Choosing your dissertation topic



Every dissertation is different because it is your dissertation. Therefore you should take time to consider your dissertation choice. What aspects of your subject do you find interesting? Do you want to use your dissertation in the future (e.g. as pilot project for further research)? Do you have other interests and expertise that could be drawn on in your dissertation? You should think about what is involved in producing a dissertation.

You also need to consider the practicalities of your potential dissertation topic. Is it achievable in the given timescale? Is it at an appropriate level? How will you undertake your research and where?

Use the table below to start thinking about choosing your dissertation topic. As every dissertation is different, use the table as a guide or prompt. You may wish to add subject-specific factors you need to consider or even produce your own guide.

Remember that one of the best sources of advice and support throughout your dissertation are your supervisors and/or programme director(s). They have a wealth of experience in the practicalities of Masters dissertations. Other members of staff from your programme may also be able to help (check with your course handbook).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Factor to consider** | **Notes – how will I do this? Are there resources available and what are they? Is it realistic? Who can help? Is it Masters level?** | **Time needed** | **Change / adapt the plan?** |
| My interest and motivation | *What do I find interesting and why? What do I want my dissertation to do for me after my Masters?* |  |  |
| Prior research / body of work (context) | *What does the literature say? Are there any gaps?* |  |  |
| Space – office / lab / research | *Where I am going to do this? Do I prefer to work in a set space (e.g. desk at home), or can I move around?* |  |  |
| Materials and equipment | *Do I need specialist equipment or software? Do I need any training (e.g. statistical programmes)?* |  |  |
| Support – supervisor / course staff / family | *How much support will your supervisor be able to offer? Will you require support with child care? Will you need to take time off from other commitments?* |  |  |
| Relevance of topic | *Is this appropriate for my degree? Is my research relevant to my topic? Do I need to change the question/title?* |  |  |
| Methodology | *What is my reasoning and (evidence) for choosing my methodology? Are there any limitations I need to keep in mind?* |  |  |
| Other: |  |  |  |
| Other: |  |  |  |
| Other: |  |  |  |