coming months by increasing your overall awareness as well as the effectiveness and efficiency with which you work. Unfortunately, all too often students learn these principle and procedure the hard way, through experience and as a result the process of conducting research and producing a dissertation or thesis becomes far more taxing and fraught with difficulties than it needs to be. Many of the following suggestions have to do with thinking ahead, working systematically and using all the resources at your disposal.

1.3 The basic requirements of a research degree

What is originality?

One of the defining characteristics of a thesis and to a lesser extent a dissertation is its originality. In both cassis it is a requirement that the research you report on is original. Simply, that research must add something new to body of knowledge that already exists in the field of study in which you are working. It must shed fresh light on the field. However, in the case of a dissertation, that contribution to knowledge will, in all probability, be less substantial than that of a thesis; nevertheless, both should seek to offer something new and original.

Here's how one university hand book of academic regulations for research degrees puts it The thesis shall from a distinct contribution those the knowledge of the subject and afford evidence of originality by the discovery joy new facts and or by the exercise of independent critical power.

There have undoubtedly been cases where research students have produced work that has completely upended their field and changed the way people think about it. Such change will often be the result of a board and quite fundamental reassessment of the state of their discipline or key aspects of it. And it may well result ultimately in a complete paradigm shift. However, these cases refer and

far between and it if far more common for research students more common for research students to focus on a one (often quite narrow) aspect of their filed we be all heard of the doctoral student who spent 15 years of their life studying the mating habits of an organism barely visible to the human eye! Of course, small doesn't necessarily mean insignificant, and perhaps this realization is key to answering his question. Original means original regardless of the read of your research and the potential scale of its implications. More important than either research or scale is significance. The examiners as well as the wider audience (academic or otherwise) need to feel that your research is significant or worthwhile in he sense that it contributes to the knowledge of the subject, this can be either through the discover of new facts and or the exercise of independent critical power and as we have seen, the contribution may consist of shedding light on one minute aspect of a very large field.

Other requirements:

Apart from originality, there are other requirements you will need to meet if you are to bring your research to a successful conclusion. it is important you are aware of these requirement before embarking on your project and as such we have listed for you a typical set of such requirement written in rate formal language.

- ❖ Consist of the candidates own account of his/her investigations. The greater proportion of which shall have been undertaken during the period of registration under supervision for the degree.
- ❖ Be an integrated whole and present a coherent argument.
- ❖ Give a critical assessment of the relevant literature. Describe the method of research and its finding, include discussion on those findings and indicate in what respects they appear to the candidate to advance the study of the in what respects they appear the the candidate to advance the study of the subject and in doing so, demonstrate a deep and synoptic understanding of the field of study.
- ❖ Be written in English and the literary presentation shall be satisfactory, although the candidate with the support of the supervision application make for a thesis in the field of modern languages and literatures only to be written in the language of study, in such cases the thesis shall include additionally a submission of between 10,000 and 20,000 words which shall be written in English and shall summarize the main arguments of the thesis.
- ❖ Not exceed 100,000 words (inclusive of footnotes but exclusive of appendices and bibliography, the word limit not apply to editions of a text or tests.

❖ Include a full bibliography and reference.
❖ Demonstrate research skills relevant to the thesis being presented.
❖ Be of a standard to merit publication in whole or in part or in a revised form (for example: as a monograph or as a number of articles in learned journals)

1.4 Writing a proposal

Before for commencing with your research, you will be asked to submit a proposal describing the nature of your project and the motivation for it, proposal is normality no more than two sides of A4 in length and serves two purposes. First, it forces you the researcher, to clarify your own thinking.

Second, a proposal gives the department an opportunity to judge whether the project is variable and whether you as a researcher have thought it thought adequately and are capable of bringing it to fraction.

Title and subject:

The department needs to see a working title of the project one that is concise and gives a clear indication of its focus.

The context of the project:

Provide some information on what motivated your research idea and how it fits into the field and current thinking. The relevant literature on the subject its history key theories articles debates and so on-and keep your language clear and simple.

Statement of aims and objectives:

This section should explain what your research is designed to achieve, what problem it seeks to address and the nature of the key constructs pertinent to solving that problem.

