the recommended sequence is as follows.

Preliminary pages, consisting of:

Title page

Abstract or summary (one separate page)

Acknowledgement

Author’s declaration

Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

*List of accompanying material (e.g. software on a disc or CD)*

*Definitions*

Body of the dissertation divided into chapters, sections, etc. There is no optimum number of chapters or a maximum or minimum requirement, but the dissertation will usually comprise:

The Introduction Chapter

Chapters Comprising a Review of Literature

A Justification of the Research Methods Used

The Results Chapter

The Analysis Chapter

The Discussion Chapter

The Conclusions Chapter

The Future Work Chapter

References

Bibliography (if required)

Appendices (if required)

*Glossary* (if required)

The **Abstract**should not extend beyond a single A4 side, and to facilitate this, single spaced typing is permitted for the summary only. The purpose of the summary according to Hussey and Hussey (1997 p. 286) is:

* “to introduce the topic
* to describe how you did the research
* to discuss the results of what was done
* to explain the implications of the results.”

The **CONTENTS**should list in sequence, with page numbers, all relevant subdivisions of the dissertation, including the title of chapters, sections and subsections, as appropriate; any appendices; the glossary; the list of references; the bibliography (if any); the index (if provided) and other functional parts of the whole dissertation (not the Preliminary Pages).

* Finally: distinguishes between **DEFINITIONS**, that define any specific terms relevant only in this dissertation, and the **GLOSSARY** that provides explanations of terms or abbreviations used in the dissertation. The glossary should follow the appendices.

The **INTRODUCTION** should capture the reader’s attention and introduce everything you use in the dissertation and later explain. It should not start to discuss the actual research findings so even when you are adding things to it at the end of your project, pretend that you have not yet conducted the study.

An examiner will usually read the **INTRODUCTION** (specifically the Objectives) and **CONCLUSIONS** first and it is worth remembering this when you are writing these chapters. When doing a project you almost always end up re-visiting some chapters to append extra work and/or modify the existing work and this is especially true for the introduction. The Introduction Chapter should contain the following:

1) Broad view of the general research area – you are trying to demonstrate how important this general area of research is to the world.

2) Explanation of how your research fits into this broad area – now you are trying to demonstrate how your research is going to contribute to this general area.

3) The research question, hypotheses and the specific objectives of your research – usually under a separate sub-heading so that they stand out to the reader (and examiner).

4) Guide to the subsequent chapters – 3 or 4 paragraphs explaining the content and reasons for including each chapter. These paragraphs must explain **why** your dissertation includes certain chapters, **not what** chapters are included. Some students have shown these on a flow chart or diagram. **Do not, however, just re-iterate the contents page,** if the reader wants to know the content of the dissertation he/she can read the CONTENTS. Alternatively, if it is not clear from the CONTENTS what is in the dissertation, then the CONTENTS requires more work.

research methodology

following questions you should have described your research methodology.

1. What was the research subject?
2. What was the research question and how was it generated?
3. What were the intended purpose, process, logic and outcome?

This section of your dissertation (which could be part of your INTRODUCTION chapter or possibly a separate chapter based in the review of literature section) seeks to explain to the reader the rational for the way in which the research was conducted. In particular, to provide the answers to the following questions:

1. What was the underlying research paradigm or philosophy?
2. What research methods were used?
3. How was the data gathered?
4. How was the data analysed?

The method chosen should be stated in your dissertation and the reasons for your choices justified.

For a questionnaires and interviews;

1. show the justification for individual questions - why do you need the data and how will it be used (analysed)?
2. show the justification for choosing the respondents - how will they provide reliable, repeatable data?

Having stated your project objectives, it is now necessary to gather all the information required to satisfy them. This is achieved by reviewing existing literature, focused on your research area. If your project involves gathering some primary data, you may find that this data when analysed changes the focus of your project and you need to return to the literature to find other research that supports or disagrees with your findings (triangulation). This suggests that you might wait until the end of the project to write up the literature review. This is not advisable for a number of reasons:

1) Making notes on the literature as you read is one of the only ways you can ensure that you properly understand and absorb what you are reading.

