

# Your Excellent Dissertation: Structure and Content

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# Introduction

- The importance of finding your *own* structural and content solutions, by **reflection** and **consultation** with advisor
- There is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution
- Variables include discipline, specific topic, approach of advisor, personal preference

# Basic components

- 1) INTRO: Aim and scope (possibly also background information and chapter description)

2) THEORY: Important and useful idea(s) or concept(s) developed by scholars

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- 3) METHODOLOGY: How you will collect and process your data. The potentialities and perhaps the limitations of your method(s).

4) 'ANALYSIS': empirical section, showing what you have found; explaining and interpreting what you have found.

5) CONCLUSION/DISCUSSION: Refer back to Introduction – what have you discovered? What is its significance?

Two approaches: 1) Social Sciences and 2)  
Humanities

# Social Sciences

- i) Introduction
- ii) Theory
- iii) Methodology
- iv) Analysis
- v) Conclusion/Discussion

# Humanities

- i) Introduction
- [ii) Background / Scholarly context / Literature Review / Source Discussion / Theory and Methods]
- iii) Analysis (more than one chapter)
- iv) Conclusion

# Structure at the micro level

- The dissertation is a *discussion* – not simply presentation of facts – and it must be structured in a **logical fashion**
- Solution? Define the AIM of the dissertation, and then ensure that each chapter, section and paragraph has its own ‘mini-aim’, which should be ordered in a logical sequence
- Collectively, each ‘mini-aim’ will contribute towards a more complete understanding of the research topic

# A practical tip: Topic sentences

*The aim of the dissertation is to ...*

*This chapter explores the problem of ...*

# And above all ...

- Be aware of your **options** ... and develop your own approach that works for your topic and which can be justified according to scholarly standards