Higher level analysis



You will have been developing your skills in higher level analysis and critical thinking throughout the taught component of your Masters programme. You will need to continue using and refining them for your dissertation. The challenge is trying to sustain this higher level analysis over the time of your dissertation period and in the course of your dissertation writing.

One way that could help you achieve this is to think ahead and plan when and how you can employ your critical thinking to your dissertation and its various stages. Taking some time to think logically, looking at the background information and considering all aspects before and during your writing, can help you to reach that higher level analysis.

You may also find it useful to look back on previous assignments and any feedback you’ve received on them. Did you actively think about and analyse the topic, or was it more like a description of what research had been done? Did you allow enough time to revisit and edit your writing, or was it handed in without being edited?

Use the table below to get you thinking about when and how you can employ these processes. Try to be specific as this will help you focus your efforts. Remember, allowing time to consider questions will aid in reaching a higher level of analysis.

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| **Aspect** | **Specific for your Dissertation** | **Thinking about it and taking it further…** |
| Background – debate, controversies, paradigms |  | Why is this important? |
| *Background – debate, controversies, paradigms* | *E.G. Theory* ***α*** *is commonly used to explain a situation, but has known limitations under circumstances x (e.g. Bloggs, 2010), y (e.g. Jones, 2011) and z (e.g. Smith, 2000).* NB - State the evidence and the limitations – be explicit. | *E.G. Theory* ***α*** *has implications for deciding on practice (e.g. economic) but usually falls short of optimal (i.e. lots of caveats).* |
| Where could this research lead? |  | What impact will this have? |
| What questions are important? |  | Justify with evidence |
| Suppositions, musings, ponderings |  | Where could these lead? |
| Context |  | Why is this relevant? |
| What assumptions have I made? |  | Understanding the assumptions – how does this affect my work? |
| Are there holes in my thought/argument/work? |  | How do these affect my results/conclusions? |
| Time allocation |  | Have I left enough time to think about it? AND then come back to it later on? |
| *Time allocation* | *E.G. Deadline in 3 weeks (give specific date) on Friday at 4pm.*  *Week 1: Research first 3 days and outline argument. Identify further research to do at the weekend.*  *Week 2: Write up in the first 3 days. At the weekend, go back to the question draft a new answer with everything that I now know. Check against what I have written.*  *Week 3: Check my assignment against the brief and critique it. Proof-read first day. Editing/restructure next 2 days. Proof-read fourth day. Aim to submit 12pm Friday!!!* | *Have I left enough time to think about it? AND then come back to it later on?* |