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Dissertation guidelines

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What we learn here?

- Why should one write a dissertation?
- What to write in a dissertation?
- How to write a dissertation?

What is a dissertation?

- A dissertation or thesis is a long piece of **academic writing** based on **original research**. It is usually submitted as part of a doctoral degree or master's degree, and sometimes as part of a bachelor's degree.
- A dissertation is a **research project** completed as part of an undergraduate or postgraduate degree.
- An effective dissertation should generally answer the "**how**", "**what**", and "**so what**." It should be a statement that represents an argument, yet is refutable by the reader.

Key features of dissertation

- **Original Research:** Dissertations involve conducting original research, which means that the author is expected to explore a specific research question or topic in-depth, often using primary sources and data collection methods.
- **In-Depth Analysis:** A dissertation requires thorough analysis and critical evaluation of existing literature and research relevant to the chosen topic. The student needs to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the subject area.
- **Organization and Structure:** Dissertations typically have a clear structure, including an introduction, literature review, research methodology, results/findings, discussion, and conclusion. Each section serves a specific purpose and contributes to the overall argument.

- **Length and Scope:** Dissertations are longer and more extensive than regular academic essays. They can vary in length, but they are generally much more substantial than other types of academic papers.
- **Contribution to Knowledge:** A significant aspect of a dissertation is making an original contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the chosen field. This can be achieved through new insights, empirical findings, or critical analysis.
- **Independent Work:** While students receive guidance from faculty advisors, a dissertation is primarily an independent project. It requires self-discipline, time management, and the ability to work autonomously.

Aim of dissertation

- **Contributing to Legal Scholarship:** A dissertation allows you to delve deeply into a specific legal topic, conduct original research, and contribute to the existing body of legal knowledge. By addressing a gap in the literature or proposing new perspectives, you can make a meaningful contribution to the field of law.
- **Demonstrating Expertise:** Writing a dissertation showcases your expertise in a particular area of law. It demonstrates your ability to conduct rigorous research, analyze complex legal issues, and present your findings in a coherent and persuasive manner.
- **Academic and Professional Growth:** Engaging in a dissertation project is an intellectually stimulating experience. It fosters critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a deeper understanding of legal principles and theories. This academic growth can have a positive impact on your professional career, whether you choose to pursue further studies or enter the legal practice.

- **Opportunity for Specialization:** A dissertation allows you to explore a niche area of law that aligns with your interests and career goals. It gives you the opportunity to become an expert in a specific legal subfield, which can be advantageous in seeking academic or professional opportunities.
- **Enhanced Research Skills:** During the dissertation process, you will refine your research skills, including literature review, data collection, analysis, and synthesis. These skills are valuable not only in academia but also in various legal professions, such as legal research and policy analysis.
- **Validation of Legal Argumentation:** Writing a dissertation involves constructing a well-organized and coherent argument supported by legal sources and evidence. Successfully defending your dissertation before a committee reinforces your ability to present compelling legal arguments.

- **Potential Publication:** A well-researched and well-written dissertation may have the potential to be published in academic journals or as a book. Publication of your work can further enhance your reputation as a legal scholar.
- **Personal Fulfillment:** Completing a dissertation is a challenging and time-consuming task. However, the sense of accomplishment and personal fulfillment that comes with producing a substantial piece of original research can be immensely rewarding.
- **Contribution to Policy and Practice:** In some cases, legal dissertations may have practical implications and influence policy-making or legal practice. Research that addresses contemporary legal issues may provide insights that can be applied to real-world situations.

Types of dissertation

- The type of dissertation you complete will vary depending on your topic and availability of time.
- **Empirical Dissertation:** This type of dissertation involves the collection and analysis of primary data through surveys, experiments, observations, or interviews. Empirical dissertations aim to generate new insights or test hypotheses based on original data.
- **Non-Empirical Dissertation:** In contrast to empirical dissertations, non-empirical dissertations are based on existing literature, theories, and secondary data. They involve a comprehensive review and critical analysis of published research and scholarly works.
- **Literature-Based Dissertation:** This type of dissertation is entirely focused on reviewing and synthesizing existing literature related to a specific topic or research question. It aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge on the subject.

