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The International Students Starter Pack

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WORLD
CHANGING
GLASGOW

THE SUNDAY TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

GOOD
UNIVERSITY
GUIDE
2024

SCOTTISH
UNIVERSITY
OF THE YEAR



Background and Approach

- LTDF funded project to foreground international student voices
- Move away from deficit narratives
- Provide guidance to new international students **and** staff teaching them
- Student-staff shared video suite
- Interviewed PGT students from different schools and colleges about their experiences studying at UofG
- Student interns produced 6 themed short videos





The Moodle Course

How to use this resource

Welcome to the International Students Starter Pack, a shared resource for students and staff. Each section contains a themed video of students speaking about their experiences of undertaking a postgraduate taught degree at the University of Glasgow and resources to support students and staff during that journey. If you would like to get in touch with the researchers please e-mail: Mona.OBrien@glasgow.ac.uk (student facing contact) or Julia.Bohlmann@glasgow.ac.uk (staff facing contact).



Announcements

Introductions



Expectations & Experi...



Time Management



Assessments at UofG



Writing a Dissertation



Advice for New Students





Theme Unit Layout



Writing a Dissertation

In this video we asked students how they found the process of writing a dissertation.



Resources for Students

Dissertations are very significant projects for undergraduate and postgraduate students, here are some resources to help you develop and write an effective dissertation.



Resources for Staff

Further reading on how international students experience the dissertation process and how to support them during supervision.





Resources for Students

Dissertations are a great opportunity for students at all levels of study to develop their expertise in a topic and to strengthen a range of skills from research to time management to writing and editing. Dissertations are also a central form of assessment in UK Higher Education as they assess a wide range of important skills including subject expertise, research, criticality, organisation, and the ability to develop a convincing and unique academic argument. Dissertations (which are sometimes also called a 'final project') take many different forms depending on the field of study; for example a dissertation in biology will look very different to a dissertation in economics and a dissertation in history will be different again. However, there are some core resources that are useful for all dissertations.

1. Ensure that you develop a clear research question(s) and that your dissertation provides a clear response to/argument on this question that is founded in substantial evidence that is thoroughly analysed; these are key things that your academic markers will expect. The SLD resources covered in point 2, below, provide lots of advice on how to develop and demonstrate these skills in dissertations.

2. SLD provides an extensive range of dissertation classes and resources:

- **Early Stages Dissertation Writing** (for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students): develops students' understanding and skills in topics for starting your dissertation, including identifying your research question; writing research proposals; finding and using literature/literature reviews; and the student-supervisor relationship.
- **Dissertation Writing for International Students** (for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students): develops students' skills for key elements of dissertations, including reading effectively for dissertations; criticality in reading and writing for dissertations; using and analysing evidence effectively; writing key sections of dissertations (introductions, literature reviews, methods, main chapters/results and analysis, conclusions).
- **Dissertation Writing for Undergraduate Students in Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities**: building on the Early Stages Dissertation Writing and Dissertation Writing for International Students classes and resources this series develops some specific skills for writing dissertations in Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities, including: developing a research question; creating a research space; being critical in your research process; engaging with and writing about literature; justifying and writing about your methodology; answering your





Resources for Staff

1. Embarking on a dissertation project for the first time can be daunting. Pringle-Barnes and Ming (2019) have found that this can start during the proposal writing stage if students find it difficult to learn independently.



Working independently on the dissertation proposal: experiences of international Master's students

In their paper they propose a scaffolded approach that can facilitate the completion of independent learning tasks and get students off to a good start on their dissertation project.

- Have you thought about this early phase of the dissertation process?
- How could you build in small tasks that can help students formulate ideas and create a feasible action plan for their project?

2. Supervision can be another area where uncertainty about what is expected can create barriers to engagement. Research on how [international students experience dissertation supervision](#) in the UK has shown that these experiences vary to a great extent due to the non-standardised nature of the process.

3. Supervisors play a key role in supporting students through the dissertation process but it can be difficult to know how, especially since students all come with different experiences and needs. Gina Wisker has published a book to help with that: *The Good Supervisor*. The 2012 edition includes a chapter on supervising international students.





Student Feedback

- Felt connected and seen
- Useful for settling into academic life
- Would revisit (e.g. for dissertations)

Staff Feedback

- Insightful, relatable, surprising
- Helpful in understanding international student experience better
- Keen on resources and tools which were not time consuming
- Availability pre-entry



Research with International Students

- Survey and focus groups
- Video interviews and self-presentation
- Qualitative analysis
- Contribution to growing field of research with international students





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If you have any questions or comments,
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