

# Introduction

Starting work on a research dissertation for the first time can be quite scary and even overwhelming. The purpose of this book is to help make that process easier, by working through the stages of the dissertation research project in a straightforward and logical fashion. Reading this book, should enable you to write your dissertation more quickly and easily and may even increase your likelihood of gaining a good grade. There is obviously a lot to learn when you are conducting a research-based project of this scale for the first time, whether it is an empirical study or audit, a literature based study or theoretical analyses. What's more, because of the relatively short timescale available to you, you have little room for making mistakes in the process as the deadline cannot be postponed. You will need to learn about how to set up a dissertation project successfully, find out what will get you good marks, organize and do all the work, and hopefully make the process as enjoyable as possible. That is where this book will be invaluable; it may even help you to avoid having to read lots of other textbooks to glean all the necessary information from; textbooks on research methods are generally a heavy read.

*Your Undergraduate Dissertation in Health and Social Care* is an updated version of the original, *Your Undergraduate Dissertation*, by Nicholas Walliman first published in 2004. I had often recommended the text to undergraduate students undertaking their dissertation projects, so it was great privilege to be given the opportunity to work with Nicholas to adapt this core text to meet the needs of health and social care students. The result, I hope, is a book that provides students with a really good grounding in what is involved in undertaking a successful undergraduate project. The chapters have been kept short (that is why there are so many of them) in order to focus on answering one particular question at a time. You should easily be able to pick out whichever question interests you at the moment. It is, therefore, not necessary to read through the whole book from beginning to end. However, I have tried to put the questions into the same general sequence as they appear when you progress through a research project, so you should find navigating the process easy enough. This also results in some elaboration later on in the book of topics that were raised earlier, consistent with your growing understanding of the issues.

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Use this book as a guide, extract what you find useful (which I hope is most of it) and leave aside the parts that are not relevant. As you work through the relevant chapters, I urge you to constantly reflect on what you are reading, how this influences your thoughts in relation to your own dissertation topic, what you will do and how you will do it. In this way, you will be able to decide what is applicable to your own work and where you will need to follow up the issues in more detail in other literature. In order to prompt you to make some decisions at the end of each chapter, there is a section on ‘What should I do next?’. I have also provided a short further reading list of books and web resources, at the end of each chapter, where you can find out more information on the topics discussed if you need to.

This book has been written as a basic introduction to producing a research dissertation thesis in health and social care. Once you have decided on your topic and the methods that you will use to explore the research problems or answer the research questions, you will be able to judge just what information you need to complete the work. Do not expect the book to provide you with all the answers. What this book will help you to do is to decide just what further information you require to complete the research dissertation journey. Of course, background and specific information about your subject will need to be gathered independently by you, irrespective of which research approach you take.

Finally, I hope that you find doing your dissertation is not just hard work, but also a useful and enjoyable experience, where you learn a lot about a subject in which you are interested and end up getting the good marks you deserve. Good luck!