- **Theoretical Dissertation:** A theoretical dissertation involves the development and exploration of new theoretical frameworks, models, or concepts. The focus is on contributing to theoretical understanding and expanding the conceptual understanding of a subject.
- **Mixed Methods Dissertation:** Some dissertations combine both empirical and non-empirical approaches. These mixed-methods dissertations use a combination of primary data collection and literature review to address research questions comprehensively.
- **Case Study Dissertation:** Case study dissertations involve in-depth analysis and examination of a particular case, situation, or individual. It aims to provide detailed insights into a specific context and can be either empirical or non-empirical.
- **Policy Analysis Dissertation:** This type of dissertation focuses on the analysis of policies and their impact. It may involve evaluating existing policies, proposing new policy solutions, or assessing the effectiveness of implemented policies.
- **Comparative Legal Dissertation:** This type of dissertation involves comparing legal systems, laws, or judicial decisions across different jurisdictions or countries. It aims to identify similarities, differences, and potential areas of harmonization in legal frameworks.

Choosing a Topic

- We will give you a topic
- You can choose a topic of your interest

- Dissertation Proposal - It is mandatory to submit a 1000 words dissertation Proposal
- Final Dissertation

Dissertation Proposal

- A research proposal is a comprehensive description of the project you are going to undertake.
- It should outline your research topic, objectives, methodology, scope, research scheme.
- It should build on the thinking that you have done in defining your research problem; and on early reading that you have done on the topic.
- A comprehensive research proposal will make you think through exactly what it is that you are going to do, and will help you when you start to write up the project.
- It is roadmap for your final dissertation.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Research problem sets out:

- the issue that you are going to be investigating;
- your argument (what you want to prove, disprove, or explore); and
- the limits of your research (i.e. what you are not going to be investigating).

- It is important that you establish a research problem at, or close to the start of, your dissertation.
- It is one of the key tools you have, to ensure that your dissertation keeps going in the right direction.
- Every task you undertake should begin with you checking your research problem and asking “will this help me address this problem?”
- You should be willing to revise your research problem as you find out more about your topic. You may, for example, discover that the data you were hoping to analyze is not available, or you may encounter a new piece of information or a new concept while undertaking a literature search, that makes you rethink the basis of your research problem.

Developing a Research Question

- Once Research Problem is identified, you need to frame Research Questions.
- This will enable you to easily navigate the thought process in writing your dissertation.
- Research Questions should be in analytical question form and you can have 3-4 primary questions and any number of secondary research questions.
- Secondary research questions should help you in addressing the primary research questions. They should complement primary questions.

Methodology

The methodology chapter or section describes how you conducted your research, allowing your reader to assess its validity. You should generally include:

- The overall approach and type of research (e.g. qualitative, quantitative, experimental, ethnographic)
- Your methods of collecting data (e.g. interviews, surveys, archives)
- Details of where, when, and with whom the research took place
- Your methods of analyzing data (e.g. statistical analysis, discourse analysis)

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- Tools and materials you used (e.g. primary or secondary sources or both)
- A discussion of any obstacles you faced in conducting the research and how you overcame them
- An evaluation or justification of your methods

Your aim in the methodology is to accurately report what you did, as well as convincing the reader that this was the best approach to answering your research questions or objectives.

Collecting Data

For most research projects the data collection phase feels like the most important part. However, you should avoid jumping straight into this phase until you have adequately defined your research problem, and the extent and limitations of your research. If you are too hasty you risk collecting data that you will not be able to use.

Literature review

- The aim of a literature review is to show your reader that you have read, and have a good grasp of, the main published work concerning a particular topic or question in your field. This work may be in any format, including online sources.
- According to Caulley (1992) of La Trobe University, the literature review should:

  • compare and contrast different authors' views on an issue • group authors who draw similar conclusions • criticise aspects of methodology • note areas in which authors are in disagreement • highlight exemplary studies • highlight gaps in research • show how your study relates to previous studies • show how your study relates to the literature in general • conclude by summarizing what the literature says

The purposes of the review are:

• to define and limit the problem you are working on • to place your study in an historical perspective • to avoid unnecessary duplication • to evaluate promising research methods • to relate your findings to previous knowledge and suggest further research

A good literature review, therefore, is critical of what has been written, identifies areas of controversy, raises questions and identifies areas which need further research.

YOUR PROPOSAL SHOULD CONTAIN -

- **Introduction of the Dissertation Topic**: The researcher is required to introduce the subject and the issue involved in brief.
- **Statement of Problem or Research Gap or Research Problem:** The researcher is required to explain the debatable issue involved in a research topic. Such issues could be single or multiple. A Statement of Problem is basically a statement that illustrates a clear vision and the overall method that will be used to solve the problem at hand. Usually used when doing research, a problem statement discusses any foreseeable tangible or intangible problems that the researcher may face throughout the course of the project.