Formulating your hypothesis:

Next, in light of your objectives you will need to formulate a set of hypothesis. These are simple statement-expressed as assertion-about the anticipated outcomes of your study, and as such they indicate the different ways that you the researcher, expect the study to turn out. They are typically phrased as follows.

To meet these objectives, I will test the following hypothesis:

1. The number of A/A* grades achieved at GCSE level will be consistently higher inn private schools than in state schools.
2. The number of a grade achieved at A-level will be consistently higher in private schools than state schools.
3. The proportion of students successfully gaining entry to a university of their choice will be higher for private schools than for state schools.

An indication of your methodology:

Having contextualized your study and established your aims and objectives, you will need to explain how you plan to achieve those aims and objectives in other words what methods you plan to use. Different parts of your project may require different methods of data collection and analysis.

Expected outcomes:

Although it would be foolish to make absolute pre-dictions about research that has yet to be undertaken, you may well l have expectations about the e eventual findings of the project. Sell these out being careful to justify them and not to exaggerate them.

A time frame for completion:

How long you expect your project to take. This information is helpful to your potential supervisor for it indicates that you have planned out the project. It also has the advantage of forcing you to think a head and organize your research h ands of establishing milestones which can help motivate you and maintain momentum event you are ultimately unable to maintain the schedule.

1.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Conduction research frequently requires sensitivity to the effects of your research methods on those around you – particularly your subjects. This is especially true of the science and social science disciplines, which often involve working with people or animals and collecting data through interviews,

questionnaires or laboratory experiments. As a researcher, you need to consider the possible moral dimensions of what you are doing: whether your behavior could be detrimental in any way to your subjects; whether you are being honest and open with them and if not, whether your research really depends on a lack of openness and whether the potential benefits of the research justify it. Also consider whether your methodology and the motivation for it could lead to problems, take advice, and do so as quickly as possible. Don't as the design stage so that you don't waste months on a methodology that is undermined by ethical problems. Following are a few tips on how you can avoid such problems.

Make sure your subjects are well informed:

Explain your methods, the reasons behind what you are doing and the use to which you will put the information they give you. Equally, if you're unable to share with them the object of the data collection exercise without defecting its purpose, then try to explain this. You can (a) Offer to share this information with them once the data if, at the points, the subject is uncomfortable with your doing so.

Ask your subjects' permission:

Put simply, allow them the change to decline the opportunity to contribute to your research by asking them very explicitly whether they are happy to take part. It's best to avoid cajoling those who are clearly uncomfortable with doing so as this could lead to trouble later. In cases where the information you are requesting is particularly sensitive, you may wish to formalize your subject participation via a signed agreement in which you state the nature of the research and the data collection exercise and the willingness of the subject to take part. If, for purpose of the experiment and the integrity of the data collected, certain information needs to be withheld, then you might include a clause to that effect information needs to be withheld, then you might include a clause to that effect and saying that the subjects has agreed to participate under those conditions.

Protect your subjects' privacy:

It is usually unnecessary to refer to subjects by name as the data itself, rather than who provides it, is often the key and the main focus of attention. However, if you do need to refer to particular subjects, you should not use their real names; use pseudonyms instead. This helps ensure that the subjects feel relaxed about providing information, especially when it's of a personal nature.

Share your recorded data and the results of your research:

It can be a good idea to show your records of interviews and so on to the subjects the, selves before committing them it papers. This not only gives them a final opportunity to confirm that they are happy for you to go ahead and use the data they have a provides, it also allows you the opportunity to check your own understanding or interpretation of what contributors is part of what we might call research etiquette!

Be courteous:

Showing recorded data and the results of your research to contributors is a courtesy on your part as a researcher in payment for their time. Efforts and trust in helping make your project a success. But so too is being punctual, organized and to the point so that you inconvenience them as little as possible while effectively collection the data you need. Be sensitive where necessary and avoid accidentally causing offence. And, of course, always remember to thank them for their help: after all, your first attempt at data collection may prove to be flawed and you may need to return for more!

Always strive to be honest and objective:

This is something that we will look at later on. For the moment, however, let's just say that being honest and objective isn't as straightforward as you might think. It can be tempting to read into your data what you want to find there and it is therefore important to continually question your own integrity and objectivity. As with astrology and star sings, people are naturally disposed to interpret things in a way that fits with their expectation and hopes!