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DISSERTATION & THESIS TEMPLATE

WHERE TO START

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A Research Blueprint is one of the best methods of realizing a smooth and organized process. These blueprints are meant to take you through all phases of your research work, beginning with the proposal and ending with the submission. It is possible to be focused, be on track and take each section with confidence by using a step-by-step system.
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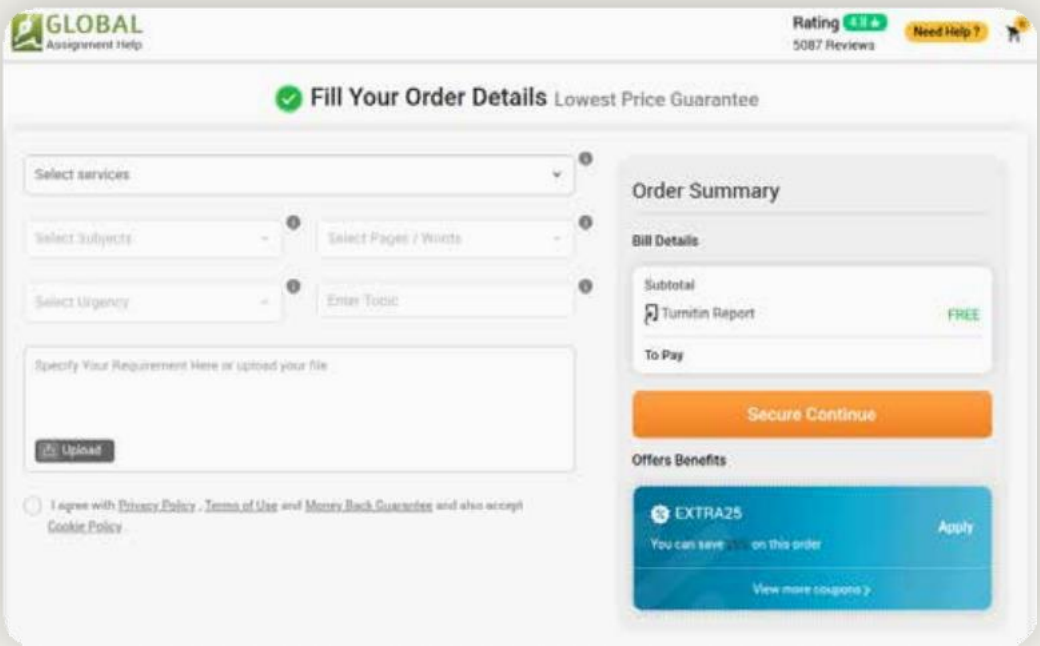

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The Title Page

The first impression between your work and your assessor is the title page and it is important to make a good, professional impression. An effective title is a brief description of what you have researched and gives a clear idea of what your research is all about. It must not be too long or unnecessarily complicated and yet it must be detailed enough to indicate the essence of research.

- An effective title must be closely connected to your research questions, providing an understanding of the topic, as well as the approach.
- A title will usually have the general subject area (e.g., human resource management, marketing, or finance), the topic or the context of your research (e.g., independent and dependent variables), and the methodology (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods).

For Example:

A quantitative investigation on effectiveness of social media marketing on customer attraction within the UK retail sector: A study on Sainsbury.

You should also ensure that your institution has no specific requirements to the title page format as it may also differ and be presented in your assignment brief or study materials.

Acknowledgements

The Acknowledgements section in dissertation is a place where the author shows his/her gratitude and appreciation to people who have helped to achieve the research. It is normally inserted after the first page and before the table of content. Here, you will recognize the individuals, organizations, and institutions that have assisted you during the research.

Among the key people mentioned we have:

- **Supervisors and advisors:** To provide guidance, support and expertise.
- **Academic staff:** Researchers or professors that assisted in the formation of your work.
- **Colleagues, friends and family:** To support and encourage them morally.
- **Funding institutions or organizations:** Where there are any, to give financial assistance or provisions.

