

# Upgrade Study Advice

## Dissertation writing: an Action Plan for Brookes

Process	Steps to be taken	When
Overall organisation and planning	Register your Stage II programme, but don't include the dissertation at this time.	Year 1, Semester 2
Overall organisation and planning	Many fields have general meetings on the dissertation and/or print guidelines	Year 2, Semester 2
Selecting a subject	Read dissertation guidelines carefully Explore ideas with potential supervisors Browse previous dissertations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Masters dissertations are held in the Library <a href="http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/library/skill/skildiss.html">www.brookes.ac.uk/services/library/skill/skildiss.html</a></li><li>• Undergraduate dissertations may be held in your School/department. It's worth checking.</li></ul> Go to one of the library's training sessions in your subject area <a href="http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/library/training.html">www.brookes.ac.uk/services/library/training.html</a> Browse literature, and identify gaps.	Commencing middle of Semester 2, year 2
Selecting a subject	Specify a research question / hypothesis, and subquestions, after discussion with your tutor.	Towards the end of Semester 2, year 2
Overall organisation and planning	Make a draft <u>plan</u> , with supervisor's help and feedback. Outline question and subquestions, possible methods and sources, structure, probable chapters, timetable. You can register your dissertation (double) module on form M199	Towards the end of Semester 2, year 2
Planning sources and methodology	Decide on appropriate methods of answering research questions, with tutor's help. Investigate likely sources of material and data you'll need. Find out if it will be possible and feasible to collect this material. Check libraries and other sources of written material for availability. Contact possible interviewees, make appointments.	Towards the end of Semester 2, year 2

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Literature search and review	Read and take notes on key research literature for the topic. Trace the way existing research 'leads up to' your own dissertation questions.	Towards the end of Semester 2, year 2, and ongoing, into vacation and Semester 1, year 3.
Collect data and other material, both primary and secondary	Do a pilot study? Do main fieldwork, labwork if relevant. Compile accurate records. Do follow up work? Complete library work.	Summer vacation between years 2 &3, and extending into Year 3 Semester 1. <i>Make plenty of time for this stage.</i>
Overall organisation and planning	<i>Deadline</i> for registering dissertation (double module) on form M199	Normally week 0, Semester 1 year 3
Overall organisation and planning	Report back to supervisor. Perhaps revise plan in the light of fieldwork & preliminary findings.	<i>Early</i> in year 3, Semester 1
Process, analyse, discuss data and information	Do any necessary quantitative analysis of findings (eg field/lab measurements). Analyse and categorise any qualitative findings (eg interviews). <i>Relate to subquestions</i>	Year 3, first part of Semester 1.
Process, analyse, discuss data and information	Discuss findings and analysis – how do they help answer the subquestions? Consult supervisor about this stage.	Year 3, second part of Semester 1
Write up, presentation.	Write first drafts - start with what you think will be the <i>easiest</i> chapter. Show drafts to supervisor. Allow plenty of time for them to be read and discussed. Edit and re-draft, at least once. Compile tables, illustrations, appendices, etc.	Year 3, end of Semester 1, first half of Semester 2.
Write up, presentation.	Compile and check references (or 'bibliography') Proof read Check page layouts, positions and readability of tables, illustrations etc. Arrange for binding	2-3 weeks before submission
SUBMISSION	Check time and place with tutor.	<i>Deadline</i> normally Friday, Week 8, Semester 2, year 3
CELEBRATE, RELAX	In moderation of course...	... for a couple of days, then back to the grindstone!