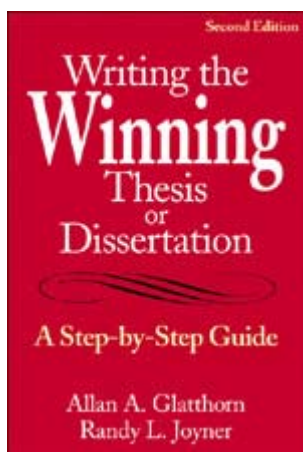


Book Review



Writing the Wining Thesis or Dissertation: A Step-by-Step Guide

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Review by **Faezeh Seyedarabi** and **Arefeh Seyedarabi**

This book is aimed at supporting Master's and Doctoral students with the writing-up of their dissertation or thesis. It helps writers plan and prepare for their writing up phases. This includes looking at both academic and personal needs such as 'planning' and 'preparing' one's time and cost. This book is divided into five parts (25 chapters); 'Establishing the Foundations', 'Developing and Defending the Proposal', 'Researching and Writing the Thesis or Dissertation', 'Defending and Profiting From the Dissertation' and 'Solving Problems Throughout the Dissertation Process'.

In the first chapter of this book, the reader's vision is adjusted to their (potential) examiners' eyesight; hence blurred angles (wrong perceptions) about 'what' a dissertation is or should look like are adjusted (corrected) accordingly. The remaining chapters of this book on the other hand are designed to equip writers with all the necessary writing tools and indeed examiners' thinking hat; enabling readers to understand or at the very least to have a general overview of what a dissertation should look like. Moreover, with its very friendly and personal writing style it tends to ease the writer's anxiety and isolation.

Chapter 1 (Part I) In this chapter the rationale behind writing a dissertation is discussed in relation to 'ethical' requirements. Moreover, a distinction is made between 'Dissertation' and 'Thesis' together with emphasis on the importance of preparing a 'Budget Worksheet' prior to writing-up. **Chapter 2-3** In chapter 2 writers are informed about ways to generate, investigate, organise and measure research topic/s together with the design of a single research problem, which was outlined within the context of the writer's 'career advancement' and 'continuous professional interest'. Consequently in chapter 3 writers (students) are advised on best practices in doing a literature review or search. Thus, useful databases, their features and indeed their most appropriate access methods are discussed together with tips on how to identify, store and manage relevant / useful resources such as papers, books and dissertation. **Chapter 4** In this chapter the concept of 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' research are introduced within the context of educational research, looking at research 'types' and 'methods'. Subsequently, six useful factors are listed for writers to consider when choosing their research type and method(s). **Chapters 5-7** Chapters 5 and 6 are about organising and scheduling research activities; selecting the research 'topic', 'problem' and 'methodology' together with drawing up a feasible working schedule for dissertation write-up. Moreover, in chapter 7 the involvement of 'peer collaboration' is discussed. This also includes tips on how to plan, organise and manage people and / tasks in the group. **Chapter 8** In this chapter the importance of understanding and indeed using appropriate software i.e. 'Word Processing', 'citation' and / 'spreadsheets' are stressed with special attention to learning the software's 'advanced features'. Writers are also advised not to rely heavily on technology hence number of technological pitfalls are outlined. **Chapter 9** This chapter describes six steps for

organising, preparing and running a 'Pre-Proposal Conference' with committee members (the advisory panel); developing research problems and their methodology/ies into 'sound proposals' before they are actually put forward for an upgrade.

Chapters 10-12 (Part II) In these chapters a systematic way of performing a more in-depth literature search is explained, advising writers on steps to narrow down their search topic and parameters i.e. 'type of article' and 'time period'. This is then followed by a brief introduction to different research designs in relation to research 'types' and 'methodologies'. Finally, writers (students) are informed about up-grading procedures (planning and defending the first three chapters of a dissertation), and making distinctions between a 'comprehensive' and 'writing' proposal in terms of its length, style and depth.

Chapters 13-15 (Part III) In chapters 13 and 14, advice is given on the execution of research designs, looking at ways in which writers can prepare, plan and organise their research activities together with providing writers with useful guidelines and examples on 'Academic' writing style. In chapter 15 writers are informed about the standard layout / structure currently used for writing dissertations with special attention to the 'clarity', 'order' and 'wholeness' of each chapter.

Chapter 16-18 These chapters are about writing the first three chapters of your dissertation, that is 'introduction', 'literature review' and 'methodology'. Hence the aims and objectives of each chapter are broadly discussed using examples. This also includes the required 'length' and 'style' of the chapters. **Chapters 19** In this chapter writers are informed about ways in which they could prepare and present ('contents' and 'format') their results. This is then followed by a checklist for writers to refer to. **Chapters 20** This chapter is about 'summarising and discussing the results' of the research studies. Writers are therefore advised to structure this chapter using the following five main headings; 'Introduction', 'Statement of the problem', 'Review of the methodology', 'Summary of the results' and 'Discussion of the results', which are explained with examples for writers to adopt accordingly. **Chapter 21** In this chapter final 'editing' steps required for writing a typical dissertation are discussed. This includes the writing of the 'Abstract', 'Title page', 'Approval page', 'Acknowledgment page', 'Table of contents', 'List of Tables and Figures', 'Chapters of the dissertation', 'References' and 'Appendices'.

Chapter 22-23 (Part IV) In chapter 22 writers are informed about steps required before and after their viva presentation, including the listing of twenty five questions typically asked at defence (an upgrade meeting) for students to consider. In chapter 23 writers are advised about possible ways in which they could disseminate their successful dissertation i.e. looking at steps involved in publishing a 'journal article' or 'book'.

Chapter 24-25 (Part V) In these chapters the 'roles and responsibility' of committee members are discussed. Writers are also advised on ways to overcome some of their 'common' communicational and indeed personal ('emotional') problems that they may face while writing their doctoral dissertation.

This book is highly recommended to Master's and Doctoral students in the field of 'social sciences'. Moreover, students writing their dissertation or thesis in the fields of 'computer sciences' and 'natural sciences' are advised to use this book in conjunction with other relevant books for their writing-up, since examples used in this book are discussed within the context of educational research and may not have a direct link to their research discipline, i.e. preparing 'an outline for the search' on page 87 and 'computerised sources' on pages 90-91 are specifically related to educational research.