

学术研究方法指导手册

The PhD Writing Handbook

博士生写作手册

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在外语科研方面，外教社曾先后推出《教育与社科研究入门指南》《小型社科项目研究方法指南》等参考用书，其中《MLA格式指南及学术出版准则》（第二版）（第三版）和《MLA科研论文写作规范》（第五版）（第七版）备受广大读者欢迎，成为外语界论文作者的必备工具书。

为进一步解决国内硕士、博士研究生在撰写科研论文和掌握科研方法方面所面临的各种问题和困惑，外教社推出“学术研究方法指导手册”。本套手册融理论和实践为一体，阐释系统、深入，既囊括了对于论文撰写结构与步骤上所有要素的介绍和分析，又涉及有关项目调研、选题论证、时间管理、成果出版、自我评价等方法上的科学指导，为论文撰写规范化提供指南，并对培养研究能力、开辟研究领域和拓展研究思路给予启示。

本套手册对于广大硕士、博士研究生的论文撰写有很好的指导作用，尤其是对人文学科和社会科学领域的硕士、博士研究生的科研工作有非常强的针对性和实用性，对于硕士、博士研究生的学科导师也具有较强的借鉴意义和参考价值。

The PhD Writing Handbook

Desmond Thomas

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described in this book as she makes steady progress in her own PhD studies in the Psychology Department at the University of Auckland.

I cannot finish without adding some thoughts on my own experience of PhD thesis writing in the 1990s. In the absence of a guiding handbook such as this one, I turned to my supervisor every time I had a problem related to writing or reading and in particular when I felt I had reached a dead end. I am indebted to Professor Cathie Wallace (University College London, Institute of Education) for all of her wisdom and her clear understanding of the difficulties that I was facing. Without skilled supervisory input, the task of producing a text that does justice to your research becomes that much harder.

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Introduction

A PhD research project presents two types of challenges. The first relates to the project itself, the type of research that is being carried out, its content and its methodology. For these, there are many potential sources of support – individual supervisors, supervisory panels, discipline-related communities and an ever-expanding range of courses and books that offer training and advice on research design, data collection and data analysis.

The other set of challenges relates to the ability to produce a written PhD thesis that will do justice to the quality of your research, enabling readers to understand and appreciate the development of your thinking. This ability will also sustain you throughout a future career in academia, when writing will be the main means of communication with other members of disciplinary and cross-disciplinary communities. It is evident that developing writing skills to the required level will be an important goal for all PhD researchers. However, there is a tendency for writing support to be made available only through occasional self-contained workshops while the need for ongoing support is often underestimated or even ignored.

There are several possible reasons for the relative lack of attention to writing which can characterize research training programmes in higher education institutions. One is the fact that many PhD supervisors and research skills trainers see their responsibilities as limited to giving guidance on content and methods. This is a great pity, as most supervisors and trainers tend to be experienced and skilled writers within their specialist fields. It seems that expertise in writing is rarely passed on from the experienced researcher to the less experienced in an explicit way.

Another reason for the lack of writing support may be an underlying belief that writing is a simple and inherently logical process, which involves working out and clarifying ideas before you write them down. From this perspective, there is a designated order of events where writing comes after reading, collecting data and analysing data as the final stage of PhD research. From this same perspective, writing does not need to be taught. Instead, it is believed that the skills involved can be acquired over a period of time. I have known many cases where PhD researchers were forbidden

to write by their supervisors until their third or fourth year of study on the grounds that they might not be ready.

For inexperienced research writers, acquiring the range of skills that they need can present a substantial challenge. The realization that writing a first draft can be a complex and messy process may come very gradually. The stereotype of the inspired writer spontaneously producing a brilliantly clear and coherent text can persist despite strong evidence to suggest that this view of writing rarely matches the reality.

One way of challenging the stereotype is to consider the role of writing and its importance at every stage of the research process. According to Wolcott (1990), writing is not really a product of thinking but is arguably a form of thinking in itself. Putting ideas down on paper or on a screen can be an excellent way of clarifying key issues, helping the writer to see arguments and counterarguments more clearly or examine the strength of the evidence presented to support a particular point that is being made. From this perspective, some form of writing needs to take place even during the very early stages of research, where writing contributes to thinking and helping to make reading more focused.

This handbook seeks to convince you that such an approach to writing can provide a useful basis for developing the skills that you will need to communicate with your intended readers. Some form of writing is present at every stage of the PhD research cycle: this has always been the case and perhaps always will be.

The handbook is divided into sections which follow the process of PhD thesis writing from the initial research proposal up until the final viva.

Chapter 1 considers different models of the PhD and issues related to reading and writing that need to be addressed at the start of PhD research, while *Chapter 2* considers ways of developing a suitable research topic through writing.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 look at various aspects of reading in order to write: the management of the reading process, issues related to compiling a literature review and the exploration of key concepts.

Chapter 6 considers ways of building a structured chapter framework for the thesis, while *Chapter 7* focuses on the importance of establishing productive writing routines which also include receiving and responding to feedback from various sources.

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 break down the process of first draft writing, examining in turn issues related to clarity and coherence at sentence, paragraph and chapter level, academic style conventions and the drafting and redrafting of text.

Chapter 11 discusses some effective ways of achieving self-motivation and self-discipline in writing, having considered the causes and consequences of writer's block.

Chapters 12 and 13 consider the later stages of thesis writing, including the reporting and analysing of data. Practical guidelines are provided for the effective and systematic editing of written text, the development of oral presentation skills and preparation for the viva.

Finally, *Chapter 14* considers ways in which writing skills can be developed throughout an academic career.

1 The Stages of PhD Thesis Writing

This chapter

- *maps out the different stages of PhD research writing, matching specific writing tasks with the research process for the 'traditional' model of the PhD*
- *compares alternative models such as professional doctorates and 'creative PhDs' and examines the implications for writing in each case*
- *considers the role of the initial research proposal and some of the concerns related to starting writing*

► **The traditional model of the PhD**

The standard or 'traditional' model of the PhD can be considered a kind of academic apprenticeship that emphasizes the production of a written text (a thesis), closely supervised by a specialist in a particular field. In recent years, the emphasis has shifted slightly to take into account the importance of the learning process itself and the acquisition and further development of a range of skills that can be used later in a career.

The stages for the traditional model can be described as below. Note, however, that the sequence will tend to be cyclical rather than linear. For example, reviewing relevant literature will take place in parallel with most of the other activities. Similarly, the initial proposal will be revisited and revised later on.

Developing a research topic and the initial research proposal

This will involve a mix of the following:

- identifying a topic area and clarifying overall aims
- applying feasibility criteria to the area of interest
- breaking down the topic area to give it a clearer focus