2) In your MSc project you are marked on progress and writing chapters based on your literature survey may be the only hard evidence your supervisor has of your progress. This is particularly important if you wish your supervisor to give a recommendation for upgrade from PgD to MSc registration.

Your review of the literature should not be just a summary of the articles that you have read; your work should be critical and analytical. Ask yourself (and attempt to answer) questions such as:

* How does this article relate to my project objectives and can I use it to develop my theories/hypotheses? You should then explain in the dissertation, how you intend to use this information.
* How does this article relate to what I already know about the subject and how does it compare with that written on the same topic by other authors? Again, you should explain in the dissertation how this information agrees (or disagrees) with other published work.

You will need to remind the reader of the purpose of the research and the research questions from the introduction and discuss how the research has or has not answered the research questions. Remember this is the chapter where you have most opportunity to demonstrate your intellectual skills. You need to be self-critical so consider how reliable and valid the findings are. What have you learnt from doing the research and what would you do differently if you could repeat it? Can you really generalise about the population based on the data that you have gathered from your sample? Have you made any sweeping statements or exaggerated claims that could be challenged in your oral presentation? The chapter should have the following sections (based on Rudestam and Newton, 1992 p. 121): -

1. An overview of the significant findings of the study
2. A consideration of the findings in light of existing research studies
3. A careful examination of findings that fail to support or only partially support your hypotheses
4. Limitations of the study that may affect the validity or generalisation of the results

Remember that most examiners read this section after the INTRODUCTION so check that your CONCLUSIONS show that the OBJECTIVES have been achieved or if not, explain why not. Try to use some of the same key words or phrases from the OBJECTIVES to show consistency. It should start with the focus on your study and broaden out to discuss the implications for this research area and for future research. The main challenge in the conclusions is to give a summary whilst avoiding too much repetition and bullet points can be very useful. In the analysis section you may have identified areas for further research but in the conclusions you could give a little detail on the possible research methodology that could be adopted. Hussey and Hussey (1997 p. 293) give the following suggestions on content: -

1. Refer to the OBJECTIVES

2. Summarise the main points from the results and show how they address your research questions

3. Give guidance of the implications of your research - who might be affected by your findings and what might the affect be?

4. Do not offer new opinions - these should all have been introduced in the discussion and analysis sections of the dissertation.

5. Identify the weaknesses in your research and the limitations of your study

6. Suggest what future research might be conducted and how your study helps

7. In the same way that you should have spent time getting the opening of the introduction right try to get a convincing ending to the dissertation.

When considering what the implications of your research are, Greenfield (1996 p. 11) suggests the following possibilities: -

1. You may have filled a gap in the literature.
2. You may have produced a solution to an identified problem in the field. (Writing a new software programme might help solve a particular problem.)
3. Your results may challenge accepted ideas in the field (some earlier statements in the literature may seem less plausible in light of your findings).
4. Some earlier statements in the literature may seem more plausible in the light of your findings.
5. Your work may help to clarify and specify the precise areas in which existing ideas apply and where they do not apply.
6. Your results may suggest a synthesis of existing ideas. (A literature-based project can contribute by providing a comparison of previous research.)
7. You may provide a new perspective on existing ideas in the field.
8. Your results may suggest new ideas, perhaps new lines of investigation.
9. You may have generated some new (research) questions in the field.
10. Your work may suggest new methods for researching your topic.

Use whichever referencing style you wish, although the **Harvard** method is probably the most widely used within UK academic institutions, due to its simplicity and ease of understanding.

If you have used the Harvard system the references are much shorter and contain each source listed only once in alphabetical order by originator’s name. This means that there is much less need for a bibliography but it could be used to list any sources not cited in the actual dissertation and therefore not contained in the reference list.