- **Research Questions:** A research question is an answerable inquiry into a specific concern or issue. It is the initial step in a research project. The "initial step" means after you have an idea of what you want to study, the research question is the first active step in the research project.
- **Hypothesis:** A research hypothesis is the statement created by researchers when they speculate upon the outcome of a research or experiment. It is an assumption with which the researcher begins its research and throughout the research paper, the researcher should seek to prove or disprove the hypothesis.
- **Scope of Study:** The researcher is required to identify the broad framework within which the study is designed. The researcher may also highlight the limitations of the study within this segment.

- **Objective of Study:** The researcher has to identify the aims and objective of the study.
- **Research Methodology:** The method that the researcher adopts to conduct a research i.e. doctrinal or non-doctrinal or empirical. The researcher has to state along with the method the justification of using the method in dissertation. Please note that the researcher can use a combination of both the methods as long as the researcher is able to justify the usage of the combined method.
- **Literature Review:** The researcher has to go through the existing materials (both primary and secondary) and provide a review or assessment of the existing literature.
- **Tentative Chapterization:** The researcher is required to briefly state how the researcher intends to go about the research. The researcher is required to categorize the dissertation into broad chapters and provide a gist of contents that the researcher intends to include in each chapter.

- Upon scrutinizing the initial dissertation proposal, the course-coordinator will either approve or reject the proposal. In the event of rejection/modification of the proposed Research Proposal, the candidate will have to re-submit another Research Proposal incorporating the suggested changes within a stipulated time fixed by the course-coordinator.

Final dissertation

- Cover page/title page (Your degree program/Name of Course , your dissertation’s title, your name, Roll Number/ID Number, submission date, Name of University and Logo)
- Certificate by supervisor
- Declaration by student
- Acknowledgements
- Table of Contents
- Index of Authorities (Statutes/Judgments/Other official sources)
- List of Abbreviations
- List of Tables/figures

- Introduction which include Research gap or statement problem; Research Objective; Scope and Limitations/Research Gap; Hypothesis; Research Questions; Research Methodology; Value of Research; Literature Review; Research Plan/Tentative chapterisation
- Main body of dissertation (divided into Chapters)
- Conclusion and Suggestions
- Bibliography (Books – Scholarly articles – Articles from news sources – Internet sources)

Table of Contents

- In the table of contents, list all of your chapters and subheadings and their page numbers. The dissertation contents page gives the reader an overview of your structure and helps easily navigate the document.
- All parts of your dissertation should be included in the table of contents, including the appendices and Bibliography.

Introduction

- Introduce the topic
- Statement of Problem/ Research Gap
- Research Objective
- Scope and Limitations
- Hypothesis
- Research Questions
- Research Methodology
- Value of Research
- Literature Review (Optional)
- Research Plan/Tentative chapterisation)

Main body of dissertation/discussion

- It should be in chapters (Maximum of 6-7 chapters including Introduction and Conclusion)
- You should be able to address all the research questions raised.
- You should also analyse the results or findings from your research

Conclusion and Suggestions

- The dissertation conclusion should concisely answer the main research question, leaving the reader with a clear understanding of your central argument and emphasizing what your research has contributed.
- Wrap up your dissertation with a final reflection on what you found. This type of conclusion often also includes recommendations for future research or practice.
- Give possible suggestions to overcome the statement of problem.

Bibliography

- You must include full details of all sources that you have cited/used.
- It is important to follow a consistent citation style.
- Each style has strict and specific requirements for how to format your sources in the reference list.
- You should use Bluebook 19th edition/20th edition through out the dissertation.

Other important information

- The written Dissertation will carry a total of 150 marks which will be followed by a viva-voce carrying 50 marks.
- **Footnotes:** It is mandatory to cite/use footnotes.
- Submit on-time.
- Dissertation Proposal is Mandatory.
- Your Dissertation should be at least 100 Pages (Minimum of 80 main body – from Introduction Chapter to Conclusion Chapter).

- You will have to submit draft dissertation for review.
- Once the draft is approved, you will have to send hard copy. Further details on hard copy etc., will be provided once the draft is approved.
- Any queries and all submissions have to be addressed to cadlprojects@nalsar.ac.in (for Aviation Law and Air Transport Management) cadlassignments@nalsar.ac.in (for Security and Defence Laws; Space and Telecommunication Laws; Maritime Laws)

Thank You….
Any Questions?