

Lecture 06 : Timetable

When you begin planning your dissertation, it is essential to create a detailed timeline. This timeline will help you structure the months you'll dedicate to your dissertation, ensuring you stay on schedule. A clear and organized dissertation timeline acts as a step-by-step guide through a lengthy and complex process.

Although we often talk about the dissertation as if it's a single task, it's actually made up of multiple stages. Your timeline should include key milestones, leading up to the defense, revisions, and final submission. By outlining each phase, along with estimated durations, you'll have a better understanding of your progress at any given moment.

Before starting, it's wise to meet with your advisor to draft a timeline that is feasible for the scope of your project and includes specific deadlines. This structure will help you manage what comes next. Additionally, reviewing sample dissertations from past graduates can provide insights into the required components and help you visualize the final product.

1.Including Key Elements in a Dissertation Timeline

When creating your dissertation timeline, be sure to include all parts of the dissertation, from the abstract to the conclusion. It's important to note that you may not write the chapters in order. For instance, many graduate students begin with their literature review after defining their research question, even though it will be placed later in the final document.

Depending on your field, your dissertation will likely include sections on methodology, results, and discussion, along with a comprehensive conclusion that suggests directions for future research. Be sure to account for references (and a tip: build your reference list as you write), as well as appendices for any supplemental materials like charts or graphs. Don't forget to include an acknowledgments section as well.

2.Structuring Your Dissertation Timeline

The shape of your timeline will evolve once you start your research. Although it may seem straightforward at first, you might encounter pauses or the need to backtrack. As your research develops, you may find that certain sections, like database research, require more time, or that your research question needs to be revised.

Some students find success by marking strict deadlines on calendars, while others use evolving timelines within spreadsheets, linking drafts of the abstract, introduction, and literature review to various sources. Choose a method that works best for your workflow.

3.Using Your Dissertation Timeline Effectively

Once your timeline is set, it's important to stick to it as much as possible. Regularly refer back to it to track your progress and make adjustments as needed. For example, if you finish your research ahead of schedule but need extra time for the literature review, modify your timeline accordingly.

It's also wise to anticipate delays, such as waiting for university approvals or funding issues. Even when things don't go according to plan, a well-constructed timeline helps you stay on course or get back on track when things stabilize.

4.Collaborating with Your Dissertation Committee

Sharing your timeline with your dissertation chair and committee is a valuable step. After completing your comprehensive exams, meet with your committee members to gather feedback on your timeline, ensuring your goals are realistic and aligned with graduation requirements. This also ensures everyone is on the same page regarding your progress.

5.Balancing Your Dissertation and Career Preparation

As you prepare to finish your dissertation, timing becomes crucial, especially if you're planning to enter the job market while still writing. This can be a busy period, but a clear and structured dissertation timeline will help you manage your tasks and priorities effectively.