Acknowledgements are usually more personal than other parts of the dissertation; it should be written in formal tone. It is a chance to appreciate the work of people who contributed to the realization of your research.

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Abstract

In a dissertation, Abstract is a summary of the whole research and gives a brief impression of the main details of the research to the reader. It usually comes after the title page, and it is supposed to be somewhere between 200 and 300 words. The abstract is aimed at providing a brief overview of the study so that the reader can get a general idea of what, how, and why it was done within a few seconds.

A good abstract contains the following items:

- **Research Problem:** A short statement of the problem or research question that the dissertation is trying to answer.
- **Objectives:** Objectives and specific objectives of the research.
- **Methodology:** An overview of research methods employed, e.g. qualitative, quantitative or mixed.
- **Key Findings:** A short description of the major results or findings of the research.
- **Conclusions:** The conclusion to the findings and any suggestion or conclusion to the study.

The abstract must be specific and concise, not many details. It must enable the reader to decide within a short time whether the dissertation is of interest to the reader and that it offers the appropriate background to read the entire work in details.

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Table of contents

A Table of Contents (TOC) is a dissertation outline that is organized in a specific way where all the chapters, sections, and subsections with their pages are listed. It makes the reader to find his way in the dissertation. A typical TOC contains major sections such as introduction, literature review, methodology, results and conclusion together with any appendices or references.

List of Figures

List of Figures is another part that comes after the table of contents which gives an account of all the figures (e.g., charts, graphs, images, diagrams) present in the dissertation. All figures are enumerated together with their titles and the page number they are located.

List of Tables

Likewise, List of Tables is another section which contains all the tables used in the dissertation with page numbers and titles. The list of figures and tables will help the reader to find the visual aids which are used in document very fast and the reader will be able to find the information about data and illustrations which he or she is interested in. Such sections are normally auto-generated when there is a word processor such as Microsoft word.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction in a dissertation is the basis of research; it gives the context and background within which the research can be understood. This chapter presents the topic, description of the research problem, and the significance of the study in regard to the current knowledge. It introduces the whole dissertation by stating research question(s) and objectives.

The main points that have been discussed in the introduction are:

- **Research Background:** A background of the subject, its importance in the field of interest.
- **Research Problem:** A well-defined expression of the problem or gap in the literature that the
- **Research Aims and Objectives:** A brief explanation of what the dissertation is supposed to accomplish.
- **Rationale of the Study:** The reason as to why the research is important and the contributions that the research will make to the field.
- **Scope and Delimitations:** A description of the study scope, what is and is not included in the study.
- **Structure of the Dissertation:** A brief overview of how the dissertation is organized and what each chapter will cover.

The introduction chapter makes sure that the readers are aware of the context, purpose and structure of the research and makes the reader go through the dissertation.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

Literature review of a dissertation is a critical review of the existing research on a given topic of study. The goal of this chapter is to develop a clear picture of the existing knowledge and outline the gaps that the research is going to fill. The literature review is used to summarize the studies, theories and methods that are relevant to the research and provides a platform on which the research stands.

The right format of a literature review is the following:

1. INTRODUCTION

- **Purpose and Scope:** Describe in a few words what you are trying to achieve with the literature review and describe the scope. Write research questions and objectives and indicate how the review is relevant to your study.
- **Organisation:** Give a synopsis of the organisation of the chapter (e.g. thematically, methodologically, or chronologically).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Introduction of the main theories, concepts or models that will inform your research. Discuss literature that underpins the theory of your study.
- Relevance to Research: state how these theories apply to your research questions and objectives.

3. PAST RESEARCH

- Chronological, Thematic, or Methodological Organization: Arrange this part according to the way you compose it (chronologically, by topics or by research methods).
- **Chronological:** In the case you wish to demonstrate how the research has developed throughout the years.
- **Thematic:** Group studies on the basis of themes or subjects (e.g. studies on a specific variable or group of people).
- **Methodological:** Group research according to the methods adopted (qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods).
- **Summary of Key Studies:** Note the most important studies, summarize their findings, methodology and conclusion.

