Transcript

Chapter 17: Writing Up

Writing is an extremely important part of the research process as a poorly written dissertation will constrain your ability to communicate your findings and limit the final mark you’re likely to achieve. It is also something that shouldn’t be left until the last minute but actually should take place throughout your dissertation.

In order to write up your dissertation you need to make sure you ***develop an argument*** to connect the pieces of your dissertation together, think about ***your audience*** and their expectations as well as carefully ***considering the structure of your dissertation****.*

An *argument* is, essentially, your line of thinking which takes the reader through the evidence and discussion to show how you came to the conclusions you are making. Your argument should also explore alternative perspectives and explain any issues with these, including why they may not be as applicable to your research. The argument should run through your whole dissertation. It is not just about telling a story about what you have found, but also being actively involved in crafting a certain (balanced) view of reality. You need to present the process of coming to a particular conclusion, providing sufficient contextual information to enable the reader to have a clear understanding of the limitations or constraints on your thinking. So in the literature review you will identify different views in relation to your topic, explore these through the data you collect and then identify which of these are most pertinent and why.

You need to make sure you keep your readers in mind. Think through what they really need to know in terms of what you did, why you did it, how you did it, and also what you found out. This is about their expectations regarding the style of writing, the use of evidence and also make sure you have a look at your marking criteria. Make sure your work is clearly presented and articulate. This will help your reader to understand your argument and evaluate its usefulness.

Different disciplines and departments may require slightly different structures and it is really important to bear in mind your specific guidelines. However, it is typical for it to consist of an introduction which specifics the problem, why it needs   
studying and the research questions, the literature review which critically   
analyses existing work in the field, a methodology which outlines what you did and why in terms of your data collection including ethical considerations, before moving on to the findings and discussions, and finally presenting a concluding chapter. Whilst you might find it more manageable to break down each of your sections into discrete chunks it is important that these link together and have a clear, joined narrative. You should think carefully about introductions and conclusions to chapters and how they link to the other chapters. Also make links between chapters. For instance, you should build on your points in your literature review in the discussion section exploring how these link to your own findings. Refer back to the points made rather than simply repeating them.

Paying attention to all of these issues will help you to produce a coherent dissertation.

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