Dissertation Planner: step-by-step

About the Planner:

This planner is designed to help you through all the stages of your dissertation, from starting to think about your question through to final submission. At each stage there are useful prompts to help you plan your work and manage your time. Throughout the planner there are also blank spaces that you can use to plan your dissertation. We hope that you find it useful, If you have any questions or comments please contact us on iad.masters@ed.ac.uk .

Getting Set

TASKS	TIMETABLE	NOTES HOW WILL YOU DO THIS?	COMPLETE? ✓
Brainstorm potential research questions. Discuss the feasibility of the research question(s) with relevant academic staff.			
Confirm your research supervisor. Check their availability during your dissertation period and how you can contact them			
Check availability of training/guidance. Are there programmes, books or courses that can help with your dissertation? For example resources on research methods and referencing.			
Create your dissertation plan – try using a timeline, calendar or mind map to highlight the key stages, specific milestones and deadlines for your dissertation.			

Starting Your Research

TASKS	TIMETABLE	NOTES HOW WILL YOU DO THIS?	COMPLETE? ✓
Timetable meetings with your supervisor at the start of your project/research. These meetings will allow you to check that the project is going in the right direction.			
Start by breaking down the research - what do you have to do? Literature search, fieldwork/placement, survey(s), interviews, desk research, lab work?			
Keep track of your notes, sources and data. Find a system that works for you.			
Consider your emergency plans - what will you do if there are unexpected delays or results? Know whom to speak to and by when.			

The Writing Process

TASKS	TIMETABLE	NOTES HOW WILL YOU DO THIS?	COMPLETE? ✓
Create a rough outline of sections and the main points and findings. Use these to plan your content.			
Start to fill in your outline - create initial drafts. These can be reviewed and amended as your thinking and knowledge progresses.			
Get feedback - timetable in meetings to get feedback on your drafts from your supervisor.			
Checks - have you addressed your dissertation title? Are all your sections relevant? Does each section flow into the next? Anything missing?			

Final Stages

TASKS	TIMETABLE	NOTES HOW WILL YOU DO THIS?	COMPLETE? ✓
Check with your programme handbook or staff for guidance on the appropriate referencing and citation method to use.			
Double check that you have used the correct font / format / layout conventions for your dissertation. Refer to your programme handbook or staff for guidance.			
Always leave time for a final proof read and time for final corrections.			
Check submission dates (electronic and/or paper copy). How long will it take to print and bind your dissertation?			

Useful notes:

My research question is:

My supervisor is:

Their contact details are:

Dissertation deadline is:

School/Programme office /point of contact :

Supervisor is available from and to:

Online resources:

Useful Links:

IAD PGT Pages:	http://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/postgraduate/taught
IAD PGT Workshops:	http://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/postgraduate/taught/courses-events
IAD PGT Learning Resources:	http://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/postgraduate/taught/learning-resources
The Careers Service:	http://www.ed.ac.uk/careers
The Counselling Service:	http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-counselling
The Advice Place:	https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace/
EUSA:	http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/
The Library:	http://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/library-museum-gallery
Information Services:	http://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services
IAD Blog and Twitter:	iad4masters.wordpress.com @iad4masters
Other:	

Useful Advice from Previous Students:

Make sure to schedule time at the end of writing your dissertation to proof-read or have someone else proof-read it

Do not write and edit on the same day. Go back the next day – it will be easier to review with fresh eyes

Start writing earlier rather than later – gives you more time for drafts and editing.

Take time off! I always worked better on my dissertation after a break.

Save your files as much as possible – always make two backups!

Write as you go along – saves time and helps you to understand your research

Please note that this planner is a generic guide that you may find helpful; it does not replace subject-specific guidance on completing your dissertation, or the guidance given to you by your teaching staff and dissertation supervisor.