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- **Strengths and Limitations:** Critically examine strengths, limitations and methodological weaknesses of such studies.

4. GAPS AND CONTROVERSIES IDENTIFICATION

- **Research Gaps:** Find out possible gaps in literature that your study is trying to fill.
- **Controversies or Debates:** Describe any controversy or debate that appears in the literature to exist on your topic.

5. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

- **Method Review:** Provide an overview of the different research methodologies applicable in past researches, their advantages as well as disadvantages.
- **How the methodologies reviewed can be used in your own research design:** this section invites you to provide details on how your own research design will be informed by the methodologies reviewed.

6. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

- **Key Findings:** Give the highlights of the key findings in the literature, and how they compare or contrast with your study.

ADDITIONAL TIPS:

1. **Be Critical:** A literature review must not merely summarize other studies, it must also critically discuss those studies, their strengths and weaknesses and how they relate to your own work.
2. **Logical Organization:** Have a logical and clear organization in the whole chapter and make use of headings and subheadings to help in guiding the reader.
3. **Citations:** Proper academic citations should be used in every study you use and the required citation style in your institution (e.g., APA, Harvard).

Such structure will make your literature review broad, critical, and well-structured, and will therefore make a good foundation to your own research.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Research Methodology describes the research method and procedures employed in carrying out the research, giving an elaborate description of the manner in which the research was conducted. The chapter is crucial in the transparency, reliability, and validity of the research process. It describes the research design, data collection procedures and data analysis techniques used to respond to the research questions.

The most important points discussed in this chapter are:

1. **Research Design:** This part describes the general design of the research, e.g. is the research exploratory, descriptive, analytical or explanatory. It also presents the discussion on whether a qualitative, quantitative or mixed-methods design was adopted, and the reason of the selection depending on the objectives of the research.

2. **Population and Sampling:** This involves a description of the target population, sampling procedures, sample size and inclusion or exclusion criteria. The reason behind adopting a particular sampling method (e.g. random, purposive, or convenience sampling) is also addressed.

3. **Data Collection Methods:** Here, the researcher describes the methods and the instruments that have been applied to collect data, i.e. surveys, interviews, observations, or even archival research. It also describes the way the data collection tools were developed and tested.

4. **Data Analysis Techniques:** The techniques of data analysis of the data obtained are described, including statistical analysis (in case of quantitative data) and thematic analysis (in case of qualitative data). Any software that was used to analyse the data (e.g. SPSS, NVivo) is also mentioned in this section.

5. Ethical Considerations: Ethical concerns that were considered in the study such as consent, confidentiality, and rights of the participants are discussed.

The methodology chapter will make sure that the research procedure is presented systematically so that it is possible to replicate or validate the study by another researcher.

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Chapter 4: Results

Chapter 4 deliver the results of your research data collection and analysis but does not interpret or discuss it. The chapter should present the results of your research in an objective and concise way so that the readers can know what the data says. Results will be presented according to your methodology in research.

In **quantitative studies** you usually start the chapter by describing your sample. This can be demographical data including gender, age, and ethnicity. You then give the description of the data by providing simple descriptive statistics, like means, medians, modes, and standard deviations. An inference of your statistics, where appropriate, is also provided, including t-tests, correlations, and regression analysis, to verify your hypotheses and ascertaining whether the noted patterns are statistically significant.

In the case of **qualitative studies**, the interest lies in the identification of the themes or patterns that appeared in the course of the analysis. This entails reporting the results on the basis of coding, categorization and grouping of the data. A diagram or some visual representation is often used to show how themes were deduced out of the codes. You are supposed to clearly define each theme and back it up with the direct quotes of the participants to enable the data to speak itself. These results are to be reported without interpretation and analysis will be done in the following chapter.

