



UK Edition

Making Everything Easier!™

Writing a Dissertation

FOR
DUMMIES®

Learn to:

- Choose a winning topic and finalise your research question
- Find information on or offline, or collect your own empirical data
- Whip the final version of your work into shape
- Approach the whole project with confidence

Dr Carrie Winstanley

Principal Lecturer in Education,
Roehampton University





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Writing a Dissertation For Dummies®

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Writing a Dissertation For Dummies[®]

**by Dr Carrie
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About the Author

Dr Carrie Winstanley works with undergraduate and postgraduate students, teaching different aspects of education including psychology, philosophy and history. She also teaches and researches with highly-able children and is especially interested in those who also have learning difficulties, sensory impairments and/or disabilities. She regularly runs workshops with children and adults in museums, galleries and schools, and is fascinated by learning and teaching in formal and non-formal contexts.

Carrie has taught in Higher Education for a decade, following ten years of teaching in schools (in the maintained, independent and international sectors). She

is also an educational consultant and writer. Carrie holds higher degrees in social justice and education (PhD, London), psychology of education (MPhil, Cambridge), as well as the philosophy and history of education (MA, Surrey), plus an undergraduate degree in education (BHEd, Kingston, CNA). She was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship from the Higher Education Academy in 2008.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the students I have supervised and the tutors who have supervised me.

Author's Acknowledgments

I am grateful to colleagues, both in my immediate workplace and in the wider Higher Education sector, for myriad discussions over the years about supervision and academic writing. Thanks are also due to the many students whose dissertations I have shared and the tutors who supervised my own writing; you have all taught me a great deal.

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Introduction

If you're reading this you're either already a student starting to prepare for your final year project or someone planning to study, and wondering what's entailed. Whatever your motivation, you'll find this book gives you answers to the questions you have and to plenty of questions you didn't realise you wanted to ask. The dissertation is the most significant piece of work most students undertake on their degree course. It's worth more than any other aspect, it has more time assigned to it and it's often the only time when you have the opportunity for sustained one-to-one support from your academic tutor.

You should do all you can to make the most of the possibilities afforded to you in undertaking a dissertation. This book helps you maximise the positive aspects of the experience. You can pick up tips and find out about common pitfalls, as well as having a rich source of help and support for your writing and research.

Before you read further, take a moment to consider that congratulations are in order! If you're writing a social science dissertation, you're probably in the third or final year of your degree course. On most degree courses, a dissertation, or final year project, is obligatory. You can't register for such modules, unless you've successfully completed previous coursework, essays, exams, presentations, portfolios, and many other requirements. You are already a success story!

However, there is still a long way to go. A dissertation is an exciting, challenging, rewarding and often wonderful experience. Simultaneously, it's also likely to be

exhausting, frustrating, time-consuming and irritating. You need to maximise the positive and minimise the negative and that 's where this book can really help.

About This Book

This book is presented in an accessible way, through straightforward writing and a user-friendly format. To make sense of the book, you don't need to read it from start to finish. In fact you don't even need to read it in order. It's a reference for you to dip into, as and when you need advice or help. It covers the usual empirical dissertations with all you'll need about research methods and analysis, but it also helps you if you're planning a library-based, theoretical thesis.

Conventions Used in This Book

Each chapter covers the basics you'll need and also provides further details and examples that you can skim over if you're pushed for time. I also flag up points in the book where you can cross-reference to different chapters, so that you can read the book thematically with ease.

For ease of navigation, I use the following conventions:

- ✓ *Italic* is used for emphasis, to highlight new words, and terms which the text defines.