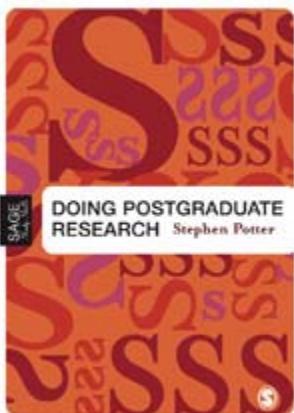


Book Review



Doing Postgraduate Research

Edited by Stephen Potter

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Review by Olympia Palikara

The increased interest in post-graduate research is demonstrated by the increasing number of books published in this area over the last years. *Doing Postgraduate Research* is an anthology of work by lecturers and Professors who are mostly based at the Open University. It focuses on many different aspects of postgraduate research. Overall, the structure of the book works well and provides a balanced account of the discussed material, practical activities and multimedia resources.

The book contains twelve chapters, a DVD, and a companion website. Each chapter contains a clear description of its aims, useful information on the discussed subjects, and well-sequenced practical activities. More specifically, Chapter 1 provides an overview of how the book is organized. It presents a short summary and a clear outline of the aims of each chapter. Chapter 2 focuses on the initial stages of doing postgraduate research. It provides an overview of the standards expected when undertaking a research degree and explores the different kinds of motivation that may be related to taking a higher degree. Furthermore, it shades some light on the initial steps of getting started with the research and the ways in which the student can seek support through his/her supervisor in the university.

Chapter 3 discusses issues related to planning and organizing work during the initial stages of a research study. For example, it provides useful information on the development of a research plan and provides practical advice on how to keep a research journal. Chapter 4 is the most theoretical chapter of the book and presents a summary of the different methods of enquiry. It explores the notions of ontology and epistemology and discusses issues related to the different logics of enquiry, such as induction and deduction. Although some students may find it useful, its content is not so strongly interrelated with the more practical style of rest of the book. Chapter 5 covers key aspects related to planning the research, such as scheduling the different stages of the research, drawing realistic work plans and timing the different phases of the research. This chapter also provides very useful practical activities and suggestions in searching funding for the research and acquiring the skills a student needs in order to progress his/her research.

Chapter 6 is concerned with the different aspects of academic writing and discusses useful techniques of adapting the writing style according to different audiences and purposes. In this chapter the reader can also find activities related to revising drafts of the thesis and important aspects related to organizing the structure of the thesis. Chapter 7 presents issues related to writing a literature review. The chapter begins with a description of the different purposes of the literature review and with an attempt to define what a literature review may involve. Then there is a description of possible sources of information for writing a literature review, practical pieces of advice on how to get access to these sources and how to check

the quality of the information used. The chapter finishes with an appendix on how to use the Harvard author-date citation system, based upon Open University Library's Information Search Guide.

Chapter 8 provides a description of the ethical and legal standards of doing research. More specifically, particular emphasis is put in the issues of plagiarism, confidentiality of the participants of the study and the importance of security with computer use. The author also describes the different aspects related to intellectual property rights and discusses issues related to the Data Protection Act.

Chapter 9 discusses the important issue of the ethical frameworks when conducting research with human participants. It describes the main areas of ethical concern related to research with human participants and critically evaluates the structure of an ethical protocol. Additionally, it provides examples of applications for ethical approval of a research project and contains activities on how to draft a relevant application.

In chapter 10 issues associated with presentations are presented, such as the different purposes that a presentation may serve and issues related to the audience. Helpful hints are provided related to the preparation of a presentation and its delivery and strategies on successfully answering demanding questions. The content of this chapter is complimented by a DVD material, which provides examples of a model lecture. This is particularly helpful because it shows both an example of a 'better lecture' and a 'poorer lecture' by the same presenter and also provides examples of answering and dealing with questions after the talk.

Chapter 11 considers the Viva and provides information in relation to the examination panel, the actual process of the viva, the preparation for this examination and more importantly contains lists of questions that may be raised during the viva. Furthermore, of particular help are the appendices of this chapter which provide copies of examiner's joint recommendation and report forms. As with chapter 10, the content of this chapter is complimented by a DVD programme, which contains a discussion between examined research students and their external examiners, and also a very interesting interview in relation to the different types of questions that may be asked during a Viva and how they can properly be addressed.

Finally, chapter 12 explores the career options after the completion of the PhD, suggestions in relation to personal development planning and advice on the preparation of CVs, application forms and job interviews.

Doing postgraduate research offers a practical and helpful guidebook both for students and supervisors. It is recommended for research students at the early stages of their research studies, because it provides a thought-provoking account of the different aspects of post-graduate research. Additionally, it can be a useful tool and resource pack for advanced research students who want to think about viva and career options after the completion of the PhD.

In summary, this book is a useful addition to the growing literature of books on post-graduate research. It provides not only a helpful reading but also a complete multimedia resource pack for new and more-advanced students and supervisors.

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