Transcript

Chapter 3: Getting Started

One of the key challenges you need to think about when undertaking a dissertation or a research project is how to manage your time appropriately. You don’t want to be in a position where you end up rushing it at the last minute or even handing it in late. So there are several things you can do to help you manage your time and these include:

* Developing a ***realistic timetable*** which you try and stick to
* Develop ***strategies for working*** to making sure you meet your timetable
* And also being aware that there can be ***unexpected delays*** and trying to factor time for these

So in order to make sure you manage your time appropriately it is important that you develop a clear and realistic timetable. This should include all of stages of the dissertation from formulating your research questions, carrying out the literature review, undertaking your ethics approval, accessing and collecting your data, analyzing the information you’ve collected and, finally, writing up your dissertation. So, you also need to make sure you leave time to check and proofread your dissertation. It’s really off putting for markers to read sloppy dissertations with mistakes in them so make sure you leave time for that.

Also don’t forget to include holidays in your timetable planning. These can be really important in keeping you motivated too as you return to work reinvigorated. In order to devise your timetable, you might wish to use a Gantt chart. This enables you to break down your dissertation into different areas according to the month or weeks. There’s an example of the Gantt chart in the book which you might find helpful. When you have developed your Gantt chart show it to your supervisor to check it makes sense to them. They should be able to advise you in relation to it and check things are at appropriate times.

So, you need to ensure that you develop writing strategies as well to help you get through your dissertation and manage your time effectively. So, for instance, it is common for students to suffer from writer’s block and try to make everything   
perfect straight away, this isn’t going to be the case. Writing is a process and it’s important to get things down on paper and then develop them through a process of   
drafting and redrafting. So, you need to use strategies to make sure you get started and use your time effectively. These can include things like free writing, writing down whatever comes into your head regarding the topic, breaking down your work into manageable chunks, and also setting yourself targets within certain time periods. Making sure you monitor distractions. So, thinking about what slows you down. For instance, is it worth putting your mobile phone in another room while you’re writing your dissertation? Think about where you work best and when you work best. Are you most productive earlier in the day? Are you most productive later in the day? Is it in the library or at home? These are all things to consider. Also, where you only have short periods of time, you might be doing other assignments for instance, think about how you can use that effectively for your dissertation. Could you work on your glossary, for instance, check the references are formatted.

So, I have mentioned the importance of developing a timetable and writing strategies to give you the best chance of meeting your deadline. However, it’s important to recognise that things don’t always go to plan. Sometimes this can’t be avoided. For instance, if you need to spend longer gaining access to your sample, or ethics approval takes longer than expected, you need to factor in plans for unexpected events. Bear in mind that some elements of your dissertation are also likely to take less time than you would have expected. See this as an opportunity to get ahead.

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