

# Create a great dissertation

LSE LIFE

A research project has many stages and the end product - a dissertation - is a major piece of writing. There's a lot to think about, but LSE LIFE can help you find your way with resources, events, and one-to-one advice at every step of the way!

Use this guide - zooming in and out - to explore the support available at different stages of research and writing. And remember, most research projects don't simply progress from A to B to research and writing. And remember, most research projects don't simply progress from A to B to research and writing. And remember, most research projects don't simply progress from A to B to research and writing. Don't fret! This is all part of discovery through research. No matter where you are in the process, visit us at LSE LIFE, get in touch for a one-to-one chat, or drop us an email, [lselife@lse.ac.uk](mailto:lselife@lse.ac.uk).

Click on these boxes to access the resource or to book your place on the event

## GET OFF TO A GOOD START

How to get started on your dissertation

Your research ideas: develop your research proposal

Plan your research project

Plan your dissertation - get organised, manage your time, and get the work done

Past dissertations from your department are an excellent source of ideas and guidance on ways to approach your dissertation. Explore past dissertations and ask yourself

- What kind of research topics and questions have students explored?
- How is theory used to shape and inform research questions?
- What kinds of methods are used to collect and analyse data?
- What various structures do you observe across past dissertations?
- What are the main similarities you notice across past dissertations? Differences?
- Which dissertation(s) do you prefer? Why?

**Practical tips for**

- qualitative research
- thematic analysis
- discourse analysis
- working with research participants
- planning, conducting, and transcribing interviews

## COLLECT AND ANALYSE DATA

Plan and conduct responsible, ethical research

Working with your data: think about data collection clearly and logically

Conduct primary research online

Conduct effective online interviews

Working with your data: connect your data analysis with your literature review and research question

Designing and carrying out research is exciting, rewarding, and challenging! Talk through your research design with experts at the **Methods Surgery** (offered by the Methodology Department in the Summer Term only)

**Quantitative methods adviser at LSE LIFE**

**Research ethics specialists**

- My research plans have changed! What should I consider now to implement my Plan B?
- How can I make sure my online survey, interview guides, or other research instrument makes sense to participants?
- Does my project require ethical clearance or review?
- Where can I learn more about a particular method independently?

## DEVELOP YOUR IDEAS AND YOUR RESEARCH STORY

Find and develop your research question

Telling the story of your research

Think about your dissertation as an argument

Stories are for telling - and research is no different! Take advantage of office hours with your dissertation supervisor or academic mentor, course teachers, or **LSE LIFE study advisers** to talk through your research ideas. For instance, you could ask...

- I have so many ideas - how can I narrow my research topic?
- I have no ideas! How can I find a topic?
- What's the difference between a research topic and a research question?

That article gives interesting reasoning but there's still something they haven't explained

## FIND, REVIEW, AND USE LITERATURE

Improve your referencing

What is a Literature Review?

Explore the literature and use it to focus your dissertation

Develop and practise your search strategy for your literature search

Read critically within and across texts for your literature reviews

Master citing and referencing with [citethemrightonline](http://citethemrightonline)

Referencing café

**Librarians** are experts in going beyond your reading lists and exploring publications and resources in-depth to find those hidden gems for your research. No question is too big or small when it comes to using the Library's vast resources, or referencing them clearly. You could ask...

- What is a literature search "strategy" - what should I be thinking of when I search?
- What tools and techniques can help me keep track of my searches and organise my references and notes from various texts?
- Which databases are suited for finding literature on my research topic?
- How do I cite (a tweet, an unpublished confidential report, a painting I saw in a museum, a webpage with no author) and include it in my references?

## MANAGE YOUR DATA AND RESEARCH MATERIALS

Write your data management plan

Get your data and resources in shape

Endnote or Mendeley: which tool to use to reference consistently?

**Practical tips for**

- organising, storing and backing up your data
- ethical use and storage of social media data
- managing interview data

Research is a craft! And there are people with plenty of experience you can turn to with your questions about keeping track of the transcripts, texts, recordings and other material you'll be using for your dissertation. Get in touch with **data management specialists** and librarians to learn more. You could ask...

- What are good ways to store stuff so my files don't get mixed up, lost or corrupted?
- Are there tools to help me organise my notes and references from texts?
- How can I protect personal data and ensure participants' anonymity?

Master's dissertation what can I do now?

## CRAFT YOUR TEXT AND BRING IT ALL TOGETHER

Structure your dissertation

Three tools to edit and polish your text

Write a draft abstract

Three ways to proofread your draft dissertation

Write a great introduction to your dissertation

Your methods section: what should it look like?

You'll be writing and re-writing ideas, notes, and drafts throughout your entire research process; writing is a form of thinking. Crafting the final text that you'll submit requires you to step back and look at your draft texts and your entire project from a reader's perspective. Talk with an **LSE LIFE study adviser** about your writing process, and with the librarians for advice on referencing so that your reader understands the foundations of your ideas and research. Questions you could discuss might include...

- Is there a "right way" to structure a dissertation?
- What belongs in which sections?
- How can I get into a writing flow?

LSE LIFE Writing Retreat

## So, how can LSE LIFE help me with all this?

LSE LIFE will be here to chat with you about research, listen to your ideas, and respond to your questions through the Summer Term and all through the summer break. We're offering **regular workshops** where you can get work done and get together with other students to keep the momentum going and the ink flowing! In addition to our online resources and workshops, you can always book a one-to-one meeting with us, too. Here are ways an **LSE LIFE study adviser** can help:

**We can help you**

- Structure your dissertation
- Develop your writing process
- Organise your time
- Navigate your literature review
- Find inspiration and ideas through discussion
- Be creative and think about practicalities related to research methods
- Find your narrative by discussing a draft outline or abstract together

**We're not able to**

- Define the scope of your research
- Formulate the research questions for you
- Determine how much data you need
- Tell you how to analyse your data
- Resolve substantive issues around research design or methods
- Read draft chapters or sections and give feedback
- Proofread your work

Reflect, motivate and drive yourself forward