The secret of this chapter is transparency: make sure that your findings are reported in an organized way with tables, figures, and word-to-word quotes, and do not interpret or discuss them since that is the role of the Discussion chapter.

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Chapter 5: Discussion (optional)

Chapter 5 discusses and interprets the findings in the preceding chapter. It is in this chapter where you connect your findings with your research questions, hypotheses and the literature. This is to give a more insightful explanation of the implications of your findings and their relevance in the larger picture of the field.

Important points of the discussion are:

1. **Interpretation of Results:** You describe the meaning of the results, how they support or conflict with past studies, theories or expectations.
2. **Literature comparison:** Compare your results to the literature review and point out similarities, differences or new knowledge.
3. **Implications:** What are the practical, theoretical and methodological implications of your findings?

The discussion chapter is vital in explaining the results of your research and making your study fit in the bigger picture of the body of research.

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Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendation

1. **Conclusion:**

   The conclusion gives an overview of the main findings of your research, answering the research questions and objectives presented in the introduction of the dissertation. It also addresses the importance of your study, integrating the findings and explaining the contribution of the findings to the current knowledge. In this section, the most important findings and their implications should be briefly repeated, without adding new findings or interpretations. You need to consider the research process, speaking about the strengths of your work and the way it relates to the goals that were established in the beginning

2. Recommendations:

   Depending on the conclusions made, this section provides practical recommendations concerning the practice, policy, or future research. These suggestions must be directly connected with the findings and they should seek to solve the problems found in the research. They can be about improvement, implementation strategies or places that require further research, depending on the nature of the study. The recommendations must be precise, practical, and viable, with a description of the steps that the stakeholders or future researchers may follow. Where possible, recommendations on how to overcome the challenges or reduce the risks detected during the research process should also be mentioned.

3. **Limitations:**

   Admit the limitations of the research, including the sample size or procedure, and how it affects the findings.

4. **Future Research Suggestions:**

   Provide some suggestions on future researches, to answer remaining questions or overcome shortcomings.

In a nutshell, the chapter of conclusions and recommendations is intended to close the research, highlighting its contribution and providing advice on future action or investigation.

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References

The References section in a dissertation is a comprehensive list of all the sources cited throughout the document. It serves as a record of the research materials that informed the study and allows readers to verify the sources of information used. The references must be formatted according to the required citation style, such as Harvard, APA, or MLA, depending on institutional guidelines.

Each reference should include the following elements:

I. **Author(s):** List the last name, followed by the first initial(s) of all authors.
II. **Publication Year:** The year the source was published.
III. **Title:** The full title of the source (book, article, report, etc.).
IV. **Publisher or Journal Name:** For books, the publisher's name; for journal articles, the journal name, volume, issue, and page range.
V. **DOI or URL:** For online sources, include the direct link or DOI (Digital Object Identifier).

It's essential to ensure that every source cited in the text is listed in the reference section and vice versa, maintaining consistency and accuracy in the referencing process.

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Appendices

Appendices in a dissertation includes the additional information that helps to support the research body. They are added at the end of the dissertation and must be cited in the text wherever necessary. The appendices are meant to present detailed information, documents, or other materials that are lengthy or detailed to be placed in the main chapters, and still not interrupt the flow of the discussion.

Typical things found in the appendices are:

- **Raw Data:** Tables, questionnaires of the survey, transcripts of the interviews, or other statistical analysis.
- **Methodological Tools:** Qualitative accounts of research tools, such as questionnaires, interview guides or coding schemes.
- **Supplementary Figures or Tables:** Enlarged copy of charts or tables mentioned in the dissertation.
- **Additional Supporting Information:** Other sources of literature, legal or any other documentation that supports the arguments presented in the dissertation.

The individual appendices are to be numbered (Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.) and mentioned in the main text. Make sure that the appendices are well arranged and related to your research.

The appendices consist of

- Ethical form
- Questionnaire
- Participant consent form
- Informed consent
- Google form